

## QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS June 2001

Once again, long service to science by one of the Society's members has been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. It is not often that a member of the Society has a repeat showing in the pages of *Notornis* for distinctions bestowed, at least not within the span of 2 years, but John Warham has managed just that. Although John arrived in New Zealand after three previous careers, he has carved out another and achieved distinction in that one as well. That fact has now been recognised by the community at large as well as by his peers. For John, sea-birds have been the objective of his research and photographic talents for many years. During that time he has worked and published with many noted colleagues, including the Serventy brothers and former Presidents of the OSNZ. In addition, he has mentored as students and colleagues, several Society members who now pursue careers as sea-bird biologists.

Honours have been relatively rare for field biologists, a tradition that happily is being broken increasingly by Society members. The OSNZ congratulates John on his well-deserved award. It reflects the success of his efforts in casting light on the often-mysterious lives of penguins, petrels, and albatrosses, and in bringing knowledge of those often-difficult-to-work-with groups to a wider audience. The following is a brief summary of John's contributions to seabird research and conservation in New Zealand and throughout the world. A more detailed biography appeared recently in *Notornis* 46(3): 414-416 on the occasion of his 1999 Fellowship of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, but it is appropriate to mark the new honour with a précis here

### John Warham (MNZM) Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for Services to Ornithology



John Warham arrived in New Zealand in 1966 and proceeded to build a distinguished career as an acknowledged expert on the crested penguins and then on the petrels. That later research has culminated in an acclaimed 2-volume work on the petrels and the publication on the Web of his compendious list (14,200 and counting) of references on the group. However, this was the latest in a series of careers that began with textiles and business management in his home ground of the industrial northeast of England, before and after a military interlude "for the duration". The return to civvy street in England was followed by 9 years in the Australian Outback making a living from photographs and films, enhancing his already deserved and heralded reputation as a nature photographer and film-maker. Then, after a long-delayed degree taken at Durham, he came to New Zealand. Although he published many of his observations during the Australian years in local and international journals, his major works in ornithology were undertaken as an academic, mainly in the Zoology Department at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch.

After taking a degree in zoology at Durham, he was appointed to a lectureship at Canterbury, teaching vertebrate biology and wildlife ecology, and where he was close to the heart of crested penguin territory. From there he continued studies of the five crested penguins he had started as a biologist with the Australian Antarctic team on Macquarie Island from 1959-1961, working on royals and rockhoppers.

After that, it was the petrels, to which he had been introduced on trips to Skomer, off Wales, in the early 1950s, and the course of the rest of his ornithological life was set. Former students have cause to be grateful for his role in organising trips to the then seldom-visited islands of the New Zealand subantarctic. The work on The Snares involved studies of the breeding biology of the Snares penguin and other species, including ongoing research on the southern Buller's albatross, and studies of the mottled petrel and the prodigious population of sooty shearwaters that breed on the islands. The collected papers of The Snares Island Expeditions run to 82 titles. The information accumulated by John and the students and other researchers who took advantage of sojourns on windy and chilly isles now provide the basis for research by a new generation of workers. In addition, by drawing attention to the fauna and flora of these islands, the work can be said to have paved the way for the active conservation of the islands.

The urge to see and record some of the vanishing wildlife of the world before it was too late was one of the reasons John and Pat left England to begin a nomadic life in the Outback nearly 50 years ago. His photographic and scientific output has furthered the cause of the conservation of birds and other wildlife and wild places here, in Australia, and elsewhere. His work has been recognised by overseas ornithological organizations, by the Royal Photographic Society, as well as by a Fellowship to this society. It is appropriate that his services to ornithology and to conservation have now been recognised on the wider stage in his adopted country. We wish John and Pat well in their "retirement" (John from a Readership in Zoology at Canterbury; Pat from the solitude of wife of a long-distance researcher), which so far has produced landmarks as lasting as any he achieved in his "active" career in ornithology.