

were so far ahead of their time, even the patrol system. But prophets are seldom recognised in their day.

In recent times conservation has become fashionable. This was far from being so in the early days of Scouting, or for that matter when the Society was founded in 1923. Today many people are "jumping on the band-wagon" and think that they can get far more

publicity by being protesters on almost any topic, and after all pressure sometimes bends the Government's will.

But the Society and Scouting will still be going on when the band-wagoners have mostly been forgotten.

Those who make the greatest noise do not necessarily achieve the greatest success; nor do their tactics have to measure up to the high reputa-

tions of long-standing and respected organisations.

The Society still believes that the day of the "good turn" is not past and that human values surpass all others. In the words of the Scout jamboree song, the Society offers its warmest congratulations to the Scout movement and trusts that "It will march on for another 50 years". ■

BOOKS

The Unpublished New Zealand Bird Paintings: Illustrations by G. E. Lodge, text by C. A. Fleming

The publication of this book, with its beautiful paintings hidden for almost 70 years, amounts to an unparalleled event in ornithology. That it should contain the full text by Sir Charles Fleming, leading New Zealand palaeontologist, geologist, and ornithologist, makes the book a benchmark in the history of New Zealand's birds.

After reading the book I thanked the fates which delayed the publication of the paintings for 69 years so that Sir Charles's wealth of authoritative knowledge became available to support them. Wonderful though the paintings are, even more important is the text itself.

It is indeed fortunate that Sir Charles's text should be set in 1982 and the modern era — a time when scientific knowledge has made such important and recent advances and when continental drift theory is at last respectable, with the magnetic message to be read in the rocks and with isotope dating, which has contributed so much to understanding of New Zealand and its birds. Such knowledge is relative to the millions of years of geological periods and epochs through which they have passed.

As Dr J. C. Yaldwyn, director of the National Museum of New Zealand, says in his preface: "We have designed the book as an interdisciplinary contribution to the history of ornithological science in New Zealand, avoiding overlap with the subject matter of other New Zealand bird-books, hand-books, and field guides currently available to the ornithological public."

In my view the book has succeeded in all these aims, but it has other im-

portance: it will delight and interest a wider public than the pure ornithologist. It will act as a tutor to the natural historian, or the interested, and most certainly internationally; at the same time it is an exciting and eminently readable book for anyone who loves New Zealand.

There are 89 full-colour plates and the large book has 408 pages of art-quality paper; it is tastefully bound in linen and imitation leather and blocked in gold on the spine.

George Edward Lodge lived from 1860 to 1954 and in his 94 years he apparently never visited New Zealand. He is considered by many to be the finest British bird painter of the twentieth century. His illustrations featured in many of the premier British bird books from 1910 to his death.

Among his methods of illustration was a classical combination of gouache (ground opaque colours in gum) and water colour. The paintings resulting from this method have a luminescence which exceeds that of oils or watercolours on their own, and this is the medium he used in the paintings for this book.

Fortunately, the New Zealand Government in 1911 placed £1,000 on the Estimates as a contribution to a bird book, to be written by James Drummond, a prominent New Zealand naturalist, and to be illustrated by George Edward Lodge.

By 1913 Lodge had produced some of the paintings and these continued during successive years. In all, Lodge supplied 90 plates, but one has been lost, and 89 of them appear in the book.

He had available collections of New Zealand bird skins in England from both the British Museum and the collection of Gregory M. Mathews, an Australian ornithologist who lived in England at the time. George Lodge was one of those painters who used much anatomical knowledge when painting from bird skins, and how well he succeeded, when his only guide was the skins of birds in collections 12 000 miles from the birds themselves, can be gauged from the wonderful results. Wisely he left out full indications of New Zealand vegetation. All the pictures are therefore without such a background and with the inherent luminosity of the paintings the birds stand out quite uncluttered.

The whole saga of the proposed bird book and its non-publication appears in the introduction. Successive authors took up the possibility of publication, including at one time two distinguished members of the Society, the late Mrs Perrine Moncrieff and the late Sir Robert Falla. But the project seemed always inhibited by dog in the manger attitudes and apparently unattainable costs for publishing, with the paintings remaining in Government departmental care. Finally the few who knew about the project lost impetus, and the paintings languished almost forgotten in the National Museum for the remainder of the 69 years.

However, I am content that all these circumstances attended the project so that the paintings and text could come together at this felicitous time. Probably the scope for such a book on New Zealand birds was never so important as it is today. The publishers and the National Museum are to be congratulated for this both historic and up-to-date publication, more important in this day than any similar work which has gone before.

The book is highly recommended to all, especially those who love New Zealand and its native birds.

— David G. Collingwood

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