

## Nomination of Dr Richard Dean for a Gill Memorial Medal

Richard Dean has served southern African ornithology with distinction for four decades.

His first scientific paper was published in 1968 (*Ostrich* 39: 264) and was entitled *Unusual nest of a Black Goshawk*. This was the start of a long and prolific publishing career, detailed in the accompanying list of publications.

From 1974 to 1978 he was based at Barberspan Ornithological Research Station, in the employ of the Transvaal Nature Conservation Division, and was subsequently in charge of the Tzaneen Nature Reserve (1978–1979) and the Nylsvley Nature Reserve (1979–1982).

From 1986, until he retired at the end of 2005, he was a research officer at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town. He registered for a master's degree in the Department of Botany at Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This university provided opportunities for people who had not done undergraduate degrees to undertake a master's degree. Admission standards were tough, and candidates admitted via this route had to demonstrate not only that they had mastered their subjects to the appropriate level, but also that they had an aptitude for research. He graduated *cum laude* in 1991 with an MSc *Ecological effects of mound-building by the harvester ant Messor capensis on Karoo plants*. He followed this up with a PhD at UCT researching the conservation of nomadic birds in the Karoo. He graduated in 1995 with thesis entitled *Where birds are rare or fill the air: the protection of the endemic and nomadic avifaunas of the Karoo*.

Richard Dean kept up the interest in Angola stimulated by his ornithological exploration work there in the 1970s. He compiled a database of Angolan bird records, which formed the basis of the first proper documentation of the avifauna of this country. *The birds of Angola* was published in 2000 by the British Ornithological Union.

In collaboration with Sue Milton, Richard Dean has devoted enormous effort to understanding the natural workings of the Karoo ecosystem and the human impacts on it. He is recognized as the world authority on this fascinating yet poorly studied biome. His interests in the Karoo are broad, and he leads our understanding of the interconnections between all the components of the Karoo ecosystem, plants, insects, birds and mammals. He understands the disturbance to this sensitive ecosystem caused by human impacts, such as agriculture, and the processes needed to restore these ecosystems to a more natural state. This knowledge and leadership has resulted in three books on the Karoo. Together with Sue Milton he edited *The Karoo: ecological patterns and processes*, published in 1999 by Cambridge University Press. He was the author of *Nomadic desert birds*, published by Springer Verlag in 2004 in their Adaptations of Desert

Organisms series. Together with Karen Esler and Sue Milton he authored a book which is an entirely practical guide to farmers, *Karoo veld: ecology and management*, published in 2006 by Briza.

He was editor of *Ostrich* from 2000 to 2006, the ornithological journal published by BirdLife South Africa. Together with Phil Hockey and Peter Ryan, he edited the seventh edition of *Roberts' Birds of southern Africa*, published in 2005.

Richard Dean is a highly regarded ecologist and ornithologist, has made a vast contribution to the study of birds in southern Africa, and is a worthy recipient of the Gill Memorial Medal.

Les Underhill  
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