

Godman–Salvin Medal

At the BOU's GM Crops & Birds meeting in February, former BOU President, John Croxall, was presented with the Union's Godman–Salvin Medal in recognition of his tremendous contribution to ornithology.

John began his career with a first-class honours degree in Zoology from Oxford in 1968; he then moved to the University of Auckland, New Zealand, to do his PhD (obtained 1971). After that, he returned to the UK, to Newcastle University, where he studied the problem of oiling in seabirds (1972–75). He joined the British Antarctic Survey in 1976, as Head of Bird and Mammal Research, and has remained there ever since, rising in 1992 to Deputy Chief Scientific Officer (Special Merit), Grade 5, a post equivalent to a university Chair.

John is known primarily for his work on the seabirds and sea mammals of Antarctica. He has examined their role as predators, and their significance in the nutrient flux of the southern oceans. Through detailed study of the diets, food consumption and energy budgets of different species, he developed the first realistic models of the important krill-based predator–prey interactions of the southern oceans. This led to a global review of the role of seabirds in marine ecosystems, which quickly became a standard text. These studies have also been important in planning the development of sustainable programmes for southern fisheries.

Together with his colleagues, he has been concerned too with population studies of some long-lived animals, notably albatrosses among birds and fur and elephant seals among mammals. He has made exemplary studies of population demography and of the role of age, experience and social status on the breeding performance of individuals. His long-term studies of seabirds, notably of albatrosses, have provided some of the best life-history data available for any seabird species. He has thus contributed not only to Antarctic ecology, but more widely to current areas of debate on vertebrate ecology and evolution.

However, his contribution in the field has extended well beyond what might be regarded as his job. He has ensured

that research findings have been applied to the sustainable use and conservation of Antarctic ecosystems. He has, for example, been a leading member of the UK delegation to the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. He has been centrally involved in the UK's attempts to develop a coherent strategy for the management and conservation of these resources, and is a principal architect of the region's fisheries management

policy. In addition, he has served on other international committees concerned with the management of marine resources. One particular ornithological problem, potentially disastrous for the procellariiforms, is that of long-lining, a fishery technique that has caused major reductions in the populations of many species. John has played a major part in the international effort to quantify the problem and to devise solutions, and here his knowledge of seabird life-histories has played an important role.

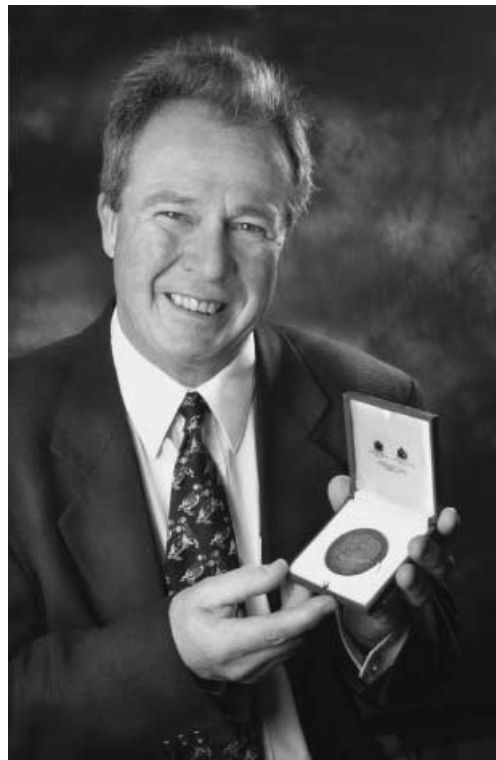
John has also made an important contribution to conservation in Britain, undertaken entirely in a voluntary capacity. This contribution stems mainly from his work, over the past 14 years, on the Council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. He was involved first as a Council Member, then as Chairman of the Conservation Committee, and finally as a most excellent and much respected Chairman of Council. His wisdom and balanced thinking, tact and diplomacy contributed greatly to the development of the Society's

conservation strategy, and in its all-important relationships with its members, with other conservation organizations and with relevant sectors of Government.

Over this whole period, moreover, he has also played an active role in other voluntary organizations, including BirdLife International and Falklands Conservation as well as many Antarctic committees, more or less connected with his work. His frequent trips 'down south' for fieldwork or meetings have enabled him, by judicious juggling of journeys, to see an impressive number of the world's birds.

He has also played an important role in the British Ornithologists' Union, serving on Council twice, as Vice

John Patrick Croxall



President 1987–91 and President 1994–99; while President, he oversaw considerable change in the management of the Union, including the appointment of our first full-time administrator.

The quality of his personal research was recognized in 1984 by the award of the Scientific Medal of the Zoological Society, in 1992 he received the Polar Medal, in

1995 the President's Medal of the British Ecological Society, and in 1997 the Robert Cushman Murphy Medal of the International Colonial Waterbird Society. He has also received numerous invitations to give plenary and other special lectures. John was appointed to an Honorary Professorship at the University of Birmingham in 1998.