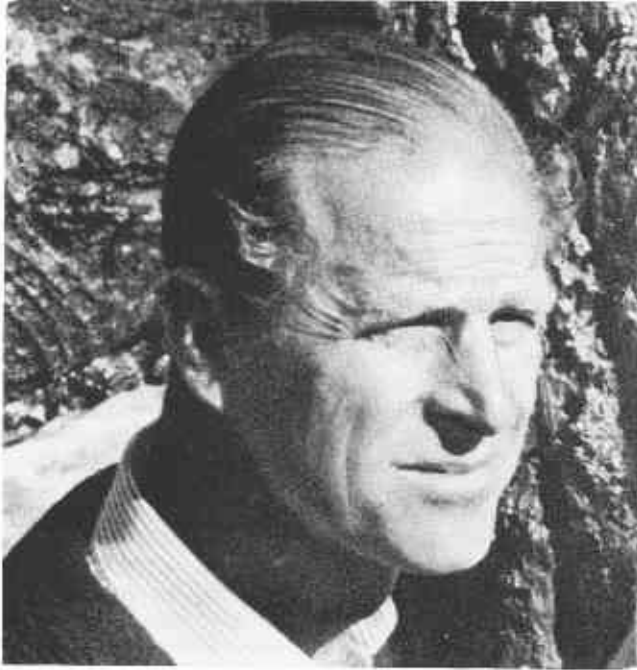


THE PRINCE AND THE NOISY SCRUB BIRD

Although the Noisy Scrub Bird is well known to most Western Australians and to keen aviculturists overseas, perhaps many people are not aware of the personal role that H.R.H. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh played in ensuring the survival of this rare species.

We were very pleased therefore, to receive the text of a speech made by Mr. Alfred George, Chairman of the City of Westminster Chamber of Commerce, when introducing Prince Philip as the guest speaker at London's Dorchester Hotel on 9th April, 1973, before an audience of 800.



"Your Royal Highness, my Lord Mayor, Mr. Minister, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

"We in the Westminster Chamber of Commerce are indeed honoured that you should come to talk to us on one aspect of conservation. Some of us here today may not realise how deeply and how long you have been personally and actively involved in the many conservation problems that face mankind. When in 1961 the World Wildlife Fund was formed, you took an active part in its formation and have been President of the British National Appeal ever since. Not, Sir, as a figurehead, but as an extremely active and effective supporter both of the British Appeal, which raised over one half million pounds last year, and of the World Wildlife Fund International Fund, of which you are a Trustee.

"During National Nature Week in May 1963 when you attended the Wildlife Exhibition you initiated the five year movement called 'The Countryside in 1970'. Three conferences were held in 1965, 1967 and 1970. You were President of all three. Your active participation helped to get the message of the conference across to the Press and, probably more than any other single factor, changed the public attitude towards the environment.

"We all know you have written books and produced wildlife films. The list is endless; but I want to finish with the story that illustrates your deep personal identification with the cause of conservation. I think the title of my story should be 'The Prince and the Noisy Scrub Bird'. Near Albany, in Western Australia there was re-discovered in 1961 a little thrush-sized bird with one of the loudest voices in Australia—it has the delightful name of the Noisy Scrub Bird. For the previous 70 years it had been recorded as extinct. Ornithologists in Australia and indeed the world over, and especially Doctor Serventy, Australia's leading ornithologist, were pleased and excited; but they were alarmed because the area of the discovery was already scheduled as the site of a new town to be called Casuarina.

"In 1962 Prince Philip visiting Perth for the Empire/Commonwealth Games heard about this case. He personally expressed to Mr. W. S. Bovell, the Minister for Lands, the hope that the bird would be protected. For the next three years he publicly maintained this interest even to the extent of, through Rear Admiral Bonham-Carter, a member of his staff, rebutting in the Perth *Daily News* articles in favour of building the town and risking the ultimate destruction of the species. On 22nd April, 1966, the Western Australian Government magnanimously, and in spite of the need for industrial development, announced that the project for the new town had been abandoned and the area was declared a nature reserve. The species was saved for all time and in asking our guest to address us, I finish with the sentence from a report made for me by Dr. Serventy, he says and I quote: . . . had it not been for the action of the Prince by personal representation made in November 1962 and later correspondence, the Government would certainly have gone on with the scheme.

"So you have to address you today, a man who has personally saved a species from extinction."



This speech indicates the vital role played by Prince Philip in instigating the conservation of the Noisy Scrub Bird. But the story did not end with the establishment of the Two Peoples Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. As conservationists in W.A. will be aware, the Sanctuary now has a full time ranger, and is the subject of a planned management programme (see S.W.A.N.S. Vol. 2, No. 3). Continuing research is being carried out on the ecology of the Noisy Scrub Bird and methods of management to ensure its persistence.