

OBITUARY

DAVID LAMBERT LACK, FRS, died at Oxford, England, on 12 March, 1973. He had joined the A.O.U. in 1939 and was made an Honorary Fellow in 1946. Dr. Lack was born in 1910. His father was an ardent ornithologist so he had early encouragement for his interest in birds. After taking his degree at Magdalene College, Cambridge, he taught biology at Dartington Hall. During this period he was able to study the European Robin and to make an expedition to the Galápagos. The results were two books of wide and enduring value, "The life of the Robin" (1943) and "Darwin's finches" (1947). Lack's interest in island avifaunas led, following a sabbatical year in Jamaica, to a book manuscript on the evolution of the West Indian avifauna.

Lack's service with the Army Operational Research Group in World War II resulted in expert knowledge of radar tracking, which he later used in quantitative study of bird migration from the Continent to England. This was an extension of the observations of "visible migration" to and through England and in the passes of the Pyrenees that he had organized.

At the end of the war he became Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, a position he held to the end of his life. Here he developed his views on avian reproductive rates and natural selection for family size. He stimulated and directed broad, long-term studies on the biology of individual species. Aside from numerous articles we may note two books: "The natural regulation of animal numbers" (1954) and "Population studies of birds" (1966).

Lack had great ability to put scientific material into a form useful to the scientist and at the same time intelligible to the layman. His book on the European Robin has been mentioned. Another example is "Swifts in a tower" (1956). It is, of course, a coincidence that, in an article in *Ibis* (1973) jointly with his son, Andrew, he should have recorded seeing this same species in Grenada, West Indies.

In 1951 Lack was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, and was President of the International Ornithological Congress at Oxford in 1966, but otherwise he did not engage widely in public affairs. Ernst Mayr comments (in litt.) that "through his annual student conferences, Lack had a tremendously constructive impact on the amateur likewise through his migration watching."

Two sentences from the obituary in the *London Times* aptly characterize him: Lack "greatly influenced the course of ornithological studies and by his friendly and enthusiastic nature inspired many students to take up the study of birds... He was essentially an individualist, with only a few really intimate friends."—CHARLES H. BLAKE.

NOTES AND NEWS

Correction: In *Auk* 90: 870-876, the date of H. L. Stoddard's death should read 1970, not 1968.—ED.

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