

# THE LAST WORD - A Life Remembered

**GEOFF MOON, O.B.E., M.R.C.V.S., M.A.C.V.Sc., Hon F.P.S.N.Z., A.R.P.S.  
1915 - 2009**

*On Friday 13 March in Auckland, Geoff Moon passed away, aged 93, after a long and amazing life. Geoff was born in China in 1915 where his English parents were living while his father worked in a managerial position for Shell Oil. The family moved back to England but Geoff moved in 1947 to Warkworth, New Zealand, where he worked as a veterinarian.*

*Geoff was awarded the OBE in 1994 for his services to the veterinary profession and photography. He was an Honorary Fellow and Patron of the Photographic Society of New Zealand, and Associate of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain. He was a Waitakere Arts Laureate, and Patron for Wingspan Birds of Prey Trust.*

*Geoff was a world-renowned wildlife photographer specialising in ornithology. He published more than thirty books about New Zealand birds, wildlife and their natural habitats and environment. He was widely recognised within this country and internationally, and he will be remembered for his contribution to research and documentation of New Zealand's birdlife.*

**- NZPA New Zealand Herald, March 2009.**

Geoff Moon had so many attributes, lots of labels, and he was good at all of them. His veterinary skills, photography and writing, his ornithology, and study of natural history. He was a real gentleman; a pioneer, an author, and an educator. Geoff had many labels, yet of them all he would tell us he wanted to be known as a 'naturalist'.

His passion for New Zealand flora and fauna was undeniable. Geoff was a true mentor who inspired and impressed many. A prolific author, it seems all bird enthusiasts have a Geoff Moon book in their library. But he was particularly passionate about raptors, and with his interest, experience and enthusiastic support of Wingspan he epitomised the role of Patron.

Geoff would talk about his childhood days when he first built a hide to watch nesting sparrow hawks. In New Zealand he built hides to watch falcons and hawks. But of all the birds he studied and photographed, ruru morepork remained his favourite.

Nesting biology of moreporks was a personal interest and he was a great help when Wingspan first started to breed them. Geoff, with his wife Lynette, would visit the Centre and offer advice. Geoff would suggest a longer box rather

than a deep box. He'd tell us the diameter of the entrance that might work best, and to fit a solid branch on the outside ready for young owlets to perch and wait for food passes. He would emphasise keeping detailed notes because very little was known about the intimate details of moreporks nesting behaviour.

It was a real highlight to first introduce him to 'Whisper', a morepork chick at the Centre. Geoff melted at the small ball of fluff, and the conversation would bounce between discussions on growth and development, but would also extend to the 'language'. Not only did Geoff have a good eye but he a good ear as well. He understood bird vocals - would describe their calls, purrs and growls, and would effortlessly imitate them.

Geoff didn't just look 'at' the birds; he looked 'with' them. That was his point of difference. His images backed up his observations, giving an intimate insight into the private life of birds. His photography and publishing has allowed us all an opportunity to share and celebrate those moments and journeys with Geoff.

A lifetime spent caring for and studying wildlife - a passing of an era. He will be missed.

