

OBITUARY

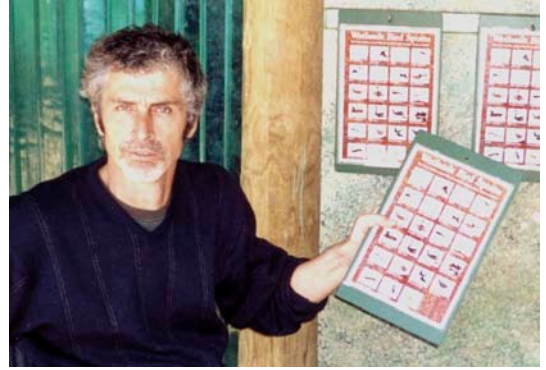
Paul Andrew 1953–2020

NIGEL J. COLLAR

Paul Andrew lived a life of two halves: first, to the age of 32, as an able-bodied, free-spirited, fast-living, deeply dedicated birdwatcher; and thereafter, until his untimely death on 26 January 2020 at 66, as a paraplegic, free-spirited, fast-living, deeply dedicated conservationist. He was one of a distinct cohort of birders schooled in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Bristol, UK, who went on to great things, but he was unique amongst his peers for his swashbuckling sense of adventure, defiant thirst for experience and uncompromising intellectual independence. With his filmstar good looks and dry, wry good humour, he made friends and gathered admirers wherever he went.

Like so many birding-minded students he chose the University of East Anglia for his higher education (in ecology), less for its quality of teaching than its proximity to the prime birding areas in Britain; but he deferred starting for a year in order to discover the wildlife of Asia (his father recalls receiving a telegram reading ‘Please contact Foreign Office regarding son Paul destitute in Kuala Lumpur’). After his first year of study he also deferred his second by a year, this time to bird his way around South America. (He got lost in the Amazonian forest of Colombia for three days with no food and little sleep, and only reached safety by finding and following some cowpats back to a village. ‘Good birding, though’, he declared with his impish twinkle, to round off the anecdote.) With characteristic *chutzpah* he tried for yet another deferral before his third year, with Africa in his sights, but this time he was refused. He went there anyway after he graduated, living (and somehow communicating) with the Dinka and Nuer in Sudan and the people around Lake Chad, only to return with blackwater fever, which nearly killed him.

He trained as a commercial diver, which took him to the Dominican Republic for 18 months, to the Pacific, where in his spare time he would go birding around atolls, swimming between coral islets with one arm while holding his binoculars above the water with the other, and finally in the early 1980s to Indonesia, where he earned good money doing such jobs as attaching explosives to decommissioned oilrigs in water so murky the divers had to be roped together. This work bought him plenty of time to go birding in Java, Sumatra and other islands, and he soon befriended Derek Holmes (*OBC Bull.* 33: 7–8), who encouraged him



SUZY BARLOW

Paul Andrew in Perth Zoo, 2001, wielding a bird list for visitors to the free-flight aviary, an educational guide he wanted to see adopted in his own institution.

to collate his records and publish them—on Gunung Gede, Java (*Kukila* 2: 10–28), Timor (*Kukila* 2: 92–95), and in due course Sulawesi (*Kukila* 5: 4–26) and Way Kambas, Sumatra (*Kukila* 8: 57–85), plus two birds whose study he pioneered, Javan Scops-owl *Otus angelinae* (*Kukila* 3: 79–81) and Sunda Coucal *Centropus nigrorufus* (*Kukila* 5: 56–64), keeping one of the latter, acquired in a market, as a much-loved pet.

But one rainy night in Java in 1986 his car went off the road, he was thrown out and his back was irreparably broken. Two passing students—their identities never discovered—saw the wreck, found him, somehow put him in a taxi, got him to a hospital in Jakarta and watched over him for 12 hours while his family was alerted. His brother Nick organised his flight back to the UK for treatment.

When I discovered that Paul was recovering at his parents' home a few miles outside Cambridge, I made contact not just from friendship but also to propose a book venture. There had never been a comprehensive red list of all the birds of the world, and I had been charged with making one. Asia was a big knowledge gap, and Paul, with his pioneering experience of Indonesia, was a perfect fit as a co-author. For week after week in 1987 I visited him with photocopies of papers and passages in books on Indonesian, other Asian and Pacific birds, freeing me up to focus on Africa, the Americas and Eurasia. The result was *Birds to watch*, which appeared in May 1988 and serves as the earliest and hence baseline source for the tracking of trends on the global Red List Index.

It also led to probably the easiest avian taxonomic revision in history, when Paul pointed out what he but nobody in the museum world had noticed, that the Sumatran Cochoa *Cochoa beccarii*, whose spectacular distinctiveness had only once been illustrated, had been languishing since at least 1964 as a subspecies of Javan Cochoa *C. azurea*. We split it in a popular piece about cochoas in the unrefereed pages of the BirdLife magazine *World Birdwatch* (9,1: 6–7), and no one ever saw the need to challenge us to publish the evidence in a more appropriate scientific outlet.

A challenge instead to *Birds to watch* itself was more surprising. That same year John MacKinnon published his *Field guide to the birds of Java and Bali*, containing brief, often ominous status reviews of each species. Jared Diamond compared the two books in *Natural History* (9/91: 30–37), and berated the ‘top down’/remotely generated *Birds to watch* for omitting many species that the ‘bottom up’/locally knowledgeable MacKinnon guide said were rare. What Diamond could not have known was that MacKinnon’s text had languished for many years before being published, and in that time Paul had been active all over Java, discovering that many of John’s ‘rare’ species were relatively secure. We were more than disgruntled at this hurtful public slight from so distinguished a biologist, and constructed a comprehensive *riposte*; but to our redoubled vexation the magazine found no space for it.

After a year of rehabilitation to regain the independence so important to him, Paul moved to Sydney, Australia. There, his interest undimmed in the avifauna of the country where he nearly died, he wrote *The birds of Indonesia: a checklist (Peters’ sequence)*, published by the Indonesian Ornithological Society in 1992. This may have stimulated his interest in systematics and nomenclature, since in 1993 he was engaged by CSIRO to work out of Taronga Zoo on a digital dictionary called *Nomina*, an extraordinary synthesis of the scientific and common names of all bird species listed in the preceding half-century’s 14 most widely used global and regional taxonomies. The CD-ROM, co-authored with Ian McAllan, came out in 1997, but it undeservedly had little uptake and was rapidly overwhelmed by the blizzard of taxonomic changes that was already sweeping through avian systematics with the arrival of molecular techniques.

But being based in Taronga quickly led to his employment there, as curator of birds and reptiles (‘The Curator’, as he enjoyed being called), a position he held until 2016 and which led him to oversee a series of major species recovery programmes. He was well read in philosophy and deeply serious about his work, thinking issues through until he felt sure of himself; but his inveterate sense of humour, which

was rooted in real modesty, would not allow him to talk himself up. ‘I turned big Five-O last 2 July (card no longer awaited) with much introspection’, he wrote to me in August 2003. ‘I guess at your age you’re used to this kind of review but for me it was novel. Luckily sex drugs and rock & roll still seem the best way forward. And with 6 months long-service leave available I’m looking to indulge.’ What he actually did with his leave was a masters at the University of Melbourne, analysing the ethical aspects of animal keeping in zoos. Soon enough his trenchant, articulate writings on the topic produced a quiet revolution in the way all Australian zoos conceptualise the care of their stock (e.g. *Internatn. Zoo Yrbk* 52: 258–266). His essay ‘A taxonomy of zoo ethics: welfare and continued life’ (*Proc. ANZCART Conference, Queenstown, New Zealand, July 2014: 26–30*) is a masterclass in rigorous, compassionate thought; but he also took delight simply in being one of 174 co-authors of a study showing the positive impact of conservation on the world’s vertebrate species (*Science* 330: 1503–1509).

He married Madelon Willemsen in 2014, the year in which his contributions to Indonesian ornithology were recognised in the name *Cacatua sulphurea paulandrewi*, a new subspecies of Yellow-crested Cockatoo from the Tukangbesi Islands south of Sulawesi. When Madelon became head of TRAFFIC Vietnam in 2015 he spent 28 months living in Hanoi, but signed up as part-time Science and Policy Manager at Aussie Ark, a new organisation dedicated to the return of threatened Australian species to strictly managed and fenced areas where, as he fervently wished, they could live as true ecological components of the habitat.

When Madelon was appointed CEO of BIAZA (British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums) in September 2019, he moved with her to the UK, planning to do a D.Phil. in ethics at Oxford and to spend time with family and friends after living overseas for more than 30 years. But within days he was under siege from *Staphylococcus aureus*, a notorious enemy of the wheelchair-user. The love and encouragement he received from his multitude of friends and supporters while he was fighting what he called his ‘war of attrition’ with it were matched only by the grief and lamentation when, after four months, he lost.

A friend told his brother Nick that Paul ‘should be a poster person for what is achievable with disabilities’; but in truth, disabled or not, he was a poster person for the sheer love of life—all life—for everyone who had the great good fortune to know him.

Madelon provided information for this notice, which also draws on the recollections of Paul’s father and brother.