

## In Memoriam: Leslie H. Brown 1917-1980

Of Scottish descent, Leslie was born in India and spent most of his life in Africa, initially in Nigeria and later Kenya where he lived the remainder of his life. He graduated from St Andrews University with a degree in zoology and studied tropical agriculture at Cambridge and Trinidad. He received a PhD from St Andrews in 1973. He joined the Colonial Agricultural Service in 1940 and retired in 1963 as Chief Agriculturist for Kenya. Though the study of raptors was his passion, Leslie studied other birds including flamingos and pelicans and wrote widely on natural history topics. Though many raptor researchers would consider one seminal book on birds of prey a lifetime accomplishment, astonishingly Leslie produced more than a dozen books and over 30 scientific papers, many of which were published in *Ibis* and the *Journal of the East African Natural History Society*. Some of his well known books include the co-written (with Dean Amadon) two-volume *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World* (1968), *African Birds of Prey* (1970), *Eagles of the World* (1976), *Birds of Prey of the World* (1980), *The African Fish Eagle* (1980), *Birds of Africa* (1982) and *British Birds of Prey* (1989). His love of large eagles is apparent from his reference to them as 'large and spectacular' and his long-term studies, in particular on African Fish eagles and Crowned eagles, remain benchmarks for these species, the longevity of which will likely never be matched. He was President of the East African Natural History Society and a member of the East African Wild Life Society and the British Ornithologists' Union among others. Though his achievements were many, he was no angel. A former protégé describes him as intolerable and rude, yet also kind. Nonetheless, compared to today's modern biologist, the sheer amount of time Leslie spent in the field observing and studying birds of prey is enviable, if not daunting, and that he wrote so prolifically based on his own observations and not those of others is nowadays unfathomable. Add to this that he was a masterful writer, clever, courageous and in his own words 'not a glad sufferer of fools, pompous landowners, constipated functionaries, imperceptive editors or slow publishers' and you get a sense of the indefatigable spirit of the quintessential Leslie Brown.



Obituary by Darcy Ogada, 2011. Photo by Peter Steyn.