

Bird expert honoured by Scottish Seabird Centre



World's gannet expert honoured with special role at Scottish Seabird Centre

The five star Scottish Seabird Centre's long-standing trustee and supporter, Dr Bryan Nelson MBE, has retired from the charity's Board of Trustees. With his reputation as the world's leading expert on gannets and his long-term commitment to the Seabird Centre, the trustees have decided to recognise Bryan's support with the honorary role of Special Ornithological Advisor for the award-winning visitor attraction and charity.

Bryan Nelson's reputation is well-deserved: following a degree in zoology at St Andrews, between 1960 and 1963 Bryan lived on the Bass Rock in a wooden hut working on the behaviour and ecology of the Atlantic gannet. At the end of 1963 he headed to two uninhabited Galapagos Islands to study red-footed, masked and blue-footed boobies (close relatives of gannets), followed by a spell on the Peruvian guano islands to look at the Peruvian booby. All this research was an extension of his D Phil from Oxford University.

Bryan then went on to Christmas Island to study the jungle tree-top nesting Abbott's booby, which breeds nowhere else in the world, and also the brown booby, followed by the Australasian gannets at Cape Kidnappers, New Zealand. He then produced a 1,000-page monograph on the world's gannets and boobies. Other books include a volume on the Pelecaniformes and one on the biology and ecology of seabirds. From 1968 to 1982 he was based in the Zoology Department of Aberdeen University.

Bryan has been involved with the Seabird Centre from before its inception and has enjoyed many highlights during his years of support; the visit of HRH Prince Charles in 2000 for the opening ceremony followed by a circumnavigation of the Bass; the visit of HM the Queen in 2009 to present the Centre with the Queen's Award for Enterprise and BBC filming with naturalist and broadcaster, Tony Soper.

His book, *The Atlantic Gannet*, is still a firm favourite in the Seabird Centre gift shop, with signed copies remaining a great seller all-year-round. His little book on 'The Bass and its Seabirds' is also a firm favourite with both locals and visitors.

Bryan Nelson said:- "I feel hugely privileged to have been 'the gannet man' on the Board of the Scottish Seabird Centre. It took me thousands of pages to immortalise gannets and boobies so how can I condense twenty years' worth of Seabird Centre drama into a few words? Impossible! I would just like to say a huge well done to the team at the Centre, who have made the visitor attraction and charity such a success, and I look forward to the exciting developments to come over the years ahead.

"One of the highlights of my time as a trustee has been watching the stupendous growth of the Bass Rock's gannet colony; it is now the world's largest single rock gannetry. When I started in 1960 the colony was almost entirely confined to the cliffs and now the whole Rock is plastered with gannets. It is a truly wonderful place and the fascinating behaviour of the nesting gannets can be watched on the Centre's live interactive cameras."

Tom Brock OBE, Chief Executive of the Scottish Seabird Centre, adds:- "As a zoology student at Aberdeen University over 30 years ago, I was truly inspired by Bryan's amazing lectures on gannets and animal behaviour. Bryan's support of the Centre has been invaluable and while we are sad that he will no

longer be a trustee of the charity, we are delighted that he has accepted the honorary role of Special Ornithological Advisor. His knowledge and dedication are an inspiration to us all and we look forward to calling upon him for advice as we develop our plans to build on the success of the Centre.”

For more information on the Scottish Seabird Centre visit www.seabird.org

.