

## GEORGE ARTHUR KEARTLAND (1848-1926)

### Naturalist and ornithologist

George Arthur Kearthland was born on 11 June 1848 in Northamptonshire, England and arrived in Melbourne with his family in 1850. He attended the George Street Public School in Fitzroy, trained as a photographer, completed an apprenticeship to a printer and became a compositor, working at the *Age* newspaper for over 50 years. This steady employment allowed him to pursue his love of nature in his spare time.

Despite being lame from a childhood accident, Kearthland served as the ornithologist and collector on the Horn Scientific Expedition from Oodnadatta to the MacDonnell Ranges in 1894 and again on the ill-fated Calvert Expedition to north-west Australia from 1896 to 1897. It was on these expeditions that he began to build an outstanding bird collection that was regarded as one of the best in the country. It is now housed jointly in the South Australian Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh.

Kearthland's contribution to the scientific knowledge and understanding of Australian ornithology resulted in two bird species being named after him: the Kearthland (Grey-headed) Honeyeater and the Orange Chat, generic name *Kearthlandia*. The Kearthland Hills in Western Australia are also named after him.



*The Grey-headed Honeyeater named after Kearthland.*

In 1900, Kearthland co-founded the (Royal) Australasian Ornithologists' Union. He also served as President of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria between 1907 and 1909. Kearthland was a skilled taxidermist, professional photographer and writer. A number of his articles were published in nature magazines. He is still quoted in books on Australian birds to this day.

On 11 June 1873, Kearthland married Margaret Jane Nicol and settled in Collingwood before moving to Cramer Street, Preston in 1914. He died of cancer on 21 May 1926 aged 76 and is buried at Coburg Cemetery with his wife Margaret and children Bertha, Ada and George.



*Kearthland (far right) poses during the Calvert Scientific Exploring Expedition 1896-97.*

Source: State Library of South Australia

#### Find out more

Simpson, K. *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, (var)  
Spencer W.B. (ed), *Report on the Work of the Horn Scientific Expedition to Central Australia* (1896)  
Whittell, H.M. *The Literature of Australian Birds* (1954)



#### DR JAN PENNEY BA, DIP ED, PHD

Jan is a professional historian who has worked across the fields of heritage, education and tourism. She has taught at several universities, including Monash University where she delivered the master of public history course. She is also a former Chair of the Heritage Council of Victoria. Jan was appointed to The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust in 2010.



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