

OBITUARY
RALPH SIMON PALMER 1914-2003

Ralph Palmer was one of the inadequately-appreciated pioneers of marine ornithology. Born and brought up in Maine, USA (for which he wrote a local avifauna, *Maine Birds*), he obtained high honours in zoology at the University of Maine in 1937, and his Ph D thesis for Cornell University on a developing theme, A behaviour study of the Common Tern, was published in the prestigious *Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History* (42 (1), 1941). He taught at Vassar College for a while, and was then New York State Zoologist for 27 years. He produced a *Mammal Guide: Mammals of North America north of Mexico*, and then started a massive *Handbook of North American Birds*. The first volume *Loons through flamingos* (1962) included valuable reviews of the petrels and pelecaniformes with much new data, and also introduced the documentation with concise references now standard in such works, but he did not receive the support he deserved and failed to get beyond the raptors. Among many other things he was also second in command of a landing craft in the third wave arriving in Normandy on D-day. He was a tubby, modest, knowledgeable, humorous, highly-respected character with many abilities, interests, and friendships who travelled widely before retiring to his beloved Maine. He leaves a wife, two sons and a daughter.

W.R.P. Bourne, Scotland