

The Names You Know, the People You Don't: **James Douglas Ogilby**

As mentioned, at the beginning of the year I had mapped out the articles I was going to write for both *The Year of The Rainbowfish* and *The Names You Know, The People You Don't*. My mistake was in not sharing that information with our esteemed editor, Klaus Steinhaus, because he informed me that he had prepared an article on *The Names You Know, The People You Don't* for the January 2012 edition of **Tank Talk**, and the person that article was on was the same person I had originally intended to write about for the December 2011 edition. Since Klaus had finished his article first, it is only fair that I not steal his thunder by writing on that person a second time. But that threw all my planning out the window. I now needed a different person to write an article about.



When I laid out my plans for this series of articles, I had put some criteria on my selection of the people I would write about. The name of the person being honoured needed to be relatively common, preferably with freshwater fish that we were all familiar with. But with the interruption of my well laid plans, I started casting around to find another person to write about.

After a couple hours of surfing, I found this person to write about, and while we may not be overly familiar with the person being honoured, the story behind the name is extremely interesting.

In Ireland...

On February 16th, 1853 in Belfast, Ireland William Ogilby and his wife Adelaide (née Douglas) celebrated the arrival of their second son whom they named James Douglas Ogilby.

Now the Ogilby's were an extremely well respected family in Ireland and indeed the entire United Kingdom. William was by trade a barrister, but by inclination he was a naturalist. In fact, the best demonstration of the lofty company he kept may be to share an excerpt from the February 11th, 1842 minutes of the *British Association for the Advancement of Science*. It reads;

Resolved – That (with a view of securing early attention to the following important subject) a Committee consisting of Mr. C. Darwin, Prof. Henslow, Rev. L. Jenyns, Mr. W. Ogilby, Mr. J. Phillips, Dr. Richardson, Mr. H.E. Strickland (reported), Mr. J.O. Westwood, be appointed to consider of the rules by which the Nomenclature of Zoology may be established on a uniform and permanent basis.

While this resolution is important in and of itself for being one of the first attempts to standardize zoological nomenclature, I would direct your attention instead to the names of the people participating to the proposed committee.

- “Mr. C. Darwin” was of course Charles Darwin.
- “Prof. Henslow” was Professor John Stevens Henslow, a clergyman, professor at Cambridge University, noted botanist, geologist, and the mentor of Charles Darwin responsible for his being onboard the HMS Beagle.
- “Rev. L. Jenyns” was a reverend and a naturalist. He also recommended that Charles Darwin be accepted into the crew of the HMS Beagle.
- “Mr. J. Phillips” was John Phillips, a noted geologist, professor at Oxford University and Fellow of the Royal Society.
- “Dr. Richardson” was Sir John Richardson, a naturalist, arctic explorer and author on arctic fish.
- “Mr. H.E. Strickland” is Hugh Edwin Strickland, a noted geologist, ornithologist, naturalist, and the author of “Strickland’s Code”, a set of 22 rules intended to provide guidance in the formulation of zoological names.
- “Mr. J.O Westwood” was John Obadiah Westwood, an entomologist (serving as the president of the Entomological Society of London at one time) and archaeologist.

Amongst this august company we find William Ogilby. He was successful in his chosen career as a barrister and successful in his chosen hobby of being a naturalist. At the time of James Douglas' birth, the family was living in Belfast, Ireland. Soon thereafter they moved to a location between Dunnamanagh and Ballyneaner, south of the town of Londonderry, in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. There William undertook the construction of a family castle.

The family castle, today referred to as "Ogilby's Castle", was also known at the time as Atnacree Castle, Altinaghree Castle or Liscloon House. It was built sometime before 1860, and constructed entirely out of cut Irish stone from nearby Dungiven. It was a large home, furnished in a lavish style that was reported to be unequalled in the local area, and over the years played host to various dignitaries from across the United Kingdom. William built it for his family, and it was intended to have been the family home for James Douglas' future family as well. (The ruins of the castle still stand, having been abandoned sometime before the turn of the century, although there is no record of why.)

Following in his father's footsteps, James Douglas (now preferring to be called Douglas) was provided with an excellent education, first studying at Winchester College (one of the oldest public schools in England, having existed for over 600 years) from 1866 to 1869 (ages 13 – 16), and then at Trinity College (Ireland's oldest university, having been founded in 1592) from 1871 to 1872 (ages 18 – 19). He was noted as excelling in athletics and as being a neat and precise student.

After he completed his studies, James Douglas sought and obtained a position with the British Museum in London. Sharing his knowledge of Ireland, he contributed notes on Irish fishes and birds that were published in the *Zoologist* (a respected publication for naturalists in the United Kingdom) over the period of 1874 to 1876.

But the most important aspect of his time spent in London is that while there he met and fell in love with Mary Jane Jamieson, a seamstress working in a local factory. He introduced her to his family and announced their intention to wed. James Douglas' mother Adelaide forbade the marriage, believing Mary Jane to be beneath her son's station in life, and sent James Douglas to live in Texas.

Not much is known about his time in America, but it is known that he was not happy. He continued in his interest in nature (eventually having a paper, *Catalogue of the Birds obtained in Navarro County, Texas* published in the *Scientific Transactions of the Royal Dublin Society* in 1883), but his love for Mary Jane was still strong. He returned to Ireland from America in 1884 and on November 24th of that year, at age 31 married the 20 year old Mary Jane at the parish church in Donaghane, County Tyrone, Ireland.

James Douglas knew that he and his bride were unaccepted by his family and shortly after their marriage in Ireland, they emigrated to Australia, arriving sometime before the end of 1884.

He was quickly hired by the Australian Museum in Sydney as a "Scientific Assistant (Zoology)" and began work on February 14th, 1885 for an annual salary of £250. By all accounts he was an enthusiastic and energetic worker, contributing reports, notes and papers primarily on fishes, but also on reptiles and mammals. In fact, in the first two years with the Australian Museum, he published 21 papers.

In 1887, at the age of 34, he was elected as a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London.

Just over two years later in 1890, and after many warning about being drunk while at work, James Douglas was dismissed from his position at the Australian Museum due to an "extreme and indiscriminating affinity for alcohol".

The following years were not kind to James Douglas. While he was able to professionally continue to publish papers, he was only able to obtain work on a contract basis. Then, in 1894, Mary Jane Ogilby died at the age of 29. The marriage had produced no children, and James Douglas would remain a bachelor for the rest of his life.

He continued to publish, but let his membership in the Linnean Society of London lapse in 1886.

In 1901 he began to work for the Queensland Museum on a contract basis and moved to Brisbane permanently in 1903 where he became the ichthyologist for the museum.



Queensland seemed to agree with James Douglas. He joined the Royal Society of Queensland, and became the honorary Museum Curator for the Amateur Fisherman's Association of Queensland.

James Douglas continued to study and publish on various aspects of ichthyology until his death at the Diamantina Hospital in Brisbane on August 11th, 1925 at the age of 72. He was interred in the Church of England section of Toowong Cemetery, also in Brisbane.

He left behind a lasting legacy. His published works included 181 papers, and he described (in some instances by himself and in others through collaborative efforts) 154 new species of fish.

Some of his more notable published works include;

- *Description of a new Australian tortoise* (1890)
- *Catalogue of Australasian Mammals* (1892)
- *Edible Fishes and Crustaceans of New South Wales* (1893)
- *The Commercial fishes and fisheries of Queensland: An Essay* (1915)

The Amateur Fishermen's Association of Queensland erected a cottage for use by their members on Bribie Island, an Australian National Park just off the coast of Brisbane, and named it the J. Douglas Ogilby Cottage in his memory and honor.

In addition, many fish (mostly marine species) and some other creatures were named in his honor. They include;

The Fish

- *Callionymus ogilbyi* (Rayfinned fish [Marine])
- *Calliurichthys ogilbyi* (Ogilby's stinkfish [Marine])
- *Cynoglossus ogilbyi* (Tongue sole [Marine])
- *Cypsilurus ogilbyi* (Ogilby's flyingfish [Marine])
- *Hydrolagus ogilbyi* (Ogilby's ghost shark [Marine])
- *Hoplichthys ogilbyi* (Ogilby's ghost flathead [Marine])
- (Ogilby's rainbowfish)
- *Nebrodes concolor ogilbyi* (Tawny nurse shark [Marine])
- *Orectolobus ogilbyi* (Ogilby's carpet shark [Marine])
- *Pranesus ogilbyi* (Common hardyhead)



Melanotaenia ogilbyi

The "Others"

- *Cephalophus ogilbyi* (Ogilby's duiker [Antelope])
- *Chimaericola ogilbyi* (Flatworm)
- *Rhectanytarsus ogilbyi* (Ogilby's Midge [Insect])

I first came across the name "ogilbyi" when researching Rainbowfish. To be honest, the photographs readily available of *Melanotaenia ogilbyi* show a rather plain species, but they did capture my interest simply by being a Rainbowfish. Historically they were kept by dedicated hobbyists in Australia, but they have reportedly just been exported to Europe for the first time (even though they were first described in 1910) and newly produced photos show an attractive if subdued fish. Ian Wilson, a noted Rainbowfish keeper, states that they are "are somewhat underrated. Unlike their rainbow brethren they are not that colourful. Yet under the right lighting beautiful and subtle blues and even reds come out. When mature their fins also develop wonderful markings that make them a genuine enhancement to any aquarium."

So I guess thanks to Klaus are in order. If I hadn't had to undertake some new research for this column, I doubt I would have come across the interesting life of James Douglas Ogilby.