

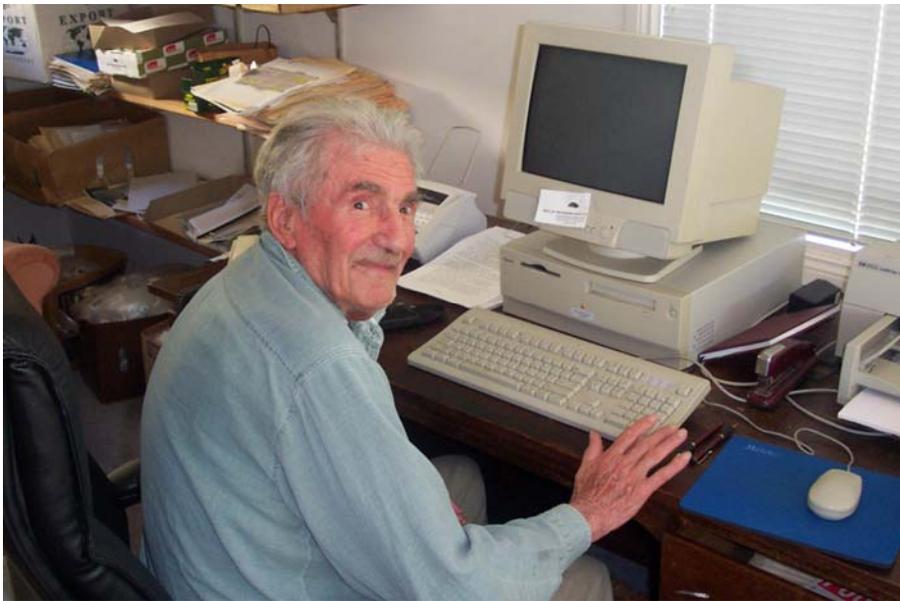
Vincent Serventy AM BSc BEd DSc

Past President of Honour, Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc.

Vincent Noel Serventy was born in Western Australia. He graduated from the University of Western Australia with teaching and science qualifications and taught in a number of local public schools.

His interest in natural history and environmental education led him to a position training other school teachers in science and environmental programs.

Over the sixty years of his environmental work in Australia, and internationally, Vincent Serventy worked to realise his vision of a world whose people understood that we do not own this earth, but are trustees for its future, and that we should live in harmony within nature. He has justly been called the 'father of conservation in Australia'. The distinguished Indian environmentalist Kailash Sankhala said that he 'gave a voice to the voiceless' in our community.



Vincent Serventy in his office at Pearl Beach, New South Wales

Originally a significant figure in environmental education in Western Australia, he spread this educational work to a wider field by his books, articles, lectures, letters, telecasts, radio programs and magazine editing. Thousands of Australians have taken up environmental science as a career, or joined conservation groups, because of his influence and wonderful example.

His more than seventy books on wildlife, the environment and conservation have played a major role in the development of conservation interest in Australia since the 1960s.

Serventy was one of the leading figures in many conservation battles in Australia, both large and small, for many years. He had a continuing and active correspondence program with many Australians on the grass roots concerns he considered essential in saving the environment of Australia.

Conservation Struggles

Serventy was one of the leading figures in conservation battles in Australia, both large and small, for many years. The areas include the Great Barrier Reef, Shark Bay region, Lake Eyre region, the Tasmanian south-west forests and Lord Howe Island, all of which later became, or are likely to become, listed as World Heritage sites.

With others he helped to save Kelly's Bush in Hunters Hill (a battle that led to the world's first Green Ban, when trade unionists joined with the conservationists), Centennial Park in Sydney, Kings Park in Western Australia, the jarrah forests of southwestern Australia, and the Kakadu and Uluru areas in the Northern Territory. Many locally based community action groups called on Vincent for his help and guidance.

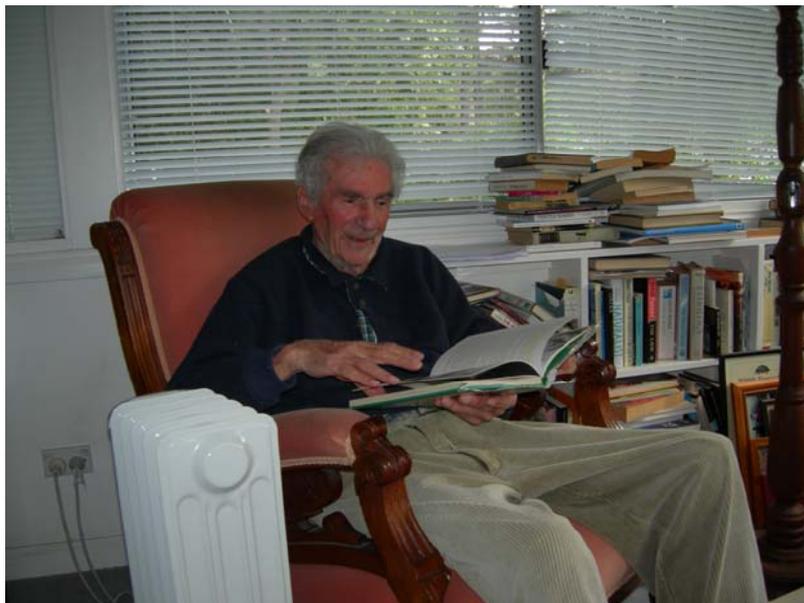
Serventy played a major role in WA in the Kings Park and Swan River conservation work. The first battle was brought to a successful conclusion with a Private Member's Bill before the State Parliament, which led to an Act to prevent destruction of any major parts of park and river without the permission of both Houses of Parliament.

He assisted Judith Wright and John Busst, major leaders in the Great Barrier Reef struggle. This important victory led to the declaration of the World Heritage Park, the largest marine Regional Park in the world.

He assisted Tasmanians in the struggle to save Lake Pedder in southwest Tasmania and later raised funds for the Franklin fight.

He organised a combination of conservationists and farmers in western New South Wales to resist the taking over by the Army of good farming land for military needs.

In India, he assisted the late Kailash Sankhala on the Baratpur Wetlands, and though Sankhala had an opportunity to advise the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi on environmental issues.



Vincent Serventy loved reading and had an extensive library

Natural History and Conservation Associations

Vincent Serventy assisted many hundreds of community associations as a speaker and adviser, and belonged to many as a member and office-bearer during his long career.

He joined the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia over fifty years ago. He was President for thirty-three years and held the position of 'President of Honour' by a unanimous vote of the Council for seven years. Throughout his presidency he was able to influence politicians at both State and Federal levels. He encouraged the WPSA to become one of the World Conservation Union founding groups. He assisted in the founding of the Australian section of the World Conservation Union.

He was a founder of the Western Australian National Trust, the Western Australian Tree Society and the Western Australian Gould League. He convinced the State groups, once called the Gould League of Birdlovers, to broaden their aims to include all wildlife and the environment, and drop the word birdlovers from the name to give it more meaning.

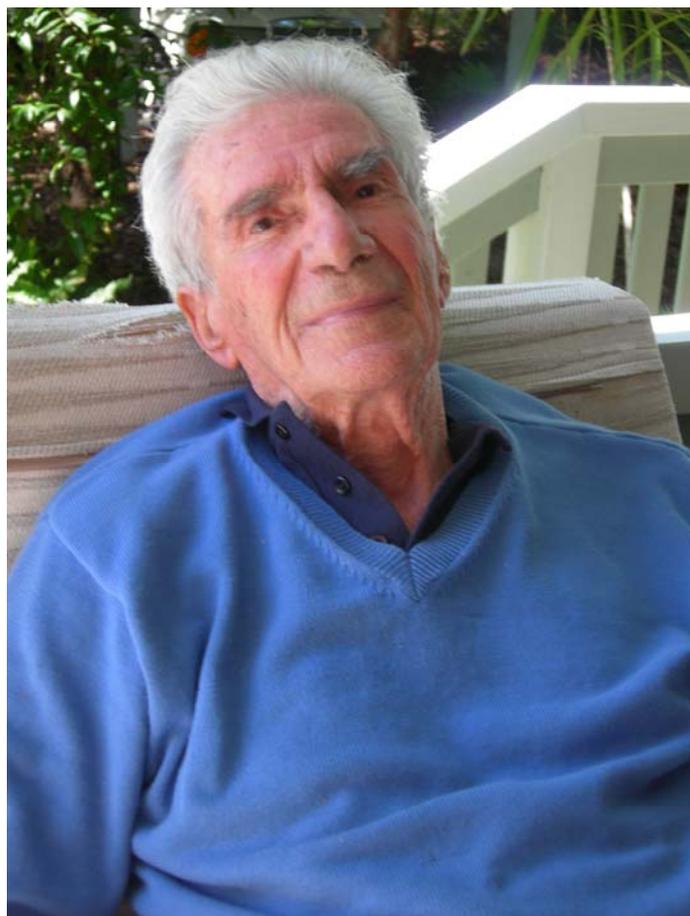
He was co-founder of World Wildlife Fund Australia, now known as World Wide Fund for Nature and was involved with the founding body in Europe from its beginning in 1962.

Vincent Serventy was Secretary and then President of the Western Australian Naturalists Club, the major society working for nature conservation in WA. He was a Life Member of the Royal Australian Ornithological Union (now Birds Australia), a former secretary, and State section newsletter editor for many years.

He was involved in the foundation and at one time served as Patron of the Australia-wide Greening Australia program.

Vincent was a member of the international Zookeepers Association and was patron of the local section. He served as an office bearer and member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW for a great many years. He worked to form a Conservation Council of Australia, banding the State Conservation Councils into a national body so that they had a direct voice in Canberra.

He was a member of the International Committee of the World Wilderness Congress.



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Publications

The following are among the most important of more than seventy books published, some of which have been translated into a number of languages.

A Continent in Danger (1966) was the first modern work on conservation in Australia. Serventy described techniques that could be used in conservation struggles in his *Easy Guide to Green Living*. In his second major work on Australian conservation, *Saving Australia*, he developed two major principles, the first that no battle is ever lost as the environmental movement gains new expertise and supporters, and that until a victory is enshrined in legislation it is not entirely won.

Dryandra - The Story of an Australian Forest (1970) was selected as one of the hundred great books of Australian literature. *Dryandra* played a prominent part in saving the forest when it was threatened by bauxite mining. Rupert Murdoch, after reading it, agreed that mining this forest would destroy a place of great value, and as a managing director instructed the company to relinquish any mining claims. It is now a nature reserve and important conservation education centre.

Australia's World Heritage Sites (1985) was the first book on these sites. It was important in the public education of Australians on the values of those listed sites, and the need for the urgent need to list more sites.

Lake Eyre - The Desert Sea (1985) played a significant role in the public pressure to have this region nominated for world heritage listing.

As editor for sixteen years of *Wildlife in Australia*, the first major Australian natural history magazine, he influenced thousands of readers in a greater understanding of their environment and its wildlife in all its forms.

Australia's Wildlife Heritage (1973-1974) Serventy was editor-in-chief and chief writer of this massive part work. Over six million copies were sold in Australia and it influenced educators and high school students, as well as university students and the general public.

National Library of Australia

All the manuscripts and associated conservation material published by Vincent Serventy has been donated to the National Library of Australia. Comprising about 200 cartons of material, to which more is being added, this was described by the then Librarian, Sir Harold White, as one of the most important collections of their Archives.

Dr Vincent Serventy AM lived in retirement in the central coast village of Pearl Beach just north of Sydney. He continued to actively support the work of the Society and wrote thoughtful letters and advice to senior politicians and newspapers on environmental issues right up until he died on Saturday 8 September 2007.