



## **Soils, Habitat and Biodiversity**

### **A project to save our soils and to protect the habitat and its biodiversity throughout Australia**

#### **A message from the President of Honour of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, Dr Vincent Serventy AM**

For the last few years our Society has been spelling out to all those who would listen - ministers, premiers and prime ministers, as well as the opposition parties – that the continued damage to the soil is threatening all of our wildlife habitat, woodlands and other vast areas of our continent.

Slowly the message has sunk home to all members of parliament, according to a recent poll – though not necessarily to their leaders. Treasury officials and the Federal Government are also aware, as a plan has now been commenced to protect our food bowl – the Murray-Darling Basin. These are actual programs that have been designed to help solve the problem. We now must have funding to carry out these sustainable programs. A promise has been made that once more we will be able to drink clean water from the tap as in the past. All states have agreed to reach this target.

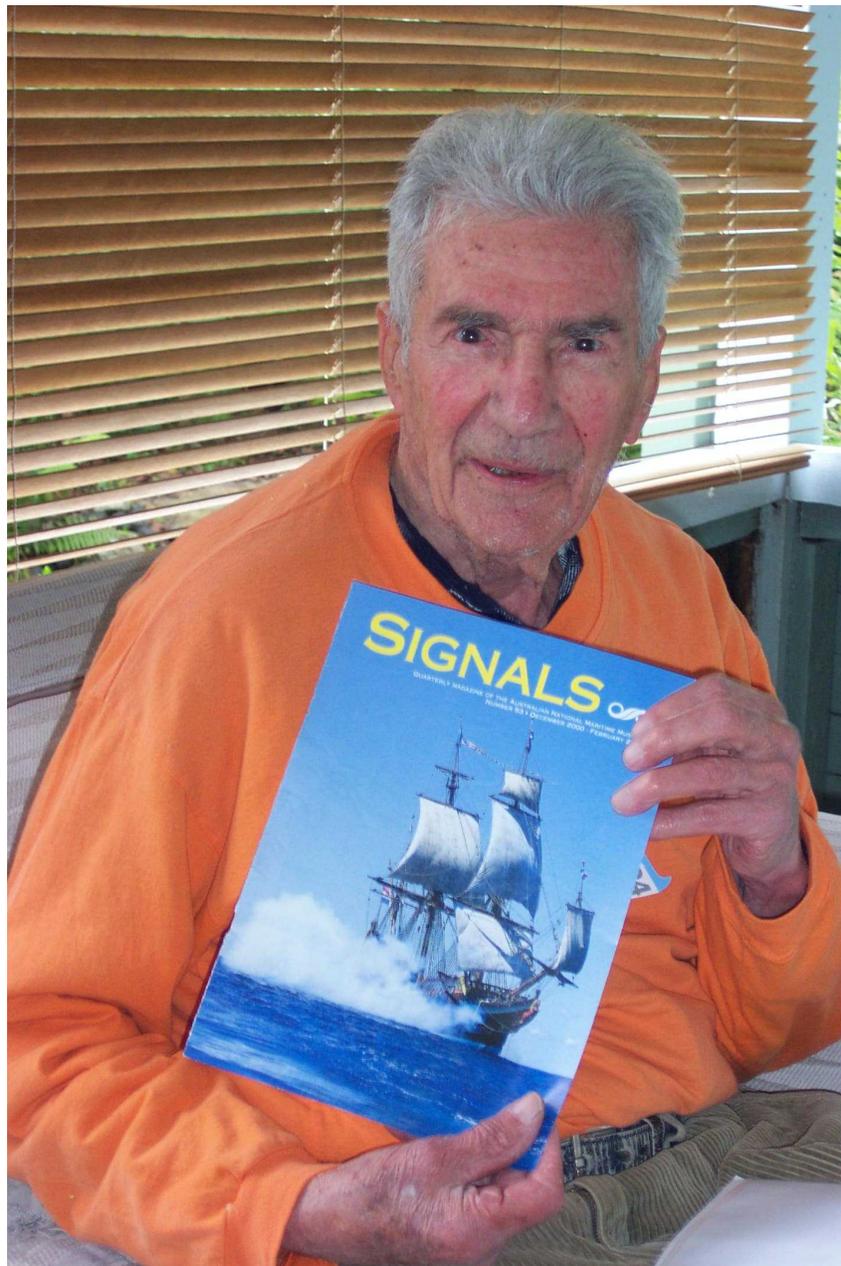
This is a giant step forward and our Society can take some of the praise for this action.

Farmers all over Australia have joined Landcare, certainly the responsible ones have. In my travels I have seen vast tree planting schemes across this country – this solution to land degradation was told to our Society by a farmer over sixty years ago.

The early settlers knew nothing of how to manage this new land. They had cleared their own forests in Europe, which had been growing for thousands of years. They knew little of how this ancient land endured, or of the white poison of salt lurking below the surface of the soil. The newcomers continued to clear the land indiscriminately destroying hundreds of thousands of acres of bushland.

As this vital habitat was cleared and destroyed, our previous Australian wildlife was decimated. We have a sad record of early extinctions of many of our small marsupials and macropods. The beautiful paradise parrot was lost to us forever when its habitat was consistently cleared for farming.

**We now have to put the trees back!** Our Society has asked Australia's greatest ecologists were they right in wanting the trees to be replanted? Yes was the unequivocal answer.



*Dr Vincent ServentyAM*

Today we want to alert the whole of Australia to the problem of habitat destruction. Not just Landcare, but all conservation groups caring for wildlife habitat and the revegetation of our land. We need to show farmers and graziers what some conservation groups have achieved and encourage them to do likewise. We need to show them schemes on how they can make money by doing the right thing by their land for a fruitful and productive Australia.

**Our Society has the vision  
Let us share it with the rest of Australia**

## Habitat preservation

### **Saving habitat for our previous Australian wildlife**

What causes our wildlife to become threatened? There are a number of factors that contribute to animals and plants becoming threatened with extinction:

Habitat destruction – as human populations and activities expand, we tend to clear vegetation such as forests and woodlands - that are home for countless numbers of native Australian species - for agriculture, urban and other developments.

Habitat change and degradation - environmental weeds, salinisation of the water supply, erosion, grazing by animals introduced from overseas, conversion of native forests to plantations, changes to burning patterns, water diversion from rivers and wetlands for irrigation or urban use, etc, all causes changes to the natural areas where Australian wildlife live which can lead to reductions in the populations of species. Smaller populations are often more vulnerable to chance events such as fires or floods, which may cause the death of a whole population or reduce the population size even further - making it impossible for the wildlife to reproduce and survive.

## Biodiversity preservation

### **What is being done to save our wildlife?**

There are a number of actions which can help save our threatened wildlife species. These actions occur at national, state and local levels, and involve science, legislation and community action. Science helps to deliver an understanding of the species and its habitat, as well as what we must do to save it. Legislation helps to ensure that public decision making works in favour of threatened species, and that business and community actions that may harm species are regulated and monitored.

At a national level, Australia has legislation that helps to provide a framework to make decisions about how to manage land where threatened species live. Some state governments also have state legislation to accomplish this. Generally, threatened species legislation aims to:

- promote the recovery of species which are threatened;
- prevent other species or communities from becoming endangered;
- promote and support public involvement in threatened species and ecological communities conservation, and
- provide a framework for land management which conserves threatened species.

One of the key processes under federal legislation is the development and implementation of Recovery Plans. This process is intended to be cooperative between state and federal governments and the broader community. A Recovery Plan is a formalised list of actions required to facilitate the recovery of a threatened species or group of species, or an ecological community.

Many of these actions can be undertaken by dedicated community groups of volunteers with assistance from scientists and other experts.

Community action is about involving as many Australians as possible in threatened species conservation through looking after local community environments and participating in recovery actions. Community action also refers to the work undertaken by environmental organisations like the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia. Our Society provides advice to governments about how best to save the environment and lobbies them to implement this advice, as well as facilitating community involvement in conservation and educating communities about environmental issues.

**"In wildness is the preservation of the world."  
As true today as when Thoreau wrote it more than a hundred years ago**



*Bilby*