
Australian Wildlife Society

University of Technology Sydney Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship

The Australian Wildlife Society Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship is open to postgraduate research students from any university in Australia undertaking a research project at University of Technology Sydney that is of direct relevance to the conservation of Australian native wildlife (flora or fauna).

The scholarship totals \$5,000 and is awarded to one candidate, who receives one payment of \$2,500 each semester. The scholarship is provided to support operational costs associated with the successful candidate's research project, such as:

- Travel associated with the research project
- Fieldwork expenses
- Specialist software
- Small items of equipment (i.e. less than \$5,000)

The recipient of the 2017 scholarship was Reannan Honey for her research into habitat restoration.

Habitat restoration

Climbing up trees searching for possums and endangered birds is just another day in the office for PhD candidate Reannan Honey.

It's all part of Ms Honey's current research project investigating habitat restoration for animals that are dependent on hollows. "Tree hollows take a very long time to form – usually over one hundred years," Ms Honey said.

"With native forestry, we tend to cut down the trees that are over a hundred years old because they are the big ones that provide the most wood. The current strategy to solve this problem is using nest boxes. But so far, they haven't proved to be very effective, with many endangered animals often rejecting the nest boxes."

Ms Honey's research is looking at whether artificial hollows can provide an alternative option to nest boxes. "Artificial hollows are hollows that are cut into the tree itself," she said. "The face plate is removed, the trunk is hollowed out, and then the face plate returned with a hole in it so that the animal can enter and exit."

The project is in its early days with Ms Honey often travelling into the bush, trapping possums and sugar gliders to microchip and track them to see which animals are using the artificial hollows, and how.



Reannan's research will investigate whether artificial hollows can provide an alternative option to nest boxes for animals, like this possum. Photo: Reannan Honey

Now Ms Honey's research has received a generous boost thanks to the 2017 AWS Wildlife Ecology Science Research Scholarship, which she will spend on data logging equipment that will allow her to effectively measure temperature and humidity.

"Thermochron® and Hygrochron® are the size of a button-battery, and they can collect three months of data, such as temperature and humidity every hour – so they're pretty cool," Ms Honey said.



Possum

Ms Honey has been at UTS for six years, starting in a Bachelor of Science in Applied Chemistry, before transferring to a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Sciences. Last year she completed her honours research year investigating whether incubation temperatures affect the learning abilities in hatching geckos.

Ms Honey is also part of the Student Promotional Representative of UTS (SPROUT) team at UTS Science, and is passionate about science communication and talking to the general public about scientific discoveries.

“Communicating science is challenging; there’s a lot more things that both scientists and the media could be doing to help explain scientific research better,” Ms Honey said.

“I enjoy communicating my work to different audiences, and that’s something I hope to develop more at as I progress through my PhD.”

You can follow Reannan Honey on Instagram @reehoney17.



Long-nosed potoroo