

## AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE SOCIETY

PO BOX 42 BRIGHTON LE SANDS NSW 22161 (ACN 134 808 790)

### PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016

#### A year in review

The past year for the Society has been one of consolidation and growth. At the Annual General Meeting in March 2016, I was honoured to be elected back onto the Board and then at the following board meeting, elected as President. We were delighted to welcome two new members to the Board – Wayne Greenwood and Trevor Evans.

A highlight of the year was our Society winning the prestigious NSW Nature Conservation Council Member Group Award for 2016. The NCC award is given annually to a Member Group of NCC judged to be the most outstanding environment group that has demonstrated commitment and success in the conservation of the environment in New South Wales, particularly through empowering and organising individuals and groups to protect the environment.



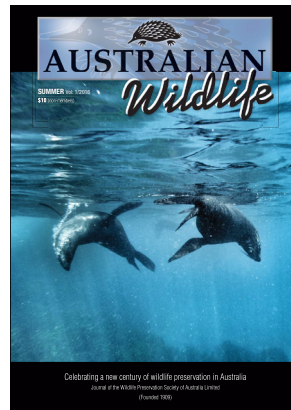
Presentation of the prestigious NSW Nature Conservation Council Member Group Award for 2016.

L to R: Clive Williams, Suzanne Medway, Professor Don White (President of NSW Nature Conservation Council) and Ken Mason

Dr. Richard (Dick) Mason, the longest serving member of the Board, decided to retire and the December meeting was his last. Dick, one of our Life Members, joined the Society during the 1970s. He has been a regular and diligent member of the Board and we presented him with two books as a farewell present. We will miss his contribution and passion.

#### Australian Wildlife magazine

Our coloured *Australian Wildlife* magazine is the flagship of the Society and has proved to be extremely popular amongst all of our members. We invite members to distribute copies to family and friends and to invite them to become members. A special thank you to our Sub-Editor, Sabine Borgis, for her valuable contribution to the editing of the magazine.



Summer Cover



Autumn Cover



Winter Cover



Spring Cover

Our fortnightly email wildlife newsletter has also proven to be very popular with our members and we encourage them to forward the newsletter on to their family, friends and associates to help spread the wildlife conservation word. A big thank you to Linda Dennis, Editor of the newsletter, for her valuable work in keeping us regularly informed on wildlife matters.

We were delighted to welcome a new volunteer to co-ordinate our social media presence – Kate Chaplin.

Kate has been making regular postings on Facebook and Twitter. Please be sure to look up our pages – Australia Wildlife Society and Australian Fauna and Flora Photography – on Facebook. Members and friends are welcome to post on either site.

## Website

Towards the end of the year we appointed a new webmaster to manage and update our website to make it more user friendly. Changes to the structure and layout will be an ongoing process. It is also planned to design and implement a 'Members Only' section. We also hope to make the application process for new members simpler. Members are encouraged to view the website and send any feedback via email to: [info@wpsa.org.au](mailto:info@wpsa.org.au)

## Strategic Planning Day

A Strategic Planning Day was held in May to review past performances and to plan for the future of the Society. A one-year and a five-year Strategic Plan were developed and adopted by the Board for implementation over the next 12 months. Highlights include plans to establish a National Office for the long-term sustainability of the Society and to engage a Project or Office Manager to promote the Society and its aims and objectives in Australian universities. Succession planning and a dynamic new website are already underway for the future of the Society.

## Wildlife rescue calls

We continue to receive numerous and wide-ranging distress calls for help from members of the public about sick, injured and stranded wildlife.

## Our Mission

Part of our Mission Statement reads:

“Our mission is to conserve Australia’s fauna and flora through education and involvement of the community. We are dedicated to the conservation of our unique Australian wildlife in all its forms through national environmental education programs, political lobbying, advocacy and hands on conservation work.”

To fulfill this goal we introduced the University Student Grants Scheme in 2005 and since its inception have awarded over 120 grants to very worthy recipients. Last year we increased the grant to \$1,500 and plan in the future to steadily increase the dollar amount of the grants.

## 2016 – University Student Grants Scheme

The Australian Wildlife Society’s University Research Grants are scholarships offered to honours or postgraduate students at Australian universities. Each year, ten grants of \$1,500 are awarded. Grants are available for research projects of direct relevance to the conservation of Australian wildlife – plant or animal. The winners for 2016 were:

**Hannah Bannister**, The University of Adelaide  
Project title: Identifying successful reintroduction techniques for brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) in a semi-arid environment.

**Lauren Roman**, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), University of Tasmania  
Project title: “We’ve had a gutful of this rubbish”: Population-level effects of plastic ingestion in Australasian seabirds



Newly elected directors. L to R: Sash Denkovski, Noel Cislowski, Wayne Greenwood, Suzanne Medway, Trevor Evans, Ken Mason and Stephen Grabowski.



**Emily Roy-Dufresne**, The University of Adelaide  
Project title: Mapping the distribution of the European rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) in Australia using occurrence data from targeted and non-targeted field studies

**Monique Smith**, The University of Adelaide  
Project title: Interactions between native and introduced grass species in the context of restoration of grassy habitats

**Patrick Taggart**, The University of Adelaide  
Project title: Investigating correlates of *Toxoplasma gondii* infection to explain its higher seroprevalence on Kangaroo Island

**Jack Tatler**, The University of Adelaide  
Project title: Spying on Dingoes in the desert - New insights into the behaviour energetic and resource selection of free-ranging dingoes - *Canis lupus dingo*

**Luke Tilley**, The University of Adelaide  
Project title: Potential impacts of Western Quolls (*Dasyurus geoffroii*) on in situ species at Arid Recovery

**Anicee Lombal**, School of Biological Sciences, University of Tasmania  
Project title: Re-establishment plan of Providence petrels (*Pterodroma solandri*) on Norfolk Island

**Donald McKnight**, James Cook University, Townsville  
Project title: Do bacterial immune defenses drive the recovery of threatened frog populations?

**Gary Palmer**, Griffith University  
Project title: Seed predators in rainforests: What are they eating, and how are they influenced by forest fragmentation?

## Wildlife Science Ecology Research Scholarship

The 2016 Australian Wildlife Society Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship was awarded to UTS School of the Environment PhD student **Naomi Walters**. Naomi's PhD project in the Kimberley, Western Australia, aims to prevent the extinction of northern quoll populations at Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary (owned by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy) and the neighbouring crown land. During the last few decades as cane toads have spread across Northern Australia, northern quolls (*Dasyurus hallucatus*) have been significantly impacted. As the invasion continues to spread, the introduced pest poses an imminent threat to the endangered northern quoll. While there is no silver bullet to halt the spread of, or to eradicate, the toxic toads, research has been working towards ways to prevent quoll extinctions by training quolls to avoid eating cane toads before the toad spreads any further.



Northern quoll (*Dasyurus hallucatus*) and Naomi Walters

## Wildlife Conservation Awards

The winner of the **Serventy Conservation Award** was **John Weigel**. John has been an active wildlife campaigner for over 35 years. In the 1990s he devised and implemented a highly successful mobile education program for primary and high schools in all states. Over a million Australian school children were educated through this program. He has made 25 visits to the Kimberley Ranges making discoveries of previously unknown species. Two, a frog and a king brown snake, have been named after him. John's most recent venture was, with his wife, to invest \$1,000,000 in Devil Ark, a program at Barrington Tops, NSW, to provide a safe haven for devils. He continues as Managing Director of the not-for-profit Devil Ark Conservation Fund. John is truly a man who has devoted his life to conservation and we welcome him to the list of those recognised by the Serventy Conservation Award.



John Weigel

The winner of the **Community Wildlife Conservation Award** was **Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby Inc.** This group is based in the Kangaroo Valley and has been active in trying to prevent the extinction of the BTRW since 1995. The group has formed a close alliance with the local community, local landholders, local schools and with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. By reducing the risk of predation the Friends have been successful in saving this animal from probable extinction in the area and trebling the number of animals at large. They are a great example of a successful community organisation at work.

## 2016 Conservation Group Grants

The Board of Directors carefully considers all requests for grants from other wildlife conservation groups and places a special emphasis on native wildlife research, conservation and the preservation of wildlife habitat. We lobby organisations and government bodies on their behalf and make donations to assist them in their special wildlife conservation projects.

Conservation grants were made to the following projects:

- Western Woodlands Koala Mapping Project
- Wedge-tailed eagle monitoring project in WA

## Conferences and wildlife research seminars

The Society's directors attended and contributed to a number of important wildlife conservation conferences, seminars and meetings throughout the year. We actively initiated and sponsored many of these conferences and participated in others. AWS

is an active member of the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales. Our Society's CEO is a representative on the NSW State Pest Animal Control Council and attends both city and country meetings at Orange. We attended the Australasian Wildlife Management Society Annual Conference in Auckland, New Zealand, in November 2016, where some six sponsored students made presentations on their research. The CEO attended the Sustainable Wildlife Conference in Brisbane in September 2016. The CEO and President attended the ANPC Conference at Mt Annan Botanic Gardens, Sydney. Regional Adviser Linda Dennis attended the Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference in Melbourne in August and presented a paper.

### Radio and Cruise talks

The Society's CEO and honorary secretary, Patrick Medway, continued to promote the Society by giving lectures to various groups and schools. He was again a guest on ABC Radio's *Nightlife with Tony Delroy* to answer questions on wildlife conservation issues from across Australia and launched a major lecture series for Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines on native Australian fauna and flora.

### Honorary Life Membership Awarded

The Society was pleased to award Honorary Life Membership to Regional Adviser Linda Dennis for her long-standing commitment and dedication to wildlife conservation and the Society.

### Donations, bequests and gifts

During the year we continued with our bequest program to encourage donors to support our wildlife conservation work across Australia through the website and through general publicity. We are very grateful to all our members for considering using the bequest program to help the Society with its long-term planning.

Please contact the National Office for more details on the Bequest Program and on how to join the Friends of the Society and make a regular monthly donation to support our national wildlife conservation programs.



Emu. Photo: Michael Ritchie



Scientia Circle Luncheon at UNSW. L to R: Professor Ian Jacobs (Vice Chancellor UNSW), Patrick Medway AM, and Dr David Gonski AC (Chancellor and Chair UNSW Foundation)

### UNSW Invitation

The CEO, Patrick W Medway AM, accepted an invitation from the Chancellor and Chair of the UNSW Foundation to join the Scientia Circle to represent the Society.

### Fundraising

A major fundraising initiative was launched during 2016 to introduce a new university scholarship at the University of New South Wales. The Australian Wildlife Society Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship will be launched during 2017 and will be open to postgraduate students from anywhere in Australia to undertake a research project at UNSW that is of direct relevance to the conservation of Australian native wildlife (flora or fauna). The scholarship totals \$5,000 and will be awarded to one candidate, who will receive 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 and purchase of small items of equipment.

### Financial Report summary

The Society's directors and the Finance and Investment Committee continue to exercise tight and effective control over our finances, reviewing and adjusting the investment portfolio as required during the year. The investment funds of the Society have continued to grow.

### Moving Forward

The Board of Directors approved two initiatives in 2016. Firstly, the Wildlife Rehabilitation Award to recognise outstanding wildlife carers who devote so much time and energy to the rehabilitation of sick and injured native wildlife. A new photographic competition is to be established to encourage a greater interest in the preservation of our rare and threatened native species. A prize of \$1,000 will be awarded to the winning digital photograph, with a second prize of \$500 from a public choice photograph. Details will be publicised via email, newsletter, magazine and website. Entries are invited from all interested members and non-members.

### A special thank you to all our members

May I wish every member of the Society a happy, healthy and prosperous 2017 and thank you all most sincerely for your tremendous support and continued dedication and commitment in helping the Society to preserve and protect our native wildlife for future generations of young Australians.

**Suzanne Medway AM | PRESIDENT | 31 December 2016**