



WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.

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ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2004

Another very busy and successful year

2004 has been a particularly busy year and, accordingly, a very successful year for the Society. The Council has worked hard to actively preserve our unique Australian wildlife in all its forms across our nation and has made numerous submissions to all levels of government to achieve added protection. Our effort to increase the protection for the wildlife on the Great Barrier Reef and other Marine Parks was officially implemented on 1 July 2004 and is regarded as a major achievement for the conservation movement as a whole and a real success for our Society to save and protect marine wildlife.



Patrick Medway and Virginia Chadwick, chair of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

95th Annual General Meeting and Luncheon

Her Excellency, the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Maria Bashir AC, was our official Guest of Honour at the 2004 annual luncheon. The Hon Bob Debus MP, NSW Minister for the Environment, was our host. A large audience of 168 members and friends enjoyed the fine food and celebrated a great occasion to mark the 95th anniversary of our Society's foundation in 1909.

Her Excellency gave an inspirational address and freely acknowledged the outstanding efforts of the early Councillors of our Society to save Australian native fauna, such as the koala, wombat, egret and lyrebird.



Her Excellency, the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Maria Bashir AC, with the Society's newly elected Councillors for 2004

Serventy Conservation Award

The 2003 Award was presented to Lance Ferris of Australian Seabird Rescue Service of Ballina by the President of Honour, Dr Vincent Serventy AM, and the Governor at the Annual Luncheon. Lance spoke with passion of his special love for Australian wildlife and his vital work to preserve and protect all injured wildlife, especially the seabirds of the east coast area. Over a 20 year period he has rescued thousands of injured animals and birds and returned them to the wild.



Lance Ferris being presented with his award by Vin Serventy

Our Society's President of Honour

Dr Vincent Serventy AM is still very active in our wildlife preservation programs. He is in constant touch with the media, mainly through Letters to the Editor, and has many of his letters published on wildlife and conservation issues. He is working on two new conservation books. Our Society has just published his latest book, "Conservation Victories and Battles Still to Win", which was co-written by Patrick Medway. We congratulate Vin on his continuing commitment to the work of the Society.



Dr Vincent Serventy AM addressing the Annual Luncheon

Visit to Wellington and Dubbo

Councillors and members of our Society made a special visit to the Wellington and Dubbo area in April to see for themselves the problems and abuse of the Southern Brigalow Biosphere reserve system. We were appalled at the extent of land clearing and soil degradation through over grazing in this area. Seriously affected by the drought, one cannot understand why land owners would want to continue to clear more land for farming and grazing. We visited the Wellington Caves and examined prehistoric skeletons and bones of extinct Australian mammals; the Western Plains Zoo to study the endangered species breeding program, especially the bilby; we sat under the famous Gould League Tree in the grounds of Wellington Public School where the League was formed; and enjoyed a visit to the Burrendong Arboretum to see the incredible range of native flora.



Our tour group under the Wellington Tree



In the Wellington Caves

Strategic Planning Day

The Society's annual Strategic Planning Day was held on 11 May 2004. The direction for the future work of the Society was decided, including the development of our environmental education program and the new ECOWORLD GARDENS project. This day was chosen to mark the Foundation Day of the Society on 11 May 1909 and will be commemorated each year with a special meeting to ensure the long term success of the Society.

Wildlife research grants

A number of wildlife research grants were awarded in 2004. Al Glenn, a PhD student at the University of Sydney, received a grant to study the effects of fox predation on native quoll. There is an urgent need to learn more about the status and long term survival of our native quoll and this research work is part of a wider research program to protect the species from predation by foxes and wild dogs. We presented the President of the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation with a cheque for the conservation of a large parcel of land in Green Valley, the home of many protected species. In December 2004, our Society made a presentation to the Australian Wildlife Conservancy to study the rare and beautiful Gouldian finches in the Kimberley at Mornington Station. This Station was recently purchased and donated to the Conservancy to protect all wildlife in the region but in particular the habitat for Gouldian finches.



Dr Dick Mason presents a cheque towards the purchase of land in Green Valley to Gillis Broinowski, Chairman of the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation



Patrick Medway, Dick Mason and Natasha Serventy at the cheque presentation to Mike Fidler, Australian Wildlife Conservancy for the Mornington Station, Gouldian Finch project

Wildlife Animal Expo

The Society again staged a major display at the 2004 Wildlife Animal Expo at Rosehill Gardens, attracting large crowds of visitors interested in all aspects of wildlife and animal management. We invited Mark Richmond from Crocodile Encounters to join us with an animated public display featuring live wildlife, which always attracts great interest. The conservation stories behind wildlife and their environment has a strong appeal to the public and assists in our public education program for wildlife preservation. If anyone would like to help with this public display next year, please contact the National Office and register your interest.



Our Society's stage demonstration attracted huge crowds

Seminars with Birds Australia

During 2004 we sponsored two conservation seminars with Birds Australia – a Parrot and Cockatoo Seminar at St Leonards and a Shorebird Seminar at Newcastle University. The seminars were enthusiastically received by a capacity audience keen to learn more about the plight of parrots and shorebirds and the wellbeing of their environment. Experts outlined the research being carried out on parrots, cockatoos and shorebirds and everyone enjoyed the delightful photographs of the birds involved in the programs.

NSW Pest Animal Control Council

Our Society's President, Patrick Medway, became a representative on the NSW State Pest Animal Control Council. The Council's aim is to minimise the disastrous effects of feral animals on livestock and wildlife across New South Wales by developing new biological control agents for four of Australia's most damaging pest animals - the European rabbit, the European red fox, the introduced house mouse and the carp. This important Committee is funded by the NSW Department of Agriculture.

Towra Beach work completed

One of our Society's major projects since 1996 has been saving the Towra Point Nature Reserve beach area from serious erosion. Following the development of the Plan of Management and funding by the Minister for the Beach Nourishment work for Towra Beach, the Steering Committee met and prepared the vital EIS report in 2003. Formal approval was given to commence the re-nourishment work on the beach on 15 June 2004 and commenced immediately. The beach nourishment work was finished on 31 October 2004 and planting of native trees on the new dunes has now commenced. This habitat is vital for the long term survival of migratory wading birds, which are protected under the international RAMSAR, CAMBA and JAMBA agreements. Our Society continued to play an important role in sponsoring the Friends Group and in providing publicity and volunteers to carry out the regular restoration and weed removal work on the Towra Reserve. More volunteers are always very welcome and are invited to assist.



Towra Beach on Botany Bay, New South Wales has been restored

“Australian Wildlife” magazine

We successfully launched our new coloured cover magazine “Australian Wildlife” in 2003 and it continues to be widely acclaimed by our members and the wider community. Our Editor, Suzanne Medway, works tirelessly to gather articles and photographs for each edition and has raised the standards high in reporting on our conservation work across Australia. More articles are always welcome to assist in making the magazine interesting and worthwhile. Plans are underway to explore the possibility of moving to full colour production in 2005.

“Conservation Victories and Battles Still to Win” published

In 2004 our Society published this new book which was written by Vincent Serventy and Patrick Medway and edited by Carol Serventy and Suzanne Medway. The book outlines the Society’s involvement in major conservation victories over the past 60 years.

Society’s publications

We reprinted and upgraded our Society’s membership brochure in 2004 to appeal to a wider and more sophisticated audience. It has been well received and is readily available to give out to schools and the general public at any time. Please call the Office for copies. Our Society’s history continues to be widely distributed and we recently sold some 40 copies through a conservation bookshop outlet, which all helps spread the conservation message.

Conferences and wildlife seminars

Councillors attended and contributed to a number of important wildlife meetings throughout the year, including:

- RSPCA Scientific conference, Canberra, 25 March
- Parrot and Cockatoo Seminar, St Leonards, 12 April
- Meeting with Victorian wildlife and conservation groups, 1 June
- Shorebirds Seminar with Birds Australia, Newcastle University, July 2004
- GEKO Environment meeting, Currumbin, 10 September
- Nature Conservation Council Annual General Meeting, 29 October
- National Parks seminar on quolls, Armidale, October
- Reduction of Roadkill meeting, Sydney, 18 November
- Wildlife Management Conference, Kangaroo Island, December

Wildlife management conference

Our Society was represented at the Australian Wildlife Management Society conference on Kangaroo Island in December 2004. The Island is richly endowed with native wildlife such as Australian sea lions, fur seals, kangaroos, tamar wallabies, echidnas, koalas and many bird species, which form a strong base for local tourism. Delegates from all over Australia assembled to discuss and present papers on an extremely wide range of wildlife management issues. Many were from government departments, universities, and private and commercial institutions involved in finding solutions to the many contentious issues of wildlife management. This was a particularly rewarding conference and we made our mark by representing our Society’s position on wildlife preservation and handing out hundreds of leaflets on the work of the Society.

Quoll Research Advisory Committee

As we have been outspoken about our concern at the loss of habitat and the decline in numbers of native quoll, our Society was invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the NPWS Northern Region’s Quoll Research Advisory Committee at Armidale NSW on 17 November 2004. We are already sponsoring a research grant for spotted quoll and hope to do more work in 2005.

Financial Report - summary

The Society’s Councillors continue to exercise effective control over our finances and reviewed and adjusted the investment portfolio during the year to take advantage of higher interest rates. Using expert financial advice from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (our Bankers) we were able to re-align our investments to take advantage of rising interest rates and now look forward to strong growth in our investment portfolio.

Donations, bequests and gifts

During the year we received many generous donations from our members, who continue to support the work of the Society in the preservation of Australia’s precious wildlife. We are most grateful for the generosity of these special members. We continue to encourage donors to support our work through advertising with the Solicitor’s Pro-Bono publication.

The future

We are now embarked on a very positive course of action to promote and market the Society and its vital work for Australian wildlife. Our quest for a permanent national office is under way and hopefully will reach an agreed solution in 2005. Membership is essential for our long term success and it is vital that all existing members continue to encourage family and friends to join us. The new coloured membership leaflets are freely available from the National Office.

Our Society is extremely grateful for the wonderful support received from all our elected Councillors. They contribute tirelessly behind the scenes to make the Society function.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the volunteers, especially Suzanne, who assists and runs the National Office and the various projects and activities on behalf of the Society.

My sincere thanks to everyone concerned for their hard work and commitment!

Patrick W Medway AM

NATIONAL PRESIDENT