



WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.

PO BOX 42 BRIGHTON LE SANDS NSW 2216

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2008

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia has developed a diverse range of conservation projects and responsibilities in our mission to preserve Australia's unique wildlife, and this is evident in the breadth of our achievements over the last year.

We deal with and support a broad spectrum of environmental issues, deliver many different wildlife conservation projects and operate in a number of different and sometimes difficult locations across Australia. Some of our wildlife conservation projects focus on preserving a single species, while others deal with national problems on a continental or global scale - such as feral animals or climate change.

Our volunteers work in locations all around Australia, from remote areas in the central desert to the capital cities - and all showing a tremendous dedication and commitment to preserving and protecting Australia's fauna and flora for the next generation of young Australians.

99th Annual General Meeting and Luncheon

We held the 99th Annual General Meeting and Luncheon in NSW Parliament House, Sydney. This has become a highlight of our Society's year. The Host for our 2008 Annual Luncheon was Ian Cohen MLC of the Greens Party. Ian Cohen has been a pioneering community-based environmental and social justice activist since 1980, working at local, state and national levels. He is currently leading a campaign to save the Murray River red gums from destruction.



Elected members of Council for 2008

The Society supported the campaign to establish a River Red Gum National Park along the Murray River to save these ancient trees from logging for fence posts and firewood.

The Serventy Conservation Medal for 2008

This Award was inaugurated in 1999 to commemorate the conservation work by the members of the Serventy family - Dr Vincent Serventy, Dr Dominic Serventy and Lucy Serventy. Each member of the family gave a lifetime of commitment to the preservation of Australian wildlife.



Bev Smiles, Dr Clive Williams and Ian Cohen

The Serventy Conservation Medal for 2008 was awarded to **Bev Smiles of Mudgee** for her outstanding wildlife conservation work. Bev has been active for many years in the Western Conservation Alliance and the Central West Environment Council. She was Chair of the Mudgee District Environment Group of which she was the founder. She was on the Steering Committee of the Inland Rivers Network for many years and the Advisory Committee for the Goulburn National Park. Bev is well-known for her strong and active commitment to save the Pilliga and the Brigalow Belt from logging.

Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2008

This Award is made each year to recognise organisations that make a significant contribution to the preservation of Australian wildlife. The Award for 2008 was awarded to the **Natural History Society of South Australia Inc.** The President, Dr Peter Clements, came to Sydney to collect the Award on behalf of the Natural History Society. It is always exciting when reviewing applications for these awards to see how much community activity is abroad in our country. The successful nominee for our Community Wildlife Conservation Award this year is a typical example of this. The Natural History Society of South Australia has been operating since 1960 and was formed as a non-profit organisation to campaign for the protection of endangered native fauna and flora and their habitats. The Society now manages four wildlife conservation properties in South Australia as habitat for the Southern hairy-nosed wombat with volunteer support from their membership. They acquired their first property, Cullen Reserve near Lake Fellmongery, as a gift in 1968. Since then the land has been rehabilitated and recently patches of a rare and endangered spider-orchid have been discovered on the site.



Dr Peter Clements, Dr Clive Williams, Ian Cohen and Patrick Medway

Strategic Planning Day on our Foundation Day

A special Strategic Planning Day was held on 11 May 2008 in Sydney to organise and plan the future conservation work of the Society with a special emphasis on the forthcoming Centenary in 2009. Major changes were recommended to our very old constitution and legal advice suggested important improvements to comply with the Federal Government's new legislation. To this end, the Society ultimately adopted a new Constitution on 2 July 2008 to fully comply with current taxation laws and to achieve gift deductible recipient status under these new laws. For the Society to continue, it must meet the needs of the next generation of Australians and to continue to be a financially viable conservation organisation.

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. The advance of urban consolidation across the metropolitan areas has a great impact on native wildlife. Feral deer coming out of the Royal National Park in southern Sydney are now being killed on the highways, snakes and lizards are more vulnerable to human impact, koalas and possums are being injured by cars and dogs and the national tragedy of wildlife 'roadkills' continues to haunt the Society.

2008 - University Student Grants Scheme

Ten annual grants of \$1,000 each was awarded to honours or postgraduate students conducting research into wildlife conservation across Australia:

Alex Wyatt – School of Environmental Systems Engineering, University of Western Australia. Project – The influence of biological oceanography on coral reef biodiversity.

Romina Rader – School of Marine and Tropical Biology, James Cook University, Cairns. Project – The impact of human modification on insect pollinator assemblages.

Anja Skroblin – School of Botany and Zoology, the Australian National University. Project – Phylogeography and conservation biology of the purple-crowned fairy-wren (*Malurus Coronatus*).



Purple-crowned fairy-wren (*Malurus Coronatus*).

Andrew Cole – ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, James Cook University, Cairns. Project – The control of coral disease by coral feeding fish.

Danielle Shanahan – Spatial Ecology Lab and CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, University of Queensland. Project – Mitigating the effects of habitat fragmentation: Understanding dispersal patterns for improved conservation of forest birds.

Helen Waudby – School of Natural and Built Environments, University of South Australia. Project – The role of cracking clay soils in maintaining fauna and flora biodiversity in the rangelands.

Katherine Forsythe – Centre for Research on Ecological Impacts of Coastal Cities, University of Sydney. Project – Feeding behaviour of *Himantopus himantopus* in coastal soft-sediment lagoons.

Rebecca Lawton – ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, James Cook University. Project – Ecological specialisation versus susceptibility to disturbance among coral-dependent butterfly fishes.

Christa Beckman – School of Biological Sciences, University of Sydney. Project – Conservation of native bird populations in a changing environment: does the continuing invasion of the cane toad pose a risk to avian biodiversity in Australia?

Arian Wallach – Faculty of Sciences, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Adelaide. Project – Persistence of endangered mammals: Is the dingo the key?

2008 Conservation Group Grants

The Council of the Wildlife Preservation Society 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. The Society makes regular contact with wildlife caring groups across Australia to find out how they are faring, what their main projects are and how we can be of assistance to them in preserving native wildlife. We lobby organisations and government bodies on their behalf and make donations to assist them in their special conservation projects.

Central North Wildlife Care & Rescue, Tasmania – a donation was made to encourage their commitment to the rescue and treatment of native injured wildlife in Northern Tasmania. The funds were put towards the purchase of a kit shed to assist the volunteers care for injured wildlife.

Fourth Crossing Wildlife Rescue received a supportive grant to assist in educating and teaching a Fauna First Aid course for wildlife carers in Victoria and Deniliquin in New South Wales.

Tolga Bat Rescue & Research on the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland is staffed by volunteers working towards the goal of rescuing, rehabilitating and releasing bats that would otherwise die. Our Society's 2008 annual Wildlife Study Tour group visited the Tolga Bat Rescue Hospital and was very impressed with the commitment and dedication of the volunteers at the Centre.



Young grey-headed flying fox

Australian Wildlife magazine

Our coloured magazine is the 'flagship' of the Society and has proved to be extremely popular amongst our members. We are indebted to the Editor, Suzanne Medway, for her continued dedication and commitment to the high standard of production of this magazine. Suzanne is continually challenged to find an outstanding wildlife photograph for the front cover and members are reminded that they can always provide an input with photographs and articles to assist in making the magazine very readable for our national membership.



Conferences and wildlife research seminars

Councillors attended and contributed to a number of important wildlife conferences and meetings throughout the year. We actively initiated and sponsored some of these conferences and participated in others:

- ARAZPA Conference at Taronga Conservation Society in Sydney
- National Parks Conference – Travelling Stock Networks: Biodiversity Highway of the Eastern Inland, Sydney - Partnership arrangements
- Kangaroo Management Committee meeting at Dubbo NSW
- NSW Pest Animal Control Council in Sydney
- Australian Network for Plant Conservation - 7th National Conference, Sydney

- 2008 Wildlife study tour Cairns in North Queensland
- 14th Australasian Vertebrate Pests Conference in Darwin
- 54th Scientific meeting of the Australian Mammal Society in Darwin
- Australasian Wildlife Management Society 21st Annual Conference in Fremantle WA

Environment education

Our National Office continues to receive and answer numerous wildlife calls each week from school students wanting to find out more about Australia's native wildlife and the conservation of its vital habitat. We provide a wide range of information and brochures on native wildlife, both on our website and in hard copy for posting. We have now developed a draft Environmental Education Program for implementation in our new Environmental Education Centre.

Financial Report summary

The Society's Councillors and Finance Committee continues to exercise tight and effective control over our finances and reviewed and adjusted the investment portfolio during the year. With the global market changing dramatically, our income was down on the previous year. We are hopeful, however, that our investment portfolio will eventually turn around and our investments will grow again to support our important wildlife conservation work.

Donations, bequests and gifts

During the year we continued with our bequest program to encourage donors to support our work through advertising in the Solicitors' Pro-Bono publication and website, and 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. Contact the National Office for more details.

The future

Acting on sound legal and accounting advice, the Council has implemented a major sustainable program for the future conservation work of the Society, with a new and modern constitution to cope with the administrative and structural changes necessary for the Society to receive Tax Exemption and Deductible Gift Recipient status. We have also applied for registration as an approved environmental organisation with the Federal Government. Members and friends can make a tax deductible donation to the wildlife conservation work of the Society, which is helping to establish our long term viable future in conservation.

Centenary program for 2009

We have endeavoured to involve every member of the Society in the 2009 Centenary celebrations. The

Centenary Committee, chaired by member Noel Cislowski, has organised Civic Receptions with the Lord Mayors of Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Darwin to mark the Centenary of the Society which was founded in 1909. Invitations will be distributed in due course to financial members in each state to attend these receptions.

A special Centenary Membership Certificate is available for all members on application through the National Office.

Dr Joan Webb, who wrote our previous history – *Conserving Australia's Wildlife* - was engaged to review and write up the full 100 year's history of the wildlife conservation work of the Society in time for our celebrations in 2009.

Ecoworld Gardens project

We continue to progress with the establishment of a major Wetland Environmental Education Centre in the Rockdale Wetlands Corridor in Sydney to be known as Ecoworld Gardens. The Rockdale City Council has given advice on how we should proceed and we expect to finalise all necessary approvals by March 2009. Once formal approval has been granted to lease the parcel of land around the Brighton Ponds, we will develop Stage 1 of the project by building the double classrooms to commence the Environmental Education Program for local schools around historic Botany Bay.



Brighton Ponds, Ecoworld Gardens

A Special thank you

May I wish every member of the Society well for 2009 and thank them most sincerely for their tremendous support and continued dedication and commitment in helping the Society to preserve and protect our native wildlife for future generations of young Australians as we begin to celebrate our next Centenary of operations as a national body.

Patrick W Medway AM
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
31 December 2008