

WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED

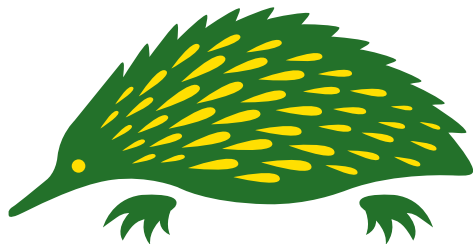
PO BOX 42 BRIGHTON LE SANDS NSW 2216

WPSA PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2013

A year in review

A major focus during the year was environmental education, awarding the ten environmental scholarships and announcing the winner of the inaugural **Wildlife Science Ecology Research Scholarship**.

Another major focus was the change of our brand name to **Australian Wildlife Society** to encompass many wildlife issues, not just preservation!



Australian Wildlife Society

AWS logo

As with all charities, we are very aware of the necessity to carefully husband our income stream and this is always a major focus for the members of the board of the Society. As we receive no government funding and rely entirely on our own membership fees and return on investments to carry out our wildlife conservation work, seeking more support through sponsorship or partnerships will be an ongoing necessity for our board members.

We identified that the future of the Society lies with a new generation of young Australians who have a passion for wildlife conservation. Our research indicated that young people who study wildlife conservation at university develop a keen and abiding interest in the subject which can last a lifetime. You too can make a donation to the Wildlife Science Ecology Research Scholarship at any time. Donations are fully tax deductible under our registration as a DGR status Item 1 on the table in section 30-15 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*.

In an innovative first for our Society we launched the UTS Scholarship Loan Scheme to raise a minimum of

\$100,000 to be invested for the scholarship in a secure financial institution at the maximum interest rate to earn additional funds. This has proved to be a very successful method of raising additional funds for the scholarship.

To date we have raised \$24,918.60 in donations and hold \$38,548.80 in the UTS Scholarship Loan Scheme investment account.

On a personal note, my highlight for the year was being appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2013 Queen's Birthday Honours List for distinguished service to wildlife conservation. The presentation of the medal by Her Excellency Professor The Honourable Marie Bashir AC CVO was a humbling and inspiring occasion.

Another memorable occasion was attending the welcome reception for the US Ambassador, John Berry. The Ambassador is very interested in Australian wildlife and keen to investigate some sort of project with our Society.

104th Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was well attended by members and at the conclusion of the proceedings all enjoyed a delicious luncheon. We were particularly delighted that our award and medal recipients joined us and gave fascinating reports of their conservation efforts.



President Suzanne Medway addresses the 104th Annual General Meeting

Serventy Conservation Medal for 2012

This special award was inaugurated in 1999 to commemorate the wonderful conservation work by the members of the Serventy family: Dr Vin Serventy, his brother Dr Dominic Serventy and their sister Lucy. Each member of the family has given a lifetime of commitment to the conservation and preservation of Australian wildlife.

The Serventy Conservation Medal for 2012 was awarded to Bob Irwin. Bob has devoted most of his adult life to the conservation of Australian wildlife and to educating people about its unique characteristics. He is well known for establishing the Beerwah Reptile Park (now Australia Zoo) in the 1970s and for working with his late son, Steve, to bring prominence to the contribution of the crocodile to our river systems. Bob was responsible for the discovery of a rare species of freshwater turtle in the Burdekin River system. This now bears his name, *Elsya irwini*. He has worked tirelessly to bring the plight of dugongs to public attention and achieved changes to the *Native Title Act* following improper hunting of dugongs and turtles by indigenous groups.

Since leaving Australia Zoo in 2008 Bob has thrown his support behind other conservation groups. He has given his support to the Wombat Protection Organisation in South Australia in its efforts to achieve better protection for the southern hairy-nosed wombat and he has been a constant campaigner for the preservation of koala habitat. Following Cyclone Yasi in North Queensland, Bob supported C4 (Community for Coastal and Cassowary Conservation) in their successful lobbying to government agencies to provide feeding stations for the starving rainforest birds. Bob has also participated in scientific research involving radio tracking of crocodiles and koalas. If there is a cause for Endangered wildlife, Bob will support it. He has recently set up the Bob Irwin Wildlife and Conservation Foundation to continue his work into the future.

Bob's lifetime dedication to the conservation of wildlife makes him a deserving winner of the Serventy Medal.



Neville and Jan Lubke accepted the Community Conservation Award from Clive Williams

Community Conservation Award

The award for 2012 was made to the NSW Nature Conservation Working Group (NCWG) based in the Murray catchment area of NSW. The group is made up of dedicated local landholders who have achieved wonders since the group's formation in 1994. They have managed the rehabilitation of almost 10,000 hectares of remnant native bushland and have focused on the preservation of threatened grassy box woodlands and supported the captive breeding and release of the bush stone-curlew, classified as Endangered under the *NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. Curlew conservation is now the key focus of the group.

Apart from conserving habitat for curlews, the NCWG has worked at raising awareness of the curlew's plight among local landholders and has undertaken an active fox-baiting program covering over 18,000 hectares of private land. The captive breeding program has led to the release of 55 young curlews over the past seven years. NCWG has also developed a comprehensive educational program, *Curlewing the Landscape*, which they have presented to schools and other groups in other parts of New South Wales, including Sydney and the Central Coast as well as the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. They also support graduate students from Charles Sturt University conducting research into curlews. They have also written several articles published in Australian magazines.

The NCWG is an excellent example of a community working together for the benefit of Endangered Australian wildlife and is a worthy winner of our award.



Judith May, Clive Williams and Bob Irwin

University Student Grants

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia announced the winners of the ten annual grants of **\$1,000** each to honour and/or postgraduate students conducting research that will contribute to the conservation of Australian wildlife. The winners for 2013 were:

James Sadler, University of Queensland. Project: Establishing new, 'non-traditional', coral paleothermometers to reconstruct environmental conditions experienced in the southern Great Barrier Reef over the last 8,000 years.

Jessica Hacking, Flinders University. Project: Disease resistance and sexual selection in the tawny dragon: utilising disease-resistance-genes in conservation biology and evolutionary theory.

Stephen Griffiths, La Trobe University. Project: Investigating factors influencing occupancy of artificial nest boxes by tree-roosting bats.

Christopher Watson, University of Technology, Sydney. Project: Detecting ecosystem change in temperate Australian grasslands: remote sensing tools.

Hugh Davies, University of Melbourne. Project: Fire, cats and the Kimberley's declining mammals.

Georgia Ward-Fear, Sydney University. Project: Mitigating the impact of an invasive species (cane toads) by decreasing naivety of a top order predator (goannas).

Giverny Rodgers, James Cook University. Project: Climate change in a stable thermal environment: effects on the performance and life history of a coral reef fish.

Kylie Soanes, University of Melbourne. Project: Evaluating the effectiveness of road mitigation measures for wildlife: how much monitoring is enough?

Madelon Willemsen, University of Technology, Sydney. Project: Can project management improve mammal conservation success in Australia?

Lachlan Fetterplace, University of Wollongong. Project: The vast unknown: assessing the conservation of soft sediment fish diversity.

Wildlife Science Ecology Research Scholarship

University of Technology Sydney School of the Environment PhD candidate Ellen Curtis was the inaugural recipient our new research scholarship designed to promote the conservation of Australian wildlife by UTS postgraduate research students to support projects with outcomes that will help conserve Australian native fauna and flora.

Ellen graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Environmental Biology with First Class Honours in 2010 having completed a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Biology in 2009.

Under the primary supervision of Dr Andy Leigh, Ellen is continuing her passion for arid plant research, focusing on plant thermal tolerance and recovery at extremely high temperatures for her thesis titled 'Response to and recovery from heat stress – thermal tolerance of Australian arid-land vegetation'.

Ellen hopes that her PhD research will give insight into Australian desert plant vulnerability to high temperature extremes.

'We can apply our knowledge of how species cope with current conditions, including their ability to recover and acclimate in response to various thermal regimes, to better predict species distribution patterns under future climate scenarios. Ultimately, this information will help target conservation efforts towards those species that are most at risk. Whilst this is the main research goal of my study, I also hope to encourage in others a greater appreciation of the ecology of Australia's arid interior,' she said.

Ellen's field work with Dr Leigh, in conjunction with Port Augusta City Council, at the Arid Lands Botanic Garden at Port Augusta, South Australia has led to a recent trip to the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, USA, where she spent time in the Sonoran and Mojave deserts accompanying Associate Professor Charles Knight and his students on a research expedition. Ellen was invited to California to teach Associate Professor Knight and his colleagues a protocol she has been developing for measuring plant thermal tolerance and recovery.

The WPSA scholarship of \$5,000 gives Ellen not only a substantial financial boost but also a personal fillip to continue along a research path in arid plant biology and wildlife conservation.



Dr Clive Williams presented Ellen Curtis with the inaugural Wildlife Science Ecology Research Scholarship

Wildlife conservation projects

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, supporting and/or delivering various wildlife conservation projects and operating in a number of different, and sometimes difficult and isolated, 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.

2013 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 wildlife conservation projects.

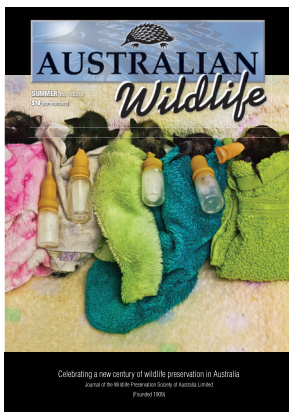
During the year major donations were made to Fourth Crossing Wildlife, Jirrahlinga Koala Wildlife Sanctuary and iNSiGHT Ornithology.

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. We note with some concern that the Victorian government has been asked to remove the bare-faced or common wombat from the list of protected native species, which will allow some local farmers to destroy wombats on their property. We are fortunate to have the support of the various national wildlife rescue services that do such valuable and selfless work to help rescue, save and rehabilitate our native wildlife. We are constantly reminded of the necessity of our organisation to stay vigilant and to continue to protect and preserve our native wildlife from attack and abuse.

Australian Wildlife magazine

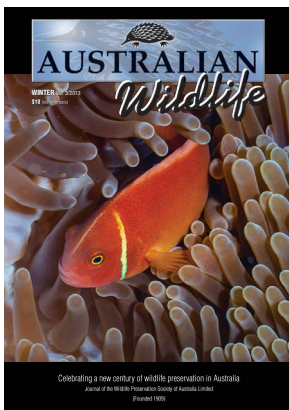
Our coloured magazine is the 'flagship' of the Society and has proved to be extremely popular amongst all of our members.



Summer Cover



Autumn Cover



Winter Cover



Spring Cover

Our fortnightly Email Wildlife Newsletter has proven to be very popular with our members and we encourage them to forward it on to their family, friends and associates to help spread the wildlife conservation word.

Conferences and wildlife research seminars

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

WPSA 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 an appointed member of the NSW Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel. He provides expert advice and assistance on wildlife conservation matters and keeps the Society abreast of environmental and conservation developments by government officials.

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.

Donations, bequests and gifts

During the year we continued with our bequest program to encourage donors to support our work through the 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.

A special thank you to all our members

May I wish every member of the Society a healthy and happy 2014 and thank you 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 2013



The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia joined a coalition of wildlife conservation organisations that are calling for the end to hunting and killing by anyone of Vulnerable or Endangered Australian wildlife. The coalition is lobbying the present federal government to alter the Native Title Act of 1993 because the twenty year old Native Title Act allows the unrestricted hunting and killing of about fifty species of Australian native wildlife. Some, like the dugong, are listed locally and internationally as Endangered or Vulnerable to extinction.