

## AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE SOCIETY

PO BOX 42 BRIGHTON LE SANDS NSW 2216 | (ACN 134 808 790)

### ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015

#### A year in review

AWS has continued to support the Linnean Society's campaign to protect the Cliefden limestone caves from proposed dams on the Belubula River. The scientific symposium organised by the Linnean Society was a great success, and attended by CEO Patrick Medway, and President David Murray. The case for protecting the caves has broadened to one for protection of the whole river system (*Australian Wildlife*, Summer 2016, p. 5).

AWS has also supported a proposal for a new Bargo Gorge National Park, as this would provide a vital wildlife corridor connecting the coast to the Blue Mountains. The proponents of the national park requested that the JR Stud residential development above the gorge should have a buffer zone of 150m from the edge of the gorge. Fortunately, Wollondilly Council has adopted this as a condition for development consent, so protecting water quality in the Bargo River.

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*.



David Murray, Noel Cislowski, Ken Mason and Patrick Medway at the 2015 AGM

#### Oldest life member turns 102

Our Society's oldest member, Mrs Margaret Deas, turned 102 in January and celebrated her birthday by raising over \$6,000, which was donated to our marine turtle project. Margaret was made an honorary life member for her contribution to the Society and its projects.

#### Australian Wildlife magazine

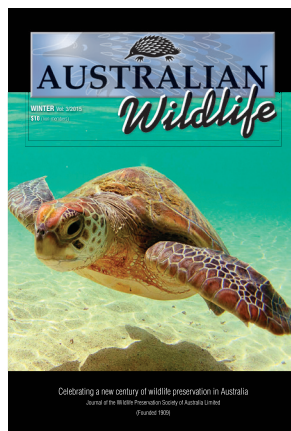
Our coloured Australian wildlife magazine is the flagship of the Society and has proved to be extremely popular amongst all of our members.



Summer Cover



Autumn Cover



Winter Cover



Spring Cover

Our fortnightly email wildlife newsletter has also proven to be very popular with our members across Australia and we encourage them to forward the newsletter on to their family, friends and associates to help spread the wildlife conservation word.

## 2015 – 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 \$1,000 are awarded. Grants are available for research projects of direct relevance to the conservation of Australian wildlife – plant or animal. Grants may be used for the purchase of equipment and consumables, travel expenses related to field research, or attendance at conferences at which the students are presenting their work. The winners for 2015 were:

**Bianca Amato**, School of Natural and Built Environments, University of South Australia  
Project: The contribution of native flower visitors and their host plants to crop pollination on the Yorke Peninsula, South Australia

**Benjamin Arthur**, Marine Science, University of Tasmania.  
Project: Changing climate and the winter foraging ecology of Antarctic fur seal populations

**Matt Christmas**, University of Adelaide.  
Project: climate adaptation of the hop bush, *Dodonaea viscosa*, along an environmental gradient

**Amanda Edworthy**, Research School of Biology, Australian National University.  
Project: Dispersal and genetic structure of forty-spotted pardalotes across fragmented landscapes: conservation of an endangered songbird

**Christine Evans**, Flinders University.  
Project: The hidden costs of extra pair paternity: implications for survival and reproductive success in an endemic woodland bird

**Sarsha Gorissen**, University of Sydney.  
Project: Conserving the endangered fauna of highland swamps

**Emily Gregg**, School of Biosciences, University of Melbourne.  
Project: No water, no hope: the on-ground feasibility of a waterless barrier to prevent the spread of cane toads in Western Australia

**Harry Moore**, School of Life & Environmental Sciences, Deakin University.  
Project: By suppressing both the abundance and activity of invasive mesopredators in arid environments, could dingoes have a positive influence on native mammal species?

**Estibaliz Palma**, School of BioSciences and the Faculty of Sciences, University of Melbourne.  
Project: Plant invasion ecology: relationship between species traits and demographic dimensions of invasiveness

**David Hamilton**, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Tasmania.  
Project: Contact networks and transmission of facial tumour disease in the Tasmanian devil

## Wildlife Science Ecology Research Scholarship

The 2015 Australian Wildlife Society Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship has been awarded to UTS School of the Environment PhD candidate Ray Mjadwesch. In 2014 UTS postgraduate student Ray Mjadwesch commenced his thesis researching the history and status

of the four large macropod species, the western grey kangaroo (*Macropos fuliginosus*), eastern grey kangaroo (*M. giganteus*), the wallaroo/euro (*M. robustus*) and the red kangaroo (*M. rufus*), in New South Wales. Ray is using, amongst other things, vegetation types and land use in New South Wales to characterise landscapes in terms of habitat values for kangaroos, and is then sampling various habitat types to develop stratified population models for the species within a contemporary land-use context.



Ray Majadwesch receiving his award from Patrick Medway

## 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. We are grateful to the late Renee Loma Ruelberg for her generous bequest to environment programs. 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.

## 2015 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. 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 and its vital 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:

- Cairns Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre
- Wedge-tailed Eagle Satellite Research Project
- Bat research in Cliefden limestone caves



## NCC Turns 60 years

Our Society has been a member of the Nature Conservation Council since its inception and several of our presidents have served on the council. Our directors joined the celebrations at a special function to mark 60 years of standing up for nature and communities.



Vice President Dr Clive Williams OAM, Professor Don White and CEO Patrick Medway AM at the NCC anniversary celebrations

## Financial Report summary

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

## 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. Recently we became embroiled in a disastrous situation where loggers clearing land were covering over wombat burrows in contravention of their conditions to clear the site. After extensive litigation the matter was resolved but we remain on guard against further breaches of the conditions in their permission to log the site.

## Awards

The winners of the Serventy Conservation Medal were Helen Bergen and Ray Mjadwesch. Not only have Helen and Ray been responsible for directly saving the lives of many injured animals, they have saved many more by educating the public on how to live harmoniously with wildlife.



Presentation of the Serventy Medal. L to R: Ray Mjadwesch, Dr Clive Williams OAM, Helen Bergen and Dr David Murray

The winner of Community Wildlife Conservation Award was Wild Mob of Brisbane. Although Wild Mob has a Brisbane base, its work ranges from the Barrier Reef to Tasmania. They have focused their attention on saving endangered species.

## 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. 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 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. A major conference during the year was the AWMS conference in Brisbane which featured research on the Australian dingo. Our directors also attended a Seed Seminar at Mt Annan Botanic Gardens and the NCC AGM.

The Society's CEO and honorary secretary, Patrick Medway, continued to promote the Society by giving lectures to various groups and schools. He was also 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.



Vice president Ken Mason and NSW Minister for the Environment the Hon. Mark R Speakman SC MP at the 2015 NCC AGM

## Fundraising



A major fundraising initiative was launched when our Vice President, Clive Williams, learned that William Ryan, publican at the Harold Park Hotel in Sydney, was collecting 5 cent coins in his business, Clive approached him to consider saving them for our Society. William

was taken by the link between the echidna on the coin and the echidna we have as our Society's emblem, and readily agreed. Not only that, he arranged for Clive to speak to other hotels and businesses in his area. As a result we now have several businesses collecting coins on our behalf. We provided signs and collection boxes for those that required them and then invited our members and friends to participate in this fundraising process. By this means small individual efforts can lead to a grand achievement. The proceeds are being used for the Society's programs, such as the university grants.

Once the collection box has been filled, it can be taken along to the nearest Commonwealth Bank. All the deposit details are printed on the bottom of the box.

### **A special thankyou to all our members**

May I wish every member of the Society a happy, healthy and prosperous 2016 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.

**David Murray PhD, PRESIDENT | 31 December 2015**



Brown falcon. Photo by Michael Ritchie