

WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC

(ABN 13 817 470 816)

*Formed in 1909 and dedicated to the conservation of Australia's wildlife
Patron: His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia*



WILDLIFE SOCIETY MOURNS THE DEATH OF DR VINCENT SERVENTY AM BSc BEd DSc

Patrick W Medway AM, President of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, expressed the great sorrow of both Council and Members on the death of their beloved President of Honour, Dr Vincent Noel Serventy AM, on Saturday 8 September 2007. He passed away in his sleep in a nursing home at Woy Woy, aged 91 years.

“He will be sadly missed by several generations of Australians who had the pleasure of meeting him, working with him or reading his many conservation publications. He was truly regarded by many of us as the ‘Father of Conservation in Australia’ and his wit and wisdom will be sadly missed,” Patrick Medway stated.

Dr Serventy was born in Perth, Western Australia in 1916 and was one of eight members of the large Serventy family who migrated from Croatia after WWI. Vincent, his brother Dominic and sister Lucy, were all keen naturalists and became active in conservation and wildlife preservation issues. Vincent and Dominic wrote several wildlife conservation and environmental science books together, particularly on sea birds.

Vincent graduated from the Western Australia University in 1941 with degrees in education and science. He worked initially as a teacher, developing the new natural history curriculum for western Australian schools, as well as becoming very involved in the conservation of native wildlife.

Vincent and his wife Carol travelled widely around Australia, producing the famous *Wildlife Walkabout* series, which began initially as a wildlife magazine, and later developed into a film and video series for television. Vincent recalls spending many a happy time in a caravan with Carol and their three children touring the outback areas, researching and writing about native wildlife issues.

Vincent moved to Sydney in 1970 with his family at the invitation of Rupert Murdoch, and wrote and published many of his conservation books during this time.

In 1973 he was elected as President of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia by popular request after the previous president Thistle Harris, the third wife of the founder of the Society, tried to close it down. Over the next thirty odd years Vincent steered the Society into an influential national wildlife conservation Society, often becoming embroiled in many of the major conservation movements of the time. Notable campaigns included the battle for the Franklin River, the stopping of logging of old growth forests in various states, increased legal protection for native wildlife and the removal of exotic predators, all with a special emphasis on teaching the next generation of young Australians about our unique native fauna and flora, as well as the constant need to protect its vital habitat.

He later co-authored a major publication, *Conservation Victories and Battles Yet to Win* (2004), with Society President Patrick Medway, highlighting the conservation wins of the period leading up to the current environmental issue of global warming.

Vincent wrote over seventy books on conservation, wildlife preservation and wider environmental issues throughout his lifetime. The most prominent of these include *A Continent in Danger* (1966), *Nature Walkabout* (1967), *Saving Australia* (1988), *Zoo Walkabout* (1979), *Serventy – An Australian Life* (1999) and *The Flight of the Shearwater* (1996). A number of his books were reproduced in other languages and his influence spread around the world.

He was presented with the rare honour of a Ritter Award by the Netherlands Government in 1980, the Australian Natural History Award in 1974, and was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1975 for his work in conservation and education. He was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Science from the Macquarie University in 1998 in recognition of his service to the advancement of natural history and science.

Vincent was very ably assisted throughout his life by his wife Carol, who co-authored several of his books, and was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 1985.

“Vincent will be sadly missed by several generations of Australians who were strongly influenced in their love of Australia and its unique wildlife. His persistence in writing to prime ministers, premiers and ministers continued right to the end – he pressed for a reduction in the roadkill of native animals and for a United Nations Bill of Environmental Rights to compliment the United Nations Bill of human Rights. He was truly regarded as the ‘Father of Conservation’ in Australia and was greatly honoured as such for his tremendous contribution to wildlife preservation throughout his lifetime,” Patrick Medway stated.

For further information please contact our National Office on 02 9556 1537.

More details on the website at www.wpsa.org.au



Dr Vincent Serventy AM BSc BEd DSc
speaking at New South Wales Parliament House

National Office: PO Box 42, Brighton Le Sands NSW 2216
Tel: 02 9556 1537 Fax: 02 9599 0000 Mob: 0402 435 048
Email: medway@optusnet.com.au
Website: www.wpsa.org.au