

Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2004

The Community Wildlife Service Award is made each year to recognise organisations which make a significant contribution to the preservation of Australian wildlife. The winner of the Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2004 was Waterfall Springs Conservation Association Incorporated of Kulnurra near Gosford, NSW.

Waterfall Springs Conservation Association

Waterfall Springs is an outstanding example of a dedicated community group working to save some of the rarest and most vulnerable species of wildlife in Australia. Their mission statement is to co-ordinate and unite with the community and organisations to conduct recovery projects for endangered native species at Waterfall Springs Wildlife Park, which constitutes 33 acres (approx. 13.5 hectares) of freehold land at Kulnurra, near Gosford, purchased by Lloyd Oldfield and his wife in 1990. Part of the property has been registered as a licensed sanctuary and part is zoned conservation and preserved as a Nature Park for flora and fauna. Their objective is to provide responsible community education relevant to the plight of endangered species. They focus on the need for wild habitat preservation as the primary means of ensuring the long-term survival of Australia's vitally important native species, as well as managed breeding programs and habitat regeneration initiatives for currently endangered species.

WSCA Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation. It employs a manager, while the remaining workforce is made up of volunteers. Funding is primarily derived from donations from the corporate sector. The major project of Waterfall Springs is the saving of endangered species, particularly the brush-tailed rock wallaby.

Many of you will remember reading about, or seeing on a TV program, the rescue of a translocated colony of brush-tailed rock wallabies from Kawau Island near Auckland, New Zealand. Sir George Grey, a former Governor of South Australia, took some with him when he became Governor of New Zealand in the middle of the 19th century. At the same time as predation and loss of habitat threatened their survival in their homeland, they proliferated to pest proportions on Kawau. The New Zealand Government planned to exterminate them and Lloyd Oldfield determined to save them. This meant negotiating with governments in both

New Zealand and Australia, building quarantine enclosures and raising the cost of capture and transportation. The total cost of this successful exercise was \$210,000, plus a lot of volunteer hours. In all, 33 wallabies were repatriated and now form the basis of a scientific breeding program.

The Victorian sub-species of the brush-tailed rock wallaby was down to only six known animals in the wild. Waterfall Springs is assisting in a breeding and release program for these animals also, as well as holding small colonies of bridled nail-tail wallabies (primarily a Queensland recovery program) and yellow-footed rock wallabies (primarily a South Australian recovery program), to provide an insurance genetic pool.



Brush-tailed rock wallaby (Petrogale penicillata). The brown colour is ornamented only by a white cheek stripe and a long tail with a distinct brush at the end. It inhabits suitable very rocky areas in the eucalyptus forests of inland South Eastern Australia. Males are up to 30% larger than females of the same age. It eats grass, herbs, leaves and some fruits. The tail is used primarily as a balance aid when running at speed up and down cliff faces in their rocky home. This animal is now one of the most critically endangered kangaroos in Australia

Waterfall Springs also provides educational experience for students in a local TAFE college and provides practical experience for persons under the "Work for the Dole" scheme.

This is truly a community project. Significantly, it has operated without any government financial assistance – Commonwealth or State. It does, however, co-operate closely with the Department of Environment & Conservation and its equivalent in other States. The corporate sector has been a tremendous help, providing both cash and materials, which includes many hundreds of tonnes of rock and well over 1,000 tonnes of soil. However, the whole operation could not proceed without all the volunteers involved. Our Society is delighted to provide its support through this award.

Some wallabies have already been returned to their former habitat in Victoria through state government agencies. Waterfall Springs works closely with National Parks and Zoos in other states and maintains small populations of other endangered species of wallaby to assist programs undertaken in Queensland and South Australia.

Dr Clive Williams, Vice President of the Wildlife Preservation Society when announcing Waterfall Springs as the winner said that he was particularly pleased to be able to offer the Award to Waterfall Springs as that organisation operated on private land and almost entirely with local volunteer labour and great dedication from management and staff. Waterfall Springs' achievement, without any government financial assistance, is a great example of a community effort from which Australian wildlife will substantially benefit. It is a worthy recipient of the 2004 Wildlife Preservation Society's Community Wildlife Conservation Award.

Debbie Breen, the Sanctuary Manager, accepted the Award on behalf of Waterfall Springs and thanked Dr Clive Williams, Richard Morecroft, and the Wildlife Preservation Society. She said it was an honour and a privilege to receive this prestigious Award. Debbie thanked the Society for recognising the hard work and dedication by Waterfall Springs towards saving our endangered native wildlife. She believed the encouragement and financial donation by the Wildlife Preservation Society would help Waterfall Springs meet their conservation objectives.



Clive Williams, Debbie Breen and Richard Morecroft

Debbie took the opportunity to personally thank the Waterfall Springs volunteers, who are instrumental in the success of the Sanctuary's operations. Their dedication and tireless unpaid efforts have helped make the Sanctuary a perfect place for these sensitive creatures to survive and thrive. She also thanked their corporate sponsors such as Red Ranger who to date have funded the Projects at Waterfall Springs. During the past three years, Waterfall Springs has invested a quarter of a million dollars of Red Ranger's precious funds into their conservation projects.

Waterfall Springs has a vision to engage in additional endangered species recovery programs, such as the Northern hairy-nosed wombat and the red tree kangaroo. Debbie asked that our Society and its supporters help them make it happen and continue to support their goals. She also, on behalf of Waterfall Springs, thanked Lloyd Oldfield for his unrelenting determination towards creating and building this project; for his commitment to conservation, his unselfish passion and love for all Australian animals. Debbie said that without his professional attitude to getting the job done, they would not be receiving the Award and she thanked Lloyd on behalf of everyone.