

## *Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2005*

The Community Wildlife Service Award is made each year to recognise organisations which make a significant contribution to the preservation of Australian wildlife.

**Dr Clive Williams announced that the Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2005 was awarded to the Mareeba Wetland Foundation of Northern Queensland.** The story behind the Mareeba Wetland Foundation winning the award is a great example of conservation and community participation and is an inspirational example of what local action can achieve.



*The Community Wildlife Conservation Award*

The Mareeba Wetland Foundation combines valuable conservation work and environmental education. With the assistance of volunteers it operates as a not-for-profit organisation; all its income is invested into sustaining the program. The success of the Mareeba Wetland Foundation provides a valuable lesson in dealing with Governments for those concerned with wildlife conservation.

Our Society congratulates the Mareeba Wetland Foundation on the success that it has achieved for conservation and the environment with this very worthwhile project.



*Alison Megarrity presents a Certificate to Gwyneth Nevard of Mareeba Wetland Foundation, with Clive Williams presenting the crystal Award*

Gwyneth Nevard upon accepting the Award on behalf of the Mareeba Wetland Foundation thanked the Society and said that this was an award for all the people who have been involved with the Mareeba Wetlands over the last ten years. Gwyneth explained that the Mareeba Tropical Savannah and Wetland Reserve is located at the foot of the Hann Tableland, 6.5kms north of the township of Mareeba on the Cairns Highlands in North Queensland. Everyone is very welcome to visit the Reserve at any time.



*Gwyneth Nevard*

The Mareeba Wetland Foundation came into being ten years ago as a result of a group of local people, spearheaded by Tim Nevard, becoming increasingly concerned about the fate of the last substantial area of publicly-accessible Reserve of savannah woodland close to Cairns, as it was proposed to clear it for sugar cane. The overflow from the Mareeba-Dimbulah Irrigation Area was causing rising salinity in the reserve. Putting these two things together, Tim developed the idea of the Mareeba Tropical Savannah and Wetland Reserve, which would use this overflow water to create a series of regionally-important wetlands. The

Mareeba Wetland Foundation was established as a not-for-profit community conservation organisation to create and manage these Wetlands into the future for wildlife and for people.



*A view from the verandah of the visitors' centre*

Since its inception, the 5,000 acre Mareeba Wetlands, as the reserve is known locally, has grown into one of the most important regional sites for native wildlife. **It has 206 recorded bird species, an innovative fire management regime and conservation programs for the re-introduction of Gouldian finches and freshwater crocodiles, as well as possibly the largest recorded breeding colony of buff-breasted button quail in the country.**



*Beautiful Gouldian finches*

Largely through voluntary support, the Reserve has become an important attraction for visitors, and now provides visitor facilities, walking trails, canoes and guided tours, and last year added overnight accommodation. It has an active volunteer program, and a large and supportive membership. Through its work, the Foundation has provided an insight into the ecology of tropical savannas and wetlands to tens of thousands of people who have been able to visit the Reserve since it opened in 1999.

Mareeba Wetland Foundation President, Mr Nevard said "It's fantastic for the Foundation to receive this Award from the Wildlife Preservation Society, as it recognises the contribution of many people who have helped put the Reserve back into ecological working order over the last ten years".



*View across the Reserve from the lookout*