

Serventy Conservation Medal for 2002



Dr Clive Williams (Senior Vice President) announces the winners of the Serventy Conservation Award for 2002

Vice President, Dr Clive Williams, announced the winners of the **Serventy Conservation Award 2002 - John and Cicely Fenton** - and highlighted their outstanding contribution to wildlife habitat conservation over the last 40 years.

John and Cicely Fenton of Lanark property at Branxholme near Hamilton in south western Victoria and his family have transformed their property Lanark from three windswept paddocks to the complex ecosystem it is today. When they took over the property it was bare and comparatively waterless. It wasn't easy. "When I was reinstating wetlands, for example, the government was funding the draining of wetlands" said John.



Dr Vincent Serventy AM (President of Honour) presents Cicely and John Fenton with the Serventy Conservation Award for 2002

Since that time they have planted more than 80,000 native trees and associated understorey and reclaimed some 67 ha of wetlands. As the Birds Australia expert Graeme O'Neill said "The return of almost all the birds that once inhabited the region to the Fentons' grazing property in Victoria's western district is perhaps the greatest of Lanark's many miracles". The number of birds that can be found on Lanark has risen from 40 species in 1956 to more than 155 species in the last few years. The eastern barred bandicoot is Victoria's most endangered native mammal. Once wide spread across the basalt plains of Western Victoria, their numbers declined to near extinction.

Today this small bandicoot has been released on the Lanark Station because the farm proved to be a safe haven for this small mammal. The careful replanting of native trees and the removal of feral animals such as the fox enabled the bandicoot to be re-established in a recreated natural environment. The Fentons went beyond drought proofing their property but sought to 'recreate the balance' between the farming enterprise and the natural environment.

John and Cicely were clearly delighted to receive the Award. John spoke on his love of the land and his commitment to a balanced approach to farming. Cicely Fenton spoke of her involvement with the local Total Catchment Management Program for the District and outlined her long experience in conservation matters, especially her work for the eastern barred bandicoot. Cicely proudly wears a small silver image of an eastern barred bandicoot as a neck pendant to show her commitment to this little animal.



Cicely Fenton



John Fenton