

## Serventy Conservation Medal for 2007

Each year the Serventy Conservation Medal is made to a very special person who has been outstanding in their commitment to the preservation of Australian wildlife. In 2007 the Award was made to **Bev Smiles** for her outstanding wildlife conservation work. Bev has been active for many years in the Western Conservation Alliance and the Central West Environment Council. She was Chair of the Mudgee District Environment Group of which she was the founder. She was on the Steering Committee of the Inland Rivers Network for many years and also served on the Advisory Committee for Goulburn National Park. Bev has been well-known for her active efforts to save the Pilliga and the Brigalow Belt. If you want to know anything about these areas just ask Bev – she probably knows every tree in the district. As if all this isn't enough, Bev has also had a high profile as an advocate for protecting the Macquarie Marshes. Currently she is the Western Project Manager for the National Parks Association of NSW. For all her dedicated efforts on behalf of wildlife and habitat over so many years she has been chosen to receive the Serventy Medal. She is a very worthy recipient of that award.



*Bev Smiles receiving the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2007,  
Presented by Dr Clive Williams (Vice President) and Ian Cohen MLC*

### Acceptance speech by Bev Smiles

It is a great and unexpected honour to be here today receiving a conservation award from the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia - an environment organisation about to celebrate one hundred years of work protecting our unique Australian fauna.

Dominic and Vincent Serventy were famous media personalities in my youth - the founders of public education about the wonders of our natural environment. I still have my collection of *Walkabout* magazines and these have become very important records of how things used to be in this country.

To be receiving the Serventy Medal for Conservation is truly an exceptional highlight of my life.

At dinner last night with Suzanne and Patrick Medway, Peter Clements and John Clarke we talked about the commitment of young people in the major conservation groups. My response is, that I am one of those young people, I am one of those young people who was educated to care for and work towards preserving our environment. I don't want to keep passing the responsibilities down to the next generation - I think it is our duty to do something, do something now and do as much as possible.

The reality in Australia is that most of the major environmental damage has been done in my life time. The post war years, when technology improved, saw the massive increase of clearing and development expansion.

I can remember in the early 1970s around my area in Central West NSW, mile upon mile (yes, before metrics came in) of cleared paddocks with windrowed timber that was all burnt. A total crime. And most of those cleared paddocks contained the Grassy Box Gum Woodlands – now listed as endangered ecosystems and most of the fauna that depend on them for feeding and breeding is also listed as threatened with extinction.

In the 70's Mudgee was famous for its Yellow Box honey, there were over seventy honey producers in the district. Now there are only three, selling blended honey and the Yellow Box has been listed as part of a critically endangered ecological community under the Federal Environment Act.

So I am very keen to stop the ongoing depletion of the habitat that our beautiful native animals rely on. All remnants of native vegetation in the landscape and their connections are now critical for future recruitment - especially the western woodland species.

It has been a great opportunity to work with NPA on western NSW campaigns. In that role I have organised a conference on the conservation significance of the Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves of NSW and Queensland - the biodiversity highways of the eastern inland.

The other major campaign I am working on is the Red Gum National Park campaign. Ian Cohen has given you the details about this issue. The red gum forests of the Murray and Murrumbidgee are the largest remnants of vegetation left in one of the most heavily cleared landscapes in Australia. They form an important east - west corridor linking the Alps to the South Australian border.

It is critical for many woodland and wetland animals that these areas are protected. Species such as the superb parrot, the barking owl, the koala, grey-crowned babbler, and the Southern bell frog.

We have given you the wonderful poster that Ian Cohen's office funded, the brochure and the lobby letter to write. Please support this campaign in whatever way you can. It is only through a coalition of groups and dedicated individuals that we can achieve these important outcomes for the future and to lead by example, as Vincent, Dominic and Lucy Serventy did.