

2010 WPSA Serventy Conservation Medal

Dr Clive Williams, Vice President, announced the winner of the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2010 as Helen George. Helen was nominated by Dr Mike Augee, a member of WSPA's scientific advisory panel.

Few people have devoted over 45 years of their lives to conservation. However, that is the achievement of the winner of our Serventy Medal for 2010, Helen George. Helen was one of the people who contributed to the forming of the Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES) and since that time she has been active in educating wildlife carers how to be responsible for the animals which come into their care. Helen is reputed to be the first person to successfully raise an orphaned grey-headed flying fox to maturity. This occurred in 1978 and the flying fox was less than 24 hours old when Helen received him. Much of his life was spent as an education animal, living for almost 23 years.

Helen developed considerable expertise in this area and, in 1987, was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her services to conservation, principally for her work on the plight of the grey-headed flying fox. She was one of the key advocates for getting the NSW Government to place them on the protected list. She is a scientific member of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW.

Helen shares her knowledge freely and, although she has no formal qualifications, is often called on to talk to a variety of organisations, students and academics. With such a length of experience, her knowledge is naturally not confined to flying foxes. She is a keen observer and recorder of data and rigorously pursues scientific principles. She is hoping to soon publish a book on the care of macropods which is eagerly awaited both by carers and veterinary scientists and students. It is a pleasure to have Helen's name added to the list of Serventy Medal winners.

Response by Helen George

I am delighted to receive this magnificent award. Although I never met Vincent Serventy, I remember him well in the 1970s and 80s. His holistic approach to the environment was music to my ears, and I continue to push that approach in endeavouring to convince carers of the absolute need to adopt a scientific approach to wildlife care. I believe that best practice demands a good understanding of environmental influences, mother animal behaviour, milk structures and natural diets if orphaned and injured animals are to be successfully rehabilitated.



Helen George with the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2010