



AUSTRALIAN

Wildlife

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\$10 (non-members)

Celebrating our Centenary

Journal of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited

(Founded 1909)

100th Annual General Meeting



1. Patrick Medway presents Centenary Membership to Carmel Tebbutt
2. L to R: Noel Cislowski, David Murray, Tony Cornell, Suzanne Medway, Patrick Medway and Carmel Tebbutt unveiling the Centenary Plaque
3. Suzanne Medway was presented with Honorary Life Membership by Carmel Tebbutt
4. L to R: Stephen Grabowski, Suzanne Medway, Don Goodsir, Patrick Medway and Joan Webb
5. L to R: Tony Cornell, Patrick Medway with the Society's accountants Sash Denkovski and Vladan Nikolic
6. Directors cutting the Centenary Cake. L to R: Noel Cislowski, David Murray, Tony Cornell, Judith May, Suzanne Medway, Patrick Medway, Vanessa Wilson and Peter Hardiman
7. A family affair – Members back row: Steve and Vanessa Wilson. Front row: Ron and Bev Wilson
8. Noel Cislowski, Chairman of the Centenary Committee
9. The Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment
10. Patrick Medway with the Society's financial advisor, Stephen Grabowski
11. Centenary Plaque



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Front Cover

Wedge-tailed eaglelet nearly ready to fly at about eleven weeks.

Photo by Simon Cherriman



Back Cover

An unusual record of a clutch of three eggs on a nest near Perth. Insert: Eaglelets have fluffy white down at about three weeks of age. Perth's skyline is just visible in the background.

Photo by Simon Cherriman

Articles and comments expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editor, Society or members. Articles contributed from outside sources are included for the reading enjoyment of members and to encourage discussion on different points of view.

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Celebrating our centenary
1909 - 2009

Australian Wildlife

is the official journal of the
Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited.

Founded in 1909, the Society is dedicated
to the conservation of our unique Australian
wildlife in all its forms.

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Membership

Concession: \$30

(pensioner, student, child)

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Family Members: \$50

(being husband, wife and children jointly)

Associate Members: \$60

(being schools or incorporated or unincorporated
associations with a principal object related to
conservation, nature study or education)

Corporate Members: \$100

(being incorporated or unincorporated associations
not being associate members)

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Our Mission

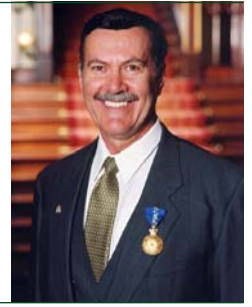
The Wildlife Preservation Society is an independent, voluntary, non-profit conservation organisation, formed in 1909, and is committed to the preservation of Australia's precious flora and fauna. We act as a watchdog and provide advice to government agencies and institutions regarding environmental and conservation issues concerning all aspects of wildlife preservation. Our mission is to conserve Australia's fauna and flora through education and involvement of the community. We are dedicated to the conservation of our unique Australian wildlife in all its forms through national environmental education programs, political lobbying, advocacy and hands on conservation work.

Our Society has always known that a conservation battle is never really won until the victory is enshrined in legislation. We have always tried to convince politicians of the necessity to include the preservation of Australia's precious wildlife and its vital conservation habitat in all their planning and environmental issues and discussions.

From the President's Desk

Patrick W Medway AM - National President

Our Centenary year



Registration as a new Company

I am pleased to report that, after a very lengthy legal process, the Society is now an Australian Public Company Limited by Guarantee and now qualifies for Australian Tax Office exemption status. We now have a Board of Directors of ten elected members who will serve for the following three years, but subject to change if any should resign from office.

Our Society is now better placed to continue to grow as a national wildlife conservation organisation and be able to make a real impact on saving our native wildlife for future generations.

History of the Society

We commissioned the renowned historian, Dr Joan Webb, to research and write up the history of the Society since its foundation in Sydney in May 1909. Joan has done a marvellous job and found many interesting historical facts about our early wildlife conservation work and its many impressive personalities who have built up the Society over the past one hundred years. The book features the outstanding conservation work of David Gordon Stead, Thistle Y Harris AM and the late Vincent Noel Serventy AM to name a few.

Foreword for the Centenary Book

We are delighted to tell you that a number of distinguished people have contributed 'Forewords' to the history of the Society. Her Majesty the Queen has sent her best wishes for our Centenary and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh graciously contributed a foreword as did His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, the Premier of New South Wales and some other prominent citizens. We all look forward to reading the full history of the Society in due course.

Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation Conference

Four members of the Society attended the international conference on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation in Brisbane last month and met and networked with some 650 other delegates from around Australia and the world. Two Society delegates gave interesting and impressive papers on their research and experience in handling Australian sea turtles which are subject to predation, damage and exploitation at a range of levels across northern Australia. It was wonderful to hear of the commitment and dedication of the indigenous conservation groups working to save and protect sea turtles

on Australian beaches and to see how they are removing the terrible 'ghost nets' that are dumped each year in the Gulf of Carpentaria, which cause such havoc amongst all marine life. The next issue of *Australian Wildlife* will feature a detailed article on sea turtle conservation

Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel

Last year the Society was invited to sit on the Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel of the Department of Climate Change and Environment, to make an input into the way the kangaroo industry is managed by the Department. A cross section of industry, consumers and conservation representatives meet to advise and discuss the way the industry operates.

Celebrate the Society's 100th birthday

Members and guests are invited to attend a very special birthday party to be held on Friday 22 May 2009. Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of New South Wales is our guest of honour. Details of the birthday luncheon are below.

Centenary Luncheon

Friday 22 May 2009

The National President, Patrick W Medway AM, and the Directors of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia extend a cordial invitation to all our members and friends to attend our Annual Luncheon to celebrate the Centenary of the Society on Friday 22 May 2009 – 12 noon till 3pm.



Venue: Cello's Restaurant - The Castlereagh Boutique Hotel
169-171 Castlereagh Street, Sydney

Enjoy a sumptuous three-course Luncheon (including beverages).

We are delighted that our Guest Speaker for this special occasion will be Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of New South Wales.

Bookings and prepayment essential as numbers are strictly limited.
Cost \$100 per person.

RSVP: 9556 1537 by Monday 18 May 2009 or email info@wpsa.org.au

Editorial

Suzanne Medway

It has been an exciting few months for me at the start of the Society's Centenary year



Thank you to all the members who wrote enthusiastic letters and emails on the first full colour edition of *Australian Wildlife*. I am so happy that you like it. I am also delighted that Society members are enjoying the fortnightly E-news. If you are not receiving an email copy, please notify the office with your current email address.

The first event for the year for me was our family's annual camping trip to Barrington Tops, north of Newcastle. This is a beautiful area with lots of native birds and wildlife. While there, I experienced what must be the highlight of all my wildlife encounter experiences.

One very hot afternoon, while swimming in a lovely waterhole in the river, we had the most wonderful encounter with a baby platypus.

The platypus is generally a solitary animal with its own specific home range in which it feeds and lives. Normally platypuses are shy and wary. It tends to be a nocturnal creature and generally

only leaves its burrow in the early morning and evening. The platypus sleeps in a burrow for up to seventeen hours a day.

The young platypus that we saw definitely was not shy and wary, nor nocturnal. It swam around us for about thirty minutes, diving under the rocks, feeding, sunning itself and at one stage swam into my grandson and gave him quite a fright.

It is hard to photograph a dark brown platypus in dark water, but we certainly tried! In the end, the platypus was either well fed or tired and disappeared amongst the rocks – probably into the burrow. What an incredible experience!

During our Society's Centenary year I plan to feature in each edition of *Australian Wildlife* an original article from our earliest publications. One of the first articles to appear in *Australian Wild Life* was an article on wild flowers. No it is not a "typo". In our early history all references to wildlife was two words. When Patrick

was editor of *Australian Wildlife* in 1995, we changed over to the single word wildlife. I hope you enjoy this article by David Stead.

The Society's "official" Centenary celebrations started with a Civic Reception hosted by the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore MP. The inside back cover of the magazine features a selection of photos taken at the Reception.

In February Patrick and I attended the 29th International Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation Conference in Brisbane. There were around 650 delegates representing sixty countries. Our Society was also represented by Dr Jennie Gilbert from Kewarra Beach in Far North Queensland, and Marnie Bonner of Australian Seabird Rescue. These two inspiring ladies are absolutely devoted to rescuing and rehabilitating sea turtles. Jennie and Marnie are writing articles for the winter edition of *Australian Wildlife* on their impressions of the Conference.

It is a rare event to hold a 100th Annual General Meeting. We were very grateful to the Deputy Premier, the Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, for hosting the morning tea that followed the meeting. To mark the celebration I rushed into David Jones' food hall and purchased a cake and numbered candles. The lady who served me was intrigued as to who was turning 100, and probably a little disappointed to realise it was an organisation not a person. The inside front cover features a selection of photos taken at the AGM.

The next exciting event to occur was the opening reception at the annual ARAZPA Conference for members and friends on the Gold Coast, Queensland, hosted by SeaWorld. Look out for photos in the next magazine.



100th Annual General Meeting - 2009

The historic 100th Annual General Meeting of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited was held on Wednesday 25 February 2009

Noel Cislowski, Chairman of the Centenary Committee welcomed the Society members to this historic Centenary Meeting.

Patrick W Medway, National President, officially opened the meeting and formally welcomed the guest of honour, The Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment.

The Minister addressed the gathering and congratulated the Society on achieving its Centenary.

The elected Executive Officers of the Society for 2009 are:

President and Chairman – Mr Patrick Medway AM

Vice President – Dr Clive Williams

Vice President – Dr David Murray

Secretary/Executive Director – Mrs Suzanne Medway

Honorary Treasurer – Mr Tony Cornell

The elected Directors of the Society for 2009 are – Noel Cislowski, Dick

Mason, Judith May, Vanessa Wilson, Peter Hardiman.

Suzanne Medway, Executive Director/Honorary Secretary/Editor was awarded Honorary Life Membership for her contribution to the Society over the last ten years.

The Directors of the Society for 2009 cut the Centenary Cake.

A delicious morning tea was served after the meeting, kindly sponsored by Carmel Tebbutt and the Department of Environment and Conservation.



Directors for 2009

Back row L to R: Dr Clive Williams (Vice President), Judith May (Carer's Liaison), Suzanne Medway (Executive Director, Company Secretary, Editor), Vanessa Wilson, Dr Richard Mason. Front row L to R: Tony Cornell (Treasurer), Dr David Murray (Vice President), Patrick Medway (National President), Noel Cislowski (Chairman Centenary Committee) and Peter Hardiman



On rare occasions both eaglets will survive - these two eagles are eleven weeks old. All photos by Simon Cherriman



A passion for powerful predators

Simon Cherriman

**“The wedge-tailed eagle soars aloft, a king on outstretched wings,
Simon, as he watches loves what nature brings,
His passion and his knowledge are gifts we’ve grown to share,
We, too, watch and listen, and show that we care.”**

My father wrote me this beautiful poem several years ago when I left home for a while and these words will never cease to be fresh in my thoughts. They sum up perfectly much of my life, which I’ve spent in the bush watching birds (especially eagles), climbing trees and building hides high in the canopy to learn all I can about birds. The first line immediately paints a characteristic image of Australia’s largest bird of prey, the wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*). This ‘bold eagle,’ or so its scientific name implies (‘audax’ from the word ‘audacious,’ meaning bold), is actually very shy and wary of humans and is usually observed soaring hundreds of metres above the earth on majestic, upswept wings. It is rare indeed to find a ‘wedgie’ that will stand its ground and appear bold to the observer, even during nesting.

Wedgies normally mate for life, and the pair lives year-round in the same territory. During the breeding season, the male eagle performs dives known as 'pothooks,' where he plummets earthward with wings folded for hundreds of feet, before opening his wings slightly and climbing swiftly upward to reach a stall, which initiates another dive. As well as impressing his mate, these dives also advertise occupancy of the territory to other eagles.

The size of a wedgie's territory varies according to food supply, landforms and human disturbance, but it is generally thirty to fifty kilometres squared in area. Most territories in south-west Western Australia are centralised in valley systems and contain large expanses of uncleared bushland, as well as open areas that are suitable for hunting. A massive nest of branches, often more than two metres deep, is built in a large tree with a commanding view over the surrounding landscape. Several nests normally exist in one territory. Although the normal clutch size is two eggs, wedgies normally rear only one young each breeding season. When they hatch, the tiny eaglets are covered in natal down that appears white and fluffy. It only takes about twelve weeks for the young to grow to fledging age, a very rapid transformation.

Being at the top of the food chain, wedge-tailed eagles don't really have any predators (except humans). Conversely, though, there is a huge variety of animals that they eat



The diamond-shaped tail gives the wedge-tailed eagle its unique name

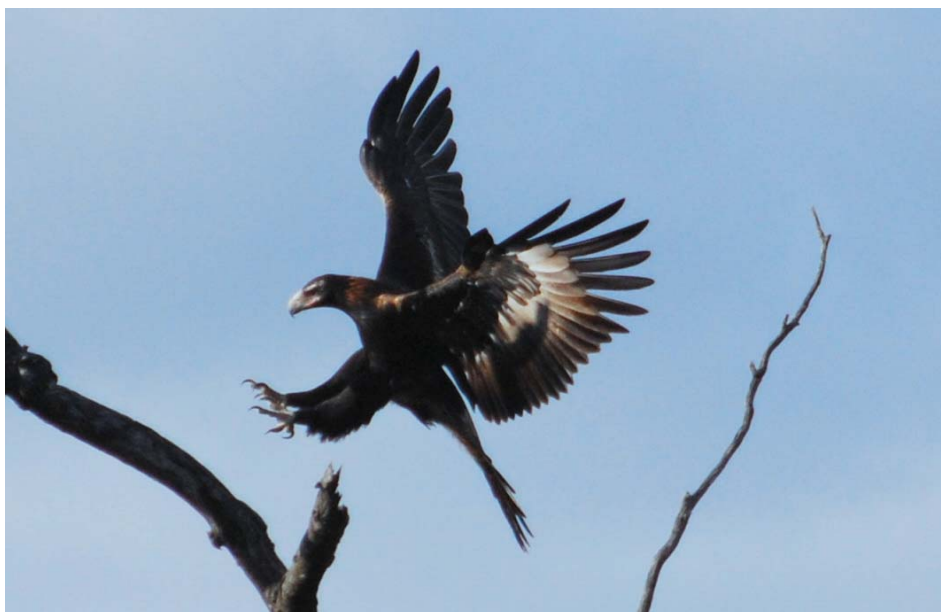
themselves. The most effective method used to determine what eagles eat is to collect the remains of prey animals from their nest. In the Perth region, I conducted my University Honours project on eagle diet from 2004 to 2006. This research involved visiting many eagle nests to collect prey remains, such as bones, fur and feathers, which had accumulated during each breeding season. These were carefully sorted and identified to determine the species to which they belonged.

Thirty-seven species of vertebrate were identified as eagle prey in the Perth region. Wedgies are mostly suited to hunting small to medium-sized mammals, so in general their diet includes bandicoots, bettongs,

young kangaroos and wallabies, as well as introduced species like rabbits. However, they are extremely adaptable predators eating whatever is most readily available. They sometimes feed on foxes, feral cats, piglets, birds like ravens, ducks, cockatoos, parrots, pigeons, even emu chicks and reptiles, including bobtail skinks and monitor lizards. They have also been known to cooperatively hunt adult kangaroos. Carrion is probably an important part of eagle food for breeding pairs during the non-breeding season and all year round for non-breeding sub-adults. The increasing number of road-killed animals, particularly in country areas, has no doubt provided an extra food source for some eagles, however it is unknown how these 'artificial' meals affect eagle reproduction and the population size overall.

I have studied wedge-tailed eagles near my home in Perth for nearly ten years now. It has been a privilege to pursue my passion as an interest in life and conduct various educational talks about my research to schools, community groups and conferences.

My most moving experience with a wedge-tailed eagle was at the Mitchell Plateau, in the northern Kimberley region of Western Australia: The red dust covered my face and, despite the air rushing over my body, I was sweating profusely in the extreme humidity. Suddenly, a large goanna shot out from the spear grass and across the road in front of me. I jammed on the brakes and the quad



A female eagle lands in a perch tree near her nest

skidded to a halt. Within eight seconds I was chasing the goanna through the savannah woodland, with grass seeds hitting me like arrows. Suddenly I lost sight of the reptile, paused and all was quiet. I glanced up into the branches of several nearby gums - nothing.

Then the rush of air broke the silence - whhhhaaauuuuuugghhht....thud!! The shadow had come from my right and torn through the sky only two metres above my head, before dropping into the spear grass. My instinct told me - I just knew it was a wedgie. I dropped my backpack, crouched and crept in his direction. I got to within ten metres and then stopped. He moved his head from side to side, adjusting his eyes so he could peer between the spear grass stalks. I did the same and glimpsed his golden head and beautiful brown eyes. This is where the experience gets different from all my previous encounters with wedgies. The immature male eagle looked towards me, bounded awkwardly to a nearby stump and hopped onto it to give himself a better view of me. My only movement was sweat dripping from my forehead. He looked curiously in my direction, still cocking his head sideways. Then in a single movement, thrust forward and, with only a few beats of his mighty wings, flew to perch in a eucalypt branch only a metre above my head.

Something told me to keep in my frozen state, but I forced my head to pivot over my left shoulder in his direction. Our eyes met in a spine-tingling gaze. Brown at blue; golden at blonde; feathers at skin; bird at man. We held this stance for only a moment, before this incredible creature broke free, flapped from the branch and disappeared over the savannah in the same fashion he had arrived. Amazing. Moving. Captivating.

These majestic creatures will never cease to inspire me. I normally kick myself for not having a camera handy during these moments. On this occasion I didn't care - the experience itself was a memory I'll never forget!

In 2009 I established the small business 'Insight Ornithology' which operates out of Perth, Western Australia, with the ultimate aim of educating people and promoting conservation. Currently I am doing a two year Master's degree in Natural History Filmmaking at Otago University in New Zealand.

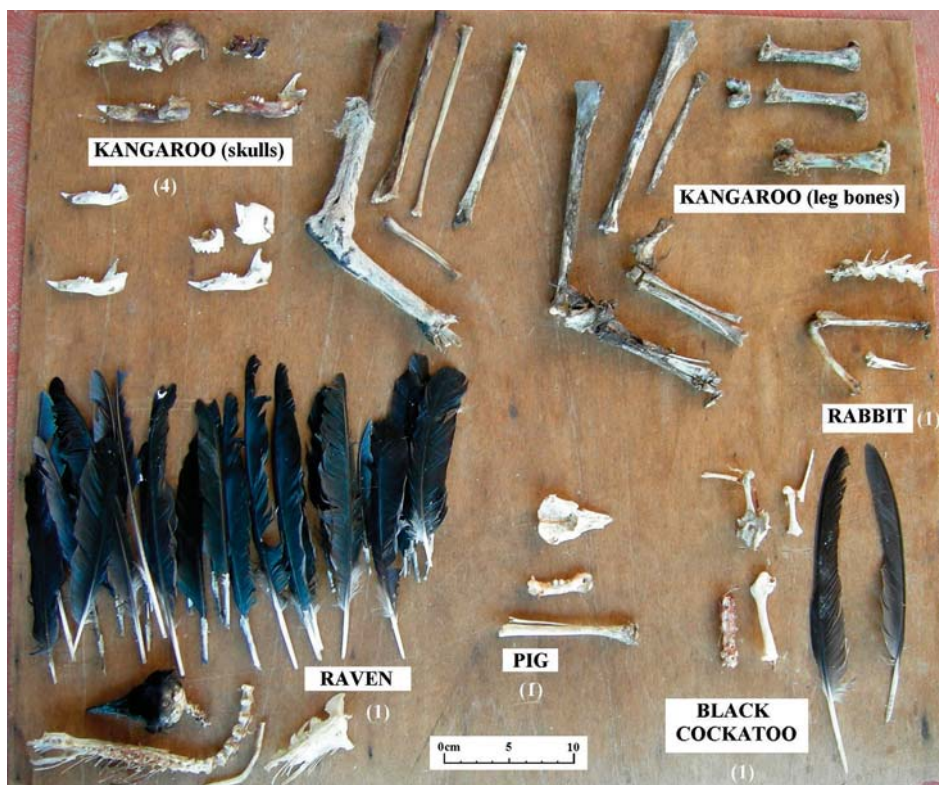
For information about wedge-tailed eagles and to order nature photographs and copies of my documentary "A King on Outstretched Wings", please contact me via email: aquila84@iinet.au.



Eagle eyries are usually built high up in the sturdy fork of a tall eucalypt tree

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Remains of prey animals collected from an eagle nest in the hills near Perth



Craig Webb releasing a Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle at Mount Wellington. Photo by Sam Rosewarne

Raptor and Wildlife Refuge of Tasmania

Craig Webb



The Raptor and Wildlife Refuge is established on a twenty acre property overlooking Kettering and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel.

The Refuge is an incorporated association as the community wanted to be involved - we currently have over one hundred and fifty members. In 1997 I returned to my birthplace of Tasmania after many years in the Kimberly working as a veterinary nurse. While there I was involved in all facets of wildlife care, being registered as a licensed wildlife career with Nature Conservation branch of DPIWE.

The Refuge reflects my dedication to caring and protecting Tasmania's natural wildlife and the proximity of the Wildlife Refuge to the birds' and animals' natural habitat is a great advantage to rehabilitation.

The outstanding feature of this facility is two of the largest raptor flight aviaries in the southern hemisphere, purpose built to flight train wedge-tailed eagles, sea eagles and other birds during there recovery from injury.

Along with the two huge flight aviaries there are a number of slatted aviaries currently under construction to house many and varied species of raptors,

with one bank of aviaries built solely for quarantine purposes.

The macropod enclosure is at last completed as a halfway house for injured and orphaned wallabies and kangaroos before eventual release back to the wild. At the Refuge we aim to provide the best possible care for not only raptors but all manner of wildlife - snakes, frogs, birds, possums and everything in between that needs some tender loving care. We also aim to be a focal point so members of the public can obtain help/care/advice at any time of the day or night. We are proud to have Dr James Harris as our contractual vet as he is one of the leading Vets in the avian field.

Volunteers are important in the operation of the Refuge as are our wonderful sponsors, with whom we have developed a great relationship. Last year we were successful in obtaining a grant from The Tasmanian Community Fund, this money has been invaluable and has increased our facilities to world class standards.

I have been a nature/wildlife lover for as long as I can remember and have always shown a keen interest and helped injured wildlife in my travels throughout Australia but it came to the fore when I was based in the far north of Western Australia in the Kimberley.

My then partner was a Vet and we built up a thriving veterinary practice with us being the only vet clinic for hundred of kilometres. I was not only fascinated with all we dealt with - and the list of native animals was very extensive - but soaked up all the knowledge I could gain like an ink blotter, this knowledge was like a drug to me and I had to use it on my return to Tasmania. I started caring for macropods as I had confidence in these animals from caring for literally hundreds of different species of wallaroos, wallabies, kangaroos, etc, but as more and more birds came in for care, I was increasingly concerned by my lack of flight aviaries and cages and the Raptor Refuge was born with my initial flight aviary being a huge success. I simply had to keep the momentum and make it happen and, through countless ideas and an imagination gone wild, I slowly gathered sponsors and equipment to construct what is now part of a marvellous facility at the Raptor and Wildlife Refuge.

The truly inspiring birds that have come through the Refuge are simply so awesome that once you have a close encounter with one of these huge and spiritual birds there is no turning back and I have committed my property and a great deal of resources to help Tasmania's wildlife.

If I had my way, Tasmania would be 'Human Free' but, that not being practical, all stops must be taken to try to not only help the injured wildlife but to educate the community on what is unfolding in Tasmania. Dare I say that we do not learn from what's happened on the mainland and, the way that forestry is decimating our Island, it is truly a shame that we have to go down this path. But for the sake of all our magnificent creatures we must try to curtail some of the damage and remain on the frontline to be available to care for the animals that unknown to them are in the firing line on all fronts - and they call it progress!

Up close and personal

It was New Year's day 2008 and I had planned to release a wedge-tailed eagle from the summit of Mount Wellington as I felt it would be a great start to the year, not only for the "wedgie" but for the Raptor Refuge.

It all started pretty smoothly, Rowena my partner in life and I went to the Refuge to catch and place the eagle in restraints for the fifty minute drive to the top of Mt Wellington. The wedgie was ready after weeks of extra fitness work. After a brief capture and a small pep talk to wedgie, we were off.

The eagle bag is a system where the bird is velcroed into a canvas bag and the eyes are covered. This minimises stress and for short trips is better than a crate that would let the bird flap about and possibly injure itself. On the way I chose to stop at a cafe for a couple of takeaway coffees, I left the door to my ute open and simply said to Rowena "back in a sec babe", as she cradled the eagle bag in her lap. On my return



Craig Webb with Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle. Photo by Sam Judd

with two coffees, I discovered Rowena yelling to me from the ute to help. The wedgie had somehow managed to "crack" the velcro straps open and Rowena had done her best to keep him from flying out the open door by having him firmly plastered to the inside of the windscreen. Believe me a wedgie is a big bird and she did extremely well to keep him contained, apparently in my moments in the shop her cries of help to passersby went unnoticed, but then again what would they do, it is not everyday you see a lovely woman struggling with a huge prehistoric raptor in a ute. Anyway after a few seconds I had the bird back in the eagle bag and we were on our way, reliving the 'almost catastrophic disaster'.

We arrived on the summit and were greeted by some friends and a few media crews, the wind was gentle but there was an almost eerie mist. After giving wedgie a few rudimentary wing stretches and another pep talk, I released him into the breeze and watched with pride and fascination as yet another magnificent wedgie flew back to where he belongs, high in the skies over Tasmania.

Ten days later I had a call from a lady saying that she was sure she had seen him at a place called Tea Tree which is about thirty kilometres away as the eagle flies. We discussed colouration, etc, and deducted that it could very well be the wedgie we released as she also had knowledge of the local wedgies.

We can only hope that this bird will be safe and can find a place to call home in a State being deprived of prime eagle habitat at an alarming rate. If he can dodge the bullets, poison, wind farms, vehicles, power lines and human persecution, he may be able to find a partner to raise a fledgling to soar the skies of Tasmania.

Contacts:

Raptor Refuge

Mob: 0408 725 869

Email: craig@raptorrefuge.com.au

Reptile Rescue

Mob: 0407565181



White breasted sea eagle. Photo by Amy Brown



Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle. Photo by Amy Brown

Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle dreaming

Wendy Buss

The close personal encounter I had with a Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle was truly a thrilling and awesome experience, not only because the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle is Australia's largest bird of prey and a critically endangered species with conservationists claiming there are less than one thousand of these magnificent native birds left in the world, but also because this rare encounter came to me as a gift that no well meaning adventure tour company could have ever orchestrated on demand. This unique moment could not have been bought for any amount of tourist dollars. Like some of the best things in life it came to me free; a raw authentic magical encounter with a top predator in the wild that left me breathless, humbled and somehow transformed.

Indeed, I had been left breathless quite a bit as I greedily gorged on the sumptuous banquet of nature's beauty my first trip through Tasmania afforded me. Moving through the constantly changing Tassie landscape was like moving through rooms in an art gallery of great art masters. One minute traversing romantic rolling green pastures dotted with

picturesque derelict cottages and stationary sheep melding into the grass-like ancient, craggy rock formations, as if I had stepped into a John Glover landscape. Passing through rippling oceans of dreamy ivory coloured poppy fields which was pure Monet. Further on down the road regimented displays of somber bottle green fir plantations were an impressive sight while, just around the bend, the landscape opened out into sweeping arcs of heavenly, ethereal purple and mauve lavender fields set against a contrasting backdrop of bright yellow green hills that had you imagining you might find Van Gogh sitting at his easel in the corner of a field somewhere.

I wandered through towering old growth forests replete with luxuriant giant ferns, breathing in deeply the mysterious sacredness of these ancient, unspoiled places and gazed upon mountain and coastal vistas so pure, pristine, wild and mesmerisingly beautiful my eyes popped, my spine tingled and my spirits soared. I think it is safe to say 'Paradise Lost' must be rediscovered many times a day for Tassie travellers.

My special moment though was still to come. My meeting with the Tasmanian wedge-tailed was to take place at Germantown; a rural and forest precinct on the outskirts of St Marys, overlooking the North East Coast. I arrived in St Marys under cover of darkness where my lift was waiting to take me up to 'Seaview Farm'; a holiday cabin and backpackers' hostel situated on a working eco farm up at Germantown.

As I bounced along in the car over dirt roads I couldn't really see too much other than numerous kamikaze wallabies bounding across the road eager for perilous fame in the glare of the car spotlights. I could however sense the vibrant fecundity of the place. The rich pungent odour of wet forest soil assailed me even through closed car windows. I could see star light filtering through enormously tall trees and the undiscovered landscape loomed dark and mysterious all around me.

It was really cold up at 'Seaview Farm' and once tucked up under way too many blankets, I revelled in the silence and the stillness. The burgeoning promise of the undiscovered landscape waiting for me like a pressie that I am not allowed to open till morning. I couldn't wait for daylight to come so I could go exploring.

The next morning after a hasty breakfast I swung on the backpack and headed out the door, I didn't actually have to go very far at all. As I stepped outside into brilliant sunlight and adjusted my eyes I discovered I was standing in a grassy paddock buzzing with huge story book bumble bees, butterflies, busy little red breasted robins, finches and fairy wrens flitting and zooming about the place. This was a real treat and I could easily have sat and watched them all day. The air was fresh and the sky was clear as a bell. Then I took a few paces, looked up and suddenly I gazed almost in disbelief at one of the most exquisite and magical seascapes I have ever seen. 'Seaview Farm' is set high on a ridge close to the ocean in Germantown and offers sweeping views right up the North East Coast. Following the coastline due north one looks out onto undulating forest covered mountains which slope steeply down to the coast.

Down below one can make out the little coastal townships of Falmouth and a little further north Scamander. The coastline recedes into the distance in a series of no less than six crescent shaped white sandy bays. You can see waves swirling up onto these beaches like the frothy white lacy scalloped hem of the ice blue silk gown of a sea goddess. Beyond the shoreline the Tasman sea lies; a wide vast shimmering palette of constantly rippling and shifting shades of silver, pale icy blue and darker blue that stretches out seemingly forever towards the shining silver curved rim of earth.

It wasn't just the view, but the pure pristine wild energy of the place is so profound and that peculiar icy blue of Tassie waters is a constant reminder that due south is Antarctica. I realised that I am indeed sitting at the edge of the world.

I sat there staring out to sea in stunned and grateful silence for ages. The warm sun beat down on me. Silky dandelion clocks floated past gently brushing my cheeks, I was sitting so still those cheeky curious little finches and robins hopped extremely close to me. I was in bliss.

I was suddenly jolted back to earth with a start as the biggest bird I have ever seen in flight in my life flew into view. It circled high above the ocean effortlessly gliding on thermal currents perhaps about four hundred metres out to sea from where I sit. Without a word of a lie the wingspan on this bird must have been at least two metres across, it was huge! I instinctively recognised it as a wedge-tailed eagle, which are seen frequently around Germantown. This was the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax fleayi*), Australia's largest bird of prey and the fourth largest species of eagle in the world.

I watched it floating up there with effortless ease and grace, musing on something I have heard, that some native American Indian tribes believe sighting an eagle is a very auspicious omen signifying that the Gods are taking a personal interest in you and looking out for you.

Watching an eagle in their own element, it is easy to understand

why many cultures in the world have embraced the eagle as a symbol of inspirational qualities like power, strength, bravery and courage, freedom and immortality. From ancient times even up to the modern day many cultures have woven eagle magic into their ancestral myths and legends, medicines and healing rituals and rite of passage ceremonies. Some native American tribes have a deeply sacred association with the eagle and eagle feathers are highly prized in their traditional medicine rituals. The ancient Romans believed that the eagle was a messenger of the highest gods and indeed the eagle is the national emblem of ancient Rome. The USA also boasts the figure of an eagle on its national crest.

As I watched the Tasmanian wedge-tailed cruising out there I yearned for a closer look. I wanted somehow to make contact and I willed the bird to come closer to me so that I could check it out. Well, dear reader, be careful what you ask for because in the next few minutes this massive bird obliged me by doing just that. Unbelievably it flew right over to where I was sitting.

I watched amazed and disbelieving as the bird moved in ever decreasing concentric circles overhead until it was hovering there directly above me, perhaps about fifteen to twenty metres up. I could now clearly see the dark brown and white patterning on its wings and its distinctive wedge-shaped tail. As I looked up at it in a suddenly thrilling and terrifying moment I realised that the bird was staring down at me with equal intensity. The wedge-tailed and I

locked eyeballs and I could feel the power of its intelligent gaze boring into me. I have since learnt that eagles see twice as well as people which gives 'birds eye view' a whole new meaning. I have also since learnt that wedge-taileds are highly territorial with wide home ranges and no doubt I was on his turf and this top predator had come to check out what manner of creature I was and where I fit into his order of the scheme of things.

My heart beat wildly as I tried to keep looking at the bird but under the palpable power of that concerted stare, I suddenly quailed with fear and had to look away. The bird had managed to outstare me and now I was freaking out. I got the distinct and uncomfortable impression that where I fit into the wedge-tailed's order of the scheme of things was as a possible culinary detour. I wildly flipped through my mental files of everything I knew about birds of prey. I had heard of a wedge-tailed regularly eating dying carrion, eg goats, sheep, even a horse, snacking on rabbits and had heard of one even taking a chihuahua but couldn't recall any tales of wedge-taileds eating humans, but hey there is a first time for everything and it is not a nice feeling when a bird of prey with a six foot wingspan is piercing you with his eagle eye and maybe has you in his sights for lunch and I don't mean inviting you.

Perhaps my ancestral DNA memories were suddenly activated as I suddenly found myself completely identifying with how my prehistoric ancestors might have felt as the dark winged shadow of a terradactyl fell across



Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle. Photo by Sam Rosewarne

their path or maybe I was reliving a nightmare scene from Alfred Hitchcock's 'The Birds'. I suddenly felt the need to differentiate myself from dying carrion. Gripped by a stark primal terror, I made a dash for the nearest tree, pulled myself out of the bird's eye line of view and pathetically clung to the tree for dear life. Eventually the eagle, who probably thought I was a bit of a woos, lost interest in me and flew off.

As I watched the bird grow smaller, receding into the distance, my heart rate returned to normal and terror melded into relief, but the deeper underlying feeling was sheer exhilaration and joy at what had just transpired. I knew this eyeball to eyeball encounter with a Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle was rare enough and all the more poignant when I later discovered that wedge-taileds are notoriously shy of humans and usually steer well clear of them.

The experience though left me on an absolute high all day. As I walked around 'Seaview Farm' to meet the other more pedestrian and earthbound creatures that live there, I was having a 'Lion King' moment.

The wedge-tailed has somehow bestowed on me the remembering that I am connected to the circle of all life of which all creatures great and small are an equally significant part and I was keen for communion with any critter who would talk to me. I scratched the appreciative ear of an ancient donkey. I stamped in syncope with a wily black faced sheep who executed a wild ungainly Riverdance, probably to scare me off. I talked winsomely to a dappled grey that cracked me up by stretching his lips like Mr Ed in a hugely comical fashion to reveal lots of gum and the most enormous set of grass stained chompers. 'More', I beg him. 'One more time please'. The horse got tired of the game long before I did.

Finally I sing Streisand to the cows. Usually I find the cows go for the big show stopper power ballads but today the 'Seaview' cows are unimpressed with 'Yentyl' and 'Woman in the Moon'. They flicked their tails in a bored fashion and barely looked up from their grazing. I was about to give up when for some unknown

reason I found myself singing a song I hadn't heard in years. A flutey version of 'Hey there Georgie Girl' burst forth from my lips. The cows went for it. They crowded close to the fence fixing me with their big round liquid eyes. Their ears and nostrils quivered with curiosity and I like to think appreciation. As I took my bows and walked away the cows ran alongside me on the other side of the fence calling out their encores for 'moo're!' 'moo're!' I felt suitably smug as I walked away leaving my audience begging for 'moo're'.

As I wandered the farm track I gazed towards South Sister who sits serene and silent in the golden afternoon sun seemingly unperturbed by the controversy that has raged around her for some years now. My heart skipped a beat for I could see two wedge-taileds circling high close by the summit. I am told Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle nests have been found in the eucalypt forest close to South Sister and the mountain is possibly part of this pair's home range.

Sadly though South Sister has been at the centre of a logging controversy for years. Forestry Tasmania plans to log there and if the Gunns' Pulp Mill goes ahead it will happen in the next couple of years. More recently a mining company also has South Sister in its sights so this comely lady is besieged on all sides. To many folks she is a treasured local icon, a popular tourist destination and recreational spot with fabulous views from the summit. She is also possessed of a rich biodiversity containing delicate ecosystems which represent habitats for numerous rare, threatened and endangered flora and fauna, invertebrates and birds including of course the Tasmanian wedge-tailed. Sadly the birds' endangered status is critical. It faces a precarious future given that there are said by conservationists to be less than one hundred pairs of adult Tasmanian wedge-taileds breeding annually left in the world. If logging or mining goes ahead on South Sister it will almost definitely represent destruction and loss of more of the Tasmanian wedge-taileds' natural habitat, sadly putting the fate of this magnificent bird of prey more precariously in the balance and perhaps contributing towards its eventual extinction.

As I gazed out towards the eagle pair still silently circling way up high my spirit soared with them.

Later I read something that resonates by Eric Phelps:

'Eagles teach us that we have the capacity to soar to great heights if only we have the courage to do so. Through watching eagles we learn that the joy and freedom we gain through soaring to great heights is worth the fear of singed feathers'.

I realised that one of the pair I am watching now is probably the same bird I had my close encounter with earlier in the day, but this time I am happy to leave the eagles in peace and wonder at a distance. I have had enough 'singed feather' excitement for one day.

National Recovery Plan for the Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle 1998-2003

Phil Bell and Nick Mooney
Francis Daly South Sister.org

Numbats in the Stirling Range National Park

Suzanne Medway



Numbats are the most striking and distinctive of all Australian marsupials. They have a long pointed snout, a black strip through the eye from ear to nose and four to eleven white bands across their rump, with a long bottle brush tail which is often held erect. Numbats are smaller than many people expect.

A male can be up to seven hundred grams with females averaging around five hundred and fifty grams. The head and body is up to two hundred and fifty millimetres in length with a tail up to one hundred and eighty millimeters long. Numbats are diurnal (active during the day) and are often seen as they cross the road while moving about their home range.

A pair of numbats can require fifty hectares or more as a home range, so a large area is required for a sustainable population.

When threatened numbats can run at speeds estimated at thirty five kilometres per hour.

They also have a characteristic alert posture, where they stand upright on their hind legs to assess the situation.

Stirling Range National Park

The Stirling Range National Park (SRNP) was chosen in 1998 as a reintroduction site for the then endangered numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*), as it is within the historic

range of the numbat and contained large tracts of suitable vegetation.

Wandoo and jarrah woodlands and long-unburnt mallee-heath provide the best habitat for numbats.

Prior to the reintroduction the last record of a numbat in the Park was during the 1950s. Thanks to the work of the Numbat Recovery Team and the establishment of new populations such as the one in the Stirling Range National Park the numbat is now listed as vulnerable, but is still not safe from extinction.

Numbat reintroduction

Numbats were reintroduced into the western end of Sterling Range National Park in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001.

Numbats were sourced from Dryandra Woodland near Narrogin, a breeding colony at Perth Zoo and Yookamurra Sanctuary in South Australia.

Monitoring of radio collared animals found that they dispersed widely, even outside the Park and successfully bred.

Most predation of numbats in the Stirlings is due to birds of prey. This led to the introduction of predator awareness training of captive born numbats at Perth Zoo prior to their release.

Numbat facts

- Numbats are the West Australian state mammal emblem
- Numbats are the only member in their family Myrmecobiidae
- Numbats are classed as carnivorous marsupials and therefore related to the chudich
- Numbats are one of two Australian mammals that are only active during the day
- Numbats eat only termites and eat around twenty thousand termites a day.

Down below

underwater secrets of the Chain of Bays revealed in recent marine survey

Grant Hobson, National Convener, Friends of Scele Bay

A recent dive survey carried out on South Australia's remote Western Eyre Peninsula has revealed a vast treasure of vibrant, rich marine life adding further weight to conservationists' and scientists' calls to have this area protected for the future.

Late February 2009 a team of volunteer divers from The University of Tasmania's Reef Life Survey (RLS) program led by Dr Marlene Davey were involved in the inaugural near shore survey of the five bays south of Streaky Bay. Corvisart, Sceale, Searcy, Baird and Anxious Bays form an area known locally as The Chain of Bays. These bays are also currently being referred to as "Marine Park #3" in the planning for nineteen new State Representative Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).



Cape Radstock from Jones Island



Southern Rock Lobster - Sceale Bay

The eight day survey was conceived and managed by the Friends of Sceale Bay as part of a Commonwealth Caring for Our Country Community Coastcare Grant. Five divers explored the local reef systems. They carried out forty-two individual fifty metre transects, also making searches for cryptic fish, including a daring late night dive in Sceale Bay.

In superb low swell, late summer conditions the indefatigable team anchored their tape measures onto the reefs in thirteen locations and swam up and down in the standardised RLS process comprehensively recording and photographing all marine life,

including fish, algae, sponges and invertebrates. See <http://www.reeflifesurvey.com/> for more information.

The resultant baseline data now forms the first ever series of official observations of the reef systems in the area. It is not widely known that due to its isolation from the main currents, South Australia's coastline contains species diversity and endemic organism representation that rivals that of the Great Barrier Reef. Interstate divers from New South Wales and Tasmania collectively remarked at the incredible rainforest like diversity of marine algae they observed in the dive sites.



School of Juvenile Western Blue Groper - Sceale Bay



The presence of large numbers of juvenile and larger Western blue groper, *Achoerodus gouldii*, gave rise to the observation from Dr Davey that the area has not been heavily fished. These large and curious fish are quite often the first to be killed by recreational and professional fishers and thus can be seen as an indicator species.

The South Australian government is poised to decide the degrees of protection to be afforded within the new Chain of Bays MPA. Consideration will be given to the types of activities that will be permitted within this marine park and the other eighteen multiple use Marine Protected Areas recently declared along South Australia's coastline.

The relatively pristine nature of the entire Chain of Bays provides a unique opportunity for Minister Jay Weatherill to establish a series of large sanctuary zones within Marine Park #3's outer boundaries.

The Chain of Bays has a remarkably diverse section of coastline, ranging from the sheltered shallow embayments and seagrass meadows of Venus, Sceale and Baird Bays, to the exposed deep waters of Anxious and Searcy Bays, and the sandy beaches and exposed headlands of Sceale Bay. There is a wide range of benthic, reef and shoreline habitats including

limestone reefs and shoreline platforms, coastal caves, granitic outcrops and "bombies", high and low cliffs, cliff top dunes and freshwater springs and soaks.

Significant no-take sanctuaries are needed within Marine Park #3 to provide a valuable scientific reference indicating the impact or recovery



Juvenile Western Blue Groper - Searcy Bay



Brittle Sea star - Smooth Pools

to other marine habitats from commercial fishing, aquaculture, boating, pollution and climate change. The Chain of Bays area is free from any aquaculture or marine grow out industry and this is an important feature to maintain.

The Chain of Bays area is also home to fourteen percent of all Australian sea lions. *Neophoca cinerea* is Australia's only endemic marine mammal and the rarest sea lion species in the world with a declining population of ten to twelve thousand. It is also home to



Grant Hobson

South Australia's highest mainland concentration of the state endangered Southern osprey and white bellied sea eagles.

This latest survey is part of a campaign now in its tenth year by the Friends of Sceale Bay to have the area's wealth of coast and marine biodiversity both mapped and managed to preserve this remote and wild Southern Ocean wilderness for future generations.



Sarcomenia habitat

Wildflowers

David Stead

This is an historical article that appeared in an early edition of "*Australian Wild Life*."

Yours to enjoy Not to destroy

An excellent suggestion has been made by one of our members to aid in the detection of those wrong-doers who allege glibly, when questioned, that such-and-such flowers were obtained from so-and-so's ground with the owner's permission; and this is that all sellers of wild flowers should be obliged, under law, to display prominently on a placard words to show whence the flowers came, and the fact that the owner had given permission; giving, also, flowers are from cultivated bushes, this should also be stated. Such a regulation would help the large section of the public that is with us in the work, and would greatly assist the Department, we think.

Cultivation of wild flowers

It is pleasant to record that the cultivation of wild flowers in private gardens has made considerable headway during the year, as also has the planting out in public streets and parks of our indigenous flora of various kinds. This sort of thing has only to spread widely enough to itself ensure a very large measure of protection for many of our species. The Australian Forest League is doing yeoman service in this direction, backed up by the very energetic Town Planning Association. In this connection, it should be mentioned that this Society has no objection to the handling and sale of flowers actually grown by private persons, but realise that in only a very small percentage of cases have the flowers offered for sale actually come from such areas.

"Australia Avenue," Sydney- Canberra-Melbourne

This Society is highly interested in the scheme promulgated by the Australian Forest League for the planting of a great tree avenue from Sydney, by way of Canberra to Melbourne, and gives its fullest support to it. Trees are bird homes, apart from our general care for the preservation of Australian nature. The general scheme is to preserve all

suitable trees at present growing along the roadside, and to plant others in vacant spaces. Where the roads are wide enough, the trees would be arranged in groves and masses. Where good views are obtainable, openings would be left and prominent features indicated. It is to be a peculiarly Australian avenue of Eucalyptus, Angophoras, Casuarinas, Callitris (Pines), Turpentine, and, as



far as possible, all trees peculiar to the particular district through which the road runs: so that "he who runs" may literally read the signs of the bush that was there. A wonderfully educative, recreative and useful thing. If carried out properly, some of the stretches of flowering gums and "Apple" trees will be a wonderful sight of bloom, attracting hundreds of birds of several species - notably Parakeets, Honey-eaters, and many insectivores.

Replanting of Hyde Park

This work has not progressed as hoped, though the Civic Commissioners (providing an interregnum between the defunct City Council of Sydney and the proposed Greater Sydney Council) have undertaken some preparatory work. During the year a deputation of your Council waited upon the Commissioners, and asked for the planting out of the park on the lines mentioned in the last report - that is, as an Australian area, with trees, as far as possible, of the Sydney locality itself: as a means of inviting the birds whose homes are in those trees, or whose food-plants they are,

to come and live among us again. The suggestion of a bird sanctum - a special area within the park, a dense coppice or other plant formation, well cut off from the incursions of bird-destroying vermin (by means of suitable hedges, hidden fences, or water-lilled moats) - was also put forward, as it had been to the previous administration. The Commissioners were highly

sympathetic with the proposal, and instructed your President to keep in touch with the consulting engineer and architect on the matter. This is being done: but it is hoped that even pending the laying-out scheme being carried out, no time will be lost in installing the trees for the special sanctum, as they may go on growing while we sleep! Certain it is that if we provide the home, the birds will come back. Many suburban people can testify to this, from their actual experience.

Not only birds may be ultimately provided for in this way, but a number of our smaller tree mammals, like the "Sugar" Squirrel and other Flying Squirrels, and, perhaps, even the poor Koala - of which we speak later.

Mount Tomah - "The Jungle"

During March, 1927, your President represented this Society on a powerful deputation which waited upon the Premier to ask him to resume about 700 acres of forest land, known as The Jungle, on the slopes of Mount Tomah. It was pointed out that the country was covered with scrub of "tropical" or Malayan nature. The deputation was representative of all sections of the community. Ultimately, however, the deputation failed in its object, and, later on, a company was formed (called "The Jungle Limited") to acquire the land and develop it as a permanent preserve for the public. Your Council acquired one ten pound share in this Company, with the intention of doing its utmost to maintain the original intention of those who launched the company. We think, however, that the only satisfactory thing to the people-at-large will be its ultimate resumption by Government and permanent retention as a National Park.



The Prince of Wales' Rainforests Project

Justin Mundy, Senior Director of The Prince's Rainforests Project

The tropical rainforests are the world's life-support system. They absorb much of the carbon that our cars, planes and factories pump into the air every year. They control the planet's climate, and create much of the rainfall farmers across the world need to produce our food. They are home to around half the animals and plants in the world, a concentration of biodiversity that has many immediate and future benefits for mankind.

For these reasons, Australia has a strong environmental and strategic interest in conserving the large rainforest resources in Indonesia, the Pacific islands and elsewhere in South East Asia, and government and non-government organisations are investing strongly in support of this.

Rainforests are being cut down at a rate of six million hectares a year. That is an area the size of fifteen football fields being destroyed every single minute! In the process, most of the tree biomass is burned, or left to rot, releasing into the atmosphere massive amounts of the carbon gases that are causing our climate to change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that

deforestation is responsible for between seventeen percent and twenty percent of global greenhouse gas emissions each year.

Why is this happening? The answer is disturbingly simple. At the moment the trees in the rainforests are worth more dead than alive. They are felled for the logs they contain and the crops or cattle that are grown in their place and then sold as palm oil, soya and beef into the huge markets of the developed world and the growing economies of Asia.

The Prince of Wales has been working on environmental issues for more than thirty-five years. His Royal Highness has taken a particularly close interest in climate change and the role of tropical rainforest loss in that process. In late 2007 he established The Prince's Rainforests Project with the aim of encouraging consensus as to how the rate of tropical deforestation might be arrested. The project has received input from senior politicians, business leaders, civil society and other interested stakeholders from around the world. It has sought to understand the economic drivers of deforestation and to find an equitable, effective way to reimburse rainforest nations for not

Top: Deforestation, Brazil. Landscape showing dense forest on one side of the river and forest cleared to expand agricultural land on the other. This is a bend in the Iguacu River in Brazil near the towns of Cristo Rei and Capanema. The precise location 25 deg 28 min south; 53 deg 48 min west. The near bank is part of the Iguacu National Park - hence the untouched, protected forest. © S.Rocha -UNEP / Still Pictures

deforesting – in other words, to make the trees worth more alive than dead.

In the long-term, it is hoped that a global climate change agreement, negotiated under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), will place a value on carbon retained in intact forests. That will change the economics of tropical forestry, reducing deforestation and therefore global carbon emissions significantly. The Prince's Rainforests Project is developing a proposal for an emergency funding package that will begin to achieve this in the near-term, acting as a bridging mechanism to the long-term climate change framework that will emerge from the UNFCCC process.

At the core of the proposal is the idea that rainforest nations should receive

annual payments from the international community, based on the opportunity cost of not deforesting. These grants would be used within rainforest nations to fund alternative, low carbon economic development programs and to strengthen forest conservation policies and enforcement mechanisms. The rainforest nations would agree to multi-year agreements with annual targets for reducing deforestation and/or conserving standing forest – the amount of funds they would receive each year would depend on whether these targets were achieved. Importantly, this arrangement would have the characteristics of a service agreement, not a donor project: the international community would provide funds and in return rainforest nations would deliver a certain amount of forest conserved (with all the benefits this produces in the form of carbon abatement, climate regulation and biodiversity preservation).

The Prince's Rainforests Project is looking for ways to leverage private sector capital to fund this solution. One idea is to issue 'Rainforest Bonds', fixed income securities that would be purchased by large institutional investors. With appropriate guarantees from developed country governments and the support of International Finance Institutions such as the World Bank, these bonds could quickly generate large amounts of capital for tropical rainforests. The project team has had extensive discussions with the pension and insurance sectors about their appetite for such bonds, through the medium, respectively, of The Prince of Wales' P8 and ClimateWise initiatives.

The Prince's Rainforests Project is also working with governments and multi-lateral agencies to design the institutional framework that would be necessary to run this mechanism. An agency, or agencies, would need to negotiate agreements with rainforest nations, raise finance from public and private sources, monitor deforestation rates and disburse funds. These functions could be delegated to existing institutions – or they could be taken on by a new 'World Rainforests Agency', set up to deliver results in an efficient and equitable manner.

Ultimately it is hoped this will help generate the strong public will which

is needed to protect these forests in the long term: in Australia itself, for example, protection of the spectacular 1200 square kilometre Daintree Rainforest Park (added to the World Heritage listing in 1988) has been a unifying task among environmental and conservation organisations, government agencies and citizens for well over twenty years now.

The Prince's Rainforests Project is working with rainforest nations and developed country governments to fully develop the proposal and to build consensus around the need for an emergency funding package. At the end of the day, the answer is simple although complicated to put in place - to find a way for the polluting, industrialised nations of the world – which caused climate change in the first

place – to pay the rainforest countries for these eco-services. If this can be done, then the prize is huge. Not only the terrifying rate of deforestation can be stopped, so buying time to develop new carbon mitigation technologies, it would also simultaneously make a big difference to the lives of some 1.4 billion of the poorest people on Earth who live in and around the rainforest. Also, the monies raised would be a useful contribution to helping stimulate the world's economy while moving towards low carbon and therefore sustainable growth.

If you would like to add your voice to those who want to combat climate change by halting tropical deforestation, please sign up on our website www.princesrainforestsproject.org



Right: Photo by Ms. Briony Mathieson taken in Brazil 2008

Plastic problem for platypus

Dr Melody Serena, Conservation Biologist, Australian Platypus Conservancy

Plastic litter is a major conservation and welfare issue for the platypus.

The Australian Platypus Conservancy recently analysed records of platypus examined in the course of population monitoring carried out along creeks and rivers in the Melbourne area from 1998 to 2007. It showed that nearly five percent of captured animals carried one or more items of litter looped around their chest or neck. The offending items included plastic cable-ties, a ring from a six-pack holder, a child's plastic bangle bracelet, numerous pieces of nylon fishing line and a wide array of plastic loops or rings of unknown origin. The problem appears to be particularly bad along the Plenty River and Diamond Creek in the city's eastern suburbs and the Werribee River in Melbourne's west. In each of these water bodies, more than twenty percent of animals were found to be encumbered by litter.



Front foot of platypus

Some platypus drown when plastic rings looped around their neck or chest become snagged on underwater branches or other objects. Others starve when smaller plastic rings (such as those found around the tops of milk bottles) get lodged around their bill, as observed in the case of a baby male platypus found dying on the banks of the Lerderderg River near the town of Bacchus Marsh. Still other animals suffer deep lacerations when constricting loops cut through the skin of the neck or chest, as seems to happen particularly often in the case of nylon fishing line.

The platypus is vulnerable to becoming entangled in litter partly due to its feeding habits: the animals prefer to



Photo: Plat Baylesford

feed on bottom-dwelling invertebrates such as caddisfly and mayfly larvae; so much of their time is spent fossicking precisely where litter tends to accumulate in a creek or river.

A second difficulty is that the platypus mainly propels itself through the water courtesy of two broad panels of skin extending beyond its front toes. When fully extended in the water, these form paddles that are very useful when swimming and diving. The downside is that the platypus has essentially no ability to grasp or manipulate objects

using its front feet. The platypus's back feet are used to groom the animal's fur and so are a little more dexterous – but their location means that they can't easily pull something forward off the animal if it gets tangled around the front half of the body. So, plastic loops or rings that accidentally find their way around the animal's head tend to work their way back along the body until they can't go any farther and then remain there – until the plastic breaks down, or the platypus dies, or (very occasionally) a concerned platypus researcher removes the offending item!

Through their behaviour, people can make a big difference to the likelihood that a platypus (or water-rat or waterbird or tortoise) encounters noxious plastic litter.

Here are some practical actions that you can take to help:

- Cut through all plastic loops or rings – for example, those serving as part of the tamper-proof seal on food and beverage containers – before disposing of them in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Make it your habit to pick up litter left along a creek or river and dispose of it properly, including rubbish left by others.
- If you're an angler, never leave tangled or surplus pieces of line behind when fishing – from the viewpoint of wildlife, abandoned line is just a deadly accident waiting to happen.

Western ring-tail possum

Linda Dennis, Regional Advisor



First day of the project, tracking the possums to see who has survived the night
Therese Black at left and Helen McCutcheon at right

After volunteering for the Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombat Recovery Project (see *Australian Wildlife* - Winter 3/2008) my friend Therese and I found that we were well and truly hooked on wildlife volunteer projects. There is something very rewarding about helping out on a project that aims to conserve and protect wildlife. So we set about finding a new venture that we could be a part of.

After doing a little research on the world-wide-web we found a project co-ordinated by Western Australian Murdoch University and the Department of Environment and Conservation. The project was a mortality study on the threatened Western ring-tailed possum.

The Western ring-tailed possum is classified as vulnerable, listed nationally as a threatened species. Unlike the Eastern ring-tailed possum of New South Wales (also known as the common ring-tailed possum) the Western ring-tailed is an urban possum living in and around suburban Busselton and some of the surrounding towns. The Western ring-tailed possum's nightly activity is much

like that of the suburban brush-tailed possum in New South Wales. Brush-tailed possums in the Busselton area are more secretive and shy, preferring to stay away from heavily built up areas. It's interesting how the roles seem to be reversed in the two states.

The Western ring-tailed possum is under threat due to urban development as more and more new housing developments are constructed and prime habitat is cleared. Sadly, the possum is also sometimes thought of as vermin as it enjoys visiting backyard gardens in search of delicious fruit and flowers, which is generally not tolerated by the public. The possum is also preyed on by foxes and feral cats.

Due to these threats the Department of Environment and Conservation decided to take action to conserve the species by translocating individuals from habitat before it was cleared and from suburban backyards when complaints were received.

Part of the project's aim was to discover if the translocation of the Western ring-tailed possum was actually working and that's where Helen McCutcheon comes into the story. Helen's study of translocated possums - or at least the "hands on" part of the project - was coming to a close and all the possums involved in the study needed to be recaptured, assessed, have their radio tracking collars removed and released back into their home ranges for the very last time.



Gelorup Forest - prime Western ring-tailed possum habitat
The pink tags indicate where possums have been seen

After discovering the project, Therese and I quickly registered our interest with Helen and were ecstatic when we were accepted as volunteers. Plans were set, plane tickets booked and before you knew it we were on our way to Busselton, Western Australia, where the project was based.

Here is a diary of our time with the possums...

Sunday - Therese lives in Queensland and I live in New South Wales so Therese flew into Sydney so we could travel together the rest of the way to Western Australia. When we met at the airport we were like excited little school girls on a big adventure - and so we were! (On a big adventure, that is, not school girls... that was a looooooong time ago!)

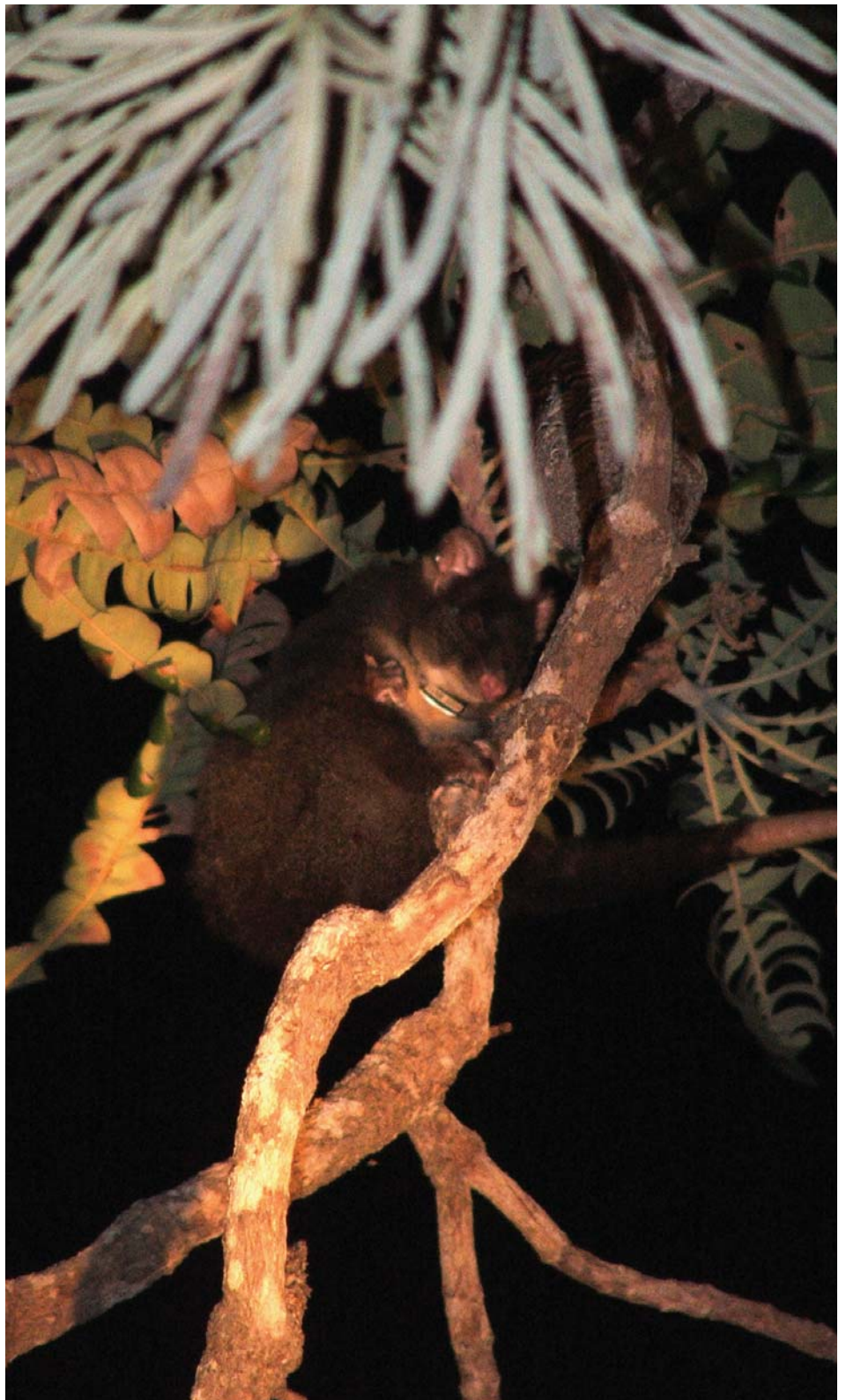
We flew into Perth late morning and were collected by my dear friend Marg Larner who had a great day planned for us. She took us to her friends cafe in rural outskirts of Perth and we enjoyed a long chat and a great lunch topped off with a glass (or several!) of delicious Western Australian wine. We were then taken on a tour of the estuaries to see Marg's pelican friends. It was terribly cold but we had a lovely day. In the early evening Marg handed us over to Helen and we drove to Busselton where we were to spend the next week working with the Western ring-tailed possums.

Monday - In the morning we travelled to one of the study sites, the Ludlow Tuart Forest, to carry out a routine mortality check so we could find out which possums had or hadn't survived the night.

The tracking collars emitted different pitched frequencies for either "alive and moving" or "dead and still". The possums in this area were keeping their collars on for longer than the rest of the project possums so Helen could continue the study on successful translocation later in the year.

Later in our week we would grid an area of the Ludlow Tuart Forest so that the next round of volunteers could carry out a possum count to determine the population in the forest.

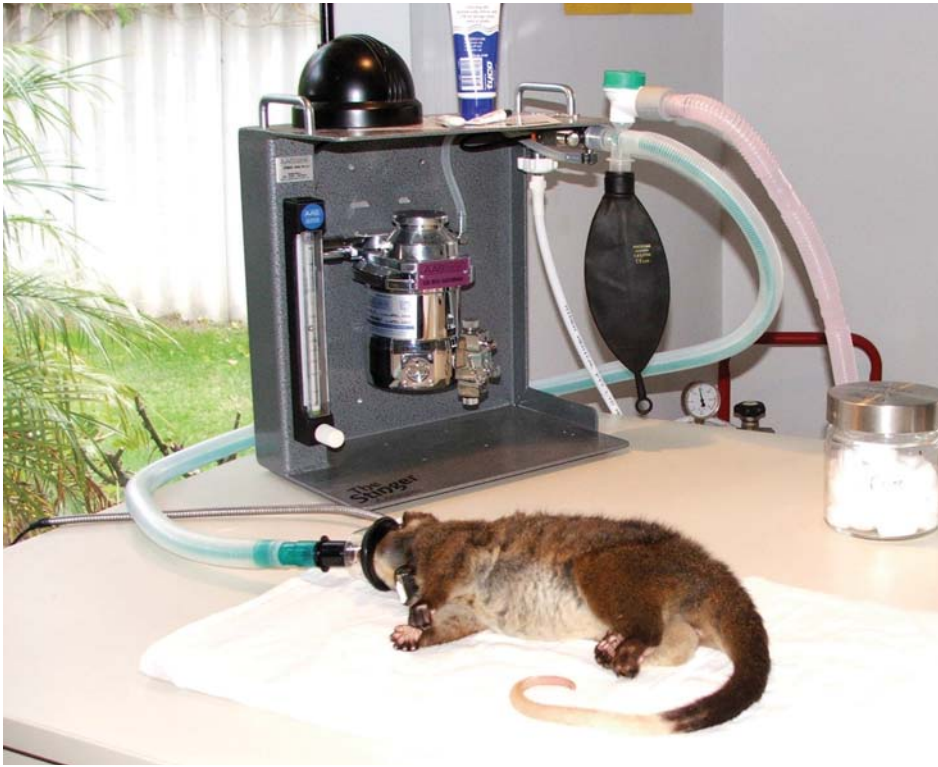
After dark we headed out to another site at Gelorup and this is where we would be spending most of our nights for the rest of the week, tracking and capturing Western ring-tailed possums.



Amelia, a female Western ring-tailed possum. We failed to capture Amelia on the first night

Earlier in the day Helen had taken us to the forest for a walk around so that Therese and I could get our bearings and be able to find our way around at night. It didn't work for me! When we started walking through the dark forest I quickly became completely lost and had no idea which way I was walking or even where the car had been parked! Luckily Helen knew the area like the back of her hand and guided us easily through the bush.

We found and successfully captured Frodo, a male Western ring-tailed. Each possum had been given a name and identification number - the volunteers who were involved in the beginning of the study (capturing and applying the collars) were given the honour of naming the individuals. Frodo, even though our first, turned out to be one of the easiest possums to catch.



Frodo at the work station

After Frodo had been securely restrained in his calico bag, which was placed inside a dark and warm box, we set out into the night again. By now, each of us had our own job. Helen was “tracker girl” as she walked up front with the antenna following the sounds of the radio collars. Then there was “dart girl” - Therese who very gently carried the box of pre-made sedation darts (one trip and the mechanism

inside the darts would be triggered resulting in useless darts and a wasted night). And then there was me - “gun girl”. I carried the dart gun ready for Helen. As luck would have it the gun also served as an excellent spider web remover.

Next we found Amelia. Over the course of the study Helen had become an excellent marksman but every now

and then a dart would go skimming past the target possum (they are rather small critters with rather small behinds) and into the forest floor. It would then take us several minutes to find the dart that was fitted with reflective tape, three head torches sweeping amongst the leaf litter until one of us yelled “found it”. That was the ‘un-fun’ part of the night.

When Helen aimed for Amelia’s tiny butt the dart skimmed, lodged but was then scratched out and it fell to the ground. While Helen kept a close eye on Amelia for signs that the sedative had worked, Therese and I busied ourselves looking for the stray dart. After some time it was apparent that Amelia had not received enough sedative to render her unconscious and she kept a firm hold on the branch, glared at us rather rudely, then slowly moved higher up the tree out of reach and curled up in a fork for a short sleep. We continued to watch her for a while but decided to abort our mission after she began to stir as she was too high for a second attempt.

In the early hours of the morning we’d had enough - we were tired, cold and hungry so we headed back to the lab-come-volunteers-quarters for a few hours of sleep.

Tuesday - Each possum is assessed the morning after capture, so for the first



Frodo, chilling out



Frodo in recovery



All possums were weighed and measured, collars were removed, labs taken and vital signs monitored

task of our second day we processed Frodo. While still safe and snug inside his calico bag, Helen anaesthetised him ready for the procedure. This was Therese's and my first up-close-and-personal experience with a ring-tailed possum so it was an exciting time. As with all the possums in the study, Frodo was weighed and measured and labs were taken, including blood, urine and faeces, eyes swabs and saliva swabs and then finally the tracking collars were removed. Frodo was then placed in recovery where he was slowly returned to consciousness. He was then left to sleep for the rest of the day.

After dark we returned to the forest. We released Frodo back to his home and our next mission was a mortality check on Amelia to make sure she was OK. She was perfectly fine but sitting high in a tree way out of reach - maybe she knew we'd be back - so we left her and we went in search of another possum.

After a while we found Merlin and we set up our capture equipment. Unfortunately we failed to secure Merlin as it was cold, wet and windy and the conditions were not great for darting possums. So the night ended

early and we got to bed not long after midnight.

Wednesday - Our third night out was quite successful, even if our first capture attempt proved not to be - Kiri, a female, was skimmed by the dart which made her a little sleepy but not enough for capture. We then went back to find Merlin. After the failed attempt to capture him the night before, we were determined to get him this time. We set up our equipment and then for the next hour and a half we watched, we waited, we attempted to dart, we cursed, as Merlin was a quick mover and then we waited some more. We were nearing the end of our perseverance when Helen saw a window of opportunity as Merlin presented his rump to us as if to say *"oh all right, let's get this over with"*.

Once the dart had found its target, Therese and Helen stood underneath the spot where Merlin sat in the tree. It was my job to give continual updates on his position in the tree and his state of consciousness. Then, just as he was about to fall I'd yell *"now"* and the girls would capture him in the large blanket held out to protect his fall. Merlin was then settled in his bag and we moved on to the next possum.

Igraine, a female, was tracked but found to be too high to capture. We then found Arwen, another female, who turned out to be our easiest capture for the entire week - just 15 minutes to dart and bag! A quick assessment of Arwen showed that she had twin joeys in the pouch. After two successful captures and being well after midnight we returned to the lab.

Thursday - Arwen was processed first. Knowing just how vulnerable the species are, it was heartening to see two wiggling joeys the size of jelly beans in Arwen's pouch. Merlin was then processed and both possums were secured and left to sleep for the day.

That night, after Arwen and Merlin were released back into their home ranges, we captured Kiri (a female) in twenty minutes. We were getting better working in our team and knew each of our jobs without having to discuss a capture plan.

We then tracked Igrain but failed an attempted capture, then Nora, Leelu, and Amelia were found, but all three were too high in the trees.



Arwen, a female with twin joeys in the pouch

Helen then decided that we would attempt capture of Luna, a twelve month old female possum who was one of last year's joeys

Female Western ring-tailed possums generally share their mother's home ranges and males tend to venture off to find a new territory. Luna went against

this usual trend, however, and travelled a whopping 1.5 kilometres in the two nights after her first capture when the monitoring collar was applied.

Luna was darted quite quickly but it took some time for the sedative to start working. She became very groggy but not enough to release her grip and fall

to the open blanket. Helen decided that it was too risky to leave Luna in such a state so out came the extendable pole to aid in the capture and it wasn't long before we had Luna bagged and were on our way home.

Friday - our last day - Therese and I were a little sad to be working our last day with Helen and the possums - but what a lovely last day it was.

Kiri's assessment was first of the day and we were all excited to see that she had a larger joey in the pouch. As best she could, Helen measured the joey's head, which was about 21mm in length. The joey looked plump and healthy so we didn't attempt any more assessment. If it had been a bit bigger, the joey would have been removed from the pouch and properly assessed before being returned to mum's warm and dark pouch.

Luna also had a joey, another little jelly bean. Helen was very pleased to see that Luna's big move hadn't distressed her at all and she was healthy and content enough to breed.

Luna's lab was interesting. The new spot she'd decided to set up home in had primarily marri gums and not



Arwen being weighed

the peppermint gums of the Gelorup forest. As a result her urine was a much darker colour.

Just on dark we released Kiri and Luna and we had the pleasure of watching Luna for a while as she sat and watched us.

As it was our last night we decided to celebrate our week by going out to dinner and enjoying a glass or two of champagne. We had been successful in capturing and removing the collars of most of the project's possums in the Gelorup forest - there were only a few more for the next lot of volunteers to capture.

For me, releasing the possums was the most rewarding experience of my time helping on the project. Over many months these little possums had been through several captures and assessments and had what must have been very annoying collars on - sometimes science is a harsh mistress. But these little possums took it very well and due to excellent planning by Helen and her team there were very few signs of distress in the animals.

Because of their use in the project a wealth of information on this endangered species has been collated and now these animals have an even better chance of being understood, managed - and saved.

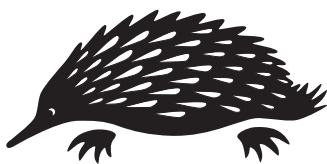


Helen collects blood from Merlin while I hold the vein



One of Arwen's joeys

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"The challenge to the present adult generation is to reduce the increasing pressures on the Earth and its resources - and to provide youth with an education that will prepare them emotionally and intellectually for the task ahead.

PATRICK W MEDWAY AM
National President

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Many of our members have expressed interest in purchasing gift merchandise for friends and family (or even themselves)! This is a great way to support the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, so we have responded below with a mail order system. Simply send your cheque or credit card details (with expiry date) and we will post your order out to you. All prices include GST and 20% member's discount. All proceeds go towards our conservation projects.



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(Navy with white logo / White with navy logo)



Kids T'Shirts - \$10

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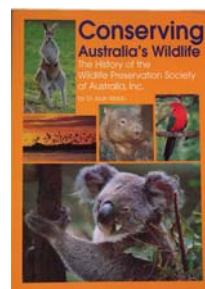
Cap - \$10

(Navy with white logo)



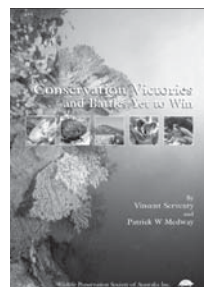
Drink Bottle Bag - \$10

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Conserving Australia's Wildlife

By Dr Joan Webb - \$15



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By Vincent Serventy and Patrick W Medway - \$20

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Centenary Souvenirs

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Bucket Hats - \$10

(Brushed Twill)

Adult: 70cm (Medium/Large), 80cm (Large/XLarge)

Child 50cm (Small), 60cm (Medium) -
with elastic sizing band and toggle



Pen - \$5



Celebrating our centenary 1909 - 2009



Caps - \$10

(Adjustable - One size fits all)



Plastic Travel Mug - \$10



2009 Centenary Calendar - \$10 - reduced to \$5

Product	Quantity	Size	Cost per item	Total
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Bucket Hat (Child)	_____	50cm, 60cm	\$10	_____
Caps	_____	n/a	\$10	_____
Pen	_____	n/a	\$5	_____
Plastic Travel Mug	_____	n/a	\$10	_____
2009 Centenary Calendar	_____	n/a	\$10 reduced to \$5	_____

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Lord Mayor's Reception a great success

Life Members and long term members of the Society enjoyed a Civic Reception in the Lord Mayor of Sydney's Reception Rooms in February 2009 to mark the start of the Society's Centenary celebrations.

While attendance was limited by the Sydney Town Hall, Life Members and long term members enjoyed the welcome and speeches by Council officials. Unfortunately, the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore MP, was unable to attend at the last minute and Councillor John McInerney stood in and welcomed members on her behalf. After the National President responded and presented the Lord Mayor of Sydney with an Honorary Centenary Membership Certificate, Councillor McInerney then presented the Society with a framed Message of Congratulations to mark the occasion.

We are very grateful to the Lord Mayor of Sydney for her hospitality and support to the wildlife conservation work of our Society.



L to R: Judith Young, Dr Clive Williams (Vice President), Raymond and Valerie Marchant



L to R: Dorothy Lawson and Peter Stock



L to R: Patrick Medway AM (National President), Councillor John McInerney and Suzanne Medway (Executive Director)



L to R: Councillor John McInerney being presented with a Centenary Membership by Patrick Medway AM (National President) for the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore



L to R: Ian Bailey, Suzanne Medway (Executive Director), Margaret McGurgan and Deidre Bowes



L to R: Peter Hardiman, Carol Serventy AM and Patrick Medway AM (National President)



L to R: Dr Joan Webb and Margaret Deas



L to R: Noel Cislowski (Director), Patrick Medway AM (National President) and Dr Clive Williams (Vice President)



L to R: Professor Don White (Chairman, Nature Conservation Council of NSW), Patrick Medway AM (National President) and Andrew Cox (Executive Officer, National Parks Association)



L to R: Anne Reeves and Dr David Murray (Vice President)



L to R: Janine Kitson (National Trust), Dr Richard Mason (Life Member) and Marjorie Woodman (Life Member)



Wildlife Preservation Directors with John McInerney. L to R: Suzanne Medway, Judith May, Clive Williams, Patrick Medway, Dick Mason, David Murray and Noel Cislowski

