



AUSTRALIAN *Wildlife*

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Celebrating a new century of wildlife preservation in Australia

Journal of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited

(Founded 1909)

Annual Member's and Friend's Luncheon

The Annual Member's and Friend's Luncheon of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia was held on Wednesday 3 March 2010 in the historic Adam Room at the Castlereagh Inn in Sydney.



Joan Webb and Geoff Ross



Betty and Harold White



Stephen Grabowski and Peter Stevens



Suzanne Medway, Sue Van Duuren, Steve and Vanessa Wilson



Leonie Gale and Gillis Broinowski from National Parks & Wildlife Foundation

Contents

features

7 101st Annual General Meeting 2010

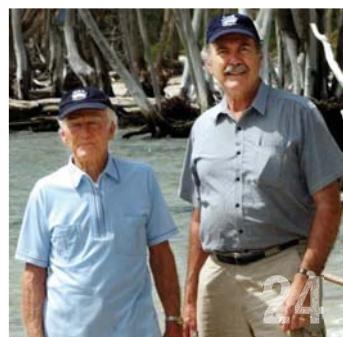
11 Donation to help marine turtles

12 Antarctica

14 Protecting wildlife sanctuaries on private land

16 In the interest of others
- Pratik Gupta

18 The saving of Towra Point



regulars

5 From the President's desk

6 Editorial

25 Membership form

26 100 Years of Saving Australia's Wildlife book order form



Front cover and back cover

King penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*).

Sub adult king penguins losing their down feathers as they prepare to go to sea for the first time.

Photographed with permission in the Kerguelen Islands.

Photographer: Michael Williams - It's A Wildlife, Nature and Wildlife Photography

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Celebrating a new century of
wildlife preservation in Australia

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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Our Mission

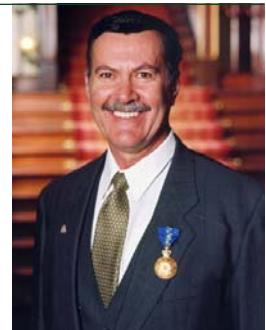
The Wildlife Preservation Society is an independent, voluntary, non-profit conservation organisation, formed in 1909, and is committed to the preservation of Australia's precious flora and fauna. We act as a watchdog and provide advice to government agencies and institutions regarding environmental and 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

We are always thrilled to hear of the outstanding work being done by wildlife conservationists across Australia. Our Society is very conscious of the need to join together with other conservation groups to save and protect all native Australian wildlife populations in all their many and varied forms.



101st Annual General Meeting

Under the newly constituted rules of our Society the three longest-standing directors are required to stand down and offer themselves for re-election. Dick Mason, Clive Williams and Patrick Medway were re-elected.

The members at the AGM congratulated all three on their re-election to the Society's board as they continue to serve the wildlife conservation work of the Society.

At the Annual Member's and Friend's Luncheon we were delighted to hear from one of our Scientific Advisory Panel members, Geoff Ross, who spoke on protecting marine mammals.

Annual awards

We are always thrilled to hear of the outstanding work being done by wildlife conservationists across Australia. Our Society is very conscious of the need to join together with other conservation groups to save and protect all native Australian wildlife populations in all their many and varied forms. The Wildlife Preservation Society wants to recognise and help these conservation groups continue with the good work they do on behalf of the whole community. Our Society knows that many organisations and thousands of volunteers are already working tirelessly to save our threatened species, as well as the humble and more common Australian species, and the precious wildlife habitat in which they live.

This year June Butcher of Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre was awarded the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2009 for her outstanding work in Western Australia.

The Community for Coastal and Cassowary Conservation (C4) was awarded the Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2009.

We congratulate the winners again and urge them to continue their efforts to preserve and protect Australia's native wildlife.

Wombat problems across Australia

We are saddened to learn of the plight of our native wombats across four states of Australia. The northern hairy-nosed wombats have suffered from the drought over the past few years and have now been affected by floods.

In South Australia we were very sad to be informed of horrific stories of the mistreatment of the southern hairy-nosed wombat by some farmers. Stories of burrows being ploughed up with the wombats still inside, of petrol being poured down the burrows and set on fire, of explosive devices being placed down the wombat burrows to destroy the animals and their burrows, of them being shot and generally being mistreated as they are seen to be a threat to some farmers.

The southern hairy-nosed wombat is a fully protected species under the South Australian *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. It is illegal to destroy or remove any protected animal without a permit. The maximum penalty is \$2,500 or six months imprisonment. From our enquiries, there have been no prosecutions in recent times for mistreatment of wombats in that state.

The southern hairy-nosed wombat (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*) is the faunal emblem of South Australia and, although once widespread in semi-arid regions of southern Australia, this species is now restricted to isolated populations.

As wombats are fully protected by law it should be recognised that these native animals are an important part of our environment and are a shared responsibility of the whole community. Burying a wombat alive to slowly starve to death or slowly suffocate is neither humane nor minimising suffering.

A special information brochure has been put out by the SA Department of Environment and Heritage reminding everyone that the animals are fully protected, with heavy fines for killing

or mistreating this totally harmless, herbivorous animal.

In Victoria the wombat is not given the full benefit of the law which this Society has spent over 100 years to bring into force to protect native wildlife. Permits to cull wombats are apparently given out on request to farmers without any real follow-up or evidence required to support their request for a permit. No follow-up or record is then taken to ascertain the number of animals culled or disposed of.

In New South Wales the common or bare-faced wombat is a major victim of roadkill and often mistreated or culled by dairy farmers who complain of the damage the wombat causes to their property.

Shame on them all for not realising or bothering to understand the real value of our native animals and our environment.



Squirrel glider - Estuary Creek. 'Estuary Creek' has five species of glider including the threatened squirrel glider. For the full story see page 14. Photo by Shannon Plummer

Editorial

Suzanne Medway

The last few weeks for me have been like a trip on a roller coaster with my emotions going from high to low and back to high again – and it all started with a telephone call about a wombat.



One of the inspirations for me in working towards conserving Australia's wildlife has been meeting and talking to "carers" and hearing their stories, their successes, problems and failures. I am continually amazed by this group of dedicated people who rescue, treat, rehabilitate and, in the best scenario, release injured wildlife.

Back to the telephone call, a carer in South Australia wanted our help in protecting a little wombat in her care. It was a long and complicated story that emerged over many emails and telephone calls. Whenever I talk to a carer it soon becomes evident that they often feel isolated and overwhelmed. They are not only dealing with a sick or injured animal, but they are often dealing with bureaucracy, cruel and indifferent people and their own lack of resources and funding.

The lady caring for this little sick wombat was battling all these odds as well as threats from a group of people who originally had the little wombat, the carers who originally tried to unsuccessfully treat it, and the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) who were bringing all the weight of their department down on her head. All over one wombat!

Immediate action was required – I spoke to the policy adviser to the South Australian Minister for Environment and Conservation and was told that the Minister did not want to become involved and did not want to change the status quo. I wondered what this meant, but was told they would get the head of animal welfare in DEH to immediately ring me back. Well, surprise, surprise, nothing happened. And thus the power of the internet came into play. I launched an appeal to all our members and friends to send an email to the Minister for Environment in South Australia and DEH asking for the wombat to remain in care and not be

returned to the people who originally caused the problem. The response was overwhelming: emails poured in from all over Australia and overseas. It took less than a day for DEH to respond and the little wombat's case was passed on to DEH's Corporate Governance. This department expressed shock that this case was allowed to go so far. The matter is now going to be reviewed and we have been assured that no one from DEH will be confiscating the little wombat and there is no way the carer's permit to rescue and rehabilitate wombats will be revoked. They also said that the matter would be dealt with nicely and amicably!

The second call was also from South Australia from another carer of wombats. This carer was in support of our Society's position on the little wombat but suggested there might be more political reasons for the Minister for Environment not wanting to become involved and for DEH to take such a strong stance. Then evolved a long discussion on the state of wildlife care in South Australia and out came story after distressing story of animal cruelty and neglect. I could not believe some of the horrible things that have been done to native wildlife and what the carers have to contend with to try to rescue such injured wildlife.

The third call was from a distressed carer who had just discovered a field that had been ploughed, collapsing all the wombat burrows. Unfortunately, it is a common practice for burrows to be bulldozed in the Murraylands region of SA as landowners see the wombats as vermin. Fences and farm productivity take precedence over the protection of wombats even though they are classified as a vulnerable species.

It is ironic that in the 1920s the Society fought a battle to stop the export of koala skins labelled as wombat skins to the United States of America. Ninety years later the battle continues. It is particularly ironic that the southern hairy-nosed wombat (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*) is the faunal emblem of South Australia and, although once widespread in semiarid regions of southern Australia, this species is now restricted to isolated populations and still being hunted and destroyed.

Our Society will be launching a major initiative to address the issues of wildlife care and rehabilitation in South Australia. There are too many to detail in this Editorial, but I will be keeping our members informed along the way on what I am sure will be a long and protracted campaign.



A very sick little, white wombat

101st Annual General Meeting 2010

The historic 101st Annual General Meeting of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited was held on Wednesday 3 March 2010

Patrick Medway, Dick Mason and Clive Williams retired in accordance with the Constitution (10.3) and were re-elected as Directors of the Society.

The elected Directors of the Society for 2010 are: Patrick Medway, Clive Williams, David Murray, Tony Cornell, Suzanne Medway, Dick Mason, Noel Cislowski, Judith May and Peter Hardiman.

The Executive Officers and Committee Chairman of the Society will be elected by the Directors at the April 2010 Council Meeting.

Directors of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia

Back row L to R: Dr Clive Williams, Judith May, Suzanne Medway, Vanessa Wilson, Dr Richard Mason.

Front row L to R: Tony Cornell, Dr David Murray, Patrick Medway, Noel Cislowski and Peter Hardiman



Annual Member's and Friend's Luncheon

The Annual Member's and Friend's Luncheon of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia was held on Wednesday 3 March 2010 in the historic Adam Room at the Castlereagh Inn in Sydney.

The National President, Patrick W Medway AM, welcomed life members, members and guests committed to wildlife conservation across Australia. He also welcomed guest speaker, Geoff Ross from the Marine Fauna Program, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW (DECCW), as well as the members of C4 Queensland and acknowledged their tremendous contribution to saving native wildlife, especially the cassowary in their special coastal areas of Queensland.

Geoff Ross entertained the luncheon guests with an address on "The

conservation of marine mammals in NSW".

2009 WPSA Serventy Conservation Medal

Dr Clive Williams, Vice President, announced the winner of the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2009 as **June Butcher** of Western Australia for her outstanding dedication to promoting the welfare of native animals for over forty years.

June founded the Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in 1986 and through dedicated effort has developed this refuge beyond a purely rehabilitative function. The centre now runs a recognised captive breeding program for endangered species including the bilby, woylie and others. June works closely with the Department of Environment

and Conservation and is active in educating the public as well as professionals, including students from local universities as well as from overseas countries.

June Butcher was recognised by the Western Australian Government with the award of WA Senior Australian of the Year for 2009.

Unfortunately, June was not able to travel from Western Australia for the luncheon, but sent her regards and a short acceptance speech.

Response by June Butcher

My late husband, Lloyd, and I started our married life on a three acre property in Gooseberry Hill in the 60s. My lifelong passion for animals led to an injured galah being our first rescued animal.



June Butcher

Lloyd was an aeronautical engineer and my background was in nursing which made an ideal combination to start Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre.

In 1986 we built a small hospital, large enough for my daughter Fleur and me to work in. That year we admitted seventy animals. We now care for 2,000 animals a year. For this, we need 140 volunteers as we are also now involved in the breeding of endangered species such as the bilby, western barred bandicoot and bettongs (woylies).

Our education team presented to 40,000 children and adults in the last twelve months.

The life of a wildlife rehabilitator is very demanding of time and commitment and is a 24-hour-a-day involvement. Night feeding of mammals and emergency phone calls and admissions happens 24 hours a day. This is all pro bono work of course and has been my life for 25 years.

Kanyana has become a powerhouse of energy and passion in caring for our wildlife, but is not only all about wildlife. It is about people too. Working with animals is a very healing activity, and one of the privileges is seeing volunteers blossom in this environment.

Over the last twenty years, the evolution of society's values and interest in the environment and

wildlife has been remarkable. Consider all the wildlife programmes on TV. Kanyana has played its part here by participating in Aussie Animal Rescue and the Return to Eden film. Both

these programs highlighted our unique Australian animals.

We are building a state-of-the-art wildlife hospital and education centre at Paxwold – the former Girl Guides' Centre in Lesmurdie. It is a mammoth project made possible by Lotterywest.

This project is a dream come true as it will be able to look after wildlife well into the future.

I accept the Serenty Conservation Medal on behalf of all wildlife rehabilitators and hope it will raise their profile in the community.

2009 WPSA Community Wildlife Conservation Award

Dr Clive Williams announced the winner of the Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2009 as **Community for Coastal and Cassowary Conservation (C4)** of Mission Beach North Queensland.

C4 is an all-volunteer organisation with over 200 members. Its aim is



Kanyana's admin, education and training centre



The facilities at Kanyana - echidna enclosure at the front and bilby enclosure at the rear

to protect the natural environment without affecting the local economy. It is active in campaigning against inappropriate development, but also believes in educating the community and to this end it has developed its own education centre.

C4 importantly has a strong scientific basis and liaises closely with local scientists and professionals. It has been particularly active in publicising the plight of the cassowary and is raising funds to purchase suitable cassowary habitat to help protect this endangered bird. C4 is a true community group with valuable conservation objectives.

C4 is a worthy recipient of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia's the Community Wildlife Conservation Award.

Response by Sandal Hayes of C4

On behalf of the Community for Coastal and Cassowary Conservation, I would like to thank the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia for this honour.

We believe the short audio visual presentation today speaks for itself and highlights the plight of the endangered cassowary – the threats of habitat loss, car strike and dogs have reduced the population to a critical point.



Dr Joan Webb and Patrick Medway launched the Centenary book

I would also like to acknowledge Judith May for nominating C4 for this award and my colleague Liz Gallie who photographed, wrote and produced C4's cassowary book and DVD. She is more comfortable behind the lens or the keyboard than accepting awards, so I accept on her behalf and on behalf of C4.

Cassowaries need your help. C4 is raising funds to secure habitat and any contributions would be most welcome.

Launch of Centenary book

Patrick Medway introduced Dr Joan Webb to the luncheon guests to officially launch the Society's Centenary publication *100 Years of Saving Australia's Wildlife*.

In launching the book Patrick said:

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia has remained active in saving and preserving Australia's native wildlife since its inception in Sydney in May 1909.

As the seventeenth president of the Society I feel I am 'standing on the shoulders of giants' when I look back over the past 100 years of pro-active wildlife preservation, led by those champions of conservation fighting to save our native species of every kind.

Volunteers from all walks of life have devoted their energies and their minds to saving Australia's native wildlife for future generations of Australians. They have worked ceaselessly and enthusiastically to ensure that the habitat of wildlife has not been destroyed, despite fierce opposition from land clearers and developers across the country.

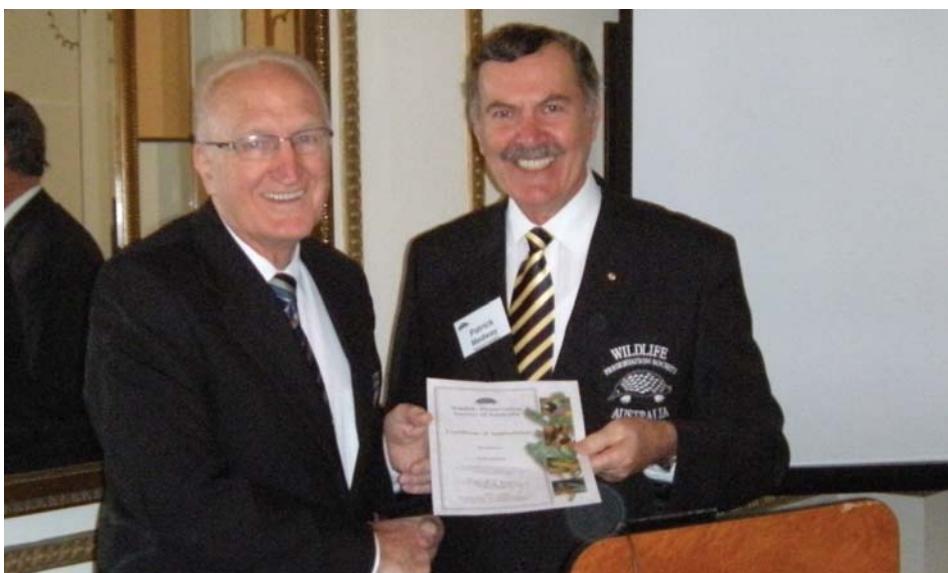
Our executive officers and members have written thousands of letters and made numerous telephone calls to local politicians, government agencies and local government officials pleading for more protection for Australia's flora and fauna.



Liz Gallie and Sandal Hayes accepted the Community Conservation Award for 2009 on behalf of C4 from Clive Williams



Judith May was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by Patrick Medway for her outstanding contribution as Carer's Liaison Officer



Noel Cislowski was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by Patrick Medway for his outstanding contribution as Chairman of the Centenary Committee



Patrick Medway thanks Geoff Ross for his address to the luncheon

We believe we have influenced hundreds of thousands of Australians of the vital need to care for our environment, to protect the habitat of our precious wildlife and campaigned to preserve our native wildlife over the past 100 years.

Yet clearly this has never been sufficient to guarantee the survival of many species. Land clearing, introduced species, droughts and bush fires, pollution and climate changes have all taken their toll on our landscape. Thousands of animals die each year from roadkill as the transport system expands across the country.

Over all this time the commitment and devotion to the cause has not wavered. Men and women, boys and girls continue to strive to protect our wildlife and its vital habitat from Cape York to Tasmania, from Byron Bay to Broome in the west.

I am mindful of the tremendous commitment by past presidents and executive officers who have honoured the principles of the Society's founding constitution to preserve wildlife. I know many have made personal sacrifices to carry out their elected tasks and I would like to acknowledge the work of my predecessors and thank them for their courage and concern that has motivated our members over the past 100 years.

I trust that this Centenary history will record some of the achievements and aspirations of those wonderful people who have led the Society since May 1909 and I commend the history of saving our Australian wildlife to our many members and friends across Australia.

Special presentations

Judith May was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by Patrick Medway for her outstanding contribution as Carer's Liaison Officer.

Noel Cislowski was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by Patrick Medway for his outstanding contribution as Chairman of the Centenary Committee.

Donation to help marine turtles

Jennie Gilbert, co-founder and co-director of Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia recently launched an email appeal to members to help fund the purchase of two water tanks for the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation.

The tanks were needed to act as water storage and settlement tanks for incoming water supplies to the turtle rehab tanks because the incoming water contains a lot of sediment, as the centre's pumping site is located up a tidal creek surrounded by mud flats. This dirty water quickly blocks up the filters, creating less-than-ideal conditions in the rehab tanks. The two new water tanks were needed to act as primary settlement tanks, removing a lot of the suspended solids from the incoming water before it reaches the filters on the rehab tanks.

There were smiles all around at the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre when the two 11,000- litre water tanks arrived. Purchase of these tanks was made possible through the kind generosity of members of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia. The tanks will be used

to store water, which in turn will be pumped into the eight tanks currently at the centre. With fluctuating tides at this time of the year, the water quality can be affected, therefore causing concern. Other problems arise with seasonally low tides that at times can prevent adequate amounts of water being pumped up to the tanks. These new storage tanks will now ensure there is always enough water available and the water quality will be of a high standard for the wellbeing of the sick and injured turtles in care. Currently the centre has a "full house" with eight turtles in care. Of the eight in care, three turtles are the endangered olive ridleys, along with three hawksbill turtles, which are also endangered. Hence the importance of good quality water for their successful rehabilitation and future release.

Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre relies on volunteers, financial support from the public and other donations to maintain the ongoing successful rehabilitation and release of marine turtles in Far North Queensland.



Jennie Gilbert with one of the donated tanks

Everyone at the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre would like to say a "big thank you" to all at WPSA for assisting in the ongoing recovery of turtles that have been brought in for rehabilitation. Thank You!!



This juvenile hawksbill turtle came in from Dunk Island with floaters disease. When it arrived it was really sick and had to be on a drip for approximately a month. The carers at Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre did not know if it would survive, but with lots of care and attention it started eating after three months. The turtle was named Hawkii; it has been in care for twenty months and will be released within the next four to six weeks with a tracker attached to see where it travels after making a successful recovery.



ANTARCTICA

1

MICHAEL WILLIAMS - IT'S A WILDLIFE, NATURE AND WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY PTY/LTD

THE SOUTHERN OCEAN IS FILLED WITH SOME OF THE RAREST AND MOST UNIQUE LIFE ON EARTH. MY ROLE AS CAMPAIGN PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE SEA SHEPHERD CONSERVATION SOCIETY ON BOARD THE STEVE IRWIN WOULD BE THE RESULT OF THREE YEARS OF PREPARATION. DURING THIS SEASONS 'OPERATION WALTZING MATILDA' WHALE DEFENCE CAMPAIGN, I WAS EXTREMELY FORTUNATE TO BE ABLE TO PHOTOGRAPH ON THE CONTINENT OF ANTARCTICA AT CAPE DENISON ADELIE PENGUIN COLONY, AS WELL AS THE KERGUELEN ISLANDS. PROTECTING THE GREAT WHALES OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN, THE SEA SHEPHERD CONSERVATION SOCIETY'S DIRECT ACTION CONSERVATION EFFORTS ALSO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN SECURING THE FUTURE OF MANY OTHER MARINE ANIMALS AND HABITATS.



2



3



1 - Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). Photographed in the Southern Ocean. 2 & 3 - Adelie penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*). Photographed with permission at the Cape Denison penguin colony. 4 - Weddell seal (*Leptonychotes weddellii*). Photographed with permission at the Cape Denison penguin colony. 5 - King penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*). Photographed with permission in the Kerguelen Islands. 6 - Salvin's albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*) listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN. 7 - Juvenile southern elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*). 8 - Adelie penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*). Photographed with permission at the Cape Denison penguin colony.



Protecting wildlife sanctuaries on private land

Across the country, a quiet revolution is slowly gathering pace. Organisations, land management agencies and government departments focusing on private land conservation are working with a growing army of committed landholders to protect vital habitat on private land, habitat that many of our native plants and animals rely on for survival.

With less than eight percent of Australia's rich natural heritage protected in national parks and nature reserves and more than sixty percent of land under private ownership, protecting important ecological values on private land is vital to the long-term survival of our amazing wildlife.

In northern NSW, about 35 kilometres north of Grafton, lies a special property that provides a perfect example of the importance of private land conservation. Purchased by the Nature Conservation Trust of NSW in 2008 as part of the NSW Government's Farmer Exit Assistance Package, 'Estuary Creek' is a 1,600 hectare property that was formerly used for light grazing and selective logging.

Wildlife abounds on 'Estuary Creek'. The property is home to the nationally endangered giant barred frog, along with a number of species threatened in NSW, including the squirrel glider, koala, rufous bettong, glossy black-cockatoo, grey-crowned babbler and green-thighed frog. Five species of gliders – the sugar, squirrel, greater, feather-tail and yellow-bellied gliders – have been found there. There are also two Endangered Ecological Communities on the property.

Nestled in the southern Richmond Range, 'Estuary Creek' is bordered by two State Conservation Areas and is close to national parks and a wilderness area. It provides an important vegetation link between these protected areas. Over 1,000 hectares of the property lie within

'Estuary Creek' has a diverse range of forest ecosystems including lush riparian forest.
Photo by Ben Lynch

a wildlife corridor identified by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW). It also contributes to the protection of state-wide climate change corridors, helping native ecosystems to cope with the effects of predicted climate change. A large part of 'Estuary Creek' is identified by DECCW as 'key habitat' for forest fauna.

CEO of the Nature Conservation Trust of NSW, Rob Dunn, describes the property as a true wildlife haven.

"Every survey we do on 'Estuary Creek' turns up animal and plant species that we've never seen there before," said Rob. "It's a sanctuary for an amazingly diverse array of wildlife and, the best thing is, it will be protected forever."

'Estuary Creek' is currently on the market. The Nature Conservation Trust will negotiate a conservation covenant and plan of management with the new owner. The covenant will be registered on title in perpetuity, ensuring this amazing property will always be the valuable wildlife haven it is now. The Nature Conservation Trust will then use the proceeds from the sale to purchase and protect more private properties of exceptional conservation value across New South Wales.

It is clear that the protection of private properties such as 'Estuary Creek' will become increasingly important as climate change, the ongoing destruction of habitat, and other threats such as feral predators and weeds, continue to impact on the survival of our native species.

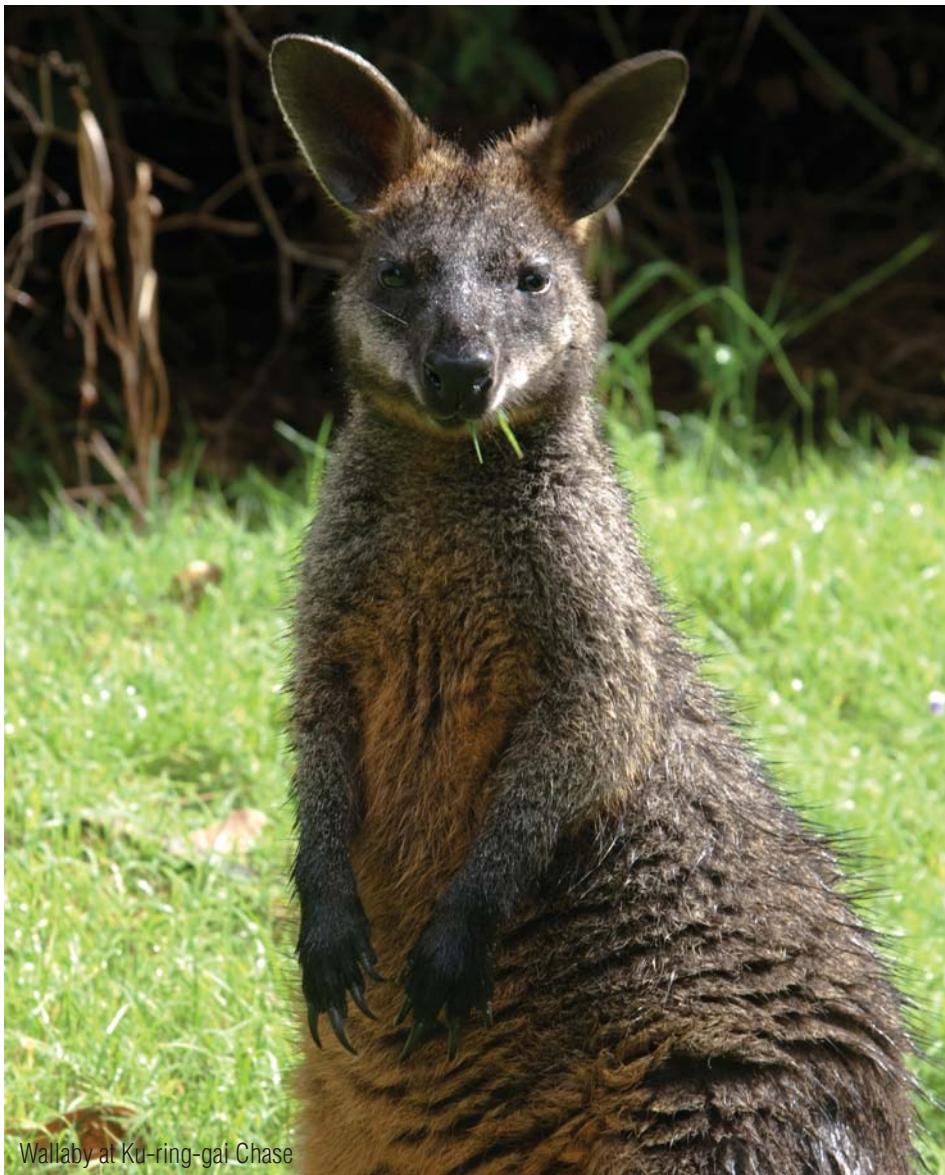
To find out more about 'Estuary Creek' and the other properties for sale by the Nature Conservation Trust, or to make a tax-deductible donation to support our work, please visit our website at www.nct.org.au



A small green banded blue butterfly found on 'Estuary Creek'. Photo by Justin McDowell



The nationally endangered giant barred frog is one of the many threatened species found on 'Estuary Creek'. Photo by Georgia Beyer



Wallaby at Ku-ring-gai Chase

In the interest of others

Pratik Gupta

We are not alone! We are made to believe from birth that the human race is quintessentially the superior race and, as we are told, controls the whole planet. We often question our existence, but rarely go beyond what we are told. As children we learn to see the world from a different perspective and a majority of our thoughts are controlled by the education we gain in school, the influence of the media and, most importantly, the knowledge we gain from our parents. But as children we see the world as we ought to. We learn from our surroundings, we see beyond what is told. We learn to observe. But with age comes a sense of caution. And things that intrigued us when we were young no longer have place in our memory. We look at the outside world, trying to make full sense of it, but as time passes our memories fade. We get so

involved in our personal lives that our once open door starts to slowly close shut. And once we find what makes us comfortable we rarely open that door again.

Our sense of curiosity decreases and practicality takes over emotions. But why is it that we forget what it was like to be innocent? Why do we forget that we are not alone? And why do we neglect the creatures that we once called our brothers and sisters?

Our world's wildlife population is in grave danger and our civilised lives are blocking us from seeing the truth. Our imaginations are blocked with various nuances and what we believed in once is taken over by what we must now believe.

Why is it that we can't share this wonderful world with everything that

lives in it? Why do we differentiate between human existence and animal existence? Are we not the same? Do we not require the same things in life to sustain ourselves?

We are on a constant search for life beyond our planet. We are on the lookout for something superior to us. But then again, if we can't recognise the life that we have already found in our diverse wildlife, how can we benefit knowing about other forms of existence?

The beginning

It began in the April of 2007. This was the first time I had ever laid eyes on something so superior in its being. It made me question everything around me. It was the day when I spotted the majestic tiger in all its glory.

Within the first few hours of my arrival at the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve in India, I was fortunate enough to have sighted a tiger on my way to the base camp. The driver stopped the jeep that I was in and told me there was a possibility of a tiger sighting just a few metres from where we were. Absolute silence prevailed. What followed were screams of other native animals which alerted us of the tiger's presence. The wind blew coolly as if signalling the arrival of this ethereal being. The road we were on cut through the forest like an artery from the heart of the jungle to its head. Then something magical happened. The wind stopped, the loud sounds of the native wildlife ceased as if to give respectful audience to the tiger's appearance. And then without any delay it appeared right in front of me, the great Indian tiger. He looked to both sides as his paws swiftly cut through the wind and the stripes stood out on its yellow body. I felt absolutely numb in the tiger's presence, incapable of any movement or thought. I was in complete awe. Instantly, the tiger disappeared into the dense forest not to be seen again. The wind returned as if to applaud its stride, and the sounds of native animals soon returned. And that is when I realised the power of this majestic creature.

My photography

After my first encounter in the jungles of Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve, I was absolutely moved. I knew then that I would spend the rest of my life looking for these magnificent creatures and telling their stories to the world. That marked the beginning of my journey into wildlife photography.

I spent the remainder of the two days photographing various flora and fauna in the reserve, seeing creatures that I had only seen in magazines and on television. Since that day I have been on the lookout for any place where I could encounter such diverse wildlife.

My journey took me on a backpacker trip to the Royal National Chitwan Park in Nepal. The park is especially known for its protection of the endangered one-horned rhinoceros. I spent a few days there taking various excursions on foot, by boat and on elephant back. It was on our walk there that we spotted this amazing animal behind the bushes and felt its raw power. To avoid any form of conflict, we watched the rhinoceros secretly. We observed its behavior, its territorial character and how it spent time foraging for food in the foliage.

It's only when you see these creatures up close that you realise how powerless a being you are, so dependent on technology, on society and on modern advancements. We forget that once we too were merely wild creatures that inhabited these lands.

Through my photography I hope to make people aware of this same power that I had a chance of experiencing.

My studies

Having decided that this was the career path I would embark on, I decided to take the next major step in my life by doing a course in photography. I wanted to make sure that I learnt the essential skills required in the field in order to best represent these creatures that have no other way of being heard. I got into a masters course at the College of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, and I couldn't have chosen a better place than Australia for my studies.



My studies involve understanding the medium of photography as an essential tool of propagating ideas. We look at images as a powerful medium to depict reality in the fairest way possible. Understanding the complexities of wildlife requires both patience and diligence. By learning about the impact that images can have on people's minds I wish to use my education to create a better awareness of conservation activity.

It is very easy to ignore facts that are not right in front of you. Through my photography I wish to take what is out there and, in the most effective way possible, show it to the rest of the world that is unfamiliar with these facts.

Australia's diverse wildlife is in a dismal condition, as is the entire world's wildlife population. Today we are faced with the responsibility of protecting the lives of these creatures and thereby creating a sustainable world in which all

species can harmoniously live together side by side.

In this economic-centred world we often fail to address the importance of our environment and the harm that we are consciously and unconsciously causing it. Through my photography, and by actively taking part in conservation work, I want to change the way we look at our environment. We must, as the self-knighted superior race, cease to look only at our personal gains and act towards more sustainable environmental practices.

Where to now?

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia is constantly working to save the flora and fauna of Australia, as are many other organisations around the world. But if we are to see any change, it is possible only if we, the people of the world, stand united and support the conservation efforts of these organisations.

Our actions today will determine what we have tomorrow. Our efforts towards a better future will not go in vain, because if we work together, if we decide that it is time to change, we will be successful in our efforts. The wildlife population of the world needs us and how we act now will determine whether they survive tomorrow.

As a wise man once said, "Nobody made a greater mistake than those who did nothing because a single person could do so little." The work of even one person who cares can make a difference to an entire civilisation tomorrow.





The saving of Towra Point

As we celebrate World Wetland Day in 2010, we look back on our very successful campaign to draw attention to major environmental problems on the Towra Nature Reserve in Botany Bay, Sydney, and recollect how we went about finding a positive solution to both the degradation of the reserve and how to provide a better habitat for migratory wading birds.

Little tern nesting

Towra Point is not only the most significant wetland in the Sydney region, but is also important at a national and international level.

Towra Point Nature Reserve, which is only 16 kilometres south of the centre of Sydney, at the mouth of the Georges River in Botany Bay, includes important remnant terrestrial vegetation and wildlife habitats, and is surrounded by seagrass beds, mangroves and migratory wading bird habitats. Towra Point Nature Reserve and the adjacent Towra Point Aquatic Reserve (managed by NSW Fisheries) form the largest and most diverse estuarine wetland complex remaining in the Sydney region.

Visitors first encounter 800 metres of saltmarsh that at times can be inundated with either seawater or fresh water, depending on tide height

and flooding from heavy rain. Of the twelve species of saltmarsh flora to be observed, glasswort (*Salicornia quinqueflora*) is the most abundant species.

The first plant community that is encountered after leaving the saltmarsh is a swamp oak forest, with stands of tall casuarina. This is the most widely scattered plant community in Towra Point Nature Reserve. Beyond these is a forest of swamp mahogany (*Eucalyptus botryoides*) referred to locally as bangalay trees.

The first littoral rainforest can be seen adjacent to the bangalay forest. It contains several large lilly pilly (*Acmena smithii*) trees. A variety of birds, including rainbow lorikeet, crimson rosella and eastern rosella, can be seen feeding on the purple berries

during spring. One of the permanent freshwater ponds in the nature reserve is to be found near the lilly pilly trees. Known as Weedy Pond, it is completely covered by exotic lantana (*Lantana camara*). It is doubtful whether any of the freshwater plant species have survived.

The forest close to the shoreline consists mainly of tea-tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*) and banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*). Many exotic plant species are found in the dune forests with the rampant lantana. The exotic bitou bush (*Chrysanthemoides moniliferum*) also appears to be gaining a hold.

Freshwater wetlands cover only two percent of the nature reserve but they add greatly to its habitat diversity. The most important pond is Mirrormere, about 100 square metres in area

and about 0.5m deep on average. It greatly increases in volume and height during heavy rain periods. Around Mirrormere is a dense stand of paperbark (*Melaleuca ericifolia*). A stand of swamp oaks borders either end of the pond. The largest pond, Towra Lagoon, contained freshwater until May 1994 when heavy waves overtopped the beach. This occurred when a combination of heavy ocean surges met with floodwaters from Georges River. Dredging Botany Bay has increased the wave height.

There are 400 hectares of mangroves around Towra. This is the largest mass stand in the Sydney region. It comprises the two species found south of Taree with grey mangrove (*Avicennia marina*) being dominant. The other species, river mangrove (*Aegiceras corniculatum*), is a dwarf form seldom reaching 2.5 metres in height and is found in the low-salinity areas.

Mangroves play an important role in the food chain for estuarine animals. One square kilometre of mangroves contributes about 600 tonnes of leaf litter each year to the detrital food chain. The mangrove forest floor also supports large numbers of animals. For example, a survey at Towra Point showed that a square metre of sediment can contain up to 100 animals of 35 species. The most common are crabs and molluscs. Mangrove stands could be classed as the Twilight Zone – the upper limit for crabs and other marine animals, the lower limit for lizards and snakes.

Sea grasses are considered to be second only to coral reef communities in



Towra Lagoon - showing pollution and erosion

productivity. A survey revealed that 1.5 square kilometres of seagrass yielded 235 million prawns and 95 billion molluscs. Seagrass is the main source of detritus, producing 20 tonnes per hectare per year.

Access

As the Towra Point Nature Reserve is a special nature reserve, visitors are obliged to obtain permission from the National Parks and Wildlife Service at Kurnell prior to gaining access.

History and nature of Towra Beach Nature Reserve

Towra Point joins the Kurnell Peninsula along the southern and eastern boundary of Botany Bay. The sandstone headland adjacent to Captain Cook's landing place at Kurnell was originally

an island. At about the time when sea levels were stabilising, between 9,000 and 6,000 BC, a tombola was formed connecting Kurnell Island to Cronulla mainland. Eventually the Kurnell-Cronulla bay mouth silted up and closed, the Kurnell and Towra peninsulas were born and Botany Bay took its present shape as a large shallow bay.

Two ancient river systems, Cooks River and Georges River that flowed into the sea beneath the present sand dunes near Wanda, became blocked with accumulating sand as the sea level rose. This gradual silting-up forced the Cooks River and Georges River system to take an easier route to the sea via La Perouse rather than continue to maintain an opening in an ever-growing sand barrier near Wanda.

Towra is now a low-lying promontory only three metres above high water level at its highest point and is surrounded by mangroves and saltmarsh. It occupies an area of 440 hectares and is the remnant of a large complex of fresh and salt water marshes and swamps lost to shifting sands of the Kurnell dunes caused by local forest logging.

History

There are traces of several Aboriginal middens on Towra Point dating back thousands of years. The quantity and variety of shellfish around Botany Bay had attracted the Water People, as the local indigenous people were called.

Towra Lagoon is an item of great cultural heritage value as it was mapped by Captain Cook when he was in Botany Bay in April 1770. It once supported numerous fauna species including



Towra Lagoon after restoration



An aerial view taken in 1961 of Towra showing the "Elephant's trunk" sand spit

tortoises but, due to the beach erosion and the subsequent saltwater inundation of the once freshwater lagoon, these species have all but disappeared.

Kurnell Peninsula was first logged by the first European landowner, James Connell, in 1835. By 1868 the forests of blackbutt and ironbark were cut down for houses and bridge construction and the remaining vegetation was cleared for grazing. This caused the sand dunes to move at a rate of approximately nine metres a year from 1885 to 1913. By 1923 sand was spilling into Quibray Bay from the large sand dunes of the ocean front of Cronulla Beach.

The mudflats of Towra Point first came under notice as an industry base after an attempt by pioneer Thomas Holt to cultivate oysters on the seabed of Gawley Bay (now Sylvania Waters) failed in 1870. Pioneer oyster farmers experimented successfully around 1870 with rectangular slabs of sandstone, placing them in rows in the intertidal mudflats in Quibray Bay, Woolooware Bay and Towra Point. By 1920 there were 450,000 stone slabs distributed around Towra. Thus the Georges River Botany Bay oyster industry was born.

There has been conflict with urban development ever since the first manufacturing industry, a clothing mill, was established on the shores of Botany Bay in 1815. The Towra Point

wetlands managed to survive because they are located in a secluded part of the Bay. However, in 1966 the Federal Government, looking to expand Kingsford Smith Airport, decided on Towra Point as a potential site for an airstrip. The campaign to oppose the airstrip lasted eighteen months before the government finally decided against using Towra.

The dredging of the seabed of Botany Bay to service large ships and the runway extensions have completely changed the bottom topography,

resulting in a new distribution of wave energy throughout the bay with consequent regression of beach fronts.

International recognition

In 1974 Japan and Australia signed a bilateral treaty on migratory wading birds. Representations to the Federal Minister for the Environment on the importance of Towra as a habitat for water birds and other features eventually resulted in the Commonwealth of Australia becoming the registered owner of 270 hectares of land owned by Towra Point Development. Prior to the registration of the transfer of the land, the NSW Government took out an injunction challenging in the High Court the right of the Commonwealth to acquire land at Towra Point. The issue remained unsolved until March 1982 when the land was transferred to the State Government as part of the Commonwealth/State Land Exchange Agreement. It was gazetted Towra Point Nature Reserve on 6 August 1982. After acquisition of additional land, including an addition of 82 hectares in April 1991, the nature reserve comprises an area of 440 hectares. It was the first nature reserve to be established by the Federal Government in any State.

Towra Point habitat was one of only three sites in NSW accorded special protection under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (especially as waterfowl habitat), which is commonly referred to as the RAMSAR Convention.

The waters surrounding Towra Point peninsula were gazetted an aquatic



Sand bag wall built to protect the lagoon

reserve on 24 December 1987 and included Quibray Bay, Weeney Bay, Stinkpot Bay and Woolooware Bay. The site was chosen because it is of special ecological significance.

Four species of seagrass are to be found on the seabed, the two most important being strapweed (*Posidonia australis*) and eelgrass (*Zostera capricorni*). The entire seabed in the aquatic reserve was carpeted with sea grasses, but more than one-third has been lost due to erosion.

Aquatic reserves are permanent reserves established to protect biodiversity and representative samples of marine life and habitats. They can also be established to protect important habitat and nursery areas and protected species, or for research and education.

Aquatic reserves are generally small in comparison to marine parks and play a significant role in marine protected area systems.

Currently there are thirteen aquatic reserves declared under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*. Today there are no less than 43 gazetted RAMSAR sites located across Australia, but Towra Point Nature Reserve was the first!

Wildlife of Towra Point Nature Reserve

Wading birds are among the world's most travelled migrants. They have an endless summer, crossing the equator twice a year as they travel to and from their breeding grounds in the Northern Hemisphere.

During their non-breeding cycle, wading birds, which include plovers,



Rainbow lorikeets feed on the trees in Towra Point Nature Reserve

sandpipers, curlews and snipe, descend on the Southern Hemisphere in huge flocks. Some two million of these birds – many weighing as little as 30 grams – make an annual round trip of 25,000 kilometres to Australia.

Reaching Australia in September, the birds feed mainly on invertebrates that live in mudflats. In April they head north again to breed in the Russian far east and Alaska.

Some of the birds that feed on the intertidal flats around Towra Point migrate over 12,000 kilometres from as far away as Siberia, China and Japan. These include the endangered golden plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) and the little

tern (*Sterna albifrons*). Towra Point is also used by many non-migratory waders, such as the endangered pied oyster-catcher (*Haematopus longirostris*).

The little tern nests on low areas of sand and shingle. An island adjacent to Towra Point is one of the major remaining nesting sites for little terns in New South Wales.

Wading birds in the Towra Point area are active, small to medium-sized birds. The smallest is the red-necked stint, only 14 centimetres long and a summer visitor from north-eastern Siberia and north-western Alaska. The largest is the eastern curlew, with a length of 61 centimetres. It is a regular spring and summer migrant from north-eastern Siberia.

The population of waders at Towra includes resident and migratory species. Nearly all are seasonal visitors.

The following species have been observed using Towra Point for feeding or other activity: eastern curlew, whimbrel, bar-tailed godwit, grey-tailed tattler and pied oystercatcher.

The Australian Littoral Society (ALS) conducted a major survey in 1977 recording 163 species of insects and 37 species of spiders, considered to be an underestimate of the actual diversity on Towra Point. ALS also recorded eight species of reptiles and four species of amphibians. Included was the eastern long-necked tortoise which is intolerant of saline conditions and apparently is endemic to the freshwater Mirrmere Pond.



Pied oyster catcher



Senator Robert Hill MP, Federal Minister for the Environment, being briefed by the Society's Regional Councillor, Bernie Clarke with Bruce Baird MP, Federal Member for Cook. Towra Point Nature Reserve on 30 July 1996

Eight reptile species were identified by ALS, including three snake species, namely, the red-bellied black snake, marsh snake and small-eyed snake. There is little doubt that a more detailed study would expand this list.

A study of Botany Bay by NSW State Fisheries found that 47 commercial species of fish caught offshore spend their nursery and growing period within Towra Aquatic Reserve.

Following a concerted conservation campaign, commercial trawling was banned in Botany Bay in 1994 to preserve and protect the juvenile fish and crustacea from exploitation.

All amateur fishermen are required to be licensed to fish in and around Botany Bay.

The Wildlife Preservation Society's involvement in Towra

In 1996 Patrick Medway the National President of WPSA, attended the International Convention of RAMSAR in Brisbane, Queensland, to mark its 25th anniversary. He met many people vitally concerned with preserving our wetlands and the wildlife that they support. Of particular interest was the growing need to protect the migratory wading birds and their fragile habitats on all sites such as Towra Point.

The Society's Vice-President, Clive Williams, had long been urging the Council of the Society to become involved in a project to galvanise the members into some vital wildlife preservation action. Patrick believed

that restoring Towra Point would be such a project. He was convinced from talking to conservationists around the country that the Society should take a lead role and establish a focus on an area of major concern where Australian wildlife and its habitat were in real peril.

Bernie Clarke, an active member and Scientific Advisor of the Society, was well-known as a campaigner for the preservation and conservation of all things to do with Botany Bay. Patrick asked Bernie to accompany him on a boat trip on Botany Bay to see at first hand the state of this very

important area of historic, scientific and environmental significance – Towra Point Nature Reserve.

They were horrified by what they saw. The neglect of the area, the beach erosion, the pollution and rubbish washed up onto the beach and mangrove area, and the disturbance by boat owners, was terrible.

The Society clearly had a long way to go to stop the pollution and to redress the neglect by the management of the National Park Service.

In 1989 the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) had written a draft Plan of Management for Towra Point, but it had never been implemented through lack of funds.

Bernie and Patrick contacted the Federal Minister, Senator Robert Hill, asking him to visit the reserve. On 30 July 1996 Robert Hill visited the bay and reserve and, after an impassioned plea by Patrick and Bernie, promised to assist with a Federal Government grant of \$200,000 to review the management of the reserve and enable steps to be taken to mitigate the erosion on Towra Beach.

Senator Hill was no doubt aware of the significance of this site, since it was fully protected by three international agreements, protection not given to the other Australian RAMSAR sites at that time.



The Minister for the Environment, The Hon Bob Debus MP, with Patrick Medway (Chairman of the Steering Committee) and Bernie Clarke at the official launch of the Plan of Management, December 2000

Senator Robert Hill sent the promised Federal funds to the State Government in 1997 and the money was handed over to the NPWS to develop the Plan of Management.

The NPWS formed an advisory committee to revise the plan of management, and the Society was represented on this committee by Patrick Medway and Bernie Clarke. The Society encouraged the formation of a "Friends" group for Towra Point Nature Reserve in 1997.

The then NSW Minister for the Environment, the Hon Pam Allan MP, officially launched the new 'Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve' at the reserve on Saturday 8 February 1997 before a crowd of 135 conservation supporters.

This new conservation group grew out of a series of successful meetings between the Society and the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre and the National Parks and Wildlife Service on how to provide future support for Towra Point Nature Reserve.

The 'Friends Group' continues to assist the NPWS officers responsible for the reserve in all aspects of management, including bush regeneration, exotic weed removal, tree planting, protection of the Towra Lagoon and its associated wildlife, with an emphasis on providing protection for the migratory wading bird population and their habitat protected under the international RAMSAR agreements.

In 1999 the Friends Group won the coveted National Parks Foundation Award - Excellence in Conservation -



Peter Stevens, District Manager of NPWS, assisting Pam Allan MP, Minister for the Environment, in planting new native trees on the Towra Point Nature Reserve - 8 February 1997

against strong competition from many other conservation associations across New South Wales.

In September 2000, the Society held the Earth 2000 Conference. At a dinner afterwards to honour the guest speaker, Professor Jared Diamond from the USA, Patrick Medway was amazed when Bob Debus lent over and whispered 'I have the money for Towra!' The Councillors of the Society present at the dinner were very excited and went into a huddle at the end of the table to discuss the details of what the Minister had said. The Minister added that he sat on a special committee for the Environmental Trust that is used to assist in rehabilitation works around the state. The main source of funding for this trust comes from fines imposed

on polluters and others convicted of damaging the environment in some way. The Minister told Patrick that he had recommended that at least \$1 million be set aside in this Trust to pay for the rehabilitation of Towra Beach.

After much work and many frustrations in getting the management plan accepted by NPWS, the new management plan for the beach habitat was completed and officially launched by the then Minister for the Environment, the Hon Bob Debus MP, in December 2000.

Throughout 2001 and 2002 the Friends struggled to implement the Plan of Management and to address the serious erosion along Towra Beach. Much work was carried out in preparing the Environmental Impact Statement for the beach erosion repair work.

In 2003 the Friends group was awarded a National Heritage grant to fund an extensive exotic weed removal campaign across the reserve. Conservation Volunteers Australia provided valuable assistance in this important conservation work.

Following the development of the Plan of Management and funding by the Minister for the beach nourishment work for Towra Beach, the Steering Committee, now chaired by Patrick Medway, met and prepared the vital Environmental Impact Statement in 2003.

Formal approval was given to commence the renourishment work on the beach on 15 June 2004 and commenced immediately.



Dredging work being carried out on the restoration of Towra Beach



Bernie Clarke and Patrick Medway on Towra Beach



Towra Beach after restoration work was completed. This beach is now an extended habitat for migratory wading birds



Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve on a working bee - 7 March 2003

The beach nourishment work was finished on 31 October 2004 and planting of native trees on the new dunes commenced.

Towra in 2010

Today, a significant feature of Towra Point Nature Reserve is a peninsula of sand known as the Elephants Trunk. This protective arm of sand is known locally as Stinkpot Bay. This bay is now ringed with mangroves and provides an important food source for local birds and fish.

The Towra Lagoon has been mainly re-vegetated with indigenous native plants by the Friends of Towra over recent years. The restored beach area now protects the lagoon from salt water invasion during high tides and storms. This beach restoration work was the result of a major effort by the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia and the National Parks Service from 1996 to 2004 and is a credit to 'people power'.

It is now essential that all development in and around Botany Bay and Kurnell Peninsula take full account of the need to protect the Towra Point Nature Reserve, Australia's first internationally recognised wetland for migratory wading birds.

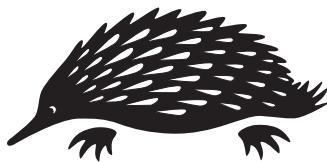


Towra 12th March 2004



Towra 6th August 2004

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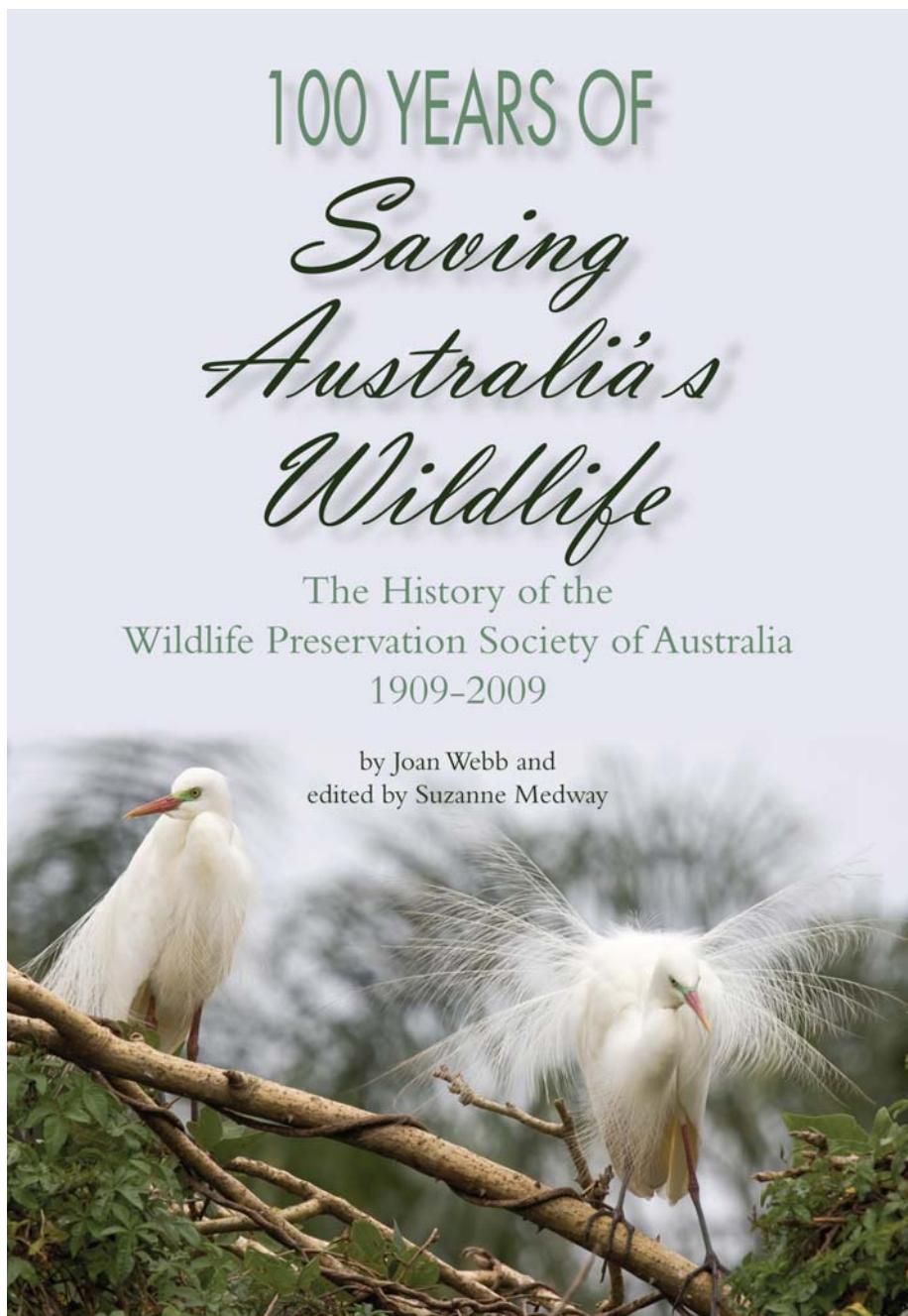
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"The challenge to the present adult generation is to reduce the increasing pressures on the Earth and its resources - and to provide youth with an education that will prepare them emotionally and intellectually for the task ahead.

PATRICK W MEDWAY AM
National President

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