AUSTRALIAN Wildlife

AUTUMN Vol: 2/2012
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Celebrating a new century of wildlife preservation in Australia

Journal of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited
(Founded 1909)

Little Desert National Park Photography by Sharon and Michael Williams

Gould's monitor (*Varanus gouldii*). Gould's monitors can grow to 1.5 metres in length

Mallee spade foot (*Neobatrachus pictus*). These powerful burrowers appear from their underground burrows after heavy rains

Full Story on page 10

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Front cover
Mallee spadefoot toad (*Neobatrachus pictus*)

Emerging from their underground burrows after heavy rain, the Mallee spadefoot is one of two burrowing frog species found in the Little Desert National Park. Photo: Sharon and Michael Williams.

Back cover
Spotted marsh frog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*)

One of the most commonly found frog species of the area can be heard calling from most water bodies … *"Tock, tock, tock"*.
Photo: Sharon and Michael Williams.

WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

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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Directors 2010

Notice to our members

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited is managed and controlled by an elected board of ten volunteer directors. The Society is a registered company limited by guarantee with ASIC and is responsible for complying with all its regulations.

Any member who might like to consider serving as a director of the Society is invited to contact the national office for more details. The most important qualification to serving as a director is "a commitment to and love of Australian wildlife".

The Society holds regular monthly meetings on the first Wednesday of each month in Sydney.

The Editor would like to feature a member's profile in the fortnightly email newsletter and occasionally in our quarterly magazine. Members are invited to consider submitting a short article with a photograph for possible publication.

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

Suzanne Medway - President

Traditional hunting of native wildlife - no place in the 21st Century

While I respect the rights of indigenous people to hunt native animals for food as bestowed by the Native Title Act in negotiations with the elders, I do not agree with it when there is blatant cruelty in the way the animals are slaughtered. I doubt that the authors of the Act foresaw sanctioning unspeakable cruelty and I don't believe that this right comes without responsibility: particularly the responsibility to the 'traditional' underpinning of this activity – only take what you need and don't waste anything. Establishing a 'black market' for the sale of protected marine turtles and dugongs is not in keeping with the Native Title Act!

If the laws are changed to bring indigenous people into line with all other Australians in terms of animal cruelty, it would sadly be nearly impossible to enforce. But, this should not be used as a cop-out or a failure on our part to draw attention to these cruel practices and the killing of protected wildlife by anyone.

I believe that the laws protecting our native wildlife and the condemnation of all animal cruelty practices must be changed to reflect the sentiment of the vast majority of Australians and should be applied fairly and equally to all Australians regardless of their racial or ethnic origins.

This is not a conflict between indigenous rights and animal rights activists; it is a conflict between so called 'indigenous rights' and all right-thinking Australians. Archaic practices such as the inhumane stone-age killing of animals with a concrete block have no place in modern Australia. One can hardly call 'traditional hunting' reasonable when high-powered rifles and modern fast motor boats are used to hunt our protected marine wildlife. Clearly the laws of Australia must apply for all Australians equally – with no exemptions to anyone.

The recent state election in Queensland brings promise that the newly-elected Minister for the Environment will challenge issues of cruelty in the killing of native wildlife under the Native Title Act.

I have now written to the Federal Minister for the Environment requesting him to enforce a total ban on the hunting of all protected native wildlife and, in particular, a total ban on the hunting of native marine life in green zones anywhere in Australia.

Spider wars

In the last magazine we featured an interesting article entitled "Spider wars". Helen Smith, Research Associate in Arachnology at the Australian Museum wrote:

"I wanted to send you some information on the mystery *Theridion* spider recorded by John Merrick and featured in your Summer issue (pp 30-31).

"The long-legged species in question is a native Australian spider, currently called *Theridion gigantipes*. This species was originally described from Sydney but has frequently been mis-identified as the introduced grey house spider, *Parasteatoda tepidariorum* (previously in the genus *Achaearanea*).

"The prey, 'Blacky' is indeed a black house spider, *Badumna insignis*. *Theridion gigantipes* has often been recorded eating other spiders as well as a wide variety of insects. The territory around windows, where insects are attracted by lights at night, seems to be 'hot property' and quite a few spider species commonly interact in such areas.

"The final two shots of John's sequence do not show a male, but another female with her recently emerged spiderlings. If 'Nimble-foot' had strayed too close there would have been a show down! Incidentally, the males of *T. gigantipes* can be recognised by enlarged palps, even longer legs, and a more elongate body. Males are often to be found lurking in or near female and juvenile female webs.

"Myself and several colleagues have recently submitted a paper to redescribe *Theridion gigantipes* and place the species into a different genus. I actually came across your article on the day our paper was ready to submit so was able to include a reference. Once the paper is published I will be happy to send you further information."

University grants

One of the great pleasures of my time as President has been meeting and learning from the university grant winners. While I have not had the privilege of meeting all of the winners, I have got to know them through their articles for this magazine and their emails. I was very sad to learn that Paul Chachelle, one of our winners in 2011, died recently. Paul's project article was published in the last edition of *Australian Wildlife*, Spring (pp 22-23). We will sadly miss Paul and his valuable contribution to the science of wildlife preservation. The family asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia.

Senior's Environmental Award

I was very humbled and proud to receive a **2012 NSW Seniors Week Achievement Award** in the category **Environment, Science, Agriculture**. My family and nominator accompanied me to the award presentation and cheered me on as I accepted the award from Graham Ross, the NSW Seniors Week Ambassador for this category.

Suzanne and Patrick Medway admiring the new award

Melbourne artist brushes our fauna

Cliff Howard is a Melbourne artist keen to paint a series of Australian wildlife, and he enjoys visiting our zoos and especially the Healesville Sanctuary for stimulation.

"Whilst most of my works portray the diversity of animal life in Africa, I'm keen to now focus on painting Australian wildlife," he says.

Cliff Howard describes his 40 years of paintings as having been a study of colour and form, covering a variety of subjects including musicians, dancers and the animal kingdom.

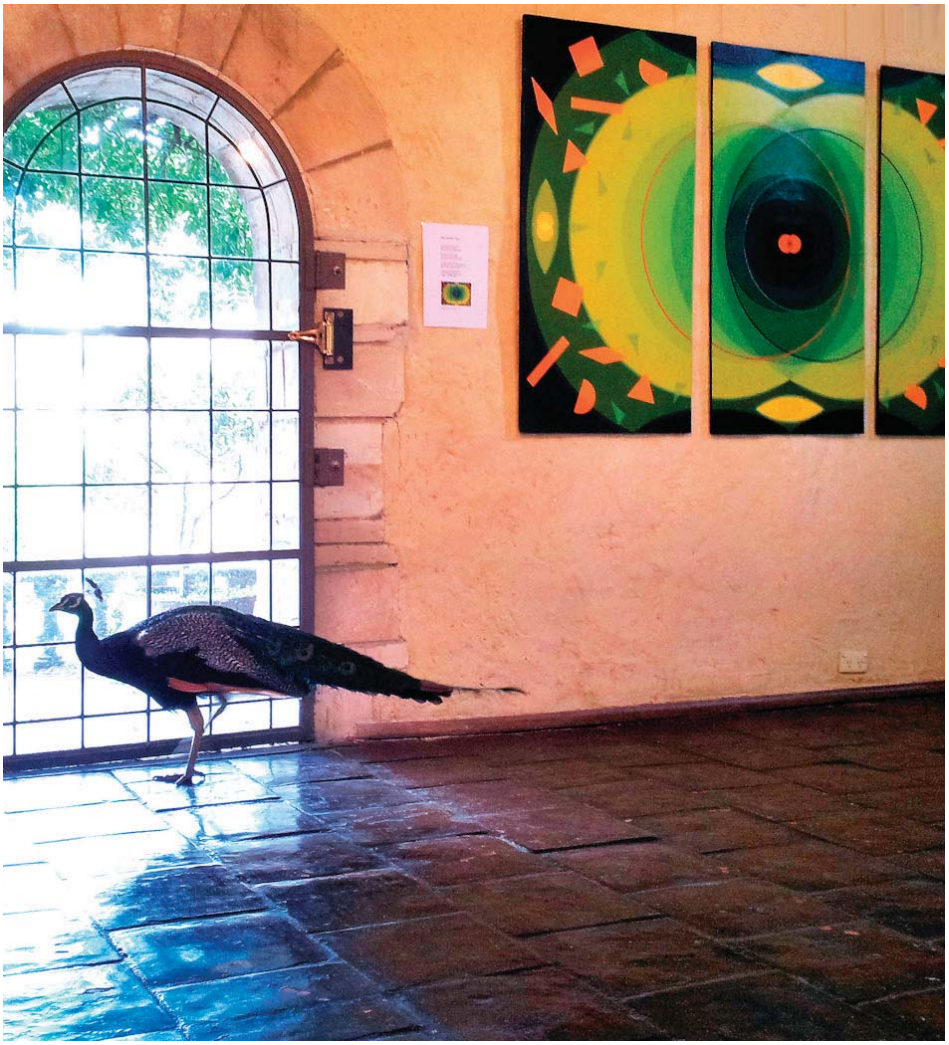
Cliff Howard's painting style is apparent in his painting of a turtle gliding across coral on the Great Barrier Reef, and in his poster called *Kangaroos at Dusk,* based on one of his commissioned paintings.

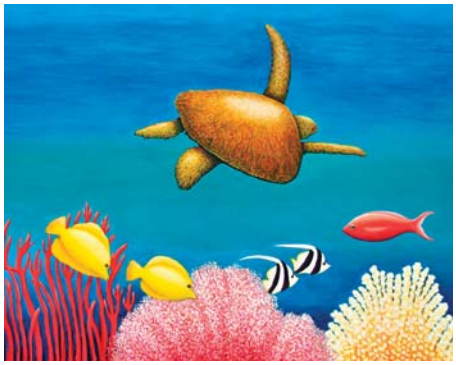
He likes to apply primary colours and hues to accentuate a desired focal point in his work, and to stimulate viewer intrigue. He says, "Sometimes I also use an unorthodox combination of lines or palette knife texture to simulate organic movement and to project the passion I see in a particular subject."

Cliff admires the unambiguous colour in the animal kingdom and envies the combination of bright hues found on fish and birds. "I aim to capture the alertness and poise of creatures in their habitat and show their surroundings in a representational context," he says. "My choice of subjects and compositions are strongly influenced by the need for us to preserve a sustainable and safe habitat for our unique native wildlife."

A range of Cliff Howard's works can be seen online at http://bit.ly/wlzM41 showing 30 paintings that were on exhibit at Montsalvat, in Eltham, during February this year.

Cliff Howard welcomes enquiries about art commissions, and is contactable by email at enquiries@falconwriting.com.au





Annual Member's and Friend's Luncheon

The Members' and Friends' Luncheon of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia was held on Wednesday 14 March 2012 in the historic Adam Room at the Castlereagh Inn in Sydney.

President, Suzanne Medway, welcomed life members, members and guests committed to wildlife conservation across Australia. She also welcomed guest speaker Deborah Tabart OAM from the Australian Koala Foundation.

2011 WPSA Serventy Conservation Medal

Dr Clive Williams, Vice President, announced the winner of the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2011 as **Jenny Maclean** of Mareeba, North Queensland, for her long-standing contribution to saving the endangered spectacled flying fox.

The Society, Australia's oldest wildlife conservation society, being in its 103rd year, awards the medal annually in honour of the Serventy family for a person who has made a significant contribution to conserving any form of wildlife in Australia.

Jenny, a physiotherapist by profession, founded the Tolga Bat Hospital over 20 years ago to rescue spectacled flying foxes paralysed by tick bites. (Because of the loss of their natural food sources, the bats have been forced to seek food at lower levels where they come into contact with ticks causing their already depleted numbers to be threatened even more.) Since that time, she and a dedicated band of volunteers, from across Australia and also from overseas, have devoted endless hours to the task. However, Jenny has not confined herself to rescuing the animals. She has developed an education centre at the hospital and regularly devotes her time to educating the public about the contribution bats make to the ecology of the region. She also makes the hospital and her expertise available to university students and staff conducting research.

Suzanne Medway and Deborah Tabart

Jenny Maclean

Jenny was also responsible for forming Wildlife Friendly Fencing which has alerted people across Australia to the damage barbed wire fences do, not only to bats, but to other wildlife that fall upon them. Jenny has shown how to minimise the damage that these fences can do. Her dedication and her long-standing contribution to wildlife conservation make her a worthy winner of the Serventy Medal.

Steve Amesbury, who nominated Jenny, accepted the award on Jenny's behalf and read out her acceptance speech.

Response by Jenny Maclean

I feel very honoured to receive the Serventy Conservation Medal, and thank the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia for this prestigious award.

I would also like to thank my bat colleagues for the nomination and for their letters of support: I truly value the confidence you have in my work through Tolga Bat Hospital.

I began working with bats in 1990, the year that tick paralysis was discovered in spectacled flying foxes on the Atherton Tablelands.

It's not easy being the 'bat lady' in a small rural community - especially in a large fruit-growing area. Even though many local farmers now have netting, the stigma of bats in orchards lives on. Like many communities around

Deborah Tabart, Peter Hardiman and Deidre Bowes

Lynne Amesbury, Clive Williams and Steve Amesbury

Patrick Medway and Martin Phillips (CEO of Zoo Aquarium Association)

Australia, we have a conflict situation with nearby residents at a local flying fox colony. It would be a lot easier to be a 'koala lady'.

I have been the president of Tolga Bat Hospital since its incorporation in 2002. The hospital has grown and grown, becoming my whole life.

We are on the Atherton Tablelands about an hour inland from Cairns. Like many others, we deal with all the usual issues affecting bats – their poor public image, entanglement in netting and barbed wire, general trauma and orphans.

But then we have the extra burden of tick paralysis. It affects thousands of flying foxes here from September to January, bringing up to 500 orphans into care annually.

We have been coping with this animal welfare crisis for the last 15 years, and fortunately have developed networks and partnerships that make this possible. We attract a large number of volunteers who work long hours to cope with the huge workload.

One of the very rewarding aspects of this work is watching the friendships that develop amongst the volunteers, their steadily increasing confidence in themselves, and how their volunteering is a catalyst in their lives.

Our core business though is the conservation of bats and their habitat, through rescue and landcare work, education and research.

Education is an essential component of our work with bats as they are so misunderstood in our Australian communities. We do this through our onsite Visitor Centre, the local Environmental Education Centre for schools, the Wildlife Friendly Fencing and Netting projects, and general advocacy work year-round.

This is the International Year of the Bat. It is shameful that the Liberal National Party in Queensland have said they will bring back lethal means of crop protection if they win Government in the upcoming state election.

This will allow shooting of bats and almost certainly a return to the use of electric grids. This sort of animal cruelty was found to be inhumane and unacceptable by Queensland's

Suzanne Medway, Steve Amesbury and Clive Williams

Animal Welfare Advisory Council. Both methods leave their victims dying from severe injuries, often slowly. The young also die slowly, from starvation, back at camp or clinging to their mothers.

Please go to a fabulous new website "dontshootbats.com" to learn more about this issue.

Sadly, NSW still allows for the issuing of permits to shoot bats. It is appalling that state governments are not only prepared to sanction animal cruelty, but allow the killing of threatened species when solutions such as netting are available for most farmers.

I would like to thank the Society for its ongoing efforts on behalf of flying-foxes and for supporting the "Don't Shoot Bats" campaign.

Thank you again for the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2011. Your support for our work goes a long way to motivating us to keep on keeping on.

We are looking to expand our facilities this year as well as looking seriously at succession planning. I expect to be actively involved for at least another 10 years but like all volunteer organisations we need to be looking to the younger generations for the future.

Speech by Deborah Tabart

Deborah is the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Koala Foundation. She spoke of her recent visit to the Gunnedah area and what is happening there in relation to the land grab by overseas investors to mine for gas and coal.

Since European settlement, approximately 80 percent of Australia's eucalypt forests have been decimated. Of the remaining 20 percent almost none is protected and most occurs on privately-owned land. Settlers have favoured the rich fertile lands along the eastern seaboard to have their farms and urban developments. Unfortunately, this is where the majority of koalas are already living because they also like to live in trees which are growing in fertile soils.

It is important to understand the relationship between the koala and its environment. Koalas rely on trees to provide them with food, shelter and a place to interact with other koalas. When their habitat is cleared to make way for a new road, housing estate or farm, it is an extremely disorienting and stressful experience for koalas. If they do manage to survive the clearing, finding a new home has its problems, too. If the area is already built up, koalas will face dangers like disorientation, cars, dog attacks and swimming pools. Unless they have access to a safe haven of undisturbed habitat large enough to support a koala colony, their days as suburban koalas are numbered. Scientists have found that koalas facing these sorts of problems are more prone to disease and also have a lower rate of reproduction.

Launch on new fund raising campaign

Clive Williams launched the Society's new fund raising campaign to raise funds for the UTS/WPSA Science Scholarship.

The Directors wish to invite people to lend money to the Society instead of making a direct donation. The objective is to raise a minimum of $100,000 and this money will then be invested either in a bank or other secure financial institution. The $100,000 invested at five percent interest would earn $5,000 for the scholarship in a year. The plan is to invite members/friends to lend money to WPSA for the purpose of investment for a nominated period. The lenders would have assurance that in an emergency they could call in their loan at any time and the money would be returned to lenders at the end of the loan period. Full details will be released at a later date.

Gillis Broinowski (National Parks & Wildlife Foundation), Martin Phillips, Suzanne Medway, Deborah Tabart and Noel Cislowski

Four seasons in one place

Little Desert National Park

Story and Photographs by Sharon and Michael Williams -
IT'S A WILDLIFE - Nature and Wildlife Photography
www.itsawildlife.com.au

Golden sun moth (*Synemon plana*). Nationally listed as 'critically endangered' this native grassland species have a reserve dedicated to them, in the Nhill Township

Mitchell's short-tailed snake (*Parasuta nigriceps*). A nocturnal snake species which is often mistaken for the more venomous juvenile brown snake

A brief history

Originally created to preserve and protect the iconic malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*), the Kiata Lowan Sanctuary was created in 1955 when 217 hectares of natural bush was set aside for its purpose. It wasn't until 1968 that the Kiata Lowan Sanctuary and a further 728 hectares were declared a national park. The then 945-hectare wilderness protection has ensured the continual survival of not only the malleefowl, but many vulnerable and rare species that now occur throughout the current 132,000 hectare park which was officially increased in 1988.

The continual protection of the area over the years has been made possible by passionate locals that have successfully lobbied local and state governments; preventing the expansion of cattle grazing and land clearing that would most definitely have seen the area's unique biodiversity being lost forever.

Visitors to the Little Desert region will immediately notice the direct consequences from the area's agricultural history that was initiated in the 1840s and that now envelops the landscape as the region's main commerce. However, there are still some pockets of intact, primary mallee habitat surviving in the area giving refuge to the indigenous flora and fauna unique to the Little Desert.

Crucial information

- Due to the sandy nature of the Little Desert vehicle tracks, much of the park is accessed by 4WD only and unfortunately catches many inexperienced visitors in 2WD vehicles to the area, resulting in expensive recoveries. But those with 2WD vehicles will not miss out at all, as there are some great walks which are accessible by 2WD vehicles.
- Visitors are advised to cater for all types of weather by bringing warm clothing, a raincoat and umbrella; inclement weather that closes in without notice is not only restricted to alpine areas.

Preceeding pages: Buckshot Mallee habitat. One of the harshest of all Mallee habitats, the 'buckshot' refers to the small pebble–like stones that contain so much iron, that they can actually be picked up with a magnet!

- Mobile telephone reception with a Telstra 'Blue Tick' phone is reasonably good throughout the park, but if driving into the park with a 4WD vehicle, reporting your movements to friends, relatives, or a Parks Victoria office is encouraged.
- Always have plenty of fresh drinking water with you.
- Respect the environment at all times by taking your rubbish with you; leaving nothing but footprints and tyre tracks and only taking photographs.
- Allow two to three days in the area to fully explore and enjoy.

When should you go?

So, when is the best time to visit, or stay in the Little Desert National Park and surrounding area?

Answer: The great thing is ... any time of the year is a great time to visit, or stay!

When deciding what time of the year best suits your needs and wants, there are a few things you might like to know up-front before you go that may influence your final decision:

Summer - December to February

Although the summer months can turn up the heat, the summer season certainly has its rewards and provides a greater abundance of wildlife than any other time of year.

As the larger waterholes begin to be the main water source in some parts of the park, the birds make the most of the mornings and evenings, coming in to cool off with a long drink and to wash off the day's heat with a soothing bath. Many honeyeaters, parrots and wrens are often observed making the most of the natural springs on offer, as well as flocks of cockatiels and budgerigars joining the summer ritual.

The malleefowl continually work their mounds in the summer months, frequently adjusting the structure, striving to regulate the environment's effects on these enormous incubators. If you are fortunate enough to stumble upon the many mounds hidden within the scrubby foliage, you should take the opportunity

Painted dragon (*Ctenophorus pictus*). You'll see flashes of blue, red and yellow dart throughout the Little Desert during hotter weather

Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*). This cryptic species can sometimes be seen tending to their incubating mounds in Mallee habitat

Spotted marsh frog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*) This very adaptable frog can be found throughout eastern Australia

Helena gum moth (*Opodiphthera Helena*). With a wingspan of 170mm, this amazing moth is unmistakable

Nightjar (*Aegotheles cristatus*). This bird species is Australia's smallest nocturnal bird. They live in hollows and often take up refuge in possum nest boxes

Growling grass frog (*Litoria reniformis*). Once a common species, the growling grass frog is now listed as endangered

to sit quietly, as you may just be rewarded with a unique sighting of this endangered and extremely elusive bird species.

Visitor-wise, it is a rather quiet time of year, so experiencing an overwhelming feeling of 'having the place to yourself' will be a feeling that you will constantly encounter while exploring the variety of walking tracks on offer, accompanied only by your inner thoughts and the melodious chorus of resident birds.

Mornings and evenings are the best time to wander along the Little Desert tracks before being confronted by the mid-afternoon heat. As the ground warms up, reptiles begin to emerge, so walking slowly and quietly may turn up several reptile species, such as: painted dragons (*Ctenophorus pictus*), which flash blue, yellow and red as they dart across in front of your feet; Mallee tree dragons (*Amphibolurus norrisi*) sunning themselves on the warm sand will quickly scamper to the safety of the trackside vegetation; and stumpy-tail lizards (*Tiliqua rugosa*), who barely make an effort to get out of your way, preferring to soak up the fresh rays of the day.

The 2011 season has seen a particular high incidence of monitor species. The Gould's monitor (*Varanus gouldii*), has been in abundance and can be located without too much trouble, with the largest local species, the 'threatened' lace monitor (*Varanus varius*), having been sighted on a more regular basis. The third official record of the lesser known Rosenberg's monitor (*Varanus rosenbergi*) was reported in the national park in September and should provide a great deal of excitement to all visiting reptile enthusiasts.

Snakes are seldom seen, but if encountered, the eastern brown snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*) will often avoid confrontation, but can be quite aggressive if challenged, or cornered, so common sense and a high level of respect must be displayed at all times. For those reptile lovers that like to venture out and explore the night time environment, the nocturnal bardick (*Echiopsis curta*) and Mitchell's short-tailed snake (*Parasuta nigriceps*), as well as geckos, blind snakes and legless lizards, are all present.

Autumn - March to May

The earlier summer temperatures start to ease, which makes ideal conditions for walking any time of the day, or night. The beautiful colour contrasts of the various foliage, from the bright greens of the native pine trees (*Callitris* sp.*)* to the rusty brown hues of the she-oaks (*Allocasuarina* sp.) makes for incredible viewing and breathtaking imagery for budding photographers.

The days are typically sunny and still, with nights remaining clear for a unique opportunity to view a spectacular showcase of stars. Even with the aid of binoculars, you can get a very good view of the moon, stars and planets.

Even though the mammal species can be quite cryptic in the Little Desert, if you choose a night where the moon is not so bright, it is possible to see the common brush-tail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), sugar glider (*Petaurus breviceps*), western and little pygmy possum (*Cercartetus coninnus/C. lepidus*), silky desert mouse (*Pseudomys apodemoides*), swamp wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*) and western grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus*). As the nights during autumn are quite mild, considerate and respectful spotlighting for these nocturnal animals can be very successful if you are patient and very quiet ... who knows, you may even stumble upon some night time aerial predators such as tawny frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*), barking owl (*Ninox connivens*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*)and southern boobook owl (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*).

Winter - June to August

Don't get me wrong ... winter temperatures can fall incredibly quickly overnight in the Little Desert, but rug up and you will love it! Winter is when everything starts to come to life again, especially if the summer has been hot and dry. A vital food source for pygmy possums, the silver and desert banksias that rely heavily on frosty mornings to stimulate nectar production, are well and truly in flower. Acacias, (of which there are 12 species that occur throughout the Park), start to blossom midway through the season along with pink and white blooms of native heath (*Epacris* spp.), as well

Heart-lipped spider orchid (*Arachnorchis cardiochila*). Two colour forms of this species are found side-by-side in the sandy soil of the Little Desert; green and red

Eastern stone gecko (*Diplodactylus vittatus*). Although commonly found throughout the Little Desert, this gecko is rarely seen

Blue sun orchid (*Thelymitra sp.*). This incredibly stunning orchid species is often found in great numbers in random locations all through the Little Desert National Park

Western blue-tongued lizard (*Tiliqua occipitalis*). Although rarely encountered, if found, their beautiful markings are very obvious and clearly identifiable

as correa (*Correa* spp.) that blanket the understorey of the heathland. Delicate grevillea (*Grevillea* spp.) flowers erupt amongst their sharp, menacing leaves along with eremophila (*Eremophila* spp.) and the first emergence of native orchids combine to make the winter season an unexpected delight.

Walking along the various paths in the winter is a great way to stay warm and the fresh perfumes of the damp mallee habitats will delight your senses. Small bush birds that remain throughout the winter visit the tiny flowers, gathering nectar and insects, as they too struggle to keep warm during this challenging time.

Other animals that you may not necessarily see, but you will definitely hear, are the frogs. The many calls resonating from springs, dams and lakes echo great distances in an attempt to attract the attention of females for reproduction. The region is home to many species of frog, but in particular two species of burrowing frog: the Mallee spadefoot toad (*Neobatrachus pictus*) and common spadefoot toad (*Neobatrachus sudelli*) both occur.

The spadefoot toads emerge from their summer burrows as winter rainfall seeps through the ground to wake them from their long slumber. Another species that in many situations survives underground in vacant yabbie holes is the endangered growling grass frog (*Litoria raniformis*). This incredibly beautiful and bright-green frog still survives in western Victoria and is one of Australia's largest frogs. From the minute common froglet (*Crinia signifera*) and Bibron's toadlet (*Pseudophryne bibronii*) to the larger Peron's tree frog (*Litoria peronii*), striped and spotted marsh frog (*Limnodynastes peronii*/*L. tasmaniensis*) and pobblebonk frog (*Limnodynastes dumerilii*) all are here in the diverse habitats both natural and man-made.

Spring - September to November

It seems everyone's favorite time of year in the Park is spring.

The burst of wildflowers put on a spectacular show and the birdlife is prolific. With over 220 bird species recorded in the Little

Desert National Park, spring is the perfect time to observe the birds in their most spectacular plumage. The Little Desert National Park, however, has its own Big Five bird species: the endangered malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*), southern scrub robin (*Drymodes brunnoepygia*), Gilbert's whistler (*Pachycephala inornata*), shy heathwren (*Hylacola cauta*) and purple-gaped honeyeater (*Lichenostomus cratitius*) will astound and capture the imagination of even the most seasoned birdwatchers.

The wildflowers really come into their own during the spring months with many more of the acacias coming into blossom and the emergence of the stunningly beautiful blue tinsel lily (*Calectasia intermedia*), fringe-myrtle (*Calytrix tetragona*) and native pea species. The varieties of native pea are in such profusion that the desert now resembles a daytime sunset covering the sandy flats and ridge-lines. One species of native pea is the barb-wire bush (*Daviesia pectinata*) that combines the drama and harshness of the dry desert environment with the elegant tenderness that is reflected in its surprisingly colorful and complex flower.

Orchid species and other small shrubs burst with their wonderfully intricate and incredibly delicate foliage as pollinating insects race to take full advantage of the event.

It is worth noting that tracks that would normally take an hour to wander may now take half the day when continually stopping to look, identify and photograph everything on offer at this time of the year.

It's totally addictive!

One way to view and discover these species at your preferred time of the year is to organise a personalised tour available from The Little Desert Nature Lodge (*Ph.0353915232/www.littledesertlodge.com.au*). The Lodge run private birding and nocturnal wildlife tours around their 117-hectare lodge property (located 15 kilometres south of the township of Nhill via the C206 to Goroke) and also to their 124-hectare, predator-proof protected malleefowl sanctuary where the Big Five bird species also occur, as well as variegated fairy-wrens (*Malurus lamberti*); white-

Stumpy-tailed lizard (*Tiliqua rugosa*). Always a welcome sight whenever you come across one along walking tracks

Tawny frog mouth (*Podargus strigoides*). A nocturnal bird which can also be seen during the day roosting on large dead branches; they blend in perfectly

Southern Banjo frog (*Limnodynastes dumerilii variegata*). Often heard and not seen. The familiar "BONK, BONK" sound can be almost deafening after rain

Southern scrub-robin (*Drymodes brunneopygia*). At the top of every bird lovers list when visiting this area

fronted, white-eared and brown-headed honeyeaters (*Phylidonyris albifrons, Lichenostomus leucotis, Melithreptus brevirostris*); golden and rufous whistlers (*Pachycephala pectoralis, P. rufiventris*) and many other spectacular birds that can be observed for which you will just have to make the trip and discover for yourselves! The Nature Lodge's experienced tour guides can take you through all aspects of the area's unique and diverse wildlife, as well as the extraordinary ecological framework.

So ... now that you are equipped with a little more information to hopefully guide you through the decision process, it is important to realise, however, that although the Little Desert National Park in western Victoria does cater for all visitors at any time of the year, the Park remains largely unexplored. Infrastructure and facilities throughout the Park are nominal and, as a result, this does deter many tourists who may require a bit more comfort. But, more importantly, minimal impact on any natural environment and the conservation of local flora and fauna are the key in the management of protected reserves, and the Little Desert National Park is truly one of these areas.

Cockatiel (*Nyphicus hollandicus*). An incredibly beautiful sight whilst driving past roadside vegetation

Cleaning up Brighton Ponds for Wildlife

Over 45 local volunteers gathered to clean up the rubbish around the Brighton Ponds on Clean Up Australia Day 2012 to make it a safer natural environment for our local native wildlife.

Led by Patrick Medway, a registered site supervisor for Clean Up Australia and CEO for the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, a large number of community volunteers came from local suburbs to help in the clean-up this year. The Brighton Ponds area is an environmentally sensitive habitat for native wildlife being a freshwater and drainage system running from Cooks River to Georges River behind the foreshores of Botany Bay, Sydney.

The largest and perhaps the most enthusiastic group came from the 5th Kingsgrove (Al Marbarat) Scout group with some 25 young men and women all dressed up for the 2012 clean-up. Led by Scout Group Leader Najwa Rachid, the Kingsgrove team did an outstanding job of collecting rubbish from around the ponds system, the sports fields, car parks and fence lines from President Avenue north to the Kings Road entranceway to the Rockdale Wetlands Corridor. They even cleaned up rubbish from around the Brighton Le Sands Scout Hall and noted the window repairs and new paint work around the front of the old Scout Hall.

University students from the Australian Catholic University, led by Bonnie Hanna, also made a great contribution to this year's clean-up for wildlife. Five students studying Primary Education at the University to become primary school teachers assisted. One of the objectives was to provide a description of the type of rubbish collected and its effect on the environment in relation to native flora and fauna. The impact of plastic rubbish and pollution is a serious concern to all native wildlife and has caused untold damage to birds and animals, as well as to marine wildlife when dumped and discarded by careless humans.

We have all seen the sad pictures of birds and animals strangled to death by plastic rings and fishing lines, and marine turtles drowned in discarded fishing nets.

Members of the 5th Kingsgrove (Al Marbarat) Scout group

Volunteers at Brighton Ponds

Volunteers (left to right) - Anthony Chuang, Benny Ng, Mandy Ng and Derrick Ng

Australian Catholic University students

Loading the rubbish

Anthony Chuang led his team of four young students from the University of New South Wales, where Anthony is in final year of a Bachelor of Medicine degree. He has a sporting interest in basketball and tennis as well as volunteering for charity work concerned with environmental protection and the health of Australians. He has been a volunteer for Clean Up Australia, St John's Ambulance and the NSW Cancer Council.

Other local community personnel included Peter Stock, a former director of WPSA, and one of our most reliable volunteers, who is also a great hand at the barbecue which is held when the volunteers return from a hard day's work in the field. Peter cooks and dishes up a mouth-watering grilled sausage with onions and salads, served in a large buttered bun, washed down with a cool drink – all provided free of charge by our Society to the worthy volunteers.

This year we collected 24 bags of mixed rubbish, ranging from the usual plastic bottles (everywhere), discarded plastic bags (everywhere), to empty cigarette packets, scrap newspapers, drink cans, large pieces of plastic, broken chairs and dumped mattresses.

Thanks to Geoffrey Raymond, Waste Education Officer, and his team of workers from the Rockdale City Council who kindly provided extra bags, extra cold water and then quietly collected and disposed of this year's rubbish.

In summary, we are very grateful to the official organisers of Clean Up Australia, Ian Keenan and his team, the local Council for their active support and encouragement, the members of the Society, and finally to those kind volunteers who come along to make it all happen.

We noticed that this year there appeared to be less rubbish lying around than in previous years and for that we are very grateful. We continue to ask everyone to be very careful in what they throw away and to take extra care that their rubbish will not kill or injure wildlife around the Brighton Ponds.

And all across Australia – what an effort! An estimated 591,400 volunteers removed a staggering 16,169 tonnes of rubbish from 7,263 Clean Up Sites.

Suzanne Medway, President of the Society, would like to thank the hard-working volunteers who have made the 22nd Clean Up Australia Day at Brighton Ponds such a successful one.

WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED
PO BOX 42 BRIGHTON LE SANDS NSW 2216

WPSA PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011

A year in review

One of the first wildlife conservation projects to be announced by Suzanne Medway following her re-election as President of the Society was a new scholarship for students to study at the University of Technology Sydney. A special Gala Dinner was held in June to officially launch the new **Wildlife Science Ecology Research Scholarship** to enable bright young student scientists to study and research wildlife conservation at the University of Technology Sydney to prevent any further wildlife extinctions. The NSW Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, officially launched the new scholarship at the Gala Dinner on 6th June 2011.

We identified that the future of the Society lies with a new generation of young Australians who have a passion for wildlife conservation. Our research indicated that young people who study wildlife conservation at university develop a keen and abiding interest in the subject which can last a lifetime. The funds raised from the Gala Dinner are now invested in the WPSA Public Fund and are being added to progressively by ongoing donations to this Fund. You too can make a donation to the Wildlife Science Ecology Research Scholarship at any time. Donations are fully tax deductable under our registration as a DGR status Item 1 on the table in section 30-15 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

NSW Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO and Suzanne Medway

Wildlife conservation projects

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia has developed a diverse range of conservation projects and responsibilities in our mission to preserve Australia's unique wildlife, and this is evident in the breadth of our achievements over the last year. We deal with and support a broad spectrum of environmental issues, supporting and/or delivering various wildlife conservation projects and operating in a number of different, and sometimes difficult and isolated, locations across Australia. Some of our wildlife conservation projects focus on preserving a single species, while others deal with national problems on a continental or global scale – such as feral animals or climate change. Our volunteers work in locations all around Australia, from remote areas in the central desert to the capital cities – and all showing a tremendous dedication and commitment to preserving and protecting Australia's fauna and flora for the next generation of young Australians.

Female numbat with nesting material

102nd Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was well attended by members and a delicious morning tea was served at the conclusion of the proceedings.

President receives prestigious award

Suzanne Medway, President of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, won the 2010 Environmental Volunteer Award for her contribution to preserving Australia's wildlife in the 2010 NRMA Helping People Awards. Every year across NSW and ACT, hardworking volunteers lend their helping hands to assist charities in their community. The NRMA Helping People Awards recognise the tireless contribution these people make.

Suzanne Medway receiving her award from NRMA President Wendy Machin, accompanied by Patrick Medway

Serventy Conservation Medal for 2010

This special award was inaugurated in 1999 to commemorate the wonderful conservation work by the members of the Serventy family: Dr Vin Serventy, his brother Dr Dominic Serventy and his sister Lucy. Each member of the family has given a lifetime of commitment to the conservation and preservation of Australian wildlife.

The Serventy Conservation Medal for 2010 was awarded to **Helen George** of Kangaroo Valley. Few people have devoted over 45 years of their lives to conservation. However, that is the achievement of the winner of our Serventy Medal for 2010, Helen George. Helen was one of the people who contributed to the forming of the Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES) and since that time she has been active in educating wildlife carers how to be responsible for the animals which come into their care. Helen is reputed to be the first person to successfully raise an orphaned grey-headed flying fox to maturity. This occurred in 1978 and the flying fox was less than 24 hours old when Helen received him. Much of his life was spent as an education animal, living for almost 23 years. Helen developed considerable expertise in this area and, in 1987, was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her services to conservation, principally for her work on the plight of the grey-headed flying fox. She was one of the key advocates for getting the NSW Government to place them on the protected list. She is a scientific member of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW. Helen shares her knowledge freely and, although she has no formal academic qualifications, is often called on to talk to a variety of organisations, students and tertiary institutions. With such a length of experience, her knowledge is naturally not confined to flying foxes. She is a keen observer and recorder of data and rigorously pursues scientific principles. She is hoping to soon publish a book on the care of macropods which is eagerly awaited both by carers and veterinary scientists and students. It is a pleasure to have Helen's name added to the list of Serventy Medal winners.

Helen George holding the Serventy Conservation Medal

Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2010

The Community Wildlife Conservation Award is made each year to recognise organisations which make a significant contribution to the preservation of Australian wildlife.

The Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2010 was awarded to the **Wombat Awareness Organisation of South Australia.** The southern hairy nose wombat is the emblem of South Australia, yet landholders easily obtain permits to cull them. Often this is done in inhumane ways, while the species is in decline. The Wombat Awareness Organisation (WAO), led by Brigitte Stevens, has for many years been fighting to educate the community of South Australia that current practices risk the eventual extinction of the species. WAO has spent many hours of its members' time and considerable money on rescuing injured animals as well as negotiating with pastoralists over ways to live harmoniously with wombats. WAO has also conducted considerable research into sarcoptic mange, a deadly disease which threatens to ravage populations of the animal. WAO also has been raising money to purchase Portee Station in South Australia as a refuge for wombats as well as a place for scientific study into mange and other threats to wombat existence. Moreover, Portee Station will also be a refuge for other wildlife species, including 133 species of birds. WAO is

Brigitte Stevens of the Wombat Awareness Organisation

a completely volunteer organisation. Its achievements and aspirations make it a worthy winner of WPSA's Community Wildlife Conservation Award.

Wildlife rescue calls

We continue to receive numerous and wide-ranging distress calls for help from members of the public about sick, injured and stranded wildlife. We note with some distress that the Victorian government has been asked to remove the bare-nosed or common wombat from the list of protected native species which will allow some local farmers to destroy wombats on their property. We are fortunate to have the support of the various national wildlife rescue services that do such valuable and selfless work to help rescue, save and rehabilitate our native wildlife. We are constantly reminded of the necessity of our organisation to continue to protect and preserve our native wildlife from repeated attacks.

University Student Grants

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia announced the winners of the ten annual grants of $1,000 each to honours and/or postgraduate students conducting research that will contribute to the conservation of Australian wildlife. The winners for 2011 were:

Joanne Towsey, University of Queensland. Project: Foraging ecology and management of flying-foxes (*Pteropus alecto* and *Pteropus poliocephalus*) in urbanised south-east Queensland

Kylie Soanes, University of Melbourne. Project: Evaluating the effectiveness of road mitigation measures for wildlife: how much monitoring is enough?

Paul Duckett, Macquarie University. Project: Combining genetics and ecological niche modeling to assess connectivity between present and future distributions of an Australian gecko (*Gehyra variegata*)

Tamara Inkster, James Cook University. Project: Community structure, altitudinal gradients, and climatic responses of microbats in the wet tropics

Bronwyn Fancourt, University of Tasmania. Project: Drought, disease or destiny? Identifying causes of decline of the eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*)

Helen Smith, University of Sydney. Project: Wildlife Responses to Black Rat Control in Sydney Harbour National Park

Maggie Haines, University of Melbourne. Project: Evolutionary ecology of an endangered alpine lizard threatened by climate change

Maggie Triska, University of Western Australia. Project: Determining Native Fauna Occupancy in unmined Jarrah Forest in South-western Australia

Mark Wallace, University of Western Australia. Project: Rare plants in the Western Australia biodiversity hotspot

Paul Chachelle, University of Western Australia. Project: The effect of fauna underpasses on the ecology and movement patterns of western grey kangaroos (*Macropus fuliginosus*) in a landscape fragmented by anthropomorphic development

2011 Conservation Group Grants

The Council of the Wildlife Preservation Society carefully considers all requests for grants from other wildlife conservation groups and places a special emphasis on native wildlife research, conservation and the preservation of wildlife habitat. The Society makes regular contact with wildlife caring groups across Australia to find out how they are faring, what their main projects are and how we can be of assistance to them in preserving native wildlife. We lobby organisations and government bodies on their behalf and make donations to assist them in their special wildlife conservation projects.

During the year major donations were made to:

Wombat Awareness Organisation in South Australia – funds were donated to this non-profit organisation to assist in their mission of large-scale rescue and rehabilitation of the southern hairy-nosed wombat (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*). This includes wombat protection and conservation, protection of fragmented populations, developing new co-existence plans for landowners, lobbying for tougher regulations on culling and undertaking research into public opinion, population status, human impact and a Murraylands Mange Management Program. Their aim is to revolutionise the perception of wombats by promoting welfare and conservation of the species.

Fourth Crossing Wildlife – we sponsored Fourth Crossing Wildlife representative's attendance at the Wombat Conference in Albury. We felt it important that WPSA be represented for their dedication to the welfare, rescue and rehabilitation of native wildlife. The conference shared the latest information about the rescue, rehabilitation and release of wombats. There were approximately 30 presenters from across Australia, including speakers from wildlife care organisations, government, the veterinary profession, research institutions and the RSPCA.

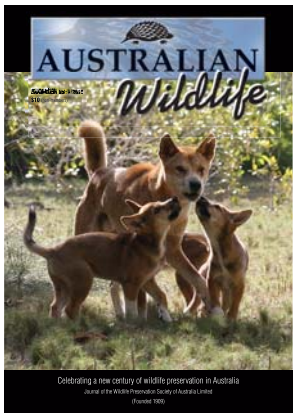
Australian Rescue and Rehabilitation Of Wildlife Assoc Inc – A.R.R.O.W. rescues and rehabilitates sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. We donated funds to give assistance for caring for the wildlife so seriously affected by the Queensland floods and its aftermath. It has not been possible to even hazard a guess at the loss of life in our wildlife species, or to work out how long it will be before the tree and plant food that fed birds, koalas and other wildlife are restored in this environment.

Foster of Australia's Unique Native Animals Association – F.A.U.N.A. is a dedicated group of people who care for sick, injured and orphaned native Australian animals. We donated funds to help in the care of the native animals devastated by the Queensland floods.

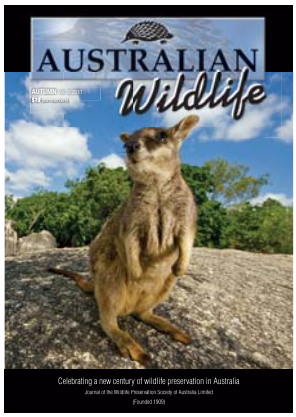
National Parks Association – The Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves (TSR) network in NSW is an extensive network of public land, established for droving sheep and cattle across the countryside. Unlike surrounding agricultural land, TSRs weren't cleared, so they have a unique range of environmental, cultural, heritage, social and economic values. We donated funds for this valuable project.

Australian Wildlife magazine

Our coloured magazine is the 'flagship' of the Society and has proved to be extremely popular amongst all of our members and their families.



Summer Cover



Autumn Cover

Winter Cover

Spring Cover

Our fortnightly Email Wildlife Newsletter has proven to be very popular with our members and we encourage them to forward it to their family, friends and associates to help spread the wildlife conservation word.

Conferences and wildlife research seminars

Councillors attended and contributed to a number of important wildlife conferences and meetings throughout the year. We actively initiated and sponsored many of these conferences and participated in others, including:

- RSPCA Scientific Day in Canberra ACT
- National Wombat Conference in Albury NSW
- 56th Scientific Meeting and Rock-wallaby Symposium by the Australian Mammal Society in Canberra ACT
- Australian Wildlife Management Society's Conference in Bathurst, NSW
- International Botanic Gardens Congress in Melbourne VIC
- Cane Toad/Frog Watch Seminar in Darwin NT
- Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel Seminar in Dubbo NSW.
- Nature Conservation Council AGM and Seminar at the University of Sydney.
- Tasmanian Conservation Trust Seminar in Hobart Tasmania
- Geko Society AGM on the Gold Coast, Queensland.

Members of the Board also contributed to the running of the Skippy Film Festival in Sydney to help conserve Waratah Park as a wildlife park and refuge for native animals.

The President and CEO also had the opportunity to travel privately to Tasmania, Darwin, the Gold Coast and Perth to meet many local members of the Society. In September they were guests of the President of the Australian Koala Foundation at the 25th anniversary reception held in Government House Brisbane and hosted by the Governor of Queensland.

WPSA is an active member of the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales. Our Society's CEO is a representative on the NSW State Pest Animal Control Council and an appointed member of the NSW Kangaroo Management Advisory Panel. He provides expert advice and assistance on wildlife conservation matters and keeps the Society abreast of environmental and conservation developments by government officials.

Members of the Society also participated in the annual Clean Up Australia Day in March and Tree Planting Day in July with some 250 native trees being planted out around the Brighton Ponds system in Rockdale Sydney.

The Society's President Suzanne was invited to attend and speak at the official celebrations to mark the 40th Anniversary of the saving of Kelly's Bush in Hunter's Hill. A memorial plaque was later installed in the Kelly's Bush parkland to commemorate this important anniversary. This function was arranged by the Hunter's Hill Council to mark the Council's 150 year celebrations.

Financial Report summary

The Society's Directors and Finance Committee continues to exercise tight and effective control over our finances and reviewed and adjusted the investment portfolio during the year. The investment funds of the Society continue to be adversely affected by the global financial crisis with the return on our investments below average. The Finance Committee reviewed the situation and made a recommendation that the Society's investments be pooled to create a single investment portfolio to maximize the income for the future wildlife conservation work.

Donations, bequests and gifts

During the year we continued with our bequest program to encourage donors to support our work through advertising in the Solicitors' Pro-Bono publication and website and general publicity. We are very grateful to all our members for considering using the bequest program to help the Society with its long-term planning. Contact the National Office for more details.

A special thank you to all our members

May I wish every member of the Society a healthy and happy 2012 and thank them most sincerely for their tremendous support and continued dedication and commitment in helping the Society to preserve and protect our native wildlife for future generations of young Australians.

Suzanne Medway JP
PRESIDENT
31 December 2011

Member Profile

Austin James Stevens by Amy Stevens

Austin James Stevens was born, raised and educated in Pretoria, South Africa. Austin's interest in wildlife began at the age of 12, and by 16 he had already gained extensive experience and knowledge, which included a private collection of both venomous and non-venomous reptiles.

Upon leaving Pretoria Boys High School, Austin was immediately recruited into the South African Defence Force by compulsory draft. Austin's natural aptitude for capturing and relocating venomous snakes was put to good use in the active military zone, where he found himself often called upon to catch and remove snakes from tents, latrines, trenches, machine gun and observation posts. It was during one such incident that Austin sustained his first serious venomous bite from a puff adder, which required his immediate evacuation, first by vehicle across hundreds of kilometres of Angolan bushveld, and a further 800 kilometres by Cessna spotter plane to Windhoek Hospital, where after arriving in a comatose state, doctors firstly fought to save his life, and then to save his hand from amputation. A three-month battle with the effects of the venom ensued.

It was not long before Austin's affinity with snakes attracted the attention of the Transvaal Snake Park in South Africa. After a period of herpetological training, Austin took a position at Transvaal Snake Park as Curator of Reptiles, which required him to oversee the care and husbandry of hundreds of reptiles, as well as to present lectures and perform public demonstrations. He remained at Transvaal Snake Park for six years, during which time he made his first television appearances when asked to present three television shows concerning reptiles of the world, which were filmed live in the studio.

After leaving Transvaal Snake Park, Austin travelled to Germany to help design, build, and instigate operation of the Nordharzer Schlangenfarm, a reptile institute in the Northern Harz region of Germany. After the Nordharzer Schlangenfarm became operational, Austin returned to South Africa, undertaking several trips to Germany in the following years to complete updates to the reptile institute.

Austin then commenced work as Curator of Reptiles at the largest privately owned reptile and animal facility in Southern Africa, the Hartbeespoort Dam Snake and Animal Park. It was during this period that Austin established a Guinness World Record 'snake sit-in' for living in a three metre by four metre glass cage, with 36 venomous snakes, including black mambas, for a period of 107 days and nights. He accomplished this amazing feat in order to raise money for the purchase of a companion for Kaiser, the Park's lone male African mountain gorilla. The details of this record were published in the Guinness Book of Animal Records. The specifications and conditions of this record have never been duplicated or broken.

Above: African desert elephant at sunset, Namibia. Photo: Austin Stevens

After Austin left Hartbeespoort Dam Snake and Animal Park, he relocated from South Africa to Namibia. He was drawn to Namibia by its unusual desert-specialised wildlife and vast open spaces, all of which were perfect subjects for Austin's latest interests in writing and wildlife photography. Over the years that followed, some 150 of Austin's wildlife articles were published in magazines around the world, all accompanied by his own photography.

In 1992, Austin's first book, *Snakes In My Bed*, was published by Penguin Books, South Africa. *Snakes In My Bed* is a hilarious compilation of Austin's adventures as a herpetologist, in Germany as well as southern Africa, including his death-defying experiences during his world record 'snake sit-in.'

The natural progression of Austin's interest in wildlife photography was his eventual move into wildlife filmmaking. After working with several wildlife filmmakers on various animal projects, Austin acquired his own 16mm equipment and produced his first film about the lives of snakes, *Die Natur der Schlange*, 1998 for NDR Television in Germany. This first film was nominated for a FRAPNA award at the 14th Grenoble International Film Festival of Nature and Environment, in France.

Austin later filmed and produced *Dragons of the Namib*, a film about dune-living desert chameleons in Namibia, for National Geographic. Austin spent eight months of near-isolation in the Namib Desert filming these interesting reptiles, and *Dragons of the Namib* has proved to be an extremely popular wildlife film, being aired continuously around the world.

Shortly after completing *Dragons of the Namib*, in March of 2001, Austin was approached by Tigress Productions in Bristol, UK, to help design, co-ordinate, and present a film which was to be entitled *Seven Deadly Strikes*. The film took Austin from one side of the southern African continent to the other, in search of Africa's most dangerous snakes.

The success of *Seven Deadly Strikes* attracted the attention of Animal Planet USA, and after commissioning two further shows, eventually set in motion a 13-part television series that Austin would present. He requested that Tigress Productions act as his film crew and producers, and the series was shot between 2002 and 2005. The series entitled *Austin Stevens Snakemaster* in the United States, and presented in other countries around the world as *Austin Stevens Most Dangerous*, and *Austin Stevens Adventures*, took him across the globe in search of the deadliest, the largest and the most beautiful reptiles on the planet.

Once the series was completed, Austin returned to writing and wildlife photography. In May 2007, he released his second book, entitled *The Last*

Brush-tail possum, Australia. Photo: Austin Stevens

Snakeman. This semi-autobiography is accompanied by Austin's spectacular photographs and describes his many adventures with wildlife from his early years onwards, as well as his work on his first television series and the realities of wildlife conservation today.

In August 2007 Austin began filming his second 12-part television series, *Austin Stevens Adventures 2*, in collaboration with Cineflix Canada, UK's Channel 5, Tigress Productions and Discovery Channel. The series launched Austin on another bout of world travel in search of unusual wild animal behaviour. The series encompassed heart-stopping encounters with wildlife and took viewers to some of the most spectacular places on the planet. Work on the series was completed in October 2009. Austin Stevens was nominated for Canada's 24th Annual Gemini Awards in 2009. Austin received a nomination for 'Best Host or Interviewer in a General/Human Interest Series' for the *In Search of Armoured Giants* episode of his series *Austin Stevens Adventures 2*. This series also received a nomination for 'Best General/Human Interest Series.

Adolescent male lion in Kalahari Desert. Photo: Austin Stevens

In July 2011, Austin and I relocated from Africa to Queensland's Fraser Coast, where we joined the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia and where Austin is presently working on his third book.

Spade-footed gecko on Namib Desert sand dune, Namibia. Photo: Austin Stevens

Humpbacks of Hervey Bay

Amy and Austin Stevens

Humpback whale breaching. Photo by Austin Stevens

Six months ago, we reluctantly exchanged a life of observing African wildlife in Namibia for a home on the Fraser Coast of Australia. We pined for the loss of elephants, rhinos and lions until we stepped onto a whale watch vessel in Hervey Bay and became caught up in the drama of the lives of the mighty humpback whales.

Few conservation issues have stirred the collective consciences of the world's nations more than the plight of cetaceans – whales, dolphins and porpoises. The dramatic turnaround from whale killing to whale watching was, ironically, as much due to economic factors resulting from the depletion of whale numbers, as to concern for the welfare and/or conservation of the species. Thanks to the persistent efforts of organisations like Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd, the needless slaughter of these ocean giants has been exposed on an international scale.

This transformation is reflected in the changing role of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The organisation was originally set up by the whaling industry in 1964 to ensure the continued viability of their business, as whale populations steadily diminished. Today the IWC has changed from harvester to protector. In 1982 it declared a moratorium against large-scale commercial whaling around the globe, a move resisted only by Japan, Norway and Iceland, countries that continue their whaling under the guise of scientific research.

The humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) undertakes the longest migration of any mammal on earth. It has followed regular migratory routes of approximately 5,000 kilometres from cold water feeding grounds to warm water breeding areas and back again for centuries. Their predictable, slow migration patterns lasting many months made the whales easy targets for the harpoon. In 1952, when the Australian whaling industry was established, there were an estimated 10,000 humpback whales migrating along the east coast. Ten years later, the population had been devastatingly depleted, leaving an estimated 300 to 500 humpbacks scattered thinly, and beyond commercial exploitation.

In 1980 Australia opted out of the whaling industry and is now a leader in the field of whale conservation. Not long thereafter, the Hervey Bay area, 300 kilometres north of Brisbane, become recognised as one of the world's most unique humpback whale watching locations.

The Bay is formed between the mainland and the 120 kilometres long Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island, and is part of the Great Sandy Marine Park, which has been zoned to protect the migrating humpbacks and other marine species, as well as to monitor the effects of human activities.

Today the humpback population is slowly recovering, from a pitiful 1,200 being recorded some 20 years ago along Australia's eastern shores, to a now more secure 14,000. An estimated 30 percent of this population visits Hervey Bay between August and October each year, on their return from northerly breeding areas along the Great Barrier Reef to their Antarctic feeding grounds. In summer, they devour as much as a ton of krill a day in polar waters, building up fat reserves in preparation for their long winter migration back to their northerly breeding grounds.

Humpbacks are thought to navigate possibly by using the earth's magnetic field and the position of the sun and stars, since they never deviate more than five degrees off course throughout their migrations regardless of strong wind and currents. The earth's magnetic field alone would likely be insufficient to guide such a long migration as researchers have shown that magnetic north alters between 0.5 and 12 percent across each whale's voyage.

Each year, humpbacks appear in Hawaiian waters in November, and in Australian waters in June, but the north and south Pacific populations do not meet. The northern variety is usually much darker in ventral colouring than the southern variety.

Humpbacks grow to about 15 metres and weigh around 40 tons, with the females usually being slightly larger than the males. The tail, which can measure five metres across, is the primary source of locomotion, and the flukes are distinctly shaped and patterned, much as human fingerprints are unique to each individual. Researchers identify individual whales by their tails. Vortices created by water displaced by the beat of the tail leave a circular 'footprint,' a slick once thought to be oily deposits from the whale's body. These slicks remain visible for some time after a humpback has submerged.

A humpback whale blows as it exhales at the surface. Photo: Austin Stevens

Knobbly protuberances on the humpback's head are called tubercles, and shouldn't be confused with the usual array of large barnacles that adhere to the whale. A single coarse hair grows from the centre of each tubercle. It is connected to a nerve and is well supplied with blood, and is thought to function as a sensory organ. The lower jaw is much larger than the upper, and supports the long pleats of expanding flesh needed to engulf large quantities of water from which the humpback filters tiny sea organisms by pushing its huge two-tonne tongue upwards to drive the water out through the baleen filter bristles suspended from its upper jaw. Respiratory and digestive passages are separated to prevent water being forced into the lungs when feeding. Air is breathed through paired blow-holes fitted with 'nasal plugs' which are forced open by respiratory contractions. Breathing is a voluntary act, measured by the whale, unlike humans, who breathe reflexively in response to increased carbon dioxide in the blood stream. The expulsion

Austin and Amy Stevens whale-watching off the coast of Fraser Island, Hervey Bay, Queensland

of air from the lungs of an adult humpback has been timed at 400 kilometres an hour. The water vapour seen shooting up to seven metres from the blow-holes is a combination of moisture from the respiratory tract and water around the blow-holes themselves, vapourised by the force of the emptied lungs. Considering that each of a whale's two lungs is roughly the size of a small family car, it's not surprising that the erupting blow can often be heard as far as it can be seen over calm waters.

Since the early days, the humpback has been recognised as the most acrobatic of the whales. The most common manoeuvres include flipper slapping, tail slapping, head slapping, spy hopping, arching and breaching. Nothing is more impressive than the sight of a full-bodied breach by a 40-tonne whale, as it launches itself gloriously out of the water, with pectoral fins fully extended, to thunder back below the surface two seconds later in an explosive wave of white surging water. This fantastic feat is achieved by a mere two thrusts of the incredibly powerful tail.

The spy-hop is often performed close to a boat. There is little doubt that whales spy-hop in order to survey their surroundings, or observe their observers. Humpbacks have complex brains, with four lobes compared to our three. The brains of humpbacks possess three times as many spindle neurons as are found in the human brain, suggesting high emotional intelligence. Spindle neurons are the cells involved in processing emotion. They are responsible for emotional suffering, and make it possible for us to feel love. These specialised cells are unique to humans, great apes,

Breaching humpback whale. Photo: Austin Stevens

elephants and some whales and dolphins. Whales' spindle neurons occur in the same area of the brain as in humans, but they have existed in the brains of whales twice as long as in the brains of humans. It seems likely that cetaceans have been capable of compassion and have been acting on emotional cues far longer than we have. The presence of such large numbers of spindle neurons is certainly evidence of the development of complex social interactions and of cognitive abilities comparable to those of primates.

At Hervey Bay, whale watchers can also hear the 'songs' of the male humpbacks, as a hydrophone is lowered into the water and the sounds are amplified through the loudspeakers on whale watch vessels. These songs are one of the most intriguing aspects of these creatures, and are partly why humans developed sympathy for the whales, as the nature of the sounds suggests complex communication and human-like emotions and attachments. Amazingly, the whales lack functional vocal cords, yet the songs of male humpbacks are the longest and most varied known in the animal world, with some lasting up to 40 minutes. Humpbacks appear to create their songs by altering the tension of pneumatically driven vibrating membranes, although the resonation of air chambers may also play a part in sound production. Each year the song varies slightly, with one or two phrases altered. How the changes in these song patterns are decided and communicated remains another mystery.

In their present form, humpback whales are believed to have existed on the planet for some five million to twenty million years. Faced with total extinction at the hand of man, there is at last a ray of hope for the continued survival of these magnificent leviathans of the deep.

These astonishing animals were composing their complex songs and nurturing their affectionate relationships for millions of years before we even existed, and they have done so while living in perfect harmony with their surroundings and other species in a way that makes human intelligence seem a pale shadow of their wisdom.

Fluke-up dive by humpback whale. Photo: Austin Stevens

Pacific Whale Foundation photographing humpback whale for identification, Hervey Bay, Queensland. Photo: Austin Stevens

Whale watchers observe a humpback whale in Hervey Bay, Queensland

Wild Towers and falcons

Simon Cherriman

Peregrine falcon nest site

Some rocks crumbled beneath my bare feet and bounced away down the chalky-white cliff to the river below. I stretched down, slowly, my back facing the sheer drop, my chest pressed up against the cliff face as I slid onto the ledge. I could feel dirt pushing under my fingernails as my rigid fingers struggled to grip onto the loose cliff edge. I kneeled down, slowly, carefully, trying to control my shaking knees and calves which throbbed with adrenalin. I could see the white streaks of falcon scat as I squatted onto the narrow ledge and peered along towards the nest site. I glanced to my left at the breakaway on the opposite side of the river, several hundred metres away. And before I could consider the twenty-metre drop inches to my left, the peregrine falcon stooped towards me at break-neck speed. Keeeeeeeeee-kek-kek-kek-kek-kek-kek-kek!! Her screech rang out across the valley. This prompted the male, who sat atop the dead perch-tree further upstream, to launch his attack.

Ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-kek!! His scream was as loud as hers as he shot past me at eye level, like a bullet, then peeled upwards for the next attack like a fighter-jet.

Peregrine falcons are known for their aggression, being eager to defend their nest site with repeated stoops and screams until an intruder has gone away. I didn't want to disturb them too much, just to photograph the nestlings, which came further into view as I crawled toward them on the ledge. One of my dreadlocks caught briefly on a spiky finger of rock that poked out from the spherical 'ceiling' of the cliff ledge, causing my hand to slide momentarily forwards and push a handful of gravel off the ledge. The rocks and gravel bounced downwards and showered into the water below. There wasn't much room under this blow-out! Less than a metre wide, the ledge was made from hardened clay, partly covered with soft, eroded chalky gravel. Without bending my neck I strained my eyes sideways to inspect the side of the ledge, then the roof above me. It was crusted, jagged and windswept, carved out over centuries by prevailing winds and spattered raindrops blowing in from the west.

Peregrine falcon nestlings

I inched my way forward on all fours, gaining about two metres, then stretched further forward onto my belly for a closer look at the nest. I could see at least two falcon chicks, but I was fairly sure there was a third one tucked behind its siblings. They were adorable! Plump, white balls of fluff, tucked away into their nest-scrape, protected from falling by a small lip formed by a mound of rocks and scree at the front of the cliff ledge. One chick, struggling to hold its head up, craned its neck and peered over in my direction. I poised my camera and snapped a few frames, first wide to show the nest site, then closer, focussing in on the tiny falcon's head. Its eyes were milky white and blurred, and I suspected it could not yet see very well. I could still hear the frenzied attack of its parents, screeching calls and air whooshing over their wings, but now, being so focussed on the nestlings, these sounds faded into the background.

My shutter clicked as I took several more frames, making sure I'd get one that was clear. Then, in another awkward stretch, I pulled my stomach backward and resumed the crawling posture, and backed away to the other end of the cliff ledge and out from under the overhang. My body was stiff as I squatted and stretched my arms forward to inspect my elbows, which were tingling and covered with pimpled impressions from the gravelly surface I had just lain on.

I looked over the edge once more, peering down at the water in the river below. The golden hour had now arrived, and as I glanced across the river, I could see the landscape of breakaways blanketed in gorgeous, soft light. I took one last wide shot of the nest ledge, then stood carefully and hugged the cliff face, ready to climb back up. Peregrine chicks! What a thrill!

This little story was just one moment in a tremendous two-week adventure that I was lucky enough to go on during October 2011. My girlfriend and I had taken a break from Perth and travelled on a big loop, heading north through the western Wheatbelt region, up the west coast, then east into the Murchison Catchment, admiring dazzling carpets of wildflowers,

Wildflowers at Coalseam Conservation Park in the Shire of Mingenew

Adult peregrine falcons swoop past me on the nest ledge!

eucalypt-lined creeks bustling with breeding birdlife and an array of other animals that crossed our path.

During one lucky afternoon an endangered malleefowl crossed the road just metres in front of our car! We stopped and quickly jumped out to grab photographs, expecting the bird to hasten away into the woodland, but amazingly it walked slowly in a circle and allowed us to get very close shots. Another time we observed a burrowing bearded dragon as it took over three hours to excavate a nest-chamber in the side of the road near our camp. Galahs nested in just about every hollow-bearing tree we passed, and in others we were lucky enough to find cockatiels and budgerigars. Although the latter species is common in metropolitan pet shops, nothing beats seeing massive flocks of them wheeling through the outback, their vivid green clouds a stark contrast to the red dust.

Outback birds are usually common where surface water is present, and we were lucky that most areas we travelled through had had a thorough soaking in Autumn and Winter. Although it was now late Spring, the rivers still had quite deep pools and there were even waterholes around a large breakaway which I had only ever seen empty in the drier months. This breakaway was right near a campsite and we spent three days discovering its secrets. We found that one particular waterhole, or 'gnamma' as the Yamatji people call them, was well known to local birdlife, and decided to sit quietly one morning and see what came in. Just after sunrise we heard many zebra finch calls, and had great pleasure watching dozens of them flutter in to drink. Then came the diamond doves, a few budgies, a lone galah and even a Western bowerbird.

I tried creeping closer to the waterhole but as soon as I moved from our hiding spot among some tall grasses, the birds zipped away and stayed hidden in their perch tree, refusing to drink. After several attempts to get photos I decided it would be a good idea to leave my motion-sensitive camera at the edge of the water, come back in a few hours and see what photos I had got. Squatting near the waterhole I found a rock to balance my camera against and tinkered with it, finding the right position. And then something amazing happened. A bold zebra finch flew down onto the rock, hopped along

A pair of vibrant green budgerigars sharing a kiss

A male zebra finch comes to drink at an outback waterhole

A diamond dove waits for the finches to leave before he can drink

An endangered malleefowl after crossing the road in front of us

the ground and drank only a metre away from my foot! This was it. All the other finches in the nearby tree followed suit, as did the doves, and like rush hour at a school tuck shop, birds rushed down in droves to get their share of the water. Now I knew the trick, and moving quickly to grab my main camera again, I squatted near the water and was blessed with photo opportunities.

Outback Australia is one of those places which never ceases to amaze me – a vast and unforgiving landscape for most of the year, it flourishes and bursts with life after a soaking of rain. At the end of the trip I felt lucky to have experienced some of these wonders and to have been able to bring photos back to share with others. Just remember, if you're travelling through WA at any time, be sure to visit during Spring after good rains and you may be lucky enough to see some of these wonders yourself!

Carpets of mulla mulla (*Ptilotus exultatus*) in the Murchison Region

The echidna

Andrea Devos - www.taswildliferescue.com.au

The echidna is an extremely secretive animal, and it is extremely sensitive to vibrations on the ground. Echidnas have a domed-shaped back with short stubby tail, no obvious neck, and a flat belly. Back and sides are covered with spines of varying sizes and lengths.

The echidna is easily recognisable by the covering of spines across its body which is a safety mechanism for the animal. These spines are yellow to golden with a black to brown tip. Between the spines is soft hair, longer in cooler climates and shorter in warmer areas. (In Tasmania the fur sometimes obscures the spines.) Echidnas have five toes on both the front and hind limbs, on the hind limbs they have two to three grooming claws (depending on the species). The pads of the front feet are full and firm in healthy animals. They contain mechanoreceptors that pick up vibrations from crunching feet, breaking vegetation and probably food sources.

The echidna's snout is between seven and eight centimetres long and is stiffened to enable the animal to break up logs and termite mounds when searching for food. They are key cultivators that enhance soil aeration, moisture penetration, nutrient mixing, seed dispersal and spread of mycorrhizae. Adult echidnas vary in size from 30-53 centimetres, with males weighing six kilograms and females 4.5 kilograms. Echidnas can live for more than 50 years.

You cannot sex an echidna simply by looking at the animal. There are no external genitals. Both males and females can form a pouch. Both males and females can retain or lose the spur on the hind foot. Size and weight of an animal is not an indication of gender. The male echidna does not use the penis for urination. It is located internally and is only outside of the body when used for copulation. Until a male echidna has reached sexual maturity, it can be extremely difficult to find evidence of the penis. However, it is not impossible because a mature echidna can be palpated, especially during the courtship and breeding season.

The echidna has small external eyes, but sense of sight is highly developed. They quickly recognise human shape so it is best to sit or kneel in order to break up the normal towering human silhouette.

When threatened, the echidna can dig very quickly and bury itself in the soil, or curl into a tight ball with its snout and legs tucked beneath it and raise its spines or quills so that it cannot be handled easily. The echidna can be found throughout all of Australia wherever there are ants or termites present, as this is its main diet source. The echidna has no teeth, but a very long tongue, which extends into ant mounds. Its tongue is around 18 centimetres long and coated with a sticky saliva substance which the ants stick to. Dirt and ant nest material is also ingested.

The echidna is a solitary animal, not territorial, but occupying overlapping ranges. Its home range can be in excess of 250 hectares, depending on food availability and habitat. Echidnas do not

The taxonomic family name for echidna – *Tachyglossidae* – means "fast tongue"

Back foot, notice the long grooming claws

The front foot has five toes the same as the hind foot but is without the grooming claws. This echidna is healthy because of its fat pads under its feet

The female echidna's pouch, notice the swollen mammary glands, this holds the puggle in the pouch. Photo: Andrea Devos

have fixed nest sites. Nests are only used for incubating and suckling the young, which are called puggles. Normal shelter is under thick bushes, hollow logs and other debris, and the echidna will often use rabbit and wombat burrows as well. During extreme weather such as intense heat, the echidna will shelter for most of the day, and will forage at night. In cold weather, as seen in the Snowy Mountain region of NSW, the echidna will hibernate. The echidna can be found throughout all of mainland Australia and Tasmania.

The echidna and platypus are the only Australian marsupials that lay eggs and do not bear live young.

Egg-laying mammals are called monotremes. There are only three kinds of monotremes in the world: the long-beaked echidna (three species – all residing in New Guinea), short-beaked echidna (found throughout Australia in all climatic conditions and ecosystems within the Australian bioregion), and the duck-billed platypus (found only in certain places in Australia).

Normally a solitary animal, sexual maturity for the male is reached between seven to twelve years of age. For a female it is earlier and she can produce her first young at five or seven years of age. During mating times it is not unusual to see a female echidna have a train of males, head to toe, following her – up to eleven males have been seen making this train. Courtship trains can last between two and 60 days.

Echidna breeding period is between late June and early September. Echidna copulation lasts between thirty minutes and two hours.

There are no verified methods of ageing adult echidnas. However, there are two distinct stages in the life of an echidna puggle from its hatching to weaning:

Pouch life: for approximately the first 50 days the puggle lives in the mother's pouch. Pouch young can be divided into two further stages - from hatching up to approximately 12 days of age when the young is moist, shiny and lives in a humid pouch. From 12 days onward the pouch is dry.

Burrow life: From about 50 to 120 days of age (about 30 weeks) the young lives in a burrow. After weaning the young is independent. There is no parental guidance or contact with other echidnas after weaning until sexual maturity is reached.

Pouch life

The female echidna lays a single, leathery egg the size of a grape every breeding cycle and their breeding cycle is individualistic – it can be as infrequent as once every five years, while a male echidna can be sexually active each year. The mother echidna then rolls the newly laid egg into a deep pocket or pouch located on her belly to keep the egg safe, which is then incubated. The pocket or pouch is really more like a fold of skin over the abdomen area which is closed with contracting muscles.

The newborn is called a puggle, it is hatched around ten to eleven days later and is less than 1.3 centrimetres long and around 0.3 of a gram, smaller than the size of a jellybean! Luckily for the mother the puggle is not born with spines, instead it is a tiny mass of pink flesh. The puggle uses its tiny, see-through claws to grip the special hairs within the mother's pouch. The mother does not have nipples the way other mammals do. Instead, the little puggle will suck at milk that is excreted from special glands on the skin in the mother's pouch. The puggle is carried in the pouch for about 53 days when its spines begin to break through. At this stage the mother leaves it in a nursery burrow and the puggle is left alone. The mother blocks up the entrance to the burrow to stop the puggle crawling out. Temperature in the burrow is 15–21°C. The mother returns every five to six days and feeds 40 percent of the baby's bodyweight in one feed, so a new baby in care may not need feeding immediately. All echidnas, and especially immature puggles, suffer heat stress and overheat rapidly, so they should be kept in a semi-torpid state.

The young echidna leaves the burrow at around six to seven months of age, weighing approximately one to two kilograms and is weaned approximately four weeks later.

If you see an echidna and it is not injured or in danger, then leave it alone. Remember: echidnas are a protected species in all states and territories. If the echidna is in danger, ie on a road or being threatened by a predator, move it away. Only authorised wildlife carers or researchers with permits are allowed to pick up an echidna for transport or rescue.

An echidna skeleton. This skeleton was most likely put together in a museum, the tibia and foot of the hind leg are rotated in the incorrect position (thanks to Peggy Rismiller for seeing this). Photo credit Wikipedia

Echidna baby just born from the egg. Pink, blind and totally reliant on its mother

Echidna egg the size of a grape

Puggle echidna. Photo: Helen Taylor

When echidnas wake from hibernation they often become disorientated. Many have been found under carports with a brick wall and concrete. All they need is to be turned around and headed back in the right direction. Most have wandered in from local parks or scrub.

Never remove a healthy echidna from the area in which it is found. It could be a female echidna with a puggle in a burrow nearby. If you take the mother away to relocate in another area, her baby will starve to death. Echidnas have also been known to try to find their way back home. They then face the risk of having to cross roads and being hit by cars.

An echidna does not have ear flaps like we do. Its ears are large, vertical slits just behind its eyes. It has an amazing sense of smell, therefore if needing to capture an echidna you must approach it from downwind so that it cannot smell you. It was once believed that echidnas had extremely poor eyesight, however, latest findings show the exact opposite is true.

Many thanks to everyone who provided photos and to Fourth Crossing Wildlife for photos and information.

The majority of this article came from the book by Dr Peggy Resmiller "*Biology Rescue and Rehabilitation of Short-Beaked Echidnas*".

Thank you Dr Peggy Resmiller for allowing us to utilise this great source.

Credits: http://www.telegraph.co.uk

In the Wild

with Harry Butler

There's something else that's not a bird, though it does lay eggs. It's something special – probably the most primitive mammal in the world, except for the platypus. It's the Echidna or Spiny Anteater. As soon as it sees me he goes into his defensive position – but the poor fellow's got one problem: his hind claws are so well developed for digging that one has to stick out. If you touch one it retreats, but the other one has to poke out, so you can get a grip on him. It's the one weakness in his protection against foxes and dingoes and other predators.

He has a lovely long nose and seven inches of tongue. He's out hunting for termites: most mammals here come out at night, but this one's an exception. He comes out in the afternoon and goes termite-hunting, scuffling around in the bushes looking for termites which live just under the surface. He digs with his powerful claws and then ... slurp! Seven inches of instant death goes up the tunnel and zaps the termites. He eats about three or four thousand of them in a day.

His back claw is very long for obvious reasons: how do you scratch yourself if you get an itch under all those prickles? That long claw is for getting in among the spines and having a good old scratch, because he gets ticks and lice the same as other things do in the bush.

He's threatened by one of our introduced animals, the fox, who's learned a way to handle Echidnas. The fox comes along, the Echidna sees him and rolls up in a tight ball. The fox will roll him with his nose to a pool of water, if there's one handy, and as soon as he hits the water the Echidna unrolls to start swimming and – zap! The fox has got him, because the belly underneath is soft and unprotected.

A good size tub to move an echidna.
Photo: Terri Eather

Baby echidna currently in care with WIRES.
Photo: Alicia Carter

Echidna contained. Terri Eather

Nestling echidnas only require milk once every 48 hours. A puggle fat from a good feed.
Source: perthzoo.wa.gov.au/via: zooborns.com

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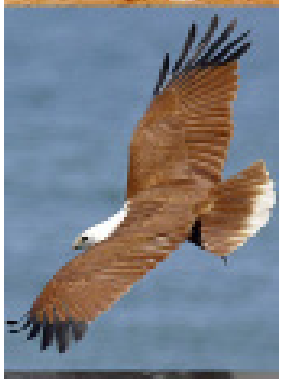
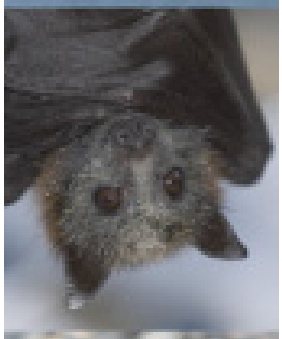


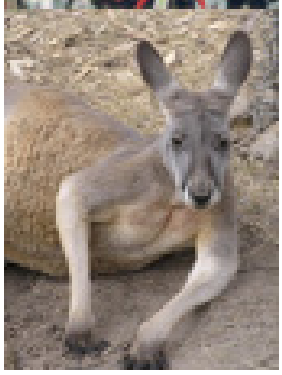

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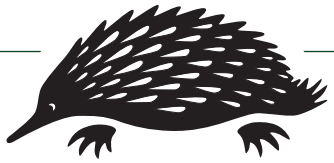

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SUZANNE L. MEDWAY
President

Little Desert National Park Photography by Sharon and Michael Williams

Brown-headed honeyeater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*). Noisy flocks of these birds move throughout the Mallee, feeding on insects and flowering plants

Eltham Copper (Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida). A threatened Victorian species. The larvae feed on the sweet bursaria plant