

AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE SOCIETY

(ACN 134 808 790)

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019

A Year in Review

The past year for the Society has been one of consolidation and growth. I was honoured to be elected as President following the Annual General Meeting. We were delighted to welcome a new member to the Board – Associate Professor Julie Old, a very keen wildlife conservationist and author.

One of the highlights of the year was the presentation of our three awards – the **Serventy Conservation Award**, **Community Wildlife Conservation Award** and **Wildlife Rehabilitation Award**. Our Society knows that many organisations and thousands of volunteers are already working tirelessly to save our threatened species as well as the humble and more common Australian species and the precious wildlife habitat in which they live. We are all aware of the wonderful work being carried out by conservation organisations and volunteers across the country. We are very proud to acknowledge and reward these individuals or conservation groups and encourage them to continue their good work on behalf of the whole community. We also introduced a new **Youth Conservation Award**. We aim to inspire young people to have a stake in environmental conservation by rewarding and recognising their efforts.

Another highlight is the awarding of our ten University Scholarships offered to honours or postgraduate students at Australian universities. Each year, ten \$1,500 grants are awarded. Grants are available for research projects of direct relevance to the conservation of Australian wildlife – plant or animal. We also award three special scholarships at University of Technology Sydney, University of New South Wales and Western Sydney University.

E-newsletter

Our fortnightly email wildlife newsletters have also proven to be very popular with our members, and we encourage them to forward the newsletters on to their family, friends and associates to help spread the wildlife conservation word. We launched AusWildKidz, a youth section in the current newsletter. In the near future, we will be developing a youth newsletter of its own! A big thankyou to Linda Dennis, Editor of the E-news bulletin, for her valuable work in keeping us regularly informed on wildlife matters. If you have not registered your email address and would like to be put on the mailing list to receive the fortnightly newsletters, please contact info@aws.org.au with your details.

Website

We continue to update our website to make it more user-friendly. Changes to the structure and layout will be an ongoing process. We are in the process of constructing a 'Members Only' section. This year also saw the introduction of free membership to all students and educational institutions via our website.

Australian Wildlife Magazine

Our coloured *Australian Wildlife* magazine is the flagship of the Society and has proved to be extremely popular amongst all of our members. We invite members to distribute copies to family and friends and to invite them to become members. A special thankyou to our Subeditor, Sabine Borgis, for her valuable contribution to assisting with the editing of the magazine.



Summer Cover



Autumn Cover



Winter Cover



Spring Cover

Social Media

Social media is now a critical part of the way people in most walks of life communicate. We have become actively involved on four social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube). We aim to keep our followers up to date with important actions of the Society and the collective work being promoted nationally. Our followers continue to grow each month.

Membership

We introduced a new category of free membership classified as a Class B membership. Class B members do not have the right to vote at the Society's Annual General Meetings and receive an Emag subscription to the quarterly magazine *Australian Wildlife*. To be eligible a person must be a student at any school or registered educational institution and hold a current student ID card or be a registered school.

Members are encouraged to view the website and send any feedback via email to info@aws.org.au

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 across Australia. Calls are received at all hours of the day and night and often the best we can do is to advise the caller to keep the animal or bird warm until a local wildlife rescue service can assist further. For more information on wildlife rescue organisations across Australia please access the link <https://www.aws.org.au/links/>

Our Mission

Part of our Mission Statement reads: **"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."

To fulfil this goal we introduced the University Student Grants Scheme in 2005 and since its inception we have awarded over 150 grants to very worthy recipients. In 2016 we increased the grant to \$1,500 and plan in the future to steadily increase the dollar amount of the grants subject to further donations, which are always welcome.

Wildlife Science Ecology Research

Scholarships

The **University Technology Sydney Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship** was awarded to UTS School of Life Sciences PhD student Laura Michie for her research on mitigation of cold water pollution using a novel thermal curtain.

The **University of New South Wales Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship** was awarded to UNSW School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences PhD student Tahneal Hawke for her research on platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*), assessing long-term changes in platypus populations and the current impacts of river regulation on platypus population dynamics.

The **Western Sydney University Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship** was awarded to WSU School of Science and Health PhD student Kristen Petrov for her research on the ecology of a wildlife disease and recovery of the imperilled Bellinger River snapping turtle (*Mychelys georgesi*).

Wildlife Conservation Awards

The winner of the **Serventy Conservation Award** was Lorraine Vass of Lismore, New South Wales. For 19 years, Lorraine has been the driving force behind Friends of the Koala, a Lismore-based group. Her efforts have made the whole Lismore region more koala-conscious and helped stabilise, and possibly increase, its koala population. Lorraine has overseen a strong education program and has forged a close association with local schools. She also has established a close relationship with universities, particularly the University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology and Southern Cross University.

The winner of the **Community Wildlife Conservation Award** was Kanyana Wildlife Refuge, near Perth, Western Australia. This organisation has operated for over 40 years with the aid of a strong band of volunteers. The refuge rehabilitates many animals each year. It now has added a captive breeding program to its services. Kanyana has a strong school holiday program and works in collaboration with local universities to conduct research into factors affecting local wildlife. In recent years it has focused on research into parasites affecting wildlife and has been responsible for discovering previously unidentified parasites.

The winner of the **Wildlife Rehabilitation Award** was Tehree Gordon OAM of Barwon Heads, Victoria. Tehree has been involved in animal rescue since the age of 15; however, she has been registered as a wildlife rescuer and rehabilitator for over 40 years. Tehree and her husband opened Jirrahlinga Koala and Wildlife Sanctuary over 40 years ago to rescue and rehabilitate injured, distressed and orphaned wildlife while at the same time providing a haven for disadvantaged people of all ages. Tehree also established a special animal welfare program for the elderly, people with special needs and school children.



Lorraine Vass and her husband Rick.



Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre staff.



Suzanne Medway and Tehree Gordon.

Wildlife Photographic Competition

The annual judge's prize of \$1,000 was won by Robert McLean for his photo of numbats (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*). The annual people's choice prize of \$500 was won by Claudia Santori for her photo of a short-necked turtle (*Emydura macquarii*).



Annual Gala Ball

The 110th Birthday Gala Ball was held in the Grand Ballroom of the Western Leagues Club, Campbelltown on Saturday 27 July. It was another outstandingly successful evening, with some 180 guests enjoying the festivities of music and dancing. A special thankyou to all our sponsors who contributed to the fundraising for the evening and especially to our special-guest sponsor WALKDEN and the Mayor of Camden, Theresa Fedeli, for attending the event. We thank director Trevor Evans for arranging the special visit of a dingo, koala and snake. This helped highlight the plight of the many species of Australia's precious wildlife that are facing the threat of extinction.



L to R: Julie Old, Arthur Pugsley, Megan Fabian, Suzanne Medway, Kevin Fabian and Philip Sansom.



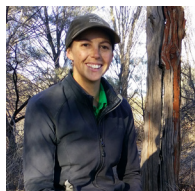
The extended Medway family. L to R: Behzad Chauhdary, Aislinn Murphy, Colleen Murphy, Suzanne Medway, Kate Cameron, Harriet Richardson, Van Cameron, Blaze Cameron and Oliver Richardson.

University Students Grants Scheme

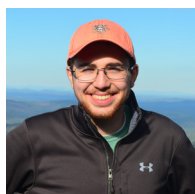
The Australian Wildlife Society's University Research Grants are scholarships offered to honours or postgraduate students at Australian universities. Each year, ten grants of \$1,500 are awarded. Grants are available for research projects of direct relevance to the conservation of Australian wildlife – plant or animal. The winners for 2019 were:



Amy Rowles - Hawkesbury Institute of the Environment, Western Sydney University
Project Title: Seasonal importance of high elevation habitat for Australian bats



Bryony Palmer - School of Biological Sciences, University of Western Australia
Project Title: Assessing the impact of reintroducing Australian digging mammals



James Peyla - Future Industries Institute, University of South Australia
Project Title: Investigating the long-term effects of ocean acidification on the giant Australian cuttlefish



Jingyi Ding - School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of New South Wales
Project Title: How does the structure of Eucalyptus and Acacia forests vary along a rainfall gradient?: implications of changes in climate



Kate Cornelsen - Centre for Ecosystem Science, University of New South Wales
Project Title: Conserving the greater bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*): breeding bilbies fit-for-release to safeguard their future



Kiarrah Smith - Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University
Project Title: Reintroduction of the yellow-footed antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*) to its historic habitat



Lachlan Pettit - School of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Sydney
Project Title: How have Australia's large reptile predators adjusted to a toxic invader through time?



Rosalie Harris - Research School of Biology, Australian National University
Project Title: Does sediment shape biodiversity in tropical macroalgal forests?



Sean Krisanski - School of Technology, Environments and Design, University of Tasmania
Project Title: Understanding spotted tail quoll behaviour in relation to habitat structure using UAV remote-sensing techniques



Vanessa Brown - School of Biological Sciences, University of Western Australia
Project Title: Novel seed enhancement technologies to improve restoration success.

2019 - Conservation Group Grants

The Council of the Society carefully considers all requests for grants from conservation groups and places special emphasis on wildlife and the preservation of wildlife habitat.

- **Port Stephens Koala Hospital.** Funds provided went to the purchase of two rescue/triage enclosures designed to carry and transport sick and injured koalas.
- **Hunter Wetland Centre.** Funds were allocated to the Green and Golden Bell Frog Project, in association with the University of Newcastle.

Key Projects

Kinder Partnership

As part of the new Natoon Kinder Surprise animal toy range launch, Ferrero Australia has partnered with the Australian Wildlife Society, which saw the charity secure a sponsorship. The sponsorship helped to fund a number of wildlife conservation programs across Australia and New Zealand, to protect endangered native animals. At the same time, the Kinder Surprise Natoon range helped to educate the next generation on the importance of native wildlife through fun and educative online resources.

Design Centre Enmore – TAFE NSW

This year we collaborated with a group of TAFE students at Design Centre Enmore who developed a 110th birthday video for the Society that was launched at our Annual Gala Ball.

Queensland Alliance for Platypus

We became members of the Queensland Alliance for Platypus, which consists of key stakeholders and experts in the field of wildlife conservation, and donated the seeding funds to establish the project. The Queensland

Alliance for Platypus has been formed off the back of the success of the Victorian Alliance for Platypus-Safe Yabby Traps. The Victorian success in banning enclosed yabby traps across the state has been a push for other states to step up and do the same. These traps are an animal welfare issue for air-breathing animals, as well as a significant conservation issue for platypuses. Regulations in Queensland are confusing, and we still see horrible deaths of platypuses and rakali in these nets even after the change of regulations in 2015. A complete ban on the sale, use and possession of these nets will take out the confusion, and alternative wildlife-friendly nets can be used.

NSW Platypus and Turtle Alliance

We formed the NSW Platypus and Turtle Alliance, which consists of key stakeholders and experts in the field of wildlife conservation. We met with the NSW Minister for Energy and Environment, Matt Kean MP, who offered us his full support as we work with government agencies to save our native wildlife in all its forms for the next generation of young Australians. The Minister expressed his strong support for our new alliance and promised to give us a 'timeline' for the implementation of a ban on the use of these opera house traps and a net exchange program to help save the platypus and other air-breathing aquatic wildlife from drowning in NSW rivers.



An enclosed yabby trap (opera house net) that we would like to see banned from use and possession.



An open-top yabby net, which air-breathing aquatic wildlife can escape from.

Conferences and Wildlife Research Seminars

The Society's directors attended and contributed to a number of important wildlife conservation conferences, seminars, events and meetings throughout the year.

We attended the Nature Conservation Council Conference in November to engage, network and discuss important issues with key stakeholders in the field of wildlife preservation.

We attended Schools Environment Day at Mittagong NSW in October. It was fantastic to communicate with children from different schools in the southern highlands and teach them about wildlife and the environment.

The National Office Manager attended a seminar titled 'Improve your business through social media and branding' run by the Western Sydney Business Centre. Australian Wildlife Society strives for continuous improvement of professional development.

We attended the National Parks Association dinner in November at Mortdale RSL Club. The Minister for Energy and Environment, Matt Kean, provided an interesting speech pledging the addition of substantial lands to our national parks, amongst other relevant matters.

We also attended the Australian Wildlife Management Society's 32nd annual conference in Darwin. Some 200 delegates from across Australian and New Zealand gathered to share knowledge and exchange ideas with a focus on wildlife management in remote landscapes, with a wide range of papers being presented.

Financial Report Summary

The Society's directors and the Finance and Investment Committee continue to exercise tight and effective control over our finances, reviewing and adjusting the investment portfolio as required during the year. The investment funds of the Society have continued to grow. The board will conduct a review of our investments in line with ethical issues.

Donations, Bequests and Gifts

During the year, we continued with our bequest program to encourage donors to support our wildlife conservation work across Australia through the 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. Please contact the National Office for more details on the Bequest Program and on how to join the friends of the Society and make a regular monthly donation to support our national wildlife conservation programs. We hold Australian Taxation Office gift deductible status for any donations over \$2. We also engaged with other organisations such as Zero Co to encourage donors to support our wildlife conservation work across Australia.

Appointment of National Office Manager

Ms Megan Fabian was appointed National Office Manager in May 2019. She is passionate about safeguarding wildlife and natural ecosystems for future generations. Megan completed a Bachelor of Natural Science (Animal Science), majoring in Zoology and sub-majoring in Conservation Biology, and a Master of Research Degree in Wildlife Conservation/Citizen Science at Western Sydney University. Megan has been an active member of the Society since 2015 and her future goals for the Society are: (1) to become more well-known in the wider community and established as a prime wildlife conservation organisation, (2) to continue to support wildlife conservationists to protect Australia's flora and fauna, and (3) to educate and encourage the wider community to take action in conserving the natural world for future generations.

A special thankyou to all our members

May I wish every member of the Society a happy, healthy and prosperous 2020. This will mark our 111th anniversary. We thank you all most sincerely for your tremendous support and continued dedication and commitment in helping the Society to preserve and protect our native wildlife for future generations.

Suzanne Medway AM | PRESIDENT | 31 December 2019