

2019 Serventy Conservation Award

The Serventy Conservation Award was inaugurated in 1999 to commemorate the incredible conservation work by the members of the Serventy family - Vincent Serventy, his brother Dr Dominic Serventy and his sister Lucy Serventy. Each member of the Serventy family has given a lifetime of commitment to the conservation of Australia's wildlife. The award is intended to recognise and celebrate conservation work that has not been done as part of a professional career. It is awarded to those who labour in the conservation field for a love of nature and a determination that it should be conserved. Often, these have been non-scientists who have earned their conservation skills through sheer hard work.

The award for 2019 was presented to Alexandra Seddon of Merimbula, New South Wales. Alexandra has devoted her life to the protection of Australia's wildlife. Since she and her husband bought their first property, in Crowsnest in Candelo New South Wales in 1975, Alexandra has acquired three other properties, all devoted to wildlife conservation. After several years in Crowsnest, Alexandra partitioned off 57 acres of feral-proof land to act as a sanctuary for animals before their release into the wild. Alexandra welcomed people from all over the world to stay on the property to learn about wildlife. In 1996, the land known as Pambula Wetlands came on the market and Alexandra purchased it, naming it Panboola and turning it into a thriving bird sanctuary.

In 2001, Alexandra purchased the Batty Towers Flying Fox Sanctuary to protect local flying foxes. Batty Towers Flying Fox Sanctuary became the main roosting site on the South Coast of New South Wales for the vulnerable grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*). In 2006, Alexandra used an inheritance to purchase Potoroo Palace at Yellow Pinch, New South Wales. Alexandra established Potoroo Palace as an environmental education centre, a charity, and handed the rights of the property to the local community so that it can never be sold. Today, Potoroo Palace is an active educational centre where people visit to learn about native wildlife.

In addition, Alexandra conducts regular talks and lectures, writes articles, produces documentaries and maintains an active relationship with the scientific community. She has also written several children's books about Australian wildlife, their habitats, and environmental surroundings and is a great advocate for the conservation of Australia's wildlife.

Acceptance speech from Alexandra Seddon

I feel truly grateful for this award. I hope that, because of it, more and more people will come to see the beauty and delicacy of Australian wildlife and how lucky we are to live amongst such magical creatures. There are many people that I know personally, who give their whole lives to caring for Australia's wildlife, scarcely allowing themselves enough sleep or even time for eating. I would like to inspire more people to follow them and learn from them. I would like to lead people to treasure and respect the land and the waters, that have been cared for with such wisdom by the traditional custodians for thousands and thousands of years.

I have been living and working in the Bega Valley since 1975. To begin with, I was caring for wildlife and protecting habitat on Crowsnest Community Farm, Candelo, while farming and teaching. Later, in 1996, I inherited, from my father, enough money to buy 15 acres of horse paddock/degraded wetland at Pambula, which we called The Waterbird Sanctuary. Then in 2001, I inherited from my mother enough money to add another 100 acres of farmland/wetland to the Sanctuary, to which other people have since added. The whole 200 acres is now called Panboola, Pambula Wetlands and Heritage Project. It has been restored beautifully by volunteers who continue to care for it. Also, in 2001, I was able to protect a flying fox camp which became Batty Towers Flying Fox Hospital and Conservation Area, where I now live. In 2006, we took over a run-down zoo which has since become Potoroo Palace, a native animal education sanctuary – a charity.



Brian Scarsbrick presented the Serventy Conservation Award for 2019 to Alexandra Seddon of Merimbula, New South Wales.