

Autumn 1997



# AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE

Journal of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc. (Founded 1909)  
\$2.50 (for non members) Print Post Approval No PP243459/00117



*Launch of 'Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve' by the  
Hon Pam Allan MP, Minister for the Environment, on Saturday 8 February 1997.*

NB - REMINDER - The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Society will be held on Thursday, 27 March 1997 commencing at 11am in the Dining Room of Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney. All financial members are invited to attend this important annual meeting. A special ANNUAL LUNCHEON will commence at 12 noon in the Dining Room, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney and all members and their friends are invited to make a booking with the Secretary to reserve a seat for the Luncheon.



## 'AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE'

*is the official journal of the  
Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc.*

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

Print Post Approval No. PP243459/00117

Price \$2.50 (for non members)

### MEMBERSHIP

Ordinary:.....\$20

Pensioner/Student:.....\$10

Corporate:.....\$35

(Corporate Membership is open to Schools,  
Associations and Institutions)

### PRESIDENT

Vincent Serventy, AM, B Sc B Ed

Tel: 043 44 4708

Fax: 043 42 6291

### EDITOR

Patrick W. Medway, B A, M Ed Admin,  
FPRIA, MACE  
Tel/Fax: (02) 9556 1537

### ADDRESS

#### National Office

Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc.  
GPO Box 3428, Sydney NSW 1043  
Tel/Fax: (02) 9556 1537

Production: New Media Communications  
Printing: Major Print Marketing

Articles may be copied or quoted with  
appropriate attribution.

### COUNCILLORS 1996

**Patron:** Judith Wright

**President:** Vincent Serventy AM B Sc B Ed

Order of the Golden Ark

36 Diamond Road, Pearl Beach NSW 2256

Phone: (043) 44 4708

Fax: (043) 42 6291

#### Vice Presidents:

Ross Bernie Ph: (02) 9607 8825 (H)

John Robertson Ph: 9363 9629

**Hon. Secretary/Executive Officer:**

Patrick W. Medway

**Min Secretary:** Marjorie Woodman

**Hon. Treasurer:** Frans Brandt

2 Iluka Road Mosman NSW 2088

Phone: (02) 9969 5642

**Editor:** Patrick W. Medway

PO Box 277 Brighton Le Sands NSW 2216

Phone & Fax: (02) 9556 1537

**Councillors:** Dr Clive Williams,

Dr Richard Mason, Denis Bowden,

Mabel Brown, Sandy Johnson,

Murray Hunt, Rosalind Gordon

#### Regional Councillors:

Glen Ingram 5'46 Ferndale Street,  
Annerley QLD 4103

Max Blanch 41 Smith Street,

Merewether NSW 2291

Jack Pearce 98 Alexander Street,

Greensborough VIC 3088

**Scientific Advisory Committee:**

Dr Michael Augee, Mammals

Dr Walter Boles, Birds

Bernie Clark, Botany Bay

Dr Harold Cogger, Reptiles and Amphibians

Dr David Murray, Plants

Dr James Puckridge, River Ecology

**Correspondence To: Executive Officer, Wildlife**

**Preservation Society of Australia, Inc.**

GPO Box 3428, Sydney NSW 1043

### REGIONAL COUNCILLORS

We would like to hear from our country members, anywhere in Australia who would like to become regional councillors.

The value to us is we would have a more intimate relationship with women and men who have local knowledge which could be valuable for conservation.

Such Regional Councillors would be sent the minutes of our Council meetings so they would know more of what we are doing. They could also submit motions for consideration and so play a part in Society decisions. By being listed in our newsletter State members could contact them in emergencies.

**All articles are written by  
Vincent Serventy and Patrick W. Medway unless  
stated otherwise.**

# CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
From The Presidents Desk	4
New Year's Day Garden Bird Count Great Success in 1997	6
88th Annual General Meeting and Luncheon Notice	6
Membership Drive in 1997	7
World Wildlife Fund	7
President Speaks at University of Western Sydney	7
Ecotourism in Australia	8
Preserving High Conservation Value Native Forests	10
Endangered Australian Lundfish	11
Wildlife Preservation Around the States	12
Obituary - Alan John Read	12
The Wide World of Nature	14
'Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve' Launched	15
The First Australians	16
An Idea Whose Time Has Come	18
Illegal Trade in Rhinoceros Products	19
It's Time For Action On Domestic Cat Control	20
Europe's Forests	22
Whale Watching	22
The Americans Do It Again	22
The World's Rarest Reptile	22
Cotton Farming?	22
Here We Go Again	23
Wingspan	23
Shark Populations	23
Dredging	23
World Environment Day	24
Laurens van der Post	26
President Speaks At Port Stephens 'Eco-Network' Meeting	28
Car Confusion	29
Rail Trails	29
Newcastle Disease	29
Wetlands Lecture Series	29
Letters To The Editor	30

# *From the Presidents Desk...*

The photo shows me on the alert in our back garden studying a Channel-bill Cuckoo on New Years Day Garden Bird Count. Our many letters indicates there has been an explosion of these cuckoos on the east coast at least. This should mean slightly less currawongs as these are favoured foster parents of a species which has increased in numbers, mainly due to unwise bird feeding and even more unwise leaving food scraps from the tables of an affluent society.

One of the pleasures of the bird count letters is often the extra details sent in. Some of these will be given in our next magazine when the results will be published but I could not resist this one from K Robinson of Homebush, NSW which is not about birds at all. She wrote... 'I was born at Mitchell in 1920.....When I was only three years old I was taken to live in Melbourne for a year. With me went my pet koala...fortunately such a thing could not happen today...when aged about six I watched a buggy loaded with bear skins (koala skins) being driven by a man with one arm...He was a district identity and reputed to be a crack shot and a villain...'

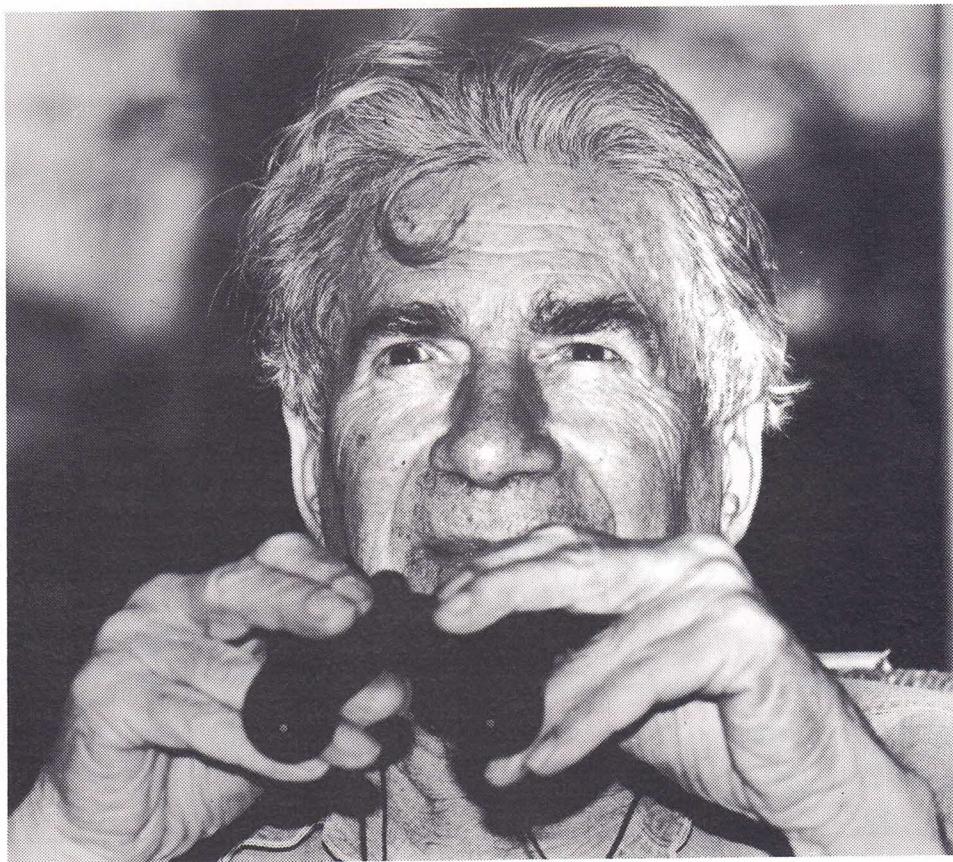
Sadly there are not enough koalas to be used as pets. Strict wildlife laws make keeping native animals as pets difficult in some States which is a pity since I remember my own early days when I kept a few pet lizards, bandicoots, tortoises as well as native fish. The 'bear skins' would have been koala skins and our Society in the twenties was a prime mover in stopping this trade in skins.

## **Wingercaribee Wetlands**

Peat mining in these pleasant wetlands is slowly destroying them. We have been asked to give evidence in a Mining Wardens Court at Moss Vale in February against the renewal of the lease.

Our main argument will be that in this driest of occupied continents, we need to conserve all our wetlands. The second argument will be that there are alternative sources of peat. From a point of view of humanity, the many tropical island communities are desperate for export income. A waste product at present is coconut fibre and it makes ideal material to replace the peat used for home gardens.

With our mission to conserve Australian wildlife, we must be ever vigilant in protecting our wildlife and their habitat. This wetland is being damaged by the peat mining and all wildlife is being constantly disturbed by the mining. This wetland has other important values that add to its uniqueness including two rare plant species Gentian (*gentiana wingecarriensis*) and the Leek Orchid (*prasophyllum uroglossum*); significant Aboriginal heritage; several species of rare, threatened or endangered fauna; and outstanding landscape values.



*President Vincent Serventy leading the Bird Count.*

# Good News From Towra Point Nature Reserve

Our involvement in this battle to conserve and rescue these wetlands has stirred the possum... Both federal and state governments are now involved, not only with words but money. Details are given on page 15 of this newsletter.

## Koalas

These animals are back in the news with one conservation group asking for a permit to destroy a colony by sand mining. Translocation is ruled out because they are 'diseased' and this would spread to healthy colonies.

We are against this proposal since there is a great deal of mystery attached to koala disease and the experts are divided not only on its origin but how harmful this to sparse colonies. We propose to hold a seminar on koalas later in the year which may shed more light on a dark subject.

## Sand mining

This is once more threatened under the release of a New South Wales Coastal policy. I remember the great flights we had in the sixties about this mining along our coastline. Dr Harrold of Brisbane wrote about the 'thousand mile desert' being created along the northern coastline.

In NSW there was a much happier solution. The famous Sims Committee was formed to consider the matter. The three main people was Sim, a civil servant, Allan Strom, a doughty civil servant who became very uncivil when fighting for his beloved bushland and a mining man. This committee after months of deliberation came up with decision on most the the coastal dunes, deciding whether to mine or not to mine.

There were a few where they could not agree and left the decision to the government. The most important was at Lake Mungo National Park. The mining companies were allowed to mine as many times as they liked for the first twenty years, then it would become conserved forever as national park.

On the new proposals, it seems where only dunes are concerned, providing great care is taken, all these can be recreated so it takes a skilled botanist to know if they have been mined in the past. We had this opinion from botanists employed by the Australian Heritage Commission, certainly not friendly to miners, who had studied coastal dunes mined twenty years before.

Of course if forests were on the dunes such regions would take hundreds of years to return. We oppose such mining since the main use for such minerals is to make paint, hardly an urgent need.

**Vincent Serventy, AM**

**President**



Channel-bill cuckoo

# New Year's Day Garden Bird Count

## Great Success in 1997

The President, Vincent Serventy has expressed his delight with the wonderful response from across Australia to the 1997 annual New Year's Day Garden Bird Count.

Vincent spoke on some 40 radio stations and media outlets right across Australia on New Years Eve and New Years Day to encourage interested people to participate in the Society's Annual Bird Count.

Hundreds of people responded to the appeal to record the birds in their Gardens on New Years Day and to forward the details to the Society for inclusion in our Data base of information. We now have 16 years of data collected since the Count was started in 1980 by our President.

If you have not already done so, please forward your Garden Bird Count direct to the Society, GPO Box 3428, SYDNEY, NSW, 2001 and include your name and address with POSTCODE for our records.

Full details of the annual Garden Bird Count will be processed and compared with the recorded data collected over the past 16 years searching for trends and developments effecting bird life in our urban gardens. After compilation, a report will be published in the next edition of Australian Wildlife for members information.



*The President counting the birds in his backyard on New Years Day. Vincent gave some 40 interviews on the annual bird count and this year we received a record number of responses. Well done everyone.*

## Annual Luncheon

### 27 March 1997

## 88th Annual General Meeting - 27 March 1997

All members are cordially invited to attend the 88th Annual General Meeting of the Society which will be held on Thursday 27 March 1997 commencing at 11am in the Parliamentary Dining Room, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney.

Members interested in standing for Council are invited to contact the Secretary and indicate their interest and qualifications.

Following the Annual General Meeting, the Annual Luncheon will be held in the Parliamentary Dining Room commencing at 12 noon.

The President has invited the Hon. Pam Allan MP, Minister for the Environment with the NSW Government to be the special Guest of Honour on this occasion and she has accepted. Members look forward to hearing from the Minister and her conservation plans for our wildlife and the environment.



*Pam Allan MP*

# Membership Drive in 1997

# World Wildlife Fund

The Council resolved at a recent meeting that there would be a major membership drive conducted during 1997 to bring our membership up to 1,000 members.

Existing members are asked to recommend the Society to their friends and relatives as one worthy of their support and should contact the Secretary for forms and magazines to pass on to potential members.

We posted a complimentary copy of our Magazine to every participant in the Annual Bird Count up to 1996 and have since received many appreciative letters and membership subscriptions back.

Following the inclusion of the Wildlife Preservation Society's name in the White and Yellow pages of the Telephone Directory, we now receive many more calls each day. A membership form and wildlife preservation information is posted back to each caller who is interested in receiving further details about our Society.

We have received some wonderful wildlife preservation information from Environment Australia (formerly the Australian Nature Conservation Agency) which is most suitable for school students and members are welcome to receive copies by calling the Secretary.

We prefer the old name, rather than the cumbersome World Wide Fund for Nature. Perhaps in time the international organisation will reverse the change. It was done, in our opinion, mistakenly, because some few countries did not have the word wildlife in their language.

All world languages are continually growing, adding new words from abroad, so wildlife could easily be added. After all they do have wild and life so the combination could be accepted easily.

First begun in 1961 we followed suit soon after though our efforts took time and WWF Australia began in 1978. It now has 30,000 supporters and since those early days has raised almost twenty million dollars for conservation.

Most of the money has been spent on saving species and habitats but at times WWF moves into wider and even more important fields. This is lobbying for change in laws to make permanent environmental safeguard.

About ten years after its formation it opposed the damming of the Franklin River, one of the more responsible groups, which helped, change public opinion.

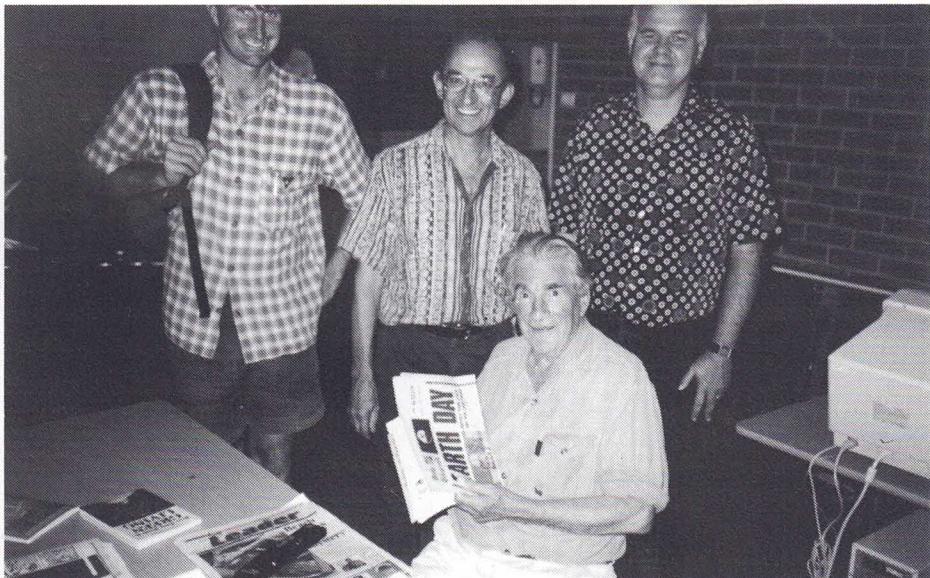
In the future with conservative parties dominating the political scene they may take similar action though it must be admitted all parties do take some action on the environment. That is the measure for our success down the years since 1909.

## President Speaks at University of Western Sydney

The President Vincent Serventy AM recently spoke to a large class of over 200 postgraduate students at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury Campus.

The postgraduate students are in the School of Social Ecology and the School of Agriculture and Rural Development and are undertaking their Masters degree studies. Vincent addressed the students on 'Trends in Australian attitudes towards nature and conservation' and was extremely well received by a long, standing ovation at the conclusion of his address.

A number of students joined the Society and many others took our magazines and application forms expressing great interest in the work of the Society.



President Vincent Serventy AM with Dr Martin Mulligan, Coordinator of the program and Foundation Professor Stewart Hill following the Address to the Masters students at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury in early February 1997.

# Ecotourism in Australia

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia welcomes the idea of regulating standards of ecotourism as discussed in the excellent article on our natural assets by Andrew Darby. As president for thirty years of this society, the oldest in Australia, possibly the oldest in the world, we have been involved with the task of conserving those assets for nearly a hundred years.

Our members have gathered considerable experience in this field. My own period of more than fifty years in various forms of ecotourism, beginning long before the word was invented, has taken me not only to most parts of Australia but also North and South America, Europe, Africa, India, the islands of the Indian and Pacific oceans, as well as Antarctica and the sub-antarctic islands.

From this I have learned some cardinal rules for all governments. It is essential that the benefits of using our natural assets must be shared with the local people. Also that use must be sustainable and finally, the viewing must be enjoyable for visitors.

I remember with sadness how my advice to an Indian Prime Minister led to a local disaster at Baratpur, a World Heritage wetland. That advice was sent at the request of expert local conservationists alarmed at the effect to the bird life, of cattle grazing on the wetlands.

The local people gained nothing from the stream of tourists to the region, all the economic benefit going to the central government with employment coming from Delhi. Their resentment spilled over to several villagers being killed during a protest regarding their cattle being driven out of the reserve.

Ironically since then it has been discovered that to maintain the wetlands some grazing is necessary!

More pleasantly, a visit to Bisnoi county in Rajasthan revealed a community who, for five hundred years, had lived in harmony with



*Loading the gun.*

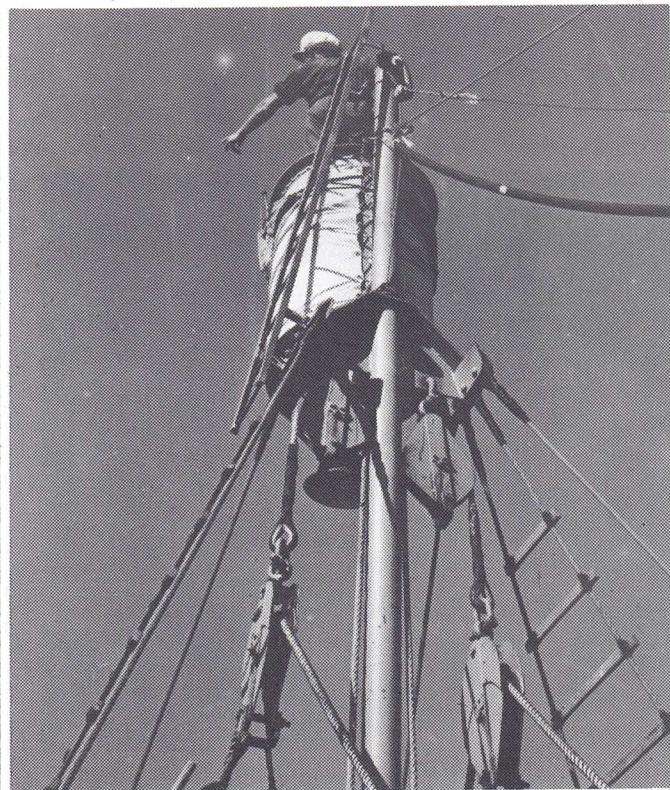
nature, in the process becoming among the most prosperous in the country. This in desert land very similar to the central two thirds of Australia. They are an example to be followed by other developing nations.

The story of our marine mammals is salutary. The killing of whales for many hundreds of years culminated in the great slaughter of the immediate postwar period. Australia played a shameful part in this killing, hunting the groups as they came to our warmer coastal waters to give birth to their young. This was a time when they should have been unmolested.

I was on a whale chaser at the time and was shocked by the cruelty of the hunt, where harpooned animals might struggle on the end of the rope for many minutes before death came. The officer to whom I spoke agreed, but his explanation was that he and all the crew had to earn a living.

More powerful ships of other nations pursued them to their last stronghold in Antarctic waters. Soon the numbers became so low it was no longer economical to capture the remaining few. The International Whaling Commission, having supervised their near extinction, brought in protective management. Better late than never.

It was then that some countries began whale watching, under the slogan "if we can't sell them dead, we'll sell them alive" and,



*There she blows. The cry from the watcher in the Crow's nest, alerted the skipper below at the harpoon gun.*



*The quarry, a humpback whale.*

as the years passed this became a multi-million dollar tourist industry in which we have shared.

Today every maritime nation has fleets of pleasure boats enjoying the spectacle of these ocean giants. Grey whales, humpback and right whales are making an encouraging come-back and in Australia, at least, the federal government has brought in legal guide-lines to ensure this tourist 'harvest' is sustainable.

The whale's smaller relatives, the dolphins, have proved equally popular. Many years ago I visited a Bunbury grandmother who had tamed a wild dolphin. Granny Smith had attracted a number of local tourists to watch this friendship between a human and a creature of the wild. I suggested to a number of local councils this was an example they might copy.

Monkey Mia, in the Shark Bay region, also found the local dolphins friendly and this has expanded into a huge industry with three hundred thousand visitors annually coming to see the animals. To lessen accommodation pressures at Monkey Mia I suggested that local station owners be encouraged to run small caravan parks to supplement falling wool incomes. Some were already doing so while others had begun farming sandalwood, another initiative in which we assisted.

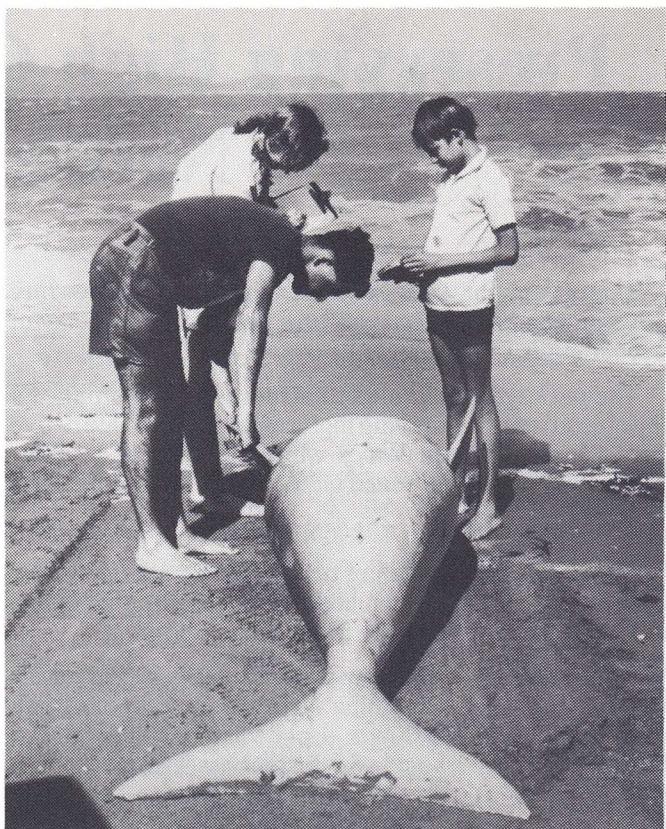
By spreading the load tourists were able to become aware of the many other attractions of this World Heritage region.

On the eastern side of the continent we took part in the long battle to save the Great Barrier Reef and Lord Howe Island, two prime destinations of ecotourism. The Reef had to be saved from miners and oil drillers. Finally we had the pleasure of having the whole region protected as a World Heritage regional park, the largest marine reserve of its kind in the world.

We still have to battle, however, against unwise tourist developments in certain key parts of this marine wonderland.

Yet there have been successes. Lady Elliott Island, which I visited in 1951, was a place almost bare of trees and shrubs. The plant life had been devastated by a herd of goats roaming the place, feeding uncontrolled, to provide milk for the lighthouse keepers and their families.

Today, as a tourist resort, planting has restored much of the vegetation while seabird's nest in some numbers. Further north in the Capricorn group conservation pressures helped save the turtles nesting on the islands. While nesting noddies and shearwaters have increased in numbers.



*A dead dugong, trapped in shark nets set at the beach at Townsville.*

At Michaelmas Cay, off Cairns, I have seen a great conservation triumph. This cay before the late forties was only visited to take seabird eggs and the flocks of sooty and noddy terns were low. Now it is alive with birds, yet there is no National Park ranger. Instead there is a sign asking all visitors to keep to the sand and not walk on the grassy nesting areas. Although hundreds come every day to see the birds and also enjoy the underwater wonders of the coral reefs fringing the island, all visitors obey these guidelines.

Ecotourism is a major ally in this task, educating millions of people into learning how to live in harmony with nature.



*Lady Elliott Island in 1951, eaten bare by this goat flock.*

# Preserving High Conservation Value Native Forests

Thank you for your recent letter congratulation my Government of its forestry reform package. The delay in responding is regretted.

The package is designed to achieve the Government's key objectives of preserving high conservation value native forests in New South Wales while maintaining a viable and sustainable value added NSW native timber industry.

The major elements of the package are:

- the deferral from logging of 816,000ha of state forest to be assessed for inclusion in the comprehensive adequate and representative national forest reserve system
- the declaration of 10 new national parks including the identification of a 120,000ha National Park in the south east forest - with 90,000ha declared immediately and a further 30,000ha set aside for further assessment
- the protection of 12 wilderness areas totalling 153,430ha including 31,590ha within existing national parks
- term agreements guaranteeing quota grade sawlogs - initially set for five years at 50% of 1995/96 levels with a guarantee of supply for a further five years contingent on sawmills meeting conditions for value adding
- in addition to the supplies in the term agreements, a further 10% of the 1995/96 allocation provided to northern assessment areas and an additional 15% allocation provided to Central and Southern assessment areas - up to the end of the comprehensive regional assessments. The total allocation levels therefore will be 60% of the 1995/96 quota allocations in the Northern areas and 65% of the 1995/96 allocations in the Central and Southern areas, tied to the end of the comprehensive regional assessments.
  - maintaining existing supply of quota grade sawlogs at current levels until 30 June 1997
  - providing \$120M for a Structural Adjustment Package to retrain and relocate affected timber workers and to restructure the industry
  - the allocation of \$47M to increase the rate of native timber hardwood plantations to 10,000ha per annum over the next 3 years
  - private forested land purchase scheme to supplement timber supplies.
  - the establishment of Harvesting Advisory Boards to advise on the implementation of the new timber allocations. The Boards will comprise of representatives from industry, conservation and government.

The Government's decision is based on the most thorough and scientifically based assessment of the State's forests ever undertaken. This involved extensive data collection, scientific analysis and resource modelling using state of the art computer technology as well as development of new methodologies.

In addition, the Interim Assessment Process involved extensive consultation with the community. For this reason the Government appointed industry, union, environment, science and government representatives to the Resource and Conservation Assessment Council (RACAC) which oversaw the IAP and involved them in its working groups. These key stakeholder groups were also involved in a four-week intensive negotiation session in Sydney, which developed a range of outcomes, which were presented in the Draft Interim Forest Assessment Report and circulated for public comment.

Stakeholder representatives on RACAC were also given an opportunity to personally address the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Land and Water Conservation and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning.

By undertaking this process I believe the Government has achieved a balanced result which best accommodates the twin conservation and socio-economic objectives of forestry reform.

Thankyou again for forwarding you letter of congratulations. I appreciate your support for the Government's decision.

Andrew Refshauge  
Acting Premier

# Endangered Australian Lungfish

The Wide Bay Burnett Conservation Council has been in touch with us regarding the fate of the endangered species, that scientific curiosity, the *Australian Lungfish*. It is now threatened by the latest construction of the Walla Weir, the latest in 5 dams and 17 weirs on this home river for the species.

Once approval has been given it will be difficult to refuse the next and the next and the next when farmers want more irrigation water. Over the whole of Australia the same pattern of irrigation greed has taken place until, at least in New South Wales, the government has called a halt in order that some valuable wetlands can be saved for the future.

As the Council points out more efficient use of water by farmers would make the weir unnecessary. We also wonder if in Queensland, as in most Australian states, one of our most precious assets is largely wasted carrying sewage and other valuable fertilisers to the sea. In many other countries these are treated and both the fertiliser and the water are reused, often many times.

Sustainability should be the keynote for all agricultural practises. Even the Minister's scientific adviser, Dr

Boardman, went on to say "... the cumulative impacts of present and future weirs and dams... could progressively destroy the breeding habitat of the lungfish...".

Dr Anne Kemp of the Queensland Museum states "...Much remains to be learned about the lungfish....Documentation and understanding of these effects (water conservation schemes etc) have to be assessed. ...We do not want to hasten their extinction".

There appears to be no urgency with the Walla Weir. Surely there is time for a study to be made on this remarkable fish which has added so much to Queensland's reputation as a treasure house of wildlife. The economic tourist value of such species also needs to be measured by all those responsible for its future.

**Vincent Serventy**  
**President**



*Photo - Queensland Lungfish*

# Wildlife Preservation Around The States

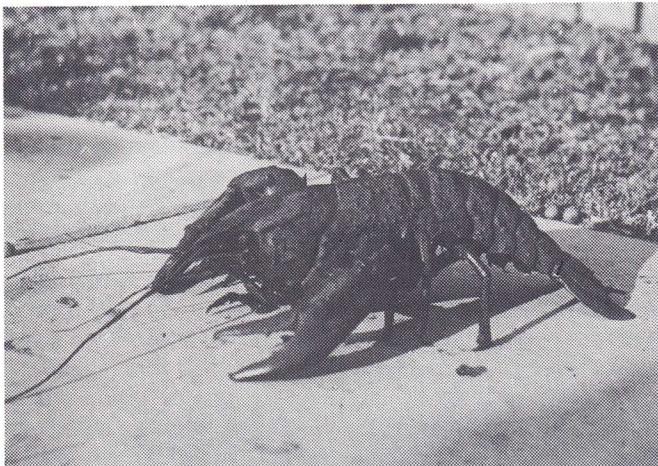
## Tasmania

### Giant Freshwater Crayfish

The World Wildlife Fund has begun a study on this fascinating animal, possibly the world's largest invertebrate. The biggest authentic measurement is fifty centimetres long and with a weight of four kilograms. Threats to its survival are many but at least it has legal protection as a threatened species so hopefully humans will leave it alone.

Normally they feed on rotting wood, although they will eat leaves and insects as well as animal flesh of any kind, which makes them vulnerable to human hunters. The strong claws are claimed to be able to break a beer bottle according to WWF.

Clearing stream edges pushes up water temperature and since the animals like very cold water this is one threat to their survival. Pollution may also be a problem though since much of the state is now World Heritage protected or national parks and state forests this should give the animal protection.



Giant Tasmanian Freshwater Crayfish

## New South Wales

A WWF funded study on koalas in Port Stephen has uncovered some interesting facts. Koalas injured in fires soon recover if not too badly burned. Also recently fired regions are soon suitable for translocating animals from where they are plentiful. Only a few months sees enough leaves appearing to provide suitable food.

Attacks by feral dogs seem the main danger, sixty percent of those 51 koalas in the study program being victims of dog attacks.

The WWF report calls these 'feral' though we wonder how many were domestic dogs roaming wild at night because of uncaring human owners. All domestic dogs and cats should be confined at their home base during the hours of darkness when these hunters do most of their wanton killing.



Photo: Koala

## Obituary - Alan John Read

Alan Read was born in England in 1945 and tragically died in Sydney on 5 November 1996. He was married to Frances and had four children.

Alan was educated in England at Warrington Grammar School and at the University of New South Wales where he studied Accountancy. He worked with Comalco for many years and later as the Bursar at Abbotsleigh Girls School.

He was a keen ornithologist all his life and spent many hours bird watching throughout Australia. He greatly enjoyed his trips to the country especially to the property 'Oallen Ford' in the southern talbelands.

Alan joined the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia in 1980 and volunteered his services as the Compiler for the national New Years Day Urban Bird Count for many years. The detailed research which Alan compiled has been most useful in monitoring our bird life and the health of the environment right across Australia.

We will all miss Alan's input into the work of the Society and extend our sincere sympathy to Frances and his family.



Vale Alan John Reed 1945 - 1996

## Australian Seas

This is a conservation story, which covers all states and the world. Everywhere bigger boats and bigger nets and lines are catching less fish. The Grand Banks Cod Fishery, made memorable by movie films with Spencer Tracey and the rich man's son whom contact with the Grand Banks fishermen made into a caring human being, now has an ironic twist. The fisherman's greed destroyed the fishery.

The FAO states that one-quarter of the world's wild fish are over exploited while two fifths have reached their limits. Soon the scarcity of wild fish will make hunting them uneconomic.

So what! Fish farms will fill the gap and already they are supplying huge world markets. Salmon, tilapia and shrimp farms to name only three.

Yet there is a growing problem. Pollution, disease and loss of natural habitats. Estuaries and mangrove forests are the vital nursery grounds for the vast majority of fish and crustaceans. The New Scientists report stated that two thirds of all our wild fish begin life in these shallow waters many of which are being destroyed by fish and shrimp farms, as well as filling in for new housing. It is poor economics.

Of course all this pressure comes from burgeoning human populations. We must stabilise our numbers and any religion, which prevents family planning, is ecologically evil, no matter how much care is spent looking after the hungry and smoothing the pillows of the dying.

Australia must play its part by carrying out research into our sustainable human population, not only to dispel alarmist estimates by some scientists who guess we can only sustain ten million people, because we need facts as a substitute for this kind of guessing.

## Queensland

### Strict Conditions Set for Hinchinbrook

The Federal Government has laid down strict environmental conditions for further work to be done on the proposed *Port Hinchinbrook development at Oyster Point*.

Federal Environment Minister Robert Hill has insisted that the Port Hinchinbrook developer enter into a deed of agreement to ensure best practice engineering methods are employed in further work done on the site.

The Commonwealth, the Queensland Government, the Cardwell Council Shire and the developer, Mr Keith Williams, has signed the deed of agreement. The approvals granted by Senator Hill relate to dredging a marina access channel and implementing a beach and foreshore management plan.

The deed of agreement ensures:

- silt curtains and other techniques will be used to ensure no increased turbidity in the Hinchinbrook Channel during dredging of the access channel,

- implementation of foreshore stabilisation which will include a large number of mangrove planting's, the use of regrowth to stop erosion on the beach front and refusal to remove any additional mangroves,

- the setting of strict water quality standards to deal with turbidity and pH levels and

- a stringent independent monitoring program to ensure all conditions is met.

Senator Hill, who has released a key scientific report on the project, says the decision to allow the work is based on the best scientific advice available.

"The scientific advice I have before me indicates that the world heritage values of the region will not be threatened provided best practice engineering methods are employed."

"Having given approval for these specified activities to proceed, the Government has moved to ensure that the developer is legally obliged to deliver environmentally responsible construction processes."

"The deed of agreement mean that we now have in place all the necessary conditions to ensure the protection of the world heritage values in the immediate vicinity of the site".

A comprehensive regional plan will be developed which will provide for:

- the protection of world heritage and national estate values in the Hinchinbrook area,

- the conduct of Dugong monitoring studies and the implementation of appropriate protection measures for Dugong and other endangered species,

- the regulation of boating activity, including speed limits where appropriate to protect marine animals,

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Australian Heritage Commission will be full participants in the development of the Hinchinbrook regional plan.

In addition, a recently released draft Plan of Management for Hinchinbrook Island National Park aims to provide for the orderly control of visitors to Hinchinbrook Island, emphasising a commitment to preserve the island's wilderness characteristics.

Editor: We will watch what happens



Mangroves are the nurseries for most fish and crustaceans.

# The Wide World of Nature

My childhood years were spent on a lonely farm at Bickley on the edge of the Darling Scarp. The natural world around me seemed immense. We caught jilgies in the creek, ran like brumbies across hills covered with pink everlasting and listened for the call of the pallid cuckoo, a winter signal for us rather than the summer one of the English cuckoo.

The family then moved to Subiaco on the edge of the bushland of Kings Park. This park became our playground and the Swan River our swimming pool. It was all still a natural wonderland, which seemed likely to last forever.

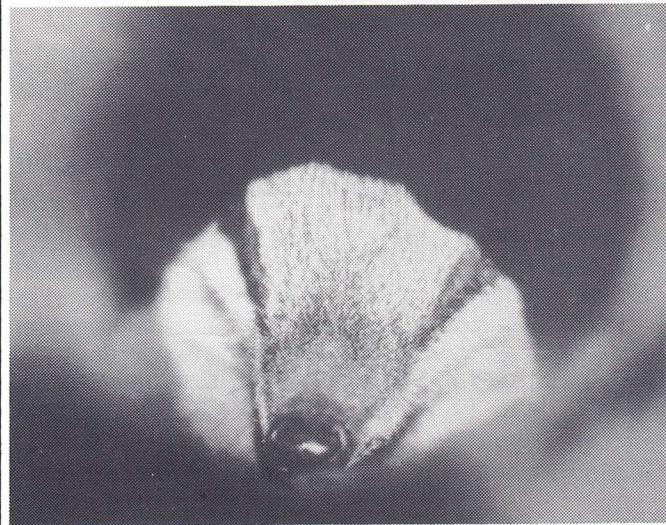
University days brought new knowledge of problems. We formed the Gould League of Bird Lovers to encourage our own love and concern for the bird life. I joined to Naturalists' Club and the Wild Life Preservation Society of Australia. Soon we became involved in conservation battles, first to save Kings Park from unwise development. We won that struggle, but went down to defeat when Perth's Reflection Pool disappeared under car parks and roads.

In 1962 in England, I visited Wicken Fen, a wetland saved by the English National Trust and now a magic place, the last remnant of the magnificent fens that once sheltered Hereward the Wake in his gallant fight against the Norman invaders. It reminded me of the fen of Herdsman's Lake back home. I also met Sir Peter Scott who told me of a new organisation, the World Wildlife Fund, started by a businessman who felt the rich and influential should use their power to save the world's wildlife. Peter enthused me with the dream of starting an Australian section.

Back home once more I helped start the Western Australia Tree Society, the Western Australia National Trust, encouraged the Gould League to change its aims to include the study of all wildlife, started the world's first Conservation Day which became Earth Day, and began tentative steps to form an Australian branch of the World Wildlife Fund.

Ambition to play a larger part in nature conservation brought me to Sydney. I was soon busy making television films, writing books, editing a wildlife magazine, and taking over the presidency of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, a position I still hold.

Yet the home tug remained. Dryandra forest was under threat from a bauxite-mining lease. I loved Dryandra, had spent many weekends camping in this woodland, and written



*A numbat peers out at a much safer world now foxes have been reduced in this reserve. Photo: V Serventy*

a book about this forest. In the fight against the miners the Opposition quoted sections from it to influence the government to change its mind.

I sent a copy to Rupert Murdoch who was the managing director of the company that held the lease. I included a message that to destroy this forest would be sacrilege. He agreed and wrote to the State government, handing back the contract on the right to mine. Dryandra is still a reserve today.

I was to return to Western Australia to help in the fight to save some of the jarrah forests. These were the bad old days when governments had little concern for care of the environment and concern only for the developers.

In 1964 at a meeting at Kirribilli House I shared a breakfast talk with Malcolm Fraser. After we discussed conservation problems and his plans for Australia, I rose to go. A last thought prompted me to say "What about the World Wildlife Fund?" He amazed and delighted me by replying, "Yes. Isn't it time we got it started? What do you want me to do?" So I sat down again and that was how WWF Australia was born.

By this time I knew that we must make a sustainable world. My old adversaries were not evil, only ignorant. All of us, developers, farmers, timber millers, miners, city folk and fishermen, wanted a sustainable world where we could not only keep our quality of living but at times, restore some of the old beauty which we had lost.

WWF played its part. The South West short-necked tortoise which had been rediscovered by science when a boy brought me a specimen to a wildlife show many years before, was saved by governments, scientists, the public and the World Wildlife Fund working as friendly associates.

Herdsman's Lake was saved from destruction, with WWF funding providing the present magnificent education centre on the site.

These are only a few of the battles we have together won in this state. There are larger, more complicated and more difficult struggles ahead. They will cost a great deal of money. Yet they are the most important battles we face. We must win, if not only Western Australia but also Australia and the earth are to survive.

Will you play a part in this contest? For truly we are the trustees for the future.

**Vincent Serventy**



*Dryandra forest - A typical scene in the wandoo forest with a bird hide set up in front of a mallee fowl nest. This is one of the birds kept safe in this reserve. Photo: V Serventy*

# 'Friends Of Towra Point Nature Reserve' Launched

The Minister for the Environment, the Hon Pam Allan MP officially launched the new 'Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve' out in the Reserve on Saturday 8 February 1997 before a large crowd of 135 conservation supporters after receiving an invitation from the President of the Society.

Along with other invited guests, the Minister then planted the first 'Banksia integrifolia' to commemorate the special occasion and to help revegetate the Nature Reserve.

Other guests included Malcolm Kerr MP, Member for Cronulla, Stephen Mutch, MP, Federal Member for Cook, Councillor Kevin Schreiber, Mayor of Sutherland Shire Council, Bob Walshe, Chairman, Sutherland Shire Environment Centre, Councillor Bernie Clarke AM, many members of the Society and representatives of all local conservation groups in the Sutherland Shire.

All distinguished guests planted Banksia trees along the causeway in the Reserve as part of the new bush regeneration program for the Reserve after the exotic weed removal program carried out by volunteers. The trees were kindly donated by the Bushcare Team of the Sutherland Shire Council Nursery and our special thanks go to Dick Rogers for his expert advice and assistance.

The new trees were grown from seeds collected from the Reserve and are identical to those species collected by Sir Joseph Banks when he accompanied Captain James Cook RN during their historic voyage to Botany Bay in 1770. Records indicate that the crew of the 'Endeavour' filled their drinking water barrels from the freshwater of the 'Towra Lagoon' during their stay at Kurnell and marked the area on their maps.

This new conservation group grew out of a series of successful meetings with the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre and the National Parks and Wildlife Service on how to provide future support for Towra Point Nature Reserve which is an important RAMSAR site for migratory wading birds.

The new Friends will assist National Parks and Wildlife Service officers responsible for the Reserve in all aspects of management of the Reserve including bush regeneration, exotic weed removal, tree planting's, protection of the Towra Lagoon and its associated wildlife, with an emphasis on providing protection for the migratory wading bird population and their habitat protected under the international RAMSAR agreement.

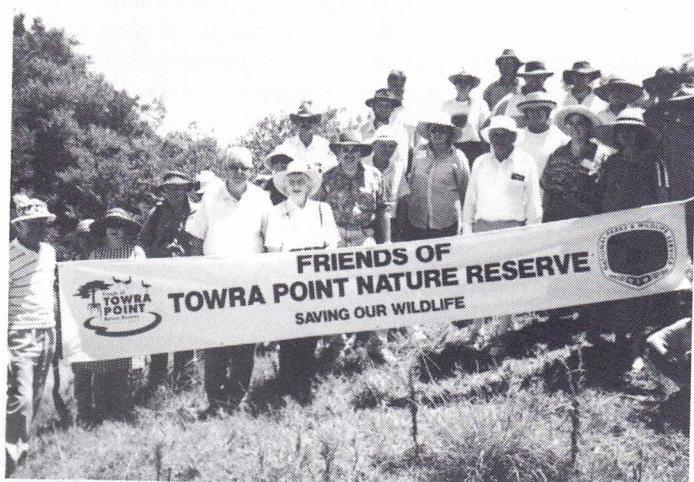
Following the official launch of the 'Friends' groups, visitors gathered on the shores of Quibray Bay and everyone present planted new trees in the area where the weeds had been removed by the volunteers earlier in the day. We are grateful to all the volunteers who assisted in making the day such as success.

Later everyone enjoyed a Barbecue at the Discovery Centre delightfully cooked by volunteers Colleen and Brett Murphy. Some 56 members of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation later held their regular Sydney Regional meeting in the Conference room where they discussed the work of bush regeneration programs in the Royal National Park.

**Members interested in assisting the new 'Friends' group are asked to contact the Secretary on Tel/Fax: 02 9556 1537.**



*Bob Walshe, Chairman, Sutherland Environment Centre planting a Banksia integrifolia in the Reserve following the official launch of the 'Friends' group, ably assisted by District Manager Peter Stevens and local children.*



*Some of the 'Friends' gathering behind the new Banner at the official launch of the 'Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve' in February 1997.*

# The First Australians

With 60,000 years of history why did the Australian Aborigines never evolve animal husbandry or agriculture. The usual glib answer is that we had no plants or animals suitable for cultivation. First let us look at the rest of the world. Until 10,000 years ago the rest of humanity were also gatherer-hunters. I use that word rather than the common hunter-gatherers since the women provided most of the food by gathering while any meat caught by males was more a matter of a welcome bit of luck. So it was not 60,000 but 10,000 years.

Certainly our Australian Aborigines were on the edge of discovering the secret. More than a hundred years ago explorer George Grey described seeing large areas of land which looked like a ploughed paddock just south of Geraldton in Western Australia. This soil had been cultivated with digging sticks by the women in search of native yams.

The distinguished anthropologists, Professor Ron and Doctor Catherine Derndt, described how in northern Australia they spoke to the native people who scoffed at planting yams in similar fashion to the people of the islands to the north. "Why bother when nature provides us with so much." Or in other words the approximately 300,000 people of Australia, spread thinly over the continent, a nomadic group of hundreds of tribes, lived very well as gatherer-hunters.

Indeed that great explorer and navigator Captain James Cook was to write of them ... "They may appear to some to be the most wretched People upon Earth; but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans..." Cook was commenting on Dampier's infamous description of the people of the North West coast a hundred years before.

Anthropologist Rhys Jones wrote of how the Aborigines were on the verge of firestick farming using a native sorghum in northern Australia. In other parts of the world the gatherer-hunters found they could increase their food supply by cultivating plants on the edges of rivers and freshwater lakes. Together with the more abundant food came increased populations and specialised skills as well as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

War caused by increasing populations obeying the Malthusian laws of fighting for survival and also that other penalty of living new water, pestilence.

As Professor Robert Desowitz wrote "Many of our most serious and common infections are either waterborne or in some other way associated with water.." Desowitz in his illuminating book New Guinea Tapeworms and Jewish



*Lyre bird pecking at Duffy's Forest near Sydney.*

*Photo: Keith Hindwood*

Grandmothers shows how many historians' accounts of our past are deeply flawed because they take little or no account of the effects of disease on events of the time. They are dazzled by the stories of great men, which make far more romantic reading.

To return to our Aborigines. They did change the face of Australia. Fire was a tool, used all over the world. Indeed every early navigator used the sight of smoke as being evidence of humans. The early farmers of Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean region, cleared their forests by burning. Even today the destruction of the rainforests in many of the Developing Nations is due to 'slash and burn', that time honoured method of primitive agriculture.

Aboriginal Australia like aboriginal America had very similar fire regimes, according to Stephen Pyne in his classic work Burning Bush, a fire history of Australia as well as a fire history of the whole earth.

So in Australia fire not only opened the country to change forests into more open woodland, it also allowed kangaroos a 'green pick' making them easier to hunt. What the later white invaders where to call 'natural' was an Aboriginal artefact, a way of life which Europeans are only painfully beginning to learn as we try to save our endangered animals by using the old ways of burning the country.

So the Aborigines were the lucky Australians. There was no population pressure to cause wars. Their time was

spent in a leisurely way of life, gaining enough food for their daily needs. As few skilled individuals earned a little extra food by excelling in painting or making stone spearheads, but for all there was a need to gather food.

They could see no point in working for the invaders, until a hundred years of occupation had seen the prime country taken. Starvation forced them to become labourers as well as skilled stockmen on whom outback stations depended.

The Stockman's Hall of Fame has only recently begun to honour these men as well as women. Aboriginal and White who were essential to the survival to these male pioneers. This truth was make known by Katherine Prichard in her novel Conardoo while a popular song of today 'Drover's Boy' brings the poignant message home to more of us. Yet it was this, which made so many visitors, and settlers make mistakes about the first Australians. Too many Europeans mistook buildings as equalling civilisation. A popular television program of a few years ago on this topic ignored all oral cultures. If they did not exist.

Yet our own Aborigines had a wealth of literature which staggers modern imagination. Professor Ted Strehlow told me how a desert elder knew 500 songs, which could take weeks to recite. Elders also had a religious enthusiasm, which few modern Australians could equal. So the following message from the Berndt's in their classic work The world of the first Australians has a message for us today .. "The wealth of Aboriginal traditional culture can

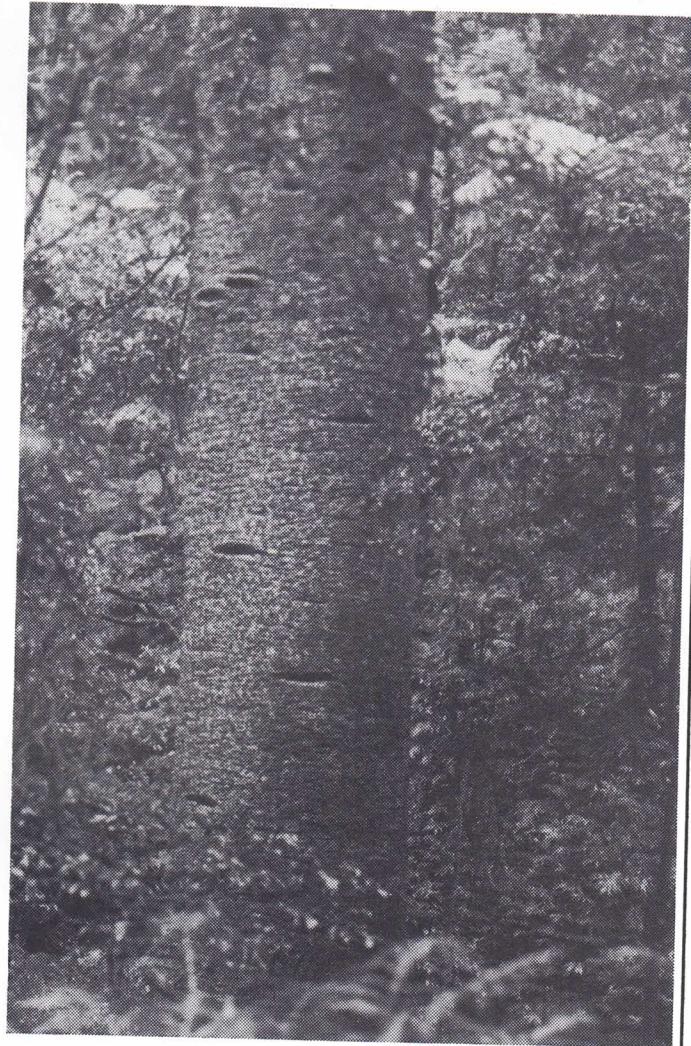
contribute to the general development of what is sometimes called, vaguely, the Australian way of life. Firstly we Australians should know what we are supplanting..."

Take for example their translation of a song of the Mudbara tribe of the Northern Territory. "...Day breaks, the first rays of the rising Sun, stretching her arms

Day breaks as the Sun rises to her feet

Sun rising scattering the darkness, lighting the land..."

Or this description by Strehlow of a scene in the Simpson Desert. It tells the story of two men standing on a sand ridge. For the European it would be noting but a sea of sand. For the Aboriginal elder "... he would have caught sight of the great Amewara Tnatana totem pole brought from Port Augusta, towering against the western horizon, the flames of its plumed crest top shooting skyward at night towards the desert bright stars." It is stories such as those, which have lifted my own understanding and appreciation of the Australian bush and the first Australians.



*Bunya pine with climbing footholds. Families of Aborigines in the pine country owned particular trees. They came in season to gather the nuts which has edible seeds. Any they could not eat would be stored in pits to be kept for later meals. Photo: V Serventy*

# An Idea Whose Time Has Come

When I first became involved in the organised conservation movement some fifty years ago I thought that to have five percent of Australia conserved in national parks and similar reserves would be a worthy ideal.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported we had attained that goal by 1992, however long before then I had moved to a need for ten percent of both land and sea to be protected by secure reserves. It was a new departure, as in my book on conservation *A continent in danger*, published in 1965, I did not mention the need for marine parks. I was well aware of the danger to marine life, but thought of the Great Barrier Reef and the coral islands of the Western Australian coast as being safe enough.

In the 1960s conservationists thought of forestry areas as de facto national parks as at that time clear felling was only an idea in the minds of economists - single tree culling was the rule. The rest of the forest was left to be a haven for wildlife, bushwalkers and naturalists.

In 1965 I moved from Perth to Sydney and became aware of dangers to Australian wildlife I had only glimpsed in the west, where we had a more forward-looking conservation movement. I then advanced the dream to ten percent of Australian diversity to be protected in secure national parks and nature reserves.

Last year leading conservation groups were asking for fifteen percent. Demands for such reserves must soon come to an end. People cannot live by parks alone. At a conference in the late 1960s I gave a paper on the need for regional parks, a new kind of reserve where people live and work.

The Director of the NSW National Park and Wildlife Service was in the audience and took me aside to urge a stay of interest. He was working hard to get that original five percent and had an interested minister, so I remained silent for some years.

The time has now come to realise that need. We have made a welcome start. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is the world's largest regional park. South Australia has a Regional Park Act. Western Australia is speaking of a large wetland regional park on Perth's doorstep. Or it was, until the environmental Goths' won government.

South Australian and New South Wales's conservationists are now speaking of the need to save Coopers Creek and the other rivers of our interior from degradation. That desert icon, Lake Eyre, has been set as a new World Heritage goal.

Developers, those corporations whose bellies are never full, in Judith Wright's telling phrase, are claiming we share their greed, as conservationists always expand their goals once each new demand has been met. The proposed desert reserve is one-sixth of the Australian mainland.

## Regional Parks

The Regional Park concept can meet all the demands of reasonable folk, isolating only the greedier of the two groups. Although not often realised, listing on the National Estate does not mean an automatic claim the region should be a 'national park or similar reserve. Its forgotten aim is only that it should be a protected area.

What is the key to a Regional Park? Basically it is a protected area, delivering a 'conservation umbrella' over a region which most agree is among our most valuable of resources. As with Sharks Bay World Heritage area, and the Great Barrier Reef, all the present activities continue. Fishing, farming, mining, human settlements and ownership of land, indeed all the many facets where human occupation has made an interesting and attractive landscape, are unchanged.

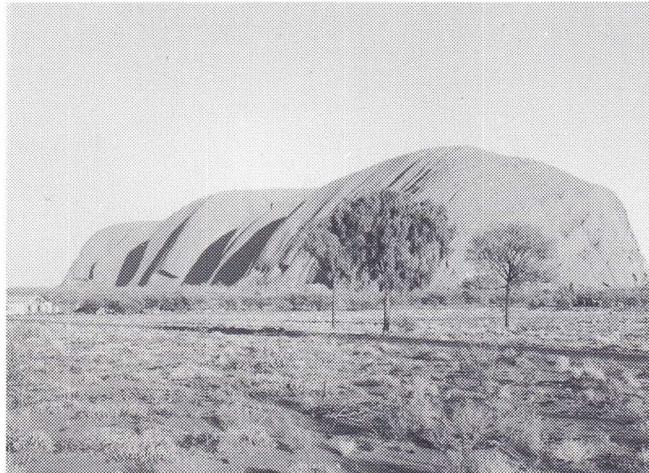
Will it work? It has in Europe for more than a hundred years. The incorrectly named 'national parks' of England are famous. The regional parks of the Lakes District and Snowdonia include farms, mines and cities. They also include great walking country, grouse moors, heather covered hills and other fragments of English natural beauty. The regional parks of Europe are even larger and just as diverse. Thirty-five countries, not all in Europe, now have regional parks.

There is no change in terms of freehold title to land but the park management must approve any radical changes in use. Houses and other buildings must be built or restored in sympathy with the present environment. The garish advertising signs and tall ego monuments that disfigure so many of the world's cities are not allowed in regional parks.

Thirty years ago the American author, Louis Bromfield, wrote of his dream of a land '... where instead of a wasted and ruined countryside, crossed by polluted streams, devoid of wildlife and beauty, it is possible to make of the whole nation a vast and natural park...' In the midst of this people live and work.

His dream is a large one. I will be content with a regional park in central Australia to include Lake Eyre, others in the Derwent Valley in Tasmania, in the Hawkesbury region in New South Wales, the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria and the coastal strip from Cape Leeuwin to Cape Naturaliste in Western Australia. For others, you can fill in your own favourite landscapes.

**Vincent Serventy**



Uluru National Park.

# Illegal Trade in Rhinoceros Products

The world's five remaining rhinoceros species are in danger of extinction. Pressure is being exerted on these mighty animals by habitat destruction and poaching. Now there are only about 11,500 rhinos left in the wild. Black rhino numbers have been reduced from 60,000 in the 1970s to about 2500 today. Against the trend however, white rhinos have increased from about 3500 to about 6500 in the same time period. Indian and Sumatran rhinos are reported to persist at about 2000 and 500 individuals respectively. Javan rhinos are critically endangered with only about 60 animals' left.

Illegal trade through poaching of the rhinos, and particularly of the African species is a major threat to the survival of the animal. Rhinos are poached for a variety of body parts and most noticeably the horn. The horn is used both in Zulu and Asian medicine for relief from a variety of ailments including headache, liver ailments and heart problems. In India the horn has also been used as an aphrodisiac. However, a second major use of the horn in the making of handles for prestigious daggers (or jambiyah) in Yemen.

Considerable effort has taken place to destroy the use of rhino products through international law. The 1989 Wildlife Conservation Law prohibited the internal trade and display of rhino horns for sale. Despite this, rhino horn was openly for sale in Taiwan until late 1992. As a result, in November 1992 the WWF filed a petition with the US government under the Petty Amendment to impose trade sanctions upon Taiwan for failing to control the illegal trade in compliance with CITES requirements.

Work is also taking place in an effort to reduce demand for rhino horn. People such as Esmond Bradley Martin have been trying to persuade the government of the Republic of Yemen to use other materials such as amber and horns of other less endangered animals in the making of dagger handles.

Dehorning rhinos has been mentioned as a method to protect rhinos from poaching. This method has been discussed since the 1950s and involves the theory that poachers will not harm hornless rhinos. However dehorning rhinos has a number of limitations. The first is that dehorning rhinos is expensive. Berger et al (1993) suggest that the expense may be as much as US \$2450 per animal. He also suggests that the horn has an ability to grow back at a rate of about 9 cm per year and hence the procedure may have to take place repeatedly.

Another major limitation of the dehorning practice is the suggestion that poachers do not discriminate due to horn size. In other words, a rhino with only a short horn, possibly due to being dehorned a year ago, is as likely to be killed for its horn as an animal with a large horn.

Other limitations of the dehorning process are tourists do not want to see hornless animals and secondarily, horns may be important for social status and ability to rear calves. Berger and Cunningham (1993) studied mortality rate of calves for horned and dehorned rhinos in the presence of predators. They found that the mortality rate was 100% for calves with dehorned mothers, with the survival was 100% for calves with horned mothers. This suggests that dehorning may be detrimental to calf survival unless practiced in areas where dangerous carnivores no longer exist or have been removed. On this basis, Kenya has not incorporated dehorning because of high predator

load. However, countries such as Namibia and Zimbabwe that have a lower predator load, have practiced dehorning. National Geographic (April 1993) reports that 500 rhinos have had their horns removed.

Another method which may help in the conservation of African wildlife (and the rhino) is the incorporation of retribution of funds achieved through tourism (and possibly hunting of non endangered species) to the local people of Africa. This will make it commercially advantageous to the local people for the continued existence of the rhinoceros. Milner-Gulland and Leader-Williams (1992) however report that local poachers will respond to local investment schemes but the deterrence of organised gangs can only be achieved with improved law enforcement. Local investment schemes tend not to prevent poaching by organised gangs because gangs are usually not based locally.

A final method of protection for rhinos, which is becoming more and more predominated is the formation of fenced sanctuaries. The fencing of large tracts of land has in many cases been effective with poaching rates reduced, and rhino numbers within protected areas increasing over time.



*The white rhinos, bred in captivity, then returned to the wild in Africa*

# It's Time For Action On Domestic Cat Control

Cats as household pets have had a bad press lately. Conservationists tend to regard them as more pest than pets. Fortunately we now know most of the facts and also the solutions, as these have been tried and they work.

Some of the facts available by Petcare from questionnaire research and telephone interviews provided much valuable information. I do not automatically discard such material so long as the results agree with research from the opposing groups.

The feral problem has very little to do with domestic cats. Folklore claims that the feral population is gaining constant recruits from the stock. The usual plaint is that if only kind hearted people would stop discarding unwanted kittens in the bush, rather than drowning them in a bucket, the feral problem would soon go.

I have always thought that belief is nonsense. We do know that spreading domestic stock into the wild is not always easy. We do know that feral cats are a menace to our wildlife, but not the prime cause of their disappearance. The top danger to native wildlife is the introduced European fox. Then comes dieback, which threatens our plant life survival. Next come feral cats, followed by land degradation caused by rabbits with feral goats last of all. Other problem animals and plants are causing disaster in particular areas.

There is no question that pets are of value to humans in terms of emotional health as well as of economic value by destroying rats and mice. There are almost one million households in Australia which keep domestic cats. About one quarter of all homes. This represents a number of voters which governments cannot ignore.

This gives an estimate of 1,397,000 animals. With some homes having more than one with a few going overboard in their love of felines, so causing troubles for neighbours and local councils. There has been a steady decline in the numbers of cat owning households in the last few years, with a ten percent drop in metropolitan centres, so possible the conservation message is taking hold.

The petcare research group found that every year each domestic cat caught one fiftieth of a native mammal, one-fifth of a native bird, one and a third native reptiles or amphibians. On the credit side, half of all creatures caught were mice, rats and rabbits.

However one fifth of 1,397,000 deaths is still a lot of birds and enough to remove most of the smaller ground feeding creatures such as blue wrens and thornbills entirely from urban areas as many home owners can testify.



*Spotted thornbill - all of our small birds suffer from predation by cats and foxes.*

The belief that putting an alarm bell on a cat to safeguard birds, did not work. Indeed the reverse seems to be true.

The other factors reported were that forty percent of cats were kept indoors at night while eighty percent did not roam during the day. Perhaps, that explains the low numbers of victims since owners who claimed their pets never roamed would report no wildlife taken.

This kind of personal reporting has some value but not as useful as actual collecting of the bodies of victims. A much more reliable personal report came from an officer of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. He kept a record of all the animals brought to the house over a seven year period. He lived at Wahroonga, a bushland suburb of Sydney. The total is frightening, even though this was a much loved and well fed pet.

Of the sixty one animals caught, only five rats and one mouse were taken. The rest included bats, birds of many species ranging from those as large as mudlarks and red wattlebirds, to small species such as spinebill honeyeaters. There were many reptiles including blue tongue skinks.

The leaves eight creatures a year, a much higher than the previous ones, though only from one reporter. Yet these animals identified take no account of the smaller victims eaten on the spot and not brought home.

What is the solution?

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, our oldest conservation group having been founded back in 1909 organised a seminar on cats, calling in experts from around Australia. From this meeting the following policy was developed.

Only registered breeders should be allowed to sell cats and these to be vaccinated before sale. Ideally they should be desexed.

All cats to be registered, as is compulsory with dogs.

Finally, there should be a curfew from dusk to dawn, with cats in secure places. (This should also apply to dogs since they are the main killers of large animal such as koalas.

There should be limits on the numbers of cats any person can keep as is done with dogs.

These regulations to apply only to urban areas, not for farmers who have special problems.

Local councils have the power to bring in such controls and an increasing number are doing so. My own Gosford City Council carried out a referendum of all ratepayers and found that an overwhelming majority did want controls on cats.

However, when I asked in July of 1994 what action they intended taking, they replied they were waiting for promised state legislation. "In summary Council's approach to cat control measures will be dictated to a high degree by the scope of legislation when enacted by the New South Wales State Parliament".

Since then there has been a change of government but still no action.

It's time Mr Carr. Majority opinion backs such regulations so why not begin their drafting?

**Vincent Serventy**

*Splendid blue wren. The wrens of all species are common victims of cats all over Australia. The brightly coloured males suffer the most.*



*Mudlarks are also known as magpie larks.*



## Europe's Forests

A recent Naturop newsletter tells the sad story of their forest. 26.4% of all their trees are now damaged. This is up from 22.96% in 1993. Deciduous trees are a little better off than conifers. The main causes are unfavourable climatic conditions, in particular drought and heat, infestation by insects and fungi, forest fires and atmospheric pollution.

## New National Parks

Italy now has 16 national parks covering a total area of 536,000 hectares. Five of these are new, created as part of the European Conservation Year in 1995.

## European Youth Parliament

An idea for us?

150,000 pupils from nine countries came to Strasbourg for the first European Youth Parliament for the Environment on 9 - 10 October 1995.

Perhaps we could try something similar inviting young folk from nearby countries. We might not get 150,000, but even a few thousand would be a start.

All we need is money. Any sponsors?

## Whale Watching

Jennifer Connell reported in the Sydney Morning Herald that around the world in 1994 there were 5.4 million watchers. She estimates that would be worth \$700 million on tourism.

My own guess would be \$5.4 billion judging by the costs of watching in the countries I have visited.

A hundred years ago whales were regarded as among the ugly creatures, judging by Bernard Shaw's comments in his book the black girl in search of god.

What a turn around. Perhaps we can do the same for more important conservation projects, at present unpopular, like land degradation pollution of the seas and a few hundred other major needs.

## The Americans Do It Again

Seventy years ago the United States saved our koalas by placing a ban on imported skins. Now they are placing a ban not only on Australia but another 51 nations, which do not have turtle excluders on their prawning nets.

Some years ago our society recommended to the government that this should be done. We included a sketch to show how it works when the air breathing reptiles go in with the crustaceans but have an escape hatch before the holding bag traps all the other animals.

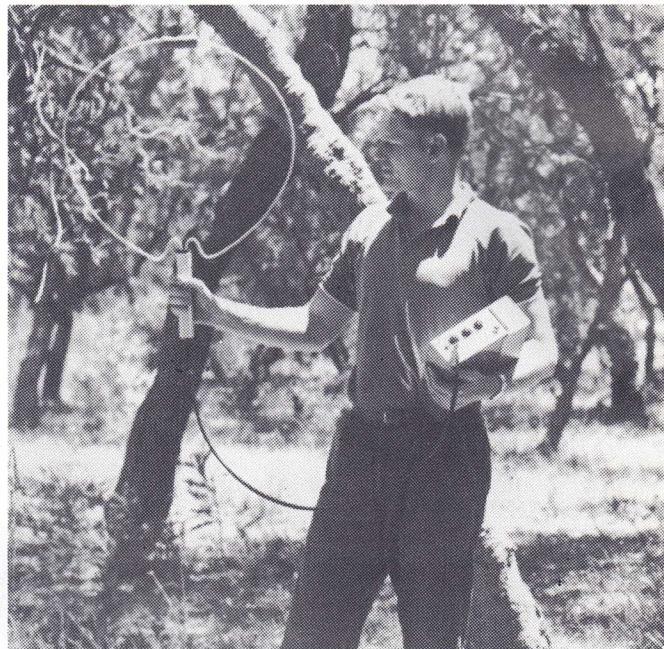
The cost of the device, sixty five dollars to four hundred dollars. A small price to pay for our wildlife safety.

Although only about a million dollars of Australian prawns are exported to the United States. The over production in the rest of the world will cause dumping on other markets. With Labor's love of a freely open market for all imports this could have been disastrous for the industry. Perhaps the Coalition may show more sense.

Perhaps.

## The World's Rarest Reptile

The western short-necked swamp tortoise is an inhabitant of the Swan coastal plain, thriving in pools which filled in winter and dried out in summer. Clearing of the bush for farms destroyed most of these swamps. The only tortoises surviving today live in a small area near Bullsbrook, north of Perth. It is estimated that the total population is less than a hundred, making it one of the world's rarest reptiles.



*One of the scientists who worked on the tortoise. Dr Andrew Burbidge uses a direction finding loop to find the animal, which has been fitted with a radio transmitter.*

*Photo: V Serventy*

## Cotton Farming?

More than a hundred years ago Henry David Thoreau, regarded as the prophet of the modern conservation movement wrote "...in wilderness is the preservation of the world..."

That is at the heart of the argument about the Macquarie Marshes. Will this fragment of the wild be allowed to remain to delight future generations, or will it be sacrificed to add more wealth to the already successful cotton growers? (Sydney Morning Herald, 9 December 1996).

This is not their first bite at our precious wetlands. The Queensland government refused their demands on the waters of Coopers Creek, not only saving these but also a local cattle industry producing free range beef. Cotton not only needs large amounts of water but also needs heavy chemical usage. Veronica Parry, the American expert who came to Australia to study our kookaburra, warned of the dangers of DDT use.

I visited the cotton country some years ago to give lectures on the need for more trees to be grown in country where farming had created an agricultural Nullarbor. I was shocked when visiting one of the workers farm houses to see cotton growing almost to the doorstep, while the children played in a car wreck.

That great Australia scientist Sir Macfarlane Burnet said in a Boyer lecture "... Who would want to live in an overpopulated world, where outside the urban sprawls there are only vast agricultural factories in the fields..."

That is what so much modern farming has become.

## Here We Go Again

In those euphoric sixties Paul Ehrlich and the Club of Rome among other experts claimed that within a decade oil would run out. Time proved both to be false prophets and while once Paul could fill the town hall with enthusiastic supporters now he has to be satisfied with smaller meeting places.

And who now heeds the Club of Rome.

Now a new report by Petroconsultants, a prestigious group which charges \$42,470 for the full report. I wonder if they have tested to see what oil is available if the price rises high enough. Two sources are oil shale and conversion of coal, of which the world has huge supplies.

No. We all know that when anything costs more the search becomes keener.

What we must do is attack car use as an evil for cities but ideal for leisure activities. Decentralisation is the key. Cities of half a million should be planned for our future, to drain population from cities, which grow like cancers. In Australia most of these will need to be along the ocean shoreline but in other countries, with not so hot climates, they can spread more evenly.

Yet even in Australia we have Canberra as one example of a thriving inland city. Broken Hill and Mount Isa are smaller examples but even along the seashore there is space enough to satisfy our needs, at least for the next century.

By that time world populations will stabilise and we will work towards greater quality of life, rather than quantity of possessions.

## Wingspan

That wonderful newsletter of Birds Australia, once known as the Royal Australasian Ornithologist Union or RAOU there is fascinating conservation information for they not only study birds but actively work to conserve them.

A recent article discussed wetlands and in particular those of the Murray-Darling Basin, the economic agricultural heartland of Australia. There are between twenty and thirty thousand in this region alone and some are important enough to have been listed in the newsletter.

From flood to mud. It's a national treasure their headline proclaims. There is also a song 'mud, glorious mud' but the composer probably never realised what a natural history treasure there is in mud. We do and we will work to preserve all we can in Australia, the world's driest inhabited continent.



*Not four-leaved clover but a fern called Nardoo, photographed in Kinchega National Park. The Aborigines of the area - a flower that became famous during the Burke and Wills expedition because it kept the explorers alive for a time, ground the spore capsules of Nardoo into flour.*

## Shark Populations

Seven people are killed around the world by sharks each year.

People around the world kill seventy million sharks each year.

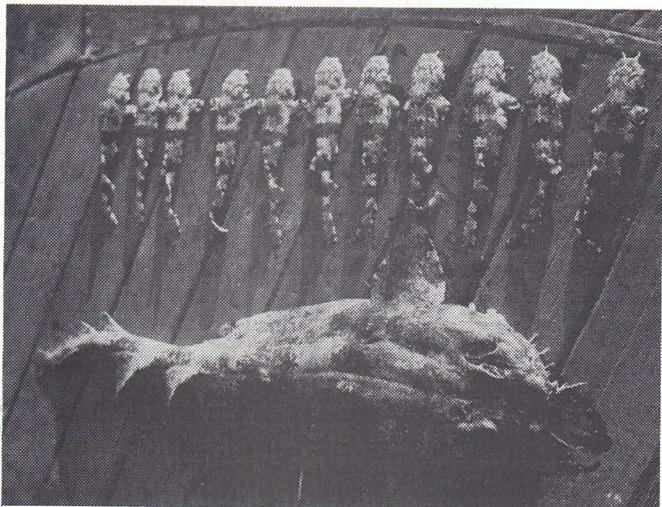
Sharks at least kill to eat, most sharks are killed for an exotic food claimed to have remarkable properties. Shark fin soup is a traditional Chinese delicacy, which costs gourmets one hundred dollars a bowl. Its taste, at least to western dietary views, is similar to trepang soup, which tastes like nothing boiled in water.

Shark meat is different according to western tastes being very attractive and often eaten by humans under the name of flake to avoid any alarm in the person concerned.

Australia today still catches ten thousand tonnes and at times certain of the smaller species has to be given legal protection from overfishing.

Even more important is what is this slaughter doing to our marine resources. We know on land that taking out all the major hunters such as wolves, dingoes, lions and other predators can often lead to disaster among the herds of herbivores.

Perhaps the same is happening to schools of fish.



*Picture: Even a prolific carpet shark, with eleven young cannot reproduce fast enough to keep pace with human hunting.*

## Dredging

Our society has a clear policy. Dredging the oceans is like clear felling the forest. The result is change to both sea floor and forest.

Recently in the news has been a cry of alarm from Botany Bay. Fishermen have found their industry being destroyed, not only by works associated with enlarging Mascot airport by dredging.

Towra Point wetlands, which are proudly listed on the Australian Ramsar list, are also in a degraded and disgusting state. At Brisbane all the governmental groups will have a cheerful get together and assure us that everything in the garden is lovely.

Our society with others will try to have our voice heard. If not in the conference, in the media.

# World Environment Day

The choice of mid-summer for this date was due to the egotism, which divides the earth into North and South, with the South as poor relations. From the sophisticated rich north would come ideas to trickle 'downwards' into the 'impoverished' south.

Yet how did the first day develop?

We can claim priority. By a stroke of good fortune the Western Australian Education Department had not only given me the task of developing the Elementary Science Curriculum but also put me in charge of an advisory service to train teachers on how to handle this new scheme more effectively.

All around the world various 'Days' were celebrated. Arbor Day was the first in the United States while in Australia we had Bird Day in 1911 and Wattle Day in 1913.

As the West Australian 'supremo' I found that some of these days had fallen into disuse. Also it was a time of ferment in environmental concern with our State in the forefront of most other places in the world.

I wrote a letter to my Director on 10 August 1964. "... It occurred to me that possibly we should broaden the whole day into a Conservation Day. Since conservation is one of the aims of the Elementary Science Curriculum ... we would then be justified in asking every teacher, that on Conservation Day this aim should be stressed ... By holding the Conservation Day in the springtime ... the benefit of the time of the year putting both gardens and bush at their best and allowing for good weather for outdoor celebrations ... if successful it could lead to other States following suit and possibly the idea spreading from Australia until it became an international day..."

Prophetic words.

In 1970 the day blossomed into a magnificent reality in the United States. With an American flair for words it was called Earth Day and some years later we followed suit. All chose springtime for this new bonding with nature.

The famous anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote of this first Earth Day on March 20, 1970. "Earth Day is the first holy day which transcends all national borders ... spans mountains and oceans and time belts, yet brings people all over the world into one resonating accord ... the selection of the vernal equinox makes planetary observance of shared event possible".

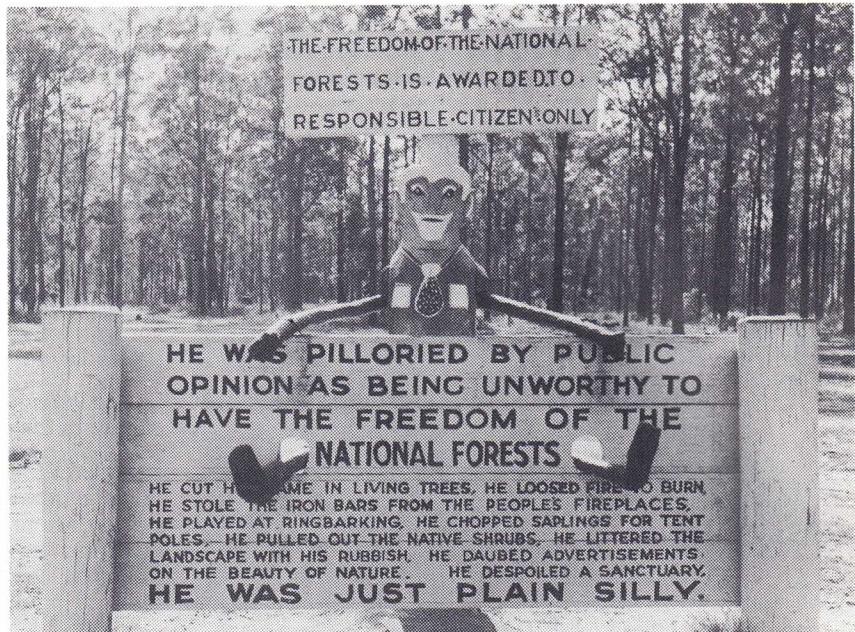
Politicians move when they can sense votes to be won.

In June 1972, 113 nations met in Stockholm and this was a landmark in official environmental concern. Realising that celebrations were important, they used their public servant stolidity to change the name to 'World Environment Day'.

Forgetting the importance of a spring or autumn date, suited to every place in the world, they chose June 5, glorious midsummer in the north, sad midwinter in the south.

Perhaps in time the powers will come to realise that a new Earth Day can become a shared event of doing, as well as talking, celebrated in the open air.

Vincent Serventy



*A sign with a message. This beautiful piece of woodwork has a plea to save this forest from vandals.*

*Photo: V Serventy*



*Twenty years before this was a bare paddock. Today it is a thriving rainforest planted by the land owner.*

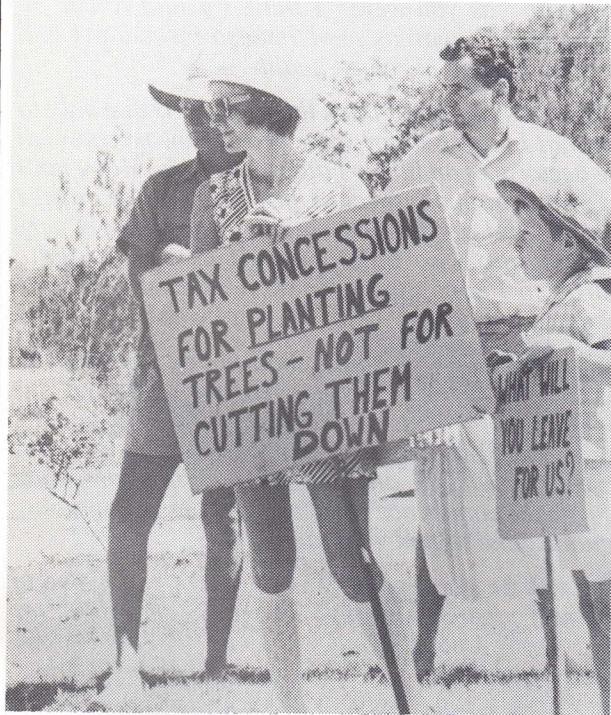
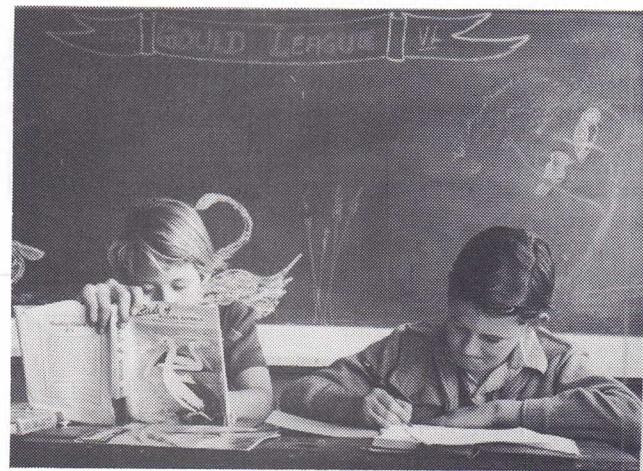
*Photo: V Serventy*



*A march to save a park. This battle to save Centennial Park many years ago was led by Nobel Prize winner Patrick White. Photo: V Serventy*



*Young children can learn to love nature. Here they study a bearded dragon lizard. Photo: V Serventy*



*Public protests help change government policy. Photo: V Serventy*



*Right and above right: Pets are important to most children as well as adults. This outback girl hugs her pet lamb. Photo: V Serventy*

# Laurens van der Post

One of the world's greatest men died on 16 December 1996.

Philosopher, soldier, naturalist, writer, film maker, friend of the friendless, conservationist, lover of wilderness. He was all these things.

When Henry David Thoreau wrote

"I went to the woods, because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover I had not lived..."

Laurens did make this discovery. He told us how when he came back to Africa from his years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp, a time when an Australian sergeant said he was the greatest man I have ever known and he saved our lives by facing brutal soldiers with a courage they admired, he was so emotionally shattered that instead of returning to his family he contacted an African friend. Together they went into 'the woods' in this case the wild country near the Limpopo river. When he had recreated himself he went home to his family.

These four letters I received from him down the years show the quality of the man better than any words I could write. Here they are, the first in 1984, the last in 1996.

13th September 1984

My dear Vincent,

*It did my heart gook to find your letter of 14th August waiting for me on my return from South Africa, and it didn't only do my heart good but made my heart beat faster reading your lovely poem, "The First Born", on the Bushmen of Australia.*

*It is strange this matter of timing - the synchronistic phenomenon which Ian and I find in Wilderness and so often inflict on dear people like yourself when we talk about the psychological implications of Wilderness - it is truly remarkable. I have just got a book coming out in which I try to sum up my experience of the First Born in life, and the BBC are producing a six-part film serial we have made about the first born of the Kalahari Desert. The Government and its mining interests now threaten the last little stronghold of the Bushman, and I am about to engage in battle with them, so please say your prayers for us. When the book is out I shall send you a copy but it will take a little time as I am compelled to send these things by surface mail.*

*You know what a special love I have of Australia and its people and how much therefore our association in so great a cause means to me. I always value too the balanced and wise contributions you make to our gatherings and it*

*will be a delight to meet you as soon as possible again.*

*Your address interested me as a possible synchronistic phenomenon. It thinks the Hunters Hill coincidence is not idle. I wounder if this is the same Hunters Hill in which I spent a happy fortnight once with my friends Judge Clarence Vaughan Kirby who acted for the Australian Department of External Affairs in Java? He lives in Hunters Hill, Sydney and was a very dear person.*

*I would love to go on talking to you but I must desist. My thanks and all possible good wishes to you both.*

Yours ever

Laurens

27th April 1987

My dear Vincent and Caroline,

*Thank you so much for your letter of 21st April and its enclosures and I hasten to assure you that I was as dismayed by seeing myself described as being "not in robust health" as you were. I think I would rather be described as "ill" than as something so insinuating and on-going as lacking in robust health.*

*My health is fine and I think this rumour is due only to the fact that I have had for some year's now mechanical trouble because of an injury I did to my back. However, I regard myself in this respect as just being in the garage for repairs, and am fortunately in the hands of a very good mechanic who calls himself an orthopaedic specialists so I hope that when we next meet I shall be straightened out again.*

*I am afraid, however, that I shall not be meeting you this year in Colorado, not for reasons of health but because of the enormous amount that I have to do and the conviction that I have said all that I can really say about Wilderness to you all and could not really contribute anything to the conference now that would justify my going and ignoring the urgent work on my table.*

*But it will be good to see you when next you come to London and please know how grateful I am to you for always keeping in touch and for being such a generous supporter of what I have tried to do through my writing.*

My regard and best wishes to you both,

Yours ever

Laurens

7th April 1988

Dear Vincent,

I was so glad to get your letter of March 25th and the moving poem, which accompanied it. I am certain too that Prince Charles will love your message which I will send to him by hand if I cannot deliver it in person, which I might be able to do in a few days time. As you know, he cares very deeply about your country, people and nature and all.

I do not know if you managed to get to Colorado. I also could not go and so missed meeting great many old friends who were one of the main reasons I attended all the other conferences.

A very special message of affection, and best wishes to you and Caroline.

In haste

Laurens

23 March 1996

My dear old Vincent,

What a joy to hear from you again and to have a glimpse of you and Carol. I have one irredeemable complaint against Australia and Australians, and that is that you are so far away physically. It would be so wonderful if you could, as my closest friends do, drop in from time to time.

I'm delighted to know that you are writing your autobiography. I think it not for nothing that autobiographies and their more common substitutes, biographies, are best sellers in a time of great book depression. Fiction has so declined, and most poets seem to be stillborn, and at heart everyone has a hunger for reality that makes them turn to people who have lived their art.

I was most moved by your poem, and its heartbreakng fear that the elephants may be doomed in the end, and that those wonderful creatures who are the great civil engineers of Africa and who walked a trail from the Cape to Cairo long before modern imperialists thought of such a thing, will find these little pocket handkerchiefs of the original Africa we offer them too small for their survival.

But I know you work as hard as any of us to prevent such an end. In this regard, I would like you to know of a great victory for old Ian.

He fought against Rio Tinto and its Canadian and South African supporters removing one of the last pieces of the original Zululand by an immense operation of open scale mining. The battle to stop this has gone on for about ten years but at last we have won it and old Ian, who only a few days ago told me the news, could hardly speak with the emotion. I told him we shall have to call him forever "Ian the Conqueror".

Please keep in touch.  
With warmest regards,

Yours ever

Laurens

Goodbye Laurens.  
Fate allowed you to live  
so long so you could  
educate so many.



Elephants at an African Waterhole

# President Speaks At Port Stephens 'Eco-Network' Meeting

The President of the Society, Vincent Serventy, AM, was the guest of honour at a special Luncheon Meeting of the Port Stephens Environmental Eco-Network groups meeting at Soldiers Point, Nelsons Bay in December.

Some sixty five members of the various conservation groups on the Port Stephens and Nelson Bay region gathered as a ECO-NETWORK GROUP to support and encourage each other in preserving and protecting their local natural environment under the very active Presidency of Councillor Helen Brown and Secretaryship of Councillor Darrel Dawson. (Full details from Secretary, PO Box 97, Nelson Bay, NSW, 2315.)

Eco-Network's objectives are to unify members, affiliates communities and their organisations in co-operation around shared values, common interests and objectives;

To conduct educative and awareness programs within local communities on ecological values and systems;

To conduct workshops, seminars, forums, on complex and contentious issues impacting upon ecosystems and related concerns;

To develop a capacity to become the eco-forum/network of the Port Stephens, Greak Lakes, Gloucester and Dungog local government areas.

Policy areas of focus for 1996-97 include vegetation, habitat conservation in dedicated nature reserves and national parks in the region, koala and other wildlife protection from sandmining and developments, linking wildlife corridors eg: Tilligerry Peninsula, Salamander Bay, Corlette; opposing



*President Vincent Serventy speaking with some of the guests at the Eco-Network Luncheon at Soldiers Point, Nelsons Bay recently.*

development zoning's in wildlife habitat, feral animal controls, bitou bush removal and native replanting, land, coast and dune care projects and eco-tourism policy and projects.

The Eco-Network draw on the principals of Agenda 21 from the World Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.



## Crommelin Arboretum Follow-up

Further to our story in the Summer edition about the Founder and Donor of the Crommelin Arboretum at Pearl Beach, Dr Joan Webb has kindly loaned us a photograph of Minard Crommelin to allow us to see what this generous lady looked like.

This photograph was probably taken about 1958 and depicts Minard Crommelin and Patricia McDonald in the garden of the Arboretum.

# Car Confusion

The New Scientist of 16 November had an article by Ian Lowe. It tells the story of a survey of car owners in New South Wales, which tells a story, which is salutary for all conservationists who think environmental life was meant to be easy.

The general question was as follows. Which is the most important environmental issue facing Australia? Remember this was a survey of car owners. Farmers might have answered land degradation, conservations saving biodiversity, surf riders beach pollution tree groups saving our forest.

45 percent put urban air pollution first, with no other problem attracting more than 20 percent. Fewer than 10 percent named global warming, ozone depletion and forest conservation as the most important need.

Which does show how ineffective we have been in capturing the hearts and minds of most Australians.

Yet when the same car owners were given solutions to air pollution, their resounding answers were all negative.

They did not want any efforts to stop people using their cars so much. While willing to pay more for cleaner air the opposed doubling the price of petrol! There was a thumping no to this and even a thirty percent rise, which would have left our petrol still half the cost of European fuel, eighty percent were still against this.

They did agree we needed better and cheaper public transport, though most would fight against any attempt to curb their rights to discourage car use.

What is the solution?

Governments must chance their arms and at least in the first year after election enact all the unpopular decisions. Just think how folk fought unleaded petrol.

Why not try draconian solutions like Singapore where it became illegal to bring a car into the city unless the driver had a clear and public need. Many cities are doing the same and the solution of more public transport can be done cheaply by using more buses, ideally using gas or electric power rather than diesel. Airports to be put out of cities rather than right inside, as in Sydney.

# Rail Trails

Disused railway lines can become well used - as walking tracks, linear parks or wildlife corridors. There is now an organisation for enthusiasts whose address is:-

Australian Rails to Trails

PO Box 223

East Melbourne VIC 3002

They are keen to publish an Australia-wide guide and would like information from any person keen to help.

They need to know the following about any disused rail line with which you are familiar:-

What is it called? Where is it? How long? What condition? What is it suitable for? Who are the local contacts?

If you can help get in touch at the above address.

# Newcastle Disease

This is a deadly virus which affects domestic fowl stocks. Fortunately it has not yet come to Australia, one of the few larger countries still disease free. This immunity is threatened by the governmental intention to import poultry meat from abroad.

One would imagine there is enough of this already in Australia but our economic rationalists claim that preventing such imports is a breach of international trade.

This is not our own field of expertise but poultry breeders have warned us that should the disease come to Australia native birds will be under threat.

As is our Society method we searched for information but found it very hard to come by. One would imagine with most of the rest of the world infected some scientist would have studied the impact on native birds.

A friend of ours searched the internet and found there had been some work on wild double-crested cormorants in the United States where 10 to 15% of young birds died in some outbreaks.

Also from the Taipi City Zoo some owls died and the danger to captive birds, particularly those linked to poultry would be obvious.

However we will keep searching for information and until then have to wait before deciding on our policy.

Certainly commonsense would indicate we should not take risks with the immunity we possess because of our ocean 'maot'. This applies not only to poultry but also to things like salmon farming also under threat through import of uncooked salmon meat.

Our federal government should strengthen our Quarantine Service rather than slashing such civil servants because of economic rationalism

# Wetlands Lecture Series

As a result of the survey that was conducted last year, this year's Lecture Series will be about wetlands in NSW.

TIME: 7.00pm

PLACE: Hallstrom Theatre

Australian Museum

(William St Entrance)

DATES:

10 March

14 April

12 May

16 June

14 July

11 August

8 September

13 October

Full details will be published in the February 1997 issue of the NPA Journal, including ticket availability and ticket purchase details.

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Vin,

Thanks for your letter regarding the issue of clear felling.

I understand and agree with many of your points. However, there are some circumstances where a focus on wood chipping is necessary, and many circumstances where selective logging of our native forests is inappropriate.

In tackling the issue of clear felling at a federal level, it is necessary to concentrate on federal powers and federal decision-making processes. The decision to clearfell forests is made at state-government agency levels. However, the export of woodchips requires an export licence issued by the federal government. This is one of the reasons why the forest debate at a federal level appears to be dominated by the issue of export wood chipping. Part of the Native Forest Protection Bill (sponsored jointly in the Parliament by me and the Democrats) focuses on wood chipping because the federal government has a direct power there which it is already exercising. (Under the corporation's power, it could be far more involved in the protection of our forests, but it has chosen not to be.)

If logging companies cannot sell woodchips on the international market, the economics being large-scale clear felling operations in rugged or remote terrain simply falls apart.

Secondly, there are many forests in Australia, which should not be logged at all - whether by clearfell or selective means. These forests include wilderness areas (such as Tasmania's magnificent South-West and Tarkine), rainforests, and old growth forests. Selective logging, while less visually offensive than clear felling, nevertheless involves building of roads into remote areas and the likely spread of diseases such as phytophthora and myrtle wilt.

Having said that, I agree that we should focus more in the public debate on the impacts of clear felling. I note that the Wilderness Society (Tasmania) Inc. has done that with some of its information sheets, which I enclose for your perusal.

The third part of the bill, which puts in place the mechanisms for a transition from native-forest logging to plantations, simply recognises the massive public investment in plantations made by the Australian public over the last four decades. We have well over a million hectares of plantations. We do not need to establish any more. We have enough to meet our needs. What's needed now is the infrastructure to process that wood here in Australia, particularly in the saw milling sector. Note that for this year, there were licence approvals for the export of nearly six million tonnes of unprocessed plantation grown wood - either as logs or chips. One million tonnes of this was in the form of whole logs. In other words, we are busy exporting - raw - the alternative to destroying our own native forests. An absolute scandal!

Again, thanks for your letter. I appreciate the feedback.

Yours sincerely

Senator Bob Brown

Ed: A most important letter.

The Editor

Sydney Morning Herald

## Coastal Protection

Please accept our Society's congratulations on your excellent Coastal series and the need for more care in terms of environmental matters.

I am sure all the points raised by your experts will be discussed by all State Conservation groups and acted on in various ways.

Also congratulations on your other environmental articles down the year which has helped our cause by influencing governments in the right directions.

Never has the need been more urgent and the media has played a vital role in developing this concern.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Serventy, President

Dear Geoff Gallop

Leader of the Opposition

Western Australia

Thanks for your letter with details of your marine policy. It looks excellent but before the next election it will need to have programs added.

There is a need for national parks extending to the coast from inland ones. A few between Perth and Geraldton to preserve the coast from a suburb of housing would be good.

Regional parks, which put a conservation umbrella over where people live and work is also an important aim. Sharks Bay is a good example just as the Great Barrier Reef in the east.

The Abrolhos Islands in the West are a prime example where wildlife, lobsters, fishing and people can co-exist in the future as they have done in the past. South to Bunbury and along the coast could be served by regional parks. My book Saving Australia deals with these in some detail.

Perhaps next time I am in the West we might meet.

Regards,

Vincent Serventy, President

Dear Vincent

Thank you for your letter of 22 May 1996 in relation to the impact of the proposed mining project at Duralie on Johnsons Creek and related river environments. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I appreciate your concerns regarding the future condition of Johnsons Creek should the proposed Duralie coal mine proceed and wish to assure you that the proposal is subject to a wide range of planning controls to ensure that all possible environmental impacts are considered.

As you are aware, the sensitivity of the Mammy Johnsons River and the Karuah River catchments is well known to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), which is committed to ensuring that water quality and ecological functioning in these river systems are not adversely affected by developments. The EPA has provided advice on issues considered to be critical to an effective assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed mining project which need to be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) currently being prepared by CIM resources.

When the EIS is lodged with the Great Lakes Council, the EPA will provide detailed advice to council on air, water, noise and waste management issues associated with the proposal. Likewise, the National Parks and Wildlife Service will comment on areas of potential significance for native fauna or archaeological potential and Aboriginal heritage values to ensure they are preserved.

I note your organisations suggestion that a Commission of Inquiry (COI) be called in the event that Council approves the proposed mine. As indicated in my previous correspondence to Ms Venaglia, depending on significant community concern, this option may be directed by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. I have therefore referred you letter to the Hon. Craig Knowles, MP, for his consideration.

I appreciate your interest in this matter and trust that this information is helpful. Should you have any further queries please contact Mr Dick Sheppard, Senior Policy Adviser, on (02) 9233 4044.

Yours sincerely

Pam Allen, MP

Minister for the Environment

Dear Mr Serventy

The Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Pam Allen, MP, has asked me to reply to your letter of 25 May, 1995 concerning the protection of wetlands.

The question of wetland protection in NSW is one of the significant issues, which the Minister has taken up since her appointment as Minister for the Environment. Together with her colleague, the Hon. Kim Yeadon, MP, Minister for Land and Water Conservation, she visited the Macquarie Marshes in mid May and viewed first hand some of the problems identified by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) through rigorous research.

It is worth noting that one of the aims of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the RAMSAR Convention) is the encouragement of research on wetlands.

In this regard, NPWS has pursued a number of important projects adding significantly to the body of data and understanding needed for the "wise use of wetlands" (Article 3.1).

Despite the good work that has been done, Ms Allan is determined that an early start be made towards dealing with outstanding concerns about wetlands in NSW. The Minister has asked the Service to promptly present some proposals. This will certainly include a process to identify feasible additional sites for possible nomination under the RAMSAR Convention to ensure effective protection of valuable areas, and a program for addressing the threats impacting on existing sites.

As part of this process, the State Government will collaborate with the Federal Government in the nomination of sites for recognition under the convention, and will also negotiate for funding for ongoing management of these sensitive areas.

Yours sincerely

Madi Maclean

Executive Officer to the

Minister for the Environment

The Secretary  
Wildlife Preservation Society Australia

I am a manufacturer and distributor of heavy duty welded galvanised steel mesh animal catching cages, which are a successful alternative to baiting and jaw traps.

These cages have proved to be highly effective in reducing the feral animals eg, dogs, cats, foxes, etc and also extremely effective in catching native fauna for relocation away from built up area back to national parks and wildlife areas. Native quolls, possums, tiger cats, koalas etc and also protecting native habitats from feral animals.

These cages are strongly constructed and will withstand the rigours of animal catching, handling and transportation.

A recent improvement in the large dog/fox trap has been made thus enabling the catching of both domesticated and feral foxes.

I also market squeeze cages for the easy immobilisation of captured animals. I am enclosing a few leaflets illustrating the possum/cat cage, the medium and large dog cages. However I do manufacture to any specifications and/or requirements.

Also I have supplied cages to the National Parks and Wildlife NSW, Shire Councils both local, city and interstate, as well as Rural Lands Protection Boards NSW, environmental groups and Landcare organisations.

Any enquires can be directed to myself on (066) 473 204.

Yours faithfully  
P Beaumont

# Membership form...



## WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA, INC.

G.P.O. Box 3428, Sydney NSW 2001

### Membership

Why not become a **MEMBER OF THE WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC?**  
Simply fill out this form.

Name:.....

Address:.....

City/Suburb:..... Postcode:.....

Telephone:..... Fax:.....

#### Membership category (please circle)

Ordinary: \$20.00 Pensioner & Students: \$10.00 Corporate: \$35.00

(Corporate membership is open to Schools, Associations and Institutions.)

Cheque/Money Order (please circle) \$..... enclosed. Donation \$.....

Mail to the **WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.,**  
**GPO BOX 3428, SYDNEY NSW 1043.**

### Consider - A Bequest

Another way in which you can support the work of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc. is to remember us in your will.

If you would like to make a bequest to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc., add the following codicil to your Will:

I bequeath the sum of \$..... to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the Treasurer for the time being of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc. shall be complete discharge to my Executors in respect of any sum paid to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc.

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

VINCENT SERVENTY

President