



AUSTRALIAN

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Journal of the Wildlife Preservation Society

of Australia Inc. (Founded 1909)

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The President welcoming the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Pam Allen MP at the 90th Anniversary Luncheon at Parliament House, Sydney.



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

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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 a 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.*

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From the Presidents Desk...

Our Patron

A letter from our Patron, Judith Wright. I sent a copy of my memoirs to Judith since there is quite a deal about her in it. This was her reply.

'Well Vin, I'm ashamed of myself for only now having finished the last chapter of your book. I more than enjoyed it all but have been ill for some time and hard at work in the intervals, trying to finish a book myself. So you must forgive me. I am after all nearly 84. It's been a life worth writing of, hasn't it? Mine has been worth it too, and at least I have managed to write of the first half of it - the book is called "HALF A LIFETIME" - but there is always so much more than one can say or even remember. You too with all your activities must say to yourself - how did I come to forget that?'

True enough. For example I forgot to mention Len Webb who was a good friend of both of us, an expert on rainforests, a tireless conservationist and of great help in our work.

'...Well what has come of all that work we did? When we started out to beat the oil companies on the Reef everyone was saying, 'You can't stop progress', but we did for a little while. Now instead of oil drilling we have shale mining (likely to be worse if anything) and coral bleaching from the Greenhouse effect and many other things with who knows that's waiting for its cue. People increasing swarms are what's waiting at the bottom of it. I fear there will be worse to come.'

But never mind as my aunt would have said, we did well in our time and it's been laid down for others to follow that track...'

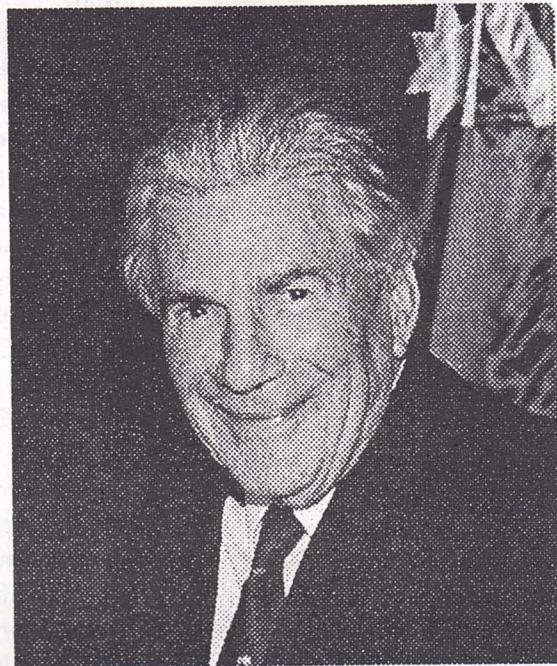
I am sure there will be a multitude to carry on the good work. Those whom Judith inspired while I did my best, stimulated by her and her husband's example.

The rest of her letter deals with more personal aspects, how her daughter now in Canberra doing a doctorate in Asian studies, has a house she designed.

Judith wrote, 'I can get a break and a breeze outside this small city among real trees and birds...'

For both of us live by Thoreau's maxim, 'In wilderness is the preservation of the world'.

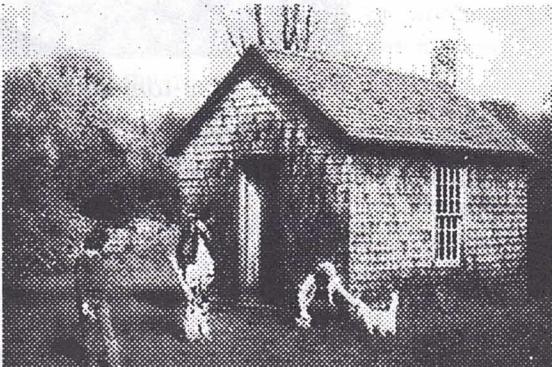
We will all look forward to the book. Better half a life than no bread!



Vincent Serventy, AM President

Thoreau's Hut

Here is a photo of a replica of Thoreau's hut in which he lived when writing his most famous work. My children are in front of this tiny home, small by our ideas yet large enough to shelter Thoreau while he wrote his great work.

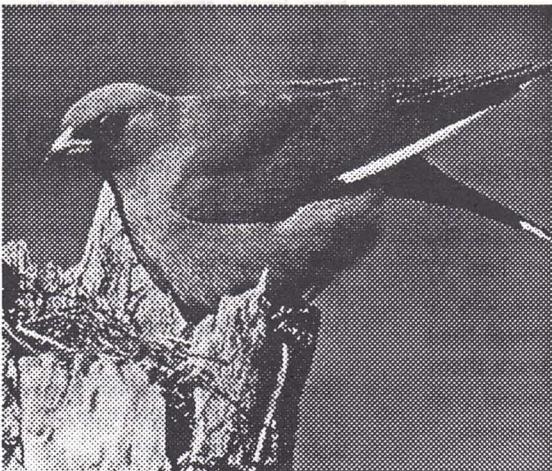


A Member's Complaint

Allen Baker of Orange has problems. Here is his letter. '...It is forty years since I lived in the central west but over the past eighteen months have lived in Orange and my occupation takes me through an area encompassed by Dubbo, Mudgee, Lithgow and Young.

As a boy in Parkes I observed plovers, top-knot pigeons, parrots, magpies and peewees galore. Finches were seasonal and sparrows plentiful. Most are now rare.

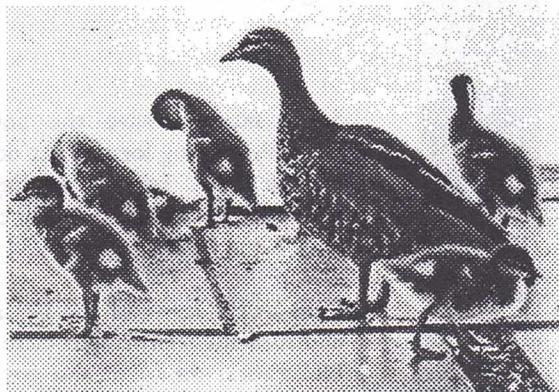
Today wherever I go there are proliferations of starlings and mynahs. I have not seen grass parrots or budgerigars in any numbers anywhere.



Dusky wood-swallow

I recall in my boy-hood a bird we called blue martins which came in large flocks and nested literally anywhere - hedges, fence posts, trees, gutters, but they seem to be extinct.

The joy of seeing wrens, wattle birds, sparrows and other small birds has long gone and the sight of a pair of wood ducks on the wing, wonga pigeons or plovers is a rare delight.



A wood duck mother with its young.

What has happened and what can be done to re-establish our avian populations?

I have planted native shrubs, there are no cats in the vicinity and I live in the northwestern outskirts of the city adjacent to farmers. However my only visitors are the despised mynahs and starlings which gorge on my worms. I despair for our children's children and their legacy of skies filled with alien birds.' Here is my reply.

Dear Allen,

Yours is a common complaint but some help is at hand. Those blue martins are various kinds of woodswallows and I put in a photograph. They are not extinct but still abundant over many regions of Australia.

So too are the wood duck pairs or larger groups strolling along the footpaths of Pearl Beach and often in hundreds on a nearby golf course. I put in a few photos I have taken of pairs and ducklings.

You are doing the right thing but help is at hand. To celebrate the millennium our Society is organising a conference on World Environment Day, June 5th in Sydney which will run for a week but you can come for a single day if short of time.

Professor David Goldney will be speaking of how to keep wildlife on the farm in the morning and in the afternoon will be discussions on what we should do in the future,

I am sending a copy of your letter to David and I am also including some newsletters to you about this conference. There will only be 300 invited, experts from all over Australia and the world so if you would like a place reserved get back to me. It will cost \$100 if coming for the day only, \$300 for the five days

I hope to hear from you.
Regards Vincent Serventy

Some farmers have the souls of peasants. Greedily groping for the last dollar from the soil of their farms. Fortunately they are a dying race with one quarter of Australian owners of the land enrolled in Landcare groups.

Even worse some of the peasants make money and turn their farms into factories, creating new Nullarbors. As far as the eye can see are neat rows of crops, with never a hedgerow or tree to break the monotony. For their laborers in these green factories, the houses are placed in the fields with no gardens, but often a broken down car for a play space.

Whether cotton, wheat, grapes, canola or any other crop most drench their farms with poisons to exterminate the last insect pests..

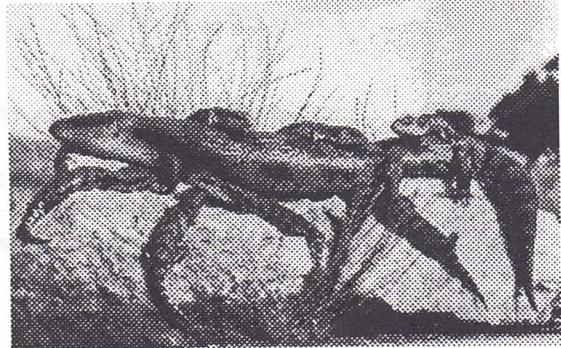
Yet these new rich peasant farmers leave the land as soon as they can afford it, never regarding their farms as home places, only land to be mined.

Ironically the sensible farmers who are willing to live with enough of the wild in terms of hedgerows and windbreaks with patches of bush preserved for their children's playgrounds, find their return is richer than any of their greedy peasant neighbours,

Blue-tongue Lizard

A recent study in Sydney by a research student Jennifer Koenig has revealed many fascinating facts about this reptile, a popular pet with children. She inserted 35 gram radio transmitters into 17 lizards then asked permission for the folk in Hornsby and Normanhurst to walk through their yards with her receiver so she could track them. She found that in 24 hours a lizard would walk through 15 backyards and cross several roads.

She also found they could live for 5 years so long as they escaped being killed by cats, (ten percent), dogs (42 percent) and car collisions (12 percent)



Eastern Blue-tongue and her broad. Young are born alive to this reptile. (*Tiliqua scincoides*).

according to Wires who recorded 2004 blue tongue rescues. Jennifer thinks road kills are more dangerous than recorded so because mother lizards may give birth to dozens of active babies that helps them survive.

I had many in our garden where I think they ate snails as well as insects and plant food.

In Western Australia the most common of this group are the sleepy lizards or bobtail as they are more commonly named. Mother bobtails are only give birth to two large twins but they seem ever more common than the western bluetongue. Fortunately they are favoured by white humans though Aborigines often find them good tucker. At least those that still are hunter-gatherers.

Earth Sanctuaries

Most people have now heard of John Wamsley's Earth Sanctuaries ideas and may have visited one of them. Basically the idea is simple. Our members know that most of our endangered small mammals and other wildlife are not so much in danger or extinction through land clearing but through attacks by feral animals such as foxes, cats both feral and domestic, wild pigs, goats and the other creatures let loose in this land of ours.

Earth Sanctuaries raises money to create fenced areas where no ferals can get in and where endangered species can breed and hopefully, be released back into their home ranges.

Their most recent plan is to create one of these on the old Canyon Colliery site at Bell in NSW. Bob Carr thought it a good idea. So does our Council. Sadly the National Parks Service are not so happy. Possibly they resent outsiders doing their job so successfully and raising money from the public to pay for it.

Also sadly both Environment Australia and the NSW Service have a strange rule which states endangered animals must be bred in the State where they once lived. Under that rule the Arabian oryx and the Mongolian horse would now be extinct though strangely it was a NSW zoo which ignored that edict and bred horses which have now been sent back to Mongolia. The oryx was bred in the United States and sent back to Arabia. Two sucess stories which Earth Sanctuaries want to repeat with the hare-wallaby known as the mala.



Of the five hare-wallabies which once occurred in Australia, two are now extinct. two are rare and one is reasonably common according to various experts in 'Complete Book of Australian mammals edited by Ron Strahan. Pictured here is the banded hare-wallaby.

Sadly Dr Wamsley has breached one of our Society guidelines. In media statements he has made a promise to spend two hundred thousand dollars on campaigns for the next elections, aimed at defeating government members.

Our Society before, airing our opinions, always looks at the totality of the promises and performance of both political sides. Mr Souris, the national party leader, will ask the Coalition to withdraw from the interstate and national committee now controlling the future of the Murray-Darling Basin. In 1981 we publicised the views of

Clark a farmer, on the Murray, who stated bluntly 'it was time all governments stopped pussyfooting about the future of these giant river systems and worked together to save both since it was a national responsibility'. Now a farmer's leader, promises, if elected, to destroy this unity. Even worse, Wilson Tuckey, the federal minister for conservation has attacked the NSW State Government for being too green. Mr Carr must drop proposals for new national parks. So the national government, whose duty it should be and was, under previous Coalition leaders, to step in when a State government is being ecologically unsound, is planning the reverse.

So without question in this election we must support the present NSW government whose green credentials are the best in Australia.

Feral Cats

These are the worst enemies of our smaller animals and the hardest to kill. They are in huge numbers, about 60,000 in the Northern Territory alone and probably greater numbers in Western Australia and Queensland. Unlike foxes they will not take ordinary baits though some sucess is being used with poisoned mice but only when all other food is in short supply.

In small sanctuaries electrified fences keep out such pests but this is an expensive solution. Some islands can be used as sanctuaries. This is happening on one of the Monte Bello group now the radioactivity has fallen to safe levels. The mala, the boodie, the harewallabies and mallee fowl are all being saved in some large sanctuaries in Western Australia and we will learn more about this work at the Earth 2000 conference.

Fungi

Once they were regarded as plants without chlorophyll. Today they are in a kingdom of their own. One with abundant subjects, a quarter million mushrooms, toadstools, slime moulds, truffles, mildew and smut. We have still to learn more of how important they are to ecosystems. They drive the nutrient turnover. The decay of dead plants is carried out by fungi in most cases.

This is an almost untouched field of research. For example only recently we have discovered that many of our smaller marsupials like potoroos and woylies feed on truffles. Half their luck say my gourmet friends though the Aborigines of the central deserts did know about and use this delicacy.



Long-nosed Potaroo. These are among the marsupials which feed on truffles. Perhaps the popularity of these fungi is due in part to folklore which believed they strengthened male virility!

Mining Wastes

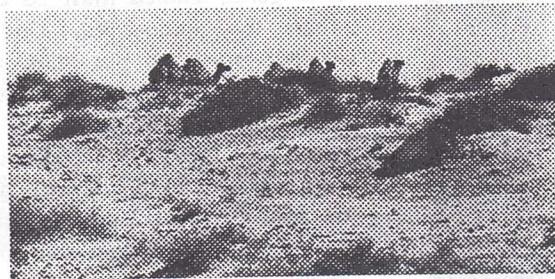
A new report from Environment Australia describes the danger from old mine wastes. When pyrites and other sulphide minerals are exposed these oxidise to sulphates which become acid in water, resulting in a kill of all animals and plants when these leak into streams or soils.

If treated when the mine is still active the problem can be solved more cheaply than later when cleaning up the site takes place.

This costs \$100,000 a hectare but only a third of that cost if done earlier.

A herdsman and his camels

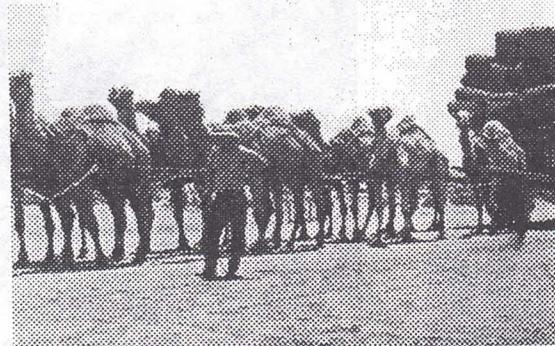
Camels



Camels near Lake Eyre.

Dromedary camels are only one of the four species, the dromedary, the bactrian, the vicuna and the guanaco. Since the dromedary is now extinct in the wild in most parts of the world, only surviving as domestic stock, the wild creatures living in Australian deserts are being studied to work out more of their life histories.

It is estimated there may be a quarter of a million in our deserts, the descendants of the few imported last century. We still need to know what kind of damage these herds are doing in our desert country.



A camel team pulling a wool wagon. With the using of motor trucks the camels were abandoned to roam free over the arid country.

Trawling

Members may remember an argument about prawn trawling in the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. The GBR Marine Park Authority had endeavoured to protect some of these underwater beds by restricting trawling. The State government objected. In a fashion we have learned is now commonplace since the Federal Coalition which considers all environmental problems are the province of the States. The objections were supported.

Now for some background. Quoting from ECOS '...CSIRO scientists have mapped 50,000 square kilometres of Torres Strait, 64,000 square kilometres of the Northwest Shelf and 30,000 square kilometres of the south-east Australian Continental Shelf ...all this so we can understand more about the effects of trawling.

50 kilometres offshore is an area known as the lagoons. This is a remarkable region of marine life. Prawn trawling takes place mainly in this region and since the marine park is for multiple use this is understandable.

800 trawlers are licensed to operate mostly in the lagoon and some inner reef waters and this fishery is worth an annual value of about \$130 million dollars.

We will contact the Federal Minister for the Environment on what is the present position as when using such a resource it is better to move cautiously and not destroy the resource. We all know that trawling is a wasteful industry in terms of destruction of much of the marine life. Almost as dangerous as clearfelling native forests.

New Sources of Power

Queensland's Rocky Point Sugar Mills is braced for a bold new venture...It has been generating its own power and process heat since the 1930's using boilers fuelled by bagasse, the organic waste remaining after juice extraction

Costs

ECOS gives the following approximate costs of all methods in terms of cents per kilowatt hour

Coal fired	3-4
Gas	4-6
Bagasse	4.5-7
Other biomass	5-12
Mini-micro hydro	2-10
Wind	6-15
Solar- thin film	12-13 target
Solar crystal	40-50

The Cumberland Plain Woodlands

This is a region west of Sydney whose soils come from shale rather than the sandstone so common over much of this area. With a different soil there

is a different suite of plants. In 1998 only six percent of this plain is left, most of the rest having been cleared for farming and other uses.

Senator Robert Hill has accepted the advice of the Endangered Species Scientific Sub-Committee to list these plains on Schedule 2 dealing with ecological communities in danger, the first such to be listed.

The fragment still faces threats such as clearing for other purposes but it is hoped the listing will be the first step to the conservation of this suite of plants and its associated animals. Our information is from *Danthonia*, the newsletter of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation.

Earth Sanctuaries

The Scotia Sanctuary of 65,000 hectares about two hundred kilometres south of Broken Hill is planned as a site for the release of the endangered bridled nail-tail wallaby. This species survives in one reserve in Queensland and it is hoped their release in Scotia will put more marsupial 'eggs' into a safer basket.

The study also showed it could also be used for the mala as soon as the present red tape which hampers the settling can be cut.

Our Population

This has once more received attention from politicians and some members of the public. Our Society's position is quite clear. Curbing world population is vital to a secure environmental future. Australia is a lucky country, with only too many people in the wrong places like Sydney and Melbourne.

There is need for a proper study of the limits for a viable Australian population. Our own ideas are based on work done twenty or so years ago and that indicates 22,000,000 is our cutoff point.

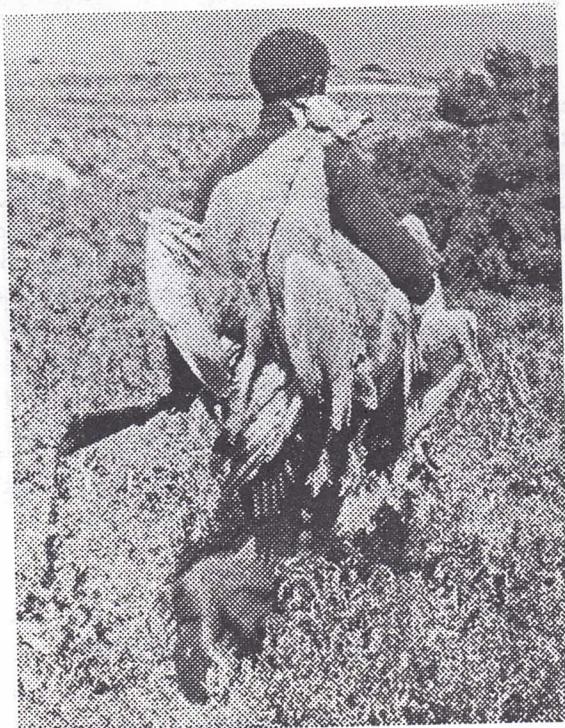
Duck Shooters Itch

No, not the problem for folk wading in estuarine waters but the attempt by some shooters to have another duck shooting season declared.

The excuse is that these birds are a pest for rice crops. However the new group are not asking for a cull of ducks in the rice fields but an open season over the whole State.

Pam Allan should hold to the present position. Ask any rice growers who have a problem to contact their local wildlife officer. He or she will make an immediate assessment and if need, issue a culling permit. This should permit any licensed shooter to work on that particular property with the permission of the owner and also the right to use the dead ducks for food.

Simple enough one would imagine.



A shooter carrying Cape Barren Geese to the boat. These birds are shot for 'sport'. For a time shooting became illegal and the geese were safe and increasing.

A New Green Belt

The National Parks Association have come up with a great plan for Pam Allan to implement. It is an ambitious attempt to create a green belt around Sydney. Included will be Sydney Harbour additions of the Headlands, the 100,000 hectares of the Woronora Plateau, the 20,000 hectares of the Holsworthy Military Base as a regional park, Prospect Reservoir, 1,350 hectares as a nature reserve, the Australain Defence Industry Site at St Marys, only 1,535 hectares but plans are in hand for development as 10,000 home sites, and 300

hectares of Manly Dam as a regional park.

Congratulations to the Association and their landscape expert Ms Helen Latham..

A Message for All Life Members.

from the President

There are sixty of us and I joined fifty years ago. In those days the cost was a week's salary and the Society needed capital to survive. As the years passed with inflation eating into the cost, Life Membership became a problem for our Society, costing more than it was rewarding so the Council discarded this.

I am sure many life members are feeling a little guilty for getting so much for ever for such a small payment many years ago.

What is my suggestion? Perhaps a donation, even better adding a codicil to your will. If still active and living in or near Sydney why not stand for Council. We need new blood, particularly working members.

So think about it.

Animal Rights

Although good hearted folk, they are often wrong rather than right. Tim Flannery who is well known as a scientist involved in conservation had an article in 'Australian Natural History' on this topic. He pointed out that the pitiful appeals of lovely baby harp seals made such an outcry around the world that the authorities took action. As a result this brutal killing stopped and the hunting became sustainable and less cruel.

Sadly the whole trade had been destroyed and the Inuits who depended on this cash crop were also impoverished.

In Australia we have had a rather more complicated problem. Encouraging women to wear fox or rabbit skin coats was ecologically more sound as both are dangerous pests. However using wool encourages an industry which damages our wild lands though where the sheep are only living in fenced paddocks the dangers are not so severe.

It is up to the conservation movement to set aside more of our arid lands so we will have adequate areas of the wild.

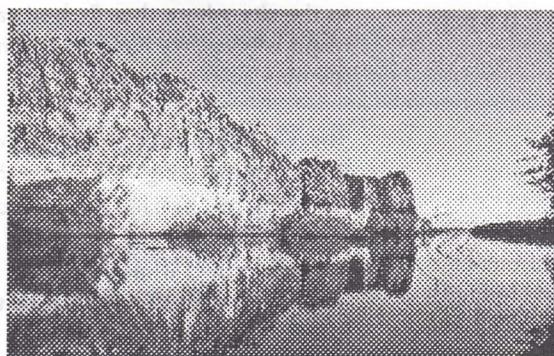
We Win Some

From Uniview the magazine of the University of WA tells the story of attempts to dam some of the great rivers of the Kimberley. The first fight to build a dam on the Fitzroy to grow cotton was finally abandoned because of protests.

Then a second attempt was made to make use of the river to provide water for holding ponds, the same method as proposed for Coopers Creek on the other side of the continent. This too was defeated on the grounds that when a dry season comes most of the water is taken by the irrigators with devastating effects on fauna refuges such as the few remaining billabongs.

A workshop was organised in 1998. One of the issues raised at this gathering was that governments asked developers to produce feasibility studies. A better method was for a fund to be established by both the government and the developer so an independent group of scientists can be used to examine the proposal.

This is the only way to go when examining a precious resource like water.



Geikie Gorge, a visual delight but not if irrigators have their greedy way!

Carp Catching

Australia's greatest aquatic pest is being deliberately bred in our waterways to increase the joy of fishing for some anglers according to Heather Gilmore of the Daily Telegraph.

European carp is a popular eating fish in Central Europe and Asia.

Blacktown Council is convinced people are dumping the fish in the award-winning Plumpton Park Wetlands.

Stormwater management engineer for Blacktown Council Geoff Hunter said yesterday he was convinced carp were deliberately introduced into the wetland because it gets its water only from a controlled inlet.

"Europeans and Asians love it for eating fish but in Australia it does not taste that great because of its high bone and fat content," he said.

Mr Hunter said many people just dump fish in the wetlands, including children who dump their goldfish that in turn mate with the carp.

"People have got to be more aware, they cannot just release things they don't understand into our waterways," he said.

Research has concluded the carp were introduced in the wetland sometime in late 1996 and have muddied the water which was once so clear you could see to the bottom in some places. Carp account for about 90 percent of all fish in New South Wales and are a problem in almost every waterway in Australia, increasing turbidity and algal blooms when it feeds.

To combat outbreaks, licensed carp hunters trawl water bodies, passing a DC electrical current up to 1000 volts through the water, stunning all fish which rise to the surface for a few minutes.

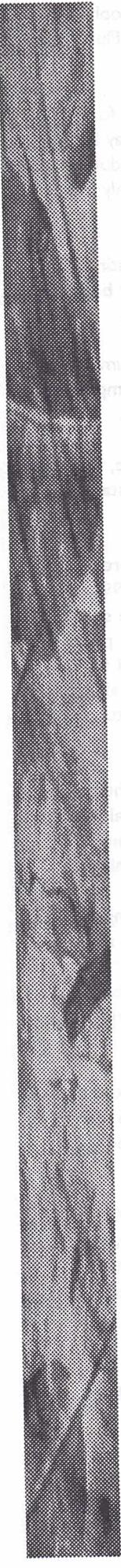
The hunters then net the carp, leaving native fish to recover from the shock and swim away.

Yesterday "carp catchers" from Botany Imports and Exports fished in Plumpton Park Wetlands, snaring 108 carp weighing 50kg.

Blacktown Council contracted the catchers for two wetlands in the area costing \$1500 a day every six months until the introduced species is eradicated.

Most of the carp in Plumpton Park Wetland were too young for breeding, but the same hunters have been working on other water bodies such as Centennial Park where about 500 tonnes of carp have been caught.

Recently they caught only 96 carp in Centennial Park totalling 486kg - one weighing 14.4kg.



Bicentennial Park, near Stadium Australia, also has a carp problem and electro-fishing will resume after a two-year study expected to end in December.

Symbol of Fertility is Still a Headache

- The carp is a large, primarily freshwater, fish which thrives in warm, weedy, slow moving waters.
- It eats crustaceans, insects and plants.
- The carp is hardy and can tolerate some degree of water pollution.
- Carp are mostly found in Europe, Asia and North America.
- They are believed to have been introduced to Europe by Asian monks, who reared them in tanks, circa AD 1100.
- The common carp has a drab olive green colour with a yellowish underside. It has a pair of barbels (fleshy filaments) on each side of the mouth.
- The base of the dorsal fin is long and the other fins may have a reddish tinge.
- Carp have toothless jaws and grind food with a set of teeth in their throat.
- Carp can grow up to 1m long and weigh more than 25kg, but the average carp is between 30 and 75cm.
- Carp can grow quickly and can live for 20 years in the wild and 50 years in captivity.
- In Japan, the carp is regarded as a symbol of fertility.
- Carp is a popular food in Europe and Asia and can be poached, fried, baked or broiled. It is a popular Christmas dish in Eastern Europe.

Gould's Petrel Breeding

A UNIQUE experiment is being carried out on a small island north of Sydney which could hold the key to saving the world's most endangered sea bird according to Environment Reporter Simon Benson of the Daily Telegraph.

For the first time in Australia, scientists are attempting to relocate an entire species from its island home to a new, uninhabited environment.

The fate of the Gould's petrel could depend on the success of the project, considered the last chance for a species reduced to fewer than 500 breeding pairs.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has embarked on the move, which would see the establishment of only the second known breeding ground in the world for the bird.

Braving huge swells and high winds, rangers and scientists moved almost 100 fledglings less than 1km across the sea to their new home.

Early trials have seen a 100 percent success rate in the move from the tiny Cabbage Tree Island, near Port Stephens, to nearby Boondelbah Island.

"Timing of the operation was extremely important because the nocturnal birds were to be stressed as little as possible so we had to move them pretty much in the dark," Nick Carlile of the NPWS Threatened Fauna Ecology Unit, said.

"Our trials were successful and so we began the program late last year with the installation of 100 specially constructed nesting boxes at the site of the Boondelbah Island."

"This was followed by selecting, by weight and condition, 100 almost fledged chicks from the main colony for the translocation."

Rabbits have destroyed the petrel's unique habitat on Cabbage Tree Island. This has made the petrel chicks vulnerable to predatory birds.

The successful introduction of the rabbit calicivirus last year saw the plague eradicated but new threats such as rats and cats have again put the birds in danger.

"When they return to breed they will come back to the site where they fledged rather than the old island where they hatched and hopefully establish the new colony," he said.

The Gould's petrel is an enigmatic animal, often living "on the wing" for up to three years before returning to Cabbage Tree Island to breed.

It is not known where the birds go, or how far. All that is known is they return to the same place to breed.

They are also renowned for their habit of crashing through the forest canopy and falling to the ground.

To return to the air they use their beak and wings to climb up the trunks of trees to reach the canopy again.

Gold Coast City Honours Tourism Pioneer and Wildlife Conservationist Alex Griffiths



Currumbin Sanctuary founder, wildlife conservationist and tourism pioneer Alex Griffiths has been recognised for his lifetime contribution with the dedication of designated Currumbin parkland in his memory.

Gold Coast Mayor, Councillor Gary Baildon and southern Gold Coast Councillor Sue Robbins officially dedicated the park, on the corner of Teemangum Street and Cooinda Avenue, recently in memory of Mr Griffiths and his lifetime contribution.

Cr Baildon said it was fitting the city dedicated a park so close to the Currumbin Sanctuary in memory of Mr Griffiths and his lifetime contribution.

"Like many Gold Coasters, one of my most colourful and fondest memories as a child is feeding the lorikeets at the then Currumbin Bird Sanctuary. And, like my children and grandchildren, generations of Australians have delighted in, and cherish the entrancing link between man and nature that Alex Griffiths had the vision to create 51 years ago," said Baildon.

"Never married and with no children of his own, Alex devoted his entire life to his beloved lorikeets and to the protection, preservation and conservation of the Gold Coast's native flora and fauna.

"Known to many Gold Coasters as the Birdman of Currumbin, Alex was one of this region's original tourism founders. He took a large piece of land and created the renowned Currumbin Bird Sanctuary - a 27 hectare wildlife sanctuary - an integral part of Gold Coast history and tourism.

"It is only fitting that a park so close to his beloved Currumbin Bird Sanctuary is named in the memory of Alex Griffiths and his lifetime contribution."

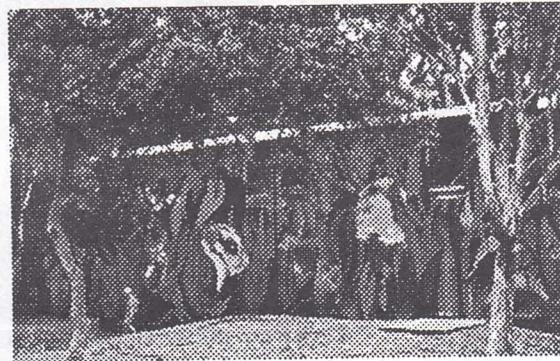
Cr Robbins described Mr Griffiths as 'a man of vision who fought long and hard for his feathered friends and for the opportunity for ordinary people to share and be close to his beloved wildlife'.

"Alex fought hard for what he truly loved and believed in - the preservation of strategic areas of wilderness for future generations," said Cr Robbins.

"If it had not been for the toil and dedication of Alex Griffiths, there would be no Currumbin Sanctuary. There would be no Coolamon the Trees property. And, there would not be a wildlife corridor linking the coastline to the hinterland in the southern Gold Coast.

"His dedication founded and built a tourism icon at Currumbin that is recognised around the world. It has provided immense pleasure and a face to face link with, and appreciation of, Australian nature for people of all ages from around the world. It has also provided hundreds of jobs for southern Gold Coast residents.

"Alex was truly a man of vision...and I believe he always had a soft spot for his particular park. He saw it as another untouched piece of the southern Gold Coast's natural lure for this area's wildlife.



"I went to Alex's memorial service and many people said that there was nothing with Alex's name on it. Yes, we have Coolamon, Trees and Currumbin Sanctuary, but nothing with Alex Griffiths on it. So after a long think about how and what we could put Alex's name on forever, I spoke with Council's property people, they came up with this park which was ideal.

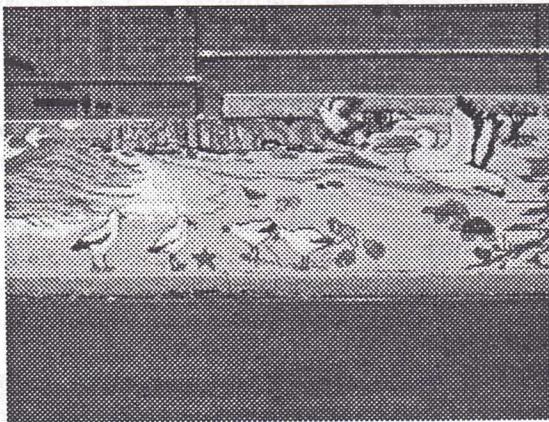
"I couldn't believe it. I was shocked it had not been named. It was almost as if it had sat there waiting for Alex - this wonderful human being who had lived so long in and given so much to this area."

Mr Griffiths received the Order of Australia in 1976, the Order of the White Cross in 1977, the Freedom of Gold Coast City for fauna conservation, education and care for the environment from the Gold Coast City in 1989 and an honorary doctorate from Griffith University in 1989.

A New May Gibbs

That wonderful artist was once a member of our Council. Now a new artist has told us of a new mural she has created at Mount Colah primary school. We helped her with this project and the illustration shows one section of this work of art.

Perhaps this might be a new trend to brighten usually dull school grounds. Another way is to turn part of the playing area into a nature corner with bush plantings to make these a haven for wildlife



A seashore section .

Right Whales

These marine giants are making an excellent come back from the extinction trail in Australian waters. However in the Atlantic they are not doing so well. It has been estimated they are going down-hill at the rate of 2.4 percent a year owing to collisions with ships.

It is hoped warnings to captains of whale sightings may help to avoid many disasters.

The name of 'right' comes from the bad old days of whale hunting. This was one of the giants which when killed floated so could be towed ashore for flensing. Humpback whales needed to be injected with air so they remain buoyant.

The Milleum Future

Recently there has been published the world's worst problems. This UN think tank has this disaster list.

1 Increasing populations. We can certainly grow more food to save them from starvation but their quality of life will continue to plummet.

2 Freshwater. Many nations are suffering from this problem. Forget about towing icebergs from Antarctica

3 The rich are getting richer, the poor, poorer. This will pose more problems of law and order.

4 Diseases have become more resistant to treatment. Of course this will curb world populations but it is hardly a solution we can tolerate

5 Solving international problems is becoming more difficult. It has been estimated that since the end of World War 2 one hundred and forty million people have died in religious or ethnic wars. Again this helps curb population but it is hardly a method which will appeal to us.

6 Terrorism is increasing.

7 Greenhouse warming

8 The status of women. Usually as women gain more power in the world, the welfare of nations improves. Sadly some of the earth's most powerful religions keep women in subjection.

9 Ethnic and religious wars have meant one in seventeen folk are refugees

10 The world is becoming more and more interconnected. This is usually a good thing for all of us but it increases risks.

11 Organised crime is on the rise, stimulated by our blindness in dealing with drug taking

12 Economic growth is used to measure human progress in quality of life. This is an absurd position as though having cars for every member of a family becomes worthwhile. Commonsense tells all there must come a stop to reckless use of world resources

13 Nuclear power plants are getting older. We still have no solution to the problem of nuclear wastes while some countries are still suffering the after effects of above ground nuclear bomb testing.

(cont. page 19)

90th Anniversary Luncheon

The 90th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the Parliament House Dining Rooms, Sydney on Wednesday 3rd March, 1999.

The President, Vincent Serventy AM was re-elected President for the 33rd time and is supported by a new Council of old and new faces.

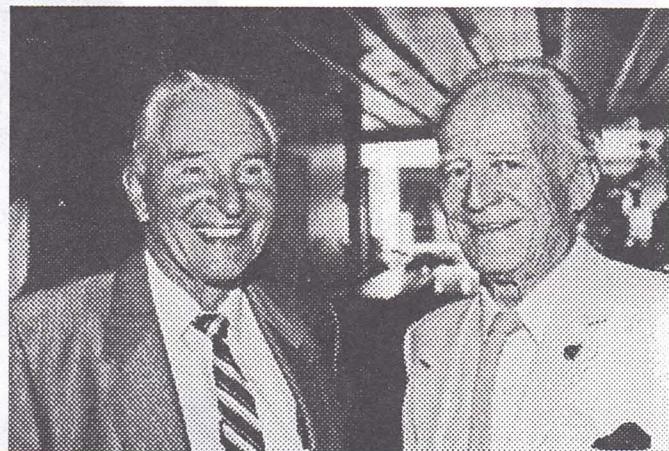
At the Luncheon following the AGM, the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Pam Allen MP was the special Guest of Honour.



The President delivering the 90th Anniversary Report on the Society.



The President and members welcome the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Pam Allen MP at the 90th Anniversary Luncheon at Parliament House Dining Rooms, Sydney.



Members Bernie Clarke OAM and Milton Way at the Luncheon.



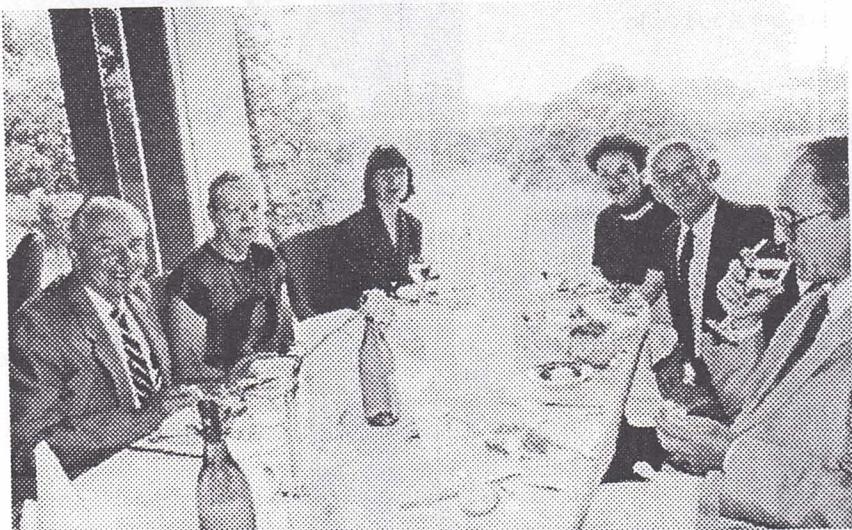
Councillors Sandy Johnson, Ros Gordon and Dr. Clive William at the Luncheon.



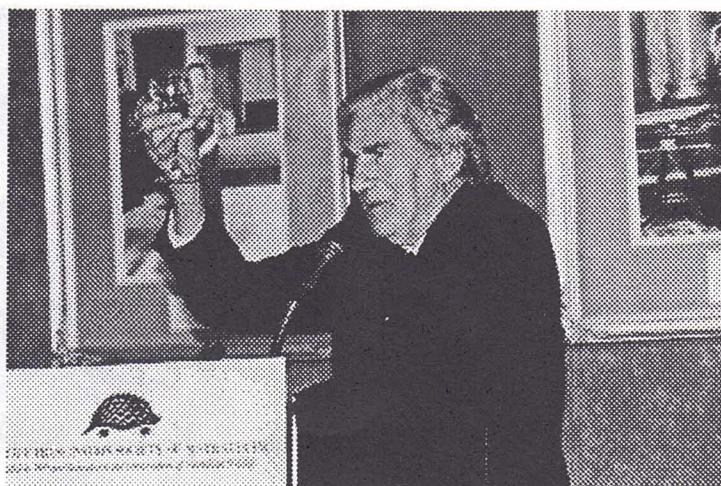
Members celebrating the 90th Anniversary Luncheon.



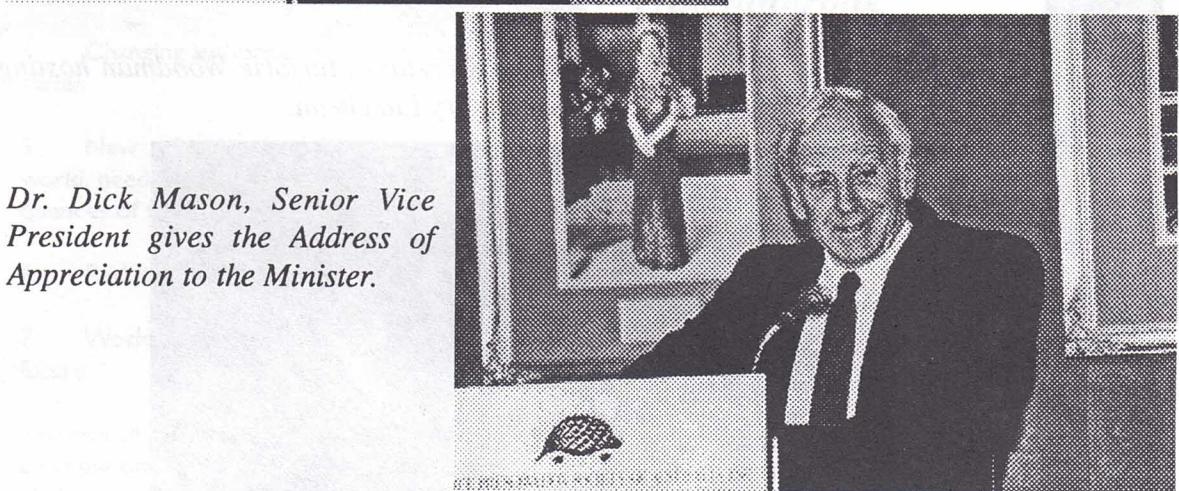
A table of members celebrating the 90th Anniversary Luncheon.



Members celebrating the 90th Anniversary Luncheon at Parliament House, Sydney.



The President, Vincent Serventy AM proposing the Toast at the 90th Anniversary Luncheon of the Society.



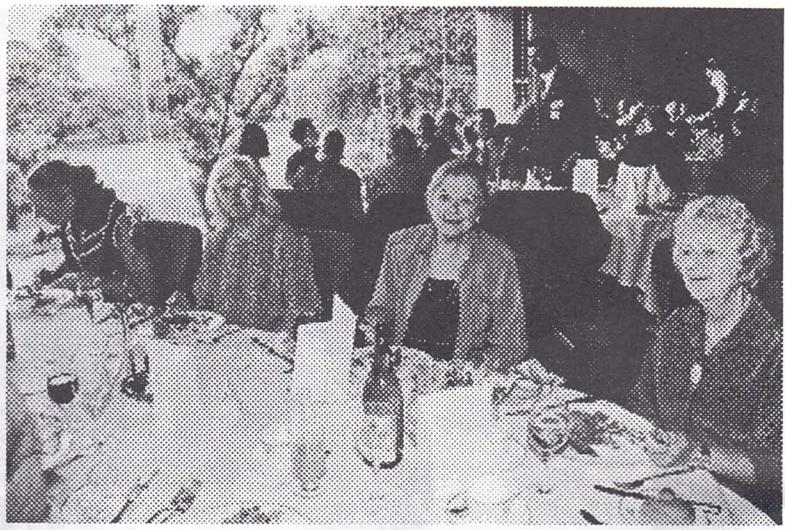
Dr. Dick Mason, Senior Vice President gives the Address of Appreciation to the Minister.



Mrs Gwyneth Arthur and Helen Potter at the Luncheon.



Auditor Jim Somerville and Friends.



Minute Secretary Marjorie Woodman hosting a table at the Anniversary Luncheon.



A group of members enjoy the 90th Anniversary Luncheon at Parliament House, Sydney.



Members Suzanne Medway, Margaret Deas, Dorothy and Colleen Murphy enjoy the 90th Anniversary Luncheon at Parliament House, Sydney.

14 Pandemics such as Aids are disturbing

15 Nature of work is changing. The unskilled are finding life becoming more and more difficult

So those are the problems. What are the solutions?

1 Sustainable development. Some communities are achieving this

2 We need global perspectives in planning

3 Improved scientific and technical breakthroughs

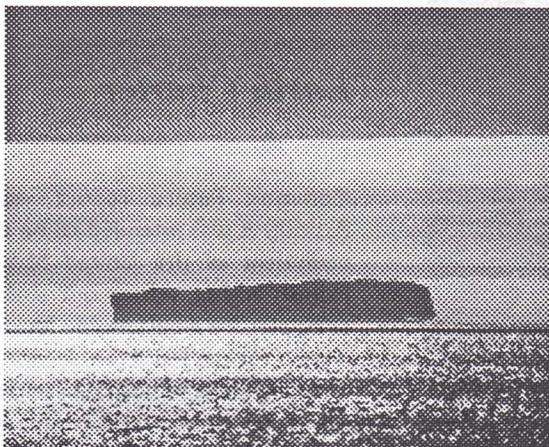
4 Changing authoritarian regimes into democracies

5 New ethical values. The religions of the world need to take a hard look at the consequences of their rigid dogmas

6 Reducing population growth

7 World peace and security are vital to our future

The rest of the list include doubtful solutions. For example one is to spend more money on space projects so we can populate new worlds. That is an absurd pipe dream sponsored by science fiction. We must solve our problems on this earth.



An iceberg in Antarctica. Plenty of freshwater locked in that ice but the technical problems to use this are immense. Since we throw away in the oceans most of the earth's freshwater it would be easier to solve that piece of stupidity.

Renewable Energy

It is the only way to go. Queensland Conservation Council held a seminar on this topic. Many success stories were paraded. The Coalition government has set a target of two percent by 2010. It should be 30 percent by that date according to Ian Lowe. Already we have ten percent from Tasmanian and Snowy Mountains hydro.

Tragic News from Hinchinbrook

Twenty years ago Joan Birkett of Ingham and her husband sailed me north along the Hinchinbrook Channel. Many years before I read how scientist Wood-Jones of South Australia was told by an old sailor that nobody could sail through that Channel and not believe in God.

There is an urgent need for Mr Howard and Mr Hill to make that journey. Here is the sad story from Margaret Thorsborne, the first winner of our Conservation Medal.

'I was quite overwhelmed to receive the inaugural Serventy Conservation Medal. I have admired and respected your work for so many years that it was a very emotional experience to be actually presented with the medal by you. It is beautiful and I treasure it.'

The generous cheque has been used to help the conservation causes in the north and I think you would be pleased.

I appreciate Mr Medway's kindness and offers of assistance on my short visit to Sydney.

I thank you, Mrs Lucy Serventy and Dr Dominic. I feel very humble and greatly honoured to have received the award.'

She sent us this plea for help published in the Australian of 17-4-98.

'We call on Mr Howard and Mr Borbridge to stop the huge development on the shore of Hinchinbrook Channel. The two governments have ignored the advice of environmental scientists who have called for an effective environmental impact assessment to safeguard the Great Barrier Reef world heritage area....The letter lists the damage already caused, the artificial beach already created and the problems of acid soils on the site. The potential dangers to the dugong colony by larger tourist boats.'



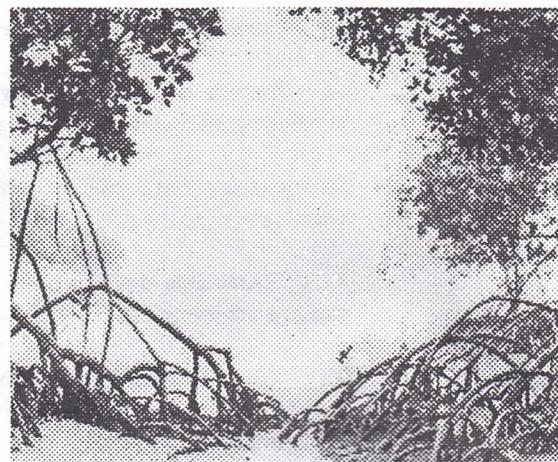
Dugong drowned in shark net.

This once peaceful place which should have been left to the tranquility of sailing boats and kayaks will be destroyed and if the developers go into liquidation as seems likely, will leave a mess for the public to repair.

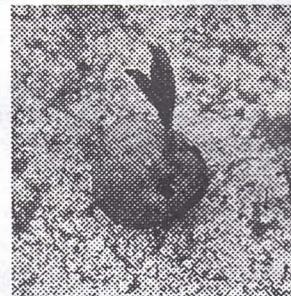
This letter was signed by David Attenborough, Paul Ehrlich, Charles Birch, David Suzuki, David Bellamy, Frank Talbot, Ian Lowe, Tim Flannery and Alistair Gilmore, all familiar and famous names to conservationists.



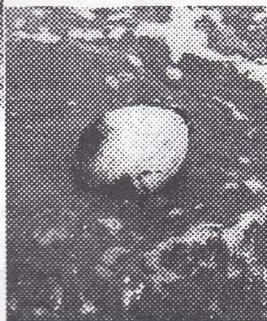
Aboriginal fish trap in channel.



Mangroves edging the channel.



Coconut sprouting on clearing on Hinchinbrook Island.



Coconut drifting ashore.

Earth Charter

This has been a long time in the making. Our Common Future report was the stimulus. Basically it was intended to be the environmental equivalent of the United Nations Charter for Human Rights, setting out ethical guidelines and principles for a sustainable future.

Our president was at Denver, Colorado when the prime minister of Norway spoke of this UN report and he was so impressed he developed guidelines to work towards an Environmental Bill of Rights to complement the 1948 Human Bill of Rights.

This was accepted by our Council and the necessary guidelines have been published in our newsletters.

At our Earth 2000 Conference he will speak on our proposal and the basic Ten Green Commandments needed for our sustainable future.

He had written a book on this proposal which was to have been launched at Rio by Maurice Strong. Sadly the Australian financial collapse with Westpac Bank pulling out funds from his publisher means the manuscript remains unpublished.

Its intention was to take examples from around the world to illustrate the need for our ten principles. Hopefully this book will be published some time in the near future.

Academia at its Best

The University of NSW is an example to academic institutions around the world. Not only did two of their staff recently win an award for work on solar energy but the technology unit launched what is claimed to be the first commercial vertical composter.

Their university is like a small city with a population of 35,000. All their waste is now composted and used to fertilise lawns as well as their staff gardens who can take what they need home

Two tonnes of waste are generated each day and this new project saves the institution \$60,000 a year

Also they have worked on different types of composting bins as well as worm farms.

Congratulations to the staff who have given a lead to the world and also to the national government who set up a Greenhouse Challenge agreement for all organisations. For many years we have held that all reasonably large organisations should work 'in house' to generate their own energy needs, deal with sewage and use 'grey' water on their own gardens and recycle all waste.

Kakadu

The World Heritage Committee has decided the uranium mine has already damaged the natural and cultural values of the region and recommended that construction of the mine should cease.

Australia has until May next year to respond while in June the decision will be made whether Kakadu should be listed as a world heritage site 'in danger'.

This is only a moral decision but Australia's international reputation will be on the line. Also nations who profit from selling uranium must be prepared to accept nuclear waste and dispose of it in their own country.

The Preamble

The president's suggestion for the preamble. We the people, needing a new Constitution because of the changes to our way of life consider we should live in harmony within nature, using sustainable resources. We need to add environmental rights to complement human rights, and accept that the Aborigines, the first people owning this land, deserve a better share of our prosperity. We welcome the people of other nations who have decided to make a new home here. To protect all we hold valuable we establish this constitution for the Federation of Australia.

Any other suggestions?

Atlas

Everyone knows he held the earth on his shoulders. A recent Landline programme detailed a West Australian company named Atlas which is planning to hold the Australian earth, or at least the soil, on its shoulders.

Basically it is working on a massive composting system to deal with all the rubbish in a local government region, the largest in Australia. This has been organised to remove all cans and bottles, toxic materials like batteries, and with the rest producing composted pellets which can enrich the soils of Australia. This is sold to farmers. Their plans could cover the whole of our country, all two million hectares of it.

Ours is an unlucky continent with regard to our soil. Aeons of leaching have removed most of the riches other countries possess. A senior politician once told me Western Australian farmers worked on hydroponics, adding the fertilisers needed to the basic sand. In this the wheat, oats and other crops were planted with water supplied by winter rains, using the soil to hold the plants upright so they could use sun light to grow.

Farewell Alec Griffiths.

To the members of the Gold Coast City Council We will not be present at your dedication ceremony but wish to record he was a good friend of our Society for many years. He was a great man who loved the wild. His sanctuary at Currumbin became known around the world.

His generosity in leaving this asset to the people of Queensland under the care of your National Trust was another tribute to the generosity of the man. While lorikeets still fly among the trees of the Gold Coast he will be remembered.

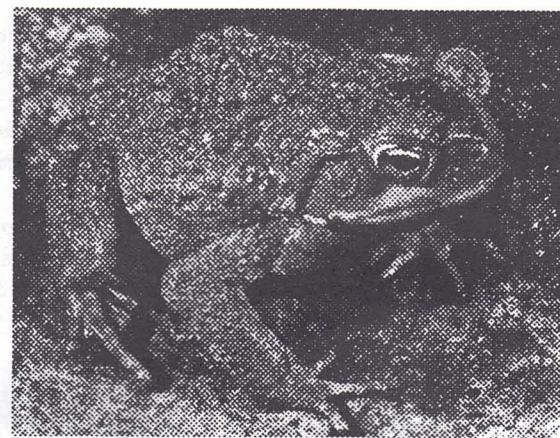


Currumbin with the lorikeets.

The Cane Toad

This huge amphibian has arrived at last. Travelling at thirty kilometres a year it was only a matter of time before it reached Sydney but so far has not invaded Kakadu.

We were warned. Many decades ago Walter Froggatt writing in the Australian Naturalist, a society which later was to merge with ours, concluded an article on *Bufo marinus*, which until it was brought here, was our only true toad. 'This great toad, immune from enemies, omnivorous in its habits, and breeding all the year round, may become as great a pest as the rabbit or the cactus...'



The toad.

Ignoring the warning of scientists the government accepted the pleas of cane farmers and imported some without bothering to see if they could control the Australian cane beetle as it had done in other parts of the world. Sadly our beetle spent little time on the ground while the cane toad was too large to climb. However it ate most other small animals, feeding mainly on ants and termites but willing to devour any animal small enough to be swallowed. It will even eat dog food and is able to withstand dessication which can kill most frogs.

Vast numbers of eggs are laid and one observation records nine females which laid 150,000 eggs in one morning. Eggs, tadpoles and adults are poisonous to most creatures, including humans. There are two records of deaths from two humans who ate a meal of cane toads. The adults have two shoulder glands which squirt the poison. So with bulk, poison and high birth rates the toad soon became so common today it is probably the most numerous vertebrate in Queensland.

5000 cane toads per hectare have been counted around one waterhole while in northern gardens they are common enough to be a pest. Able to grow more than one and a half kilos, some pet animals have tipped the scales at over 1.8 kilograms.



Calling in a pool.

It would seem obvious that research would be undertaken on the effect of this huge new predator on our other fauna. The New Scientist of 1 August 1998 wrote how a series of research projects were begun in 1990 but most were terminated by the Australian government in June 1997.

Now the toad have arrived in Mr Howard's backyard perhaps the coalition may have second thoughts!

We will keep an eye on this dangerous introduced pest and publish details in future magazines.



Devouring a victim.



The eggs.



On the move.

The Western Forests - the Government Side

Here is the story advanced to explain their beliefs.

1 Already more than 200,000 hectares of old growth forests are protected from logging.

2 Overall more than one million hectares are protected from logging and the Regional Forest Agreement will protect even more

3 No streams from the forests are saline and no forest plants or animals are facing extinction.

4 70,000 jobs and \$4.4 billion dollars are at stake in forestry, mining, timber and other industries.

5 Our State has the biggest tree crop programme underway and we plant twenty eight million trees each year.

6 500 scientists and other experts have studied our forests future.

All this is good news but here are our questions.

1 What was the original size of the State's forests?

We need percentages saved of old growth forests, not just hectares. Work on national parks by Jared Diamond has shown the size of protected areas decides its final biodiversity.

2 Of those biggest tree crops, how many are maritime pines and how much are native species?

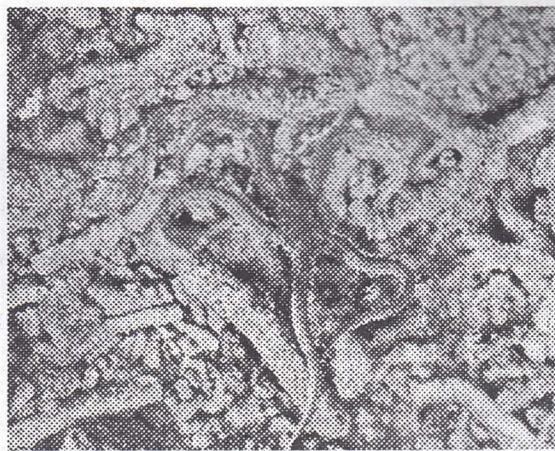
3 Is clearfelling still allowed or has it been outlawed as in Queensland? The use of the word 'logging' can cover many sins. Why not say selective tree felling if that is what it means? Clearfelling is as much of a biological disaster in our forests as dredging is in our seas.

Yet we remain impressed with what the State government is doing yet worried that so many folk are disturbed. Many of these are conservationists we respect and others are supporters of the Coalition and still oppose the way the present government is travelling.

The Great Barrier Reef

Once more this natural treasurehouse is under threat. Some dangers are obvious such as mining for oil shale which extends from the land to under the reef. Mining on land will increase waste materials of treated shale and also all the works which go with oil refineries. Oil as an energy producer is as much a backward step as using coal. We have plenty of natural gas, using plant crops can also produce fuels while our scientists working on solar energy. They are starved of resources.

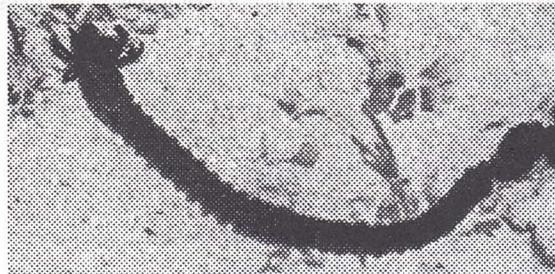
Has tidal power been tried in our northwest where sea movements are huge? These are only a few of the new ways of gaining energy and we must not remain bogged in old ways by mining coal and oil.



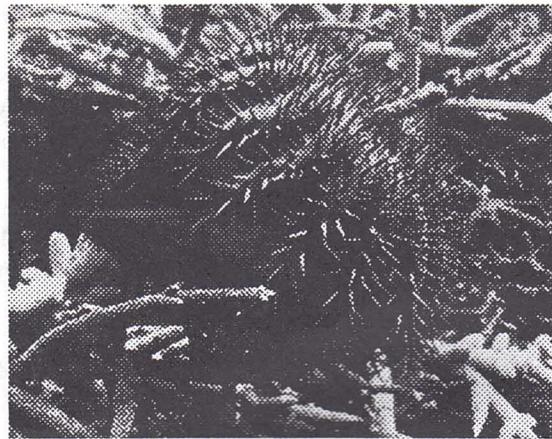
Brittle stars flourish in the silty waters of Low Isles.

Sea warming. This is another threat to our reefs. Bleaching of coral is a world-wide problem. Climate change is the culprit and Dr Terry Done says corals are the 'canaries in the coal mine' warning of dangers to come.

Agriculture is another threat. In the seventies we spoke to Sir Maurice Yonge, the scientist who headed the huge study on Low Isles in the twenties. He told us how he had revisited these islands and the changes were so great they could never do the work now as they had done fifty years before.



Beche-de-mer feeding on the coral sea bottom.

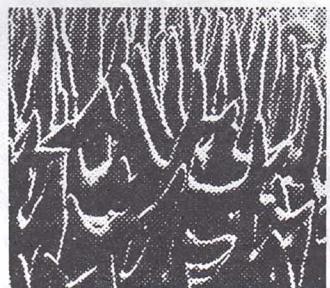


Crown-of thorns seastar feeding on coral. The white skeletons are dead coral.

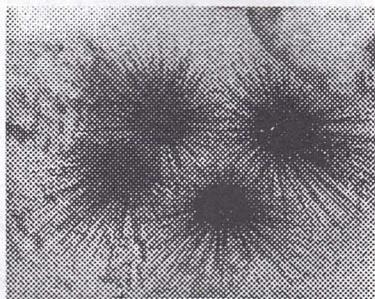
Ten years later we also revisited Low Isles and were shocked at the amount of silt which had destroyed most of the corals while mangroves had enlarged immensely.

Recently ECOS published some staggering figures. 'An estimated 15 million tonnes of sediment containing 7000 tonnes of nitrogen and 11,000 tonnes phosphorus is said to discard into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon each year from coastal agriculture'.

It is possible these nutrients allow phytoplankton to thrive. Since these microscopic plants are needed by the young of the crown-of-thorns seastar it is possible this is one explanation of the outbursts of this coral pest predator from time to time.

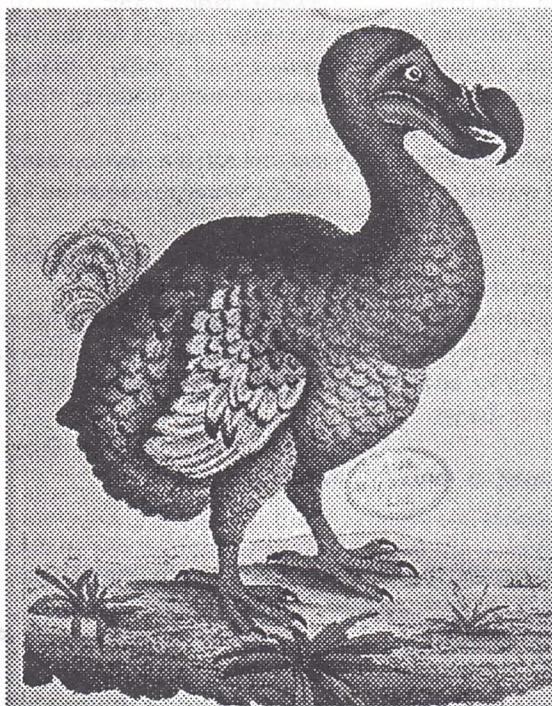


Staghorn coral. Our coral reefs are a tourist asset worth millions from tourism.



Needle urchins whose thin spines protect them from many enemies.

Dead as the Dodo



Painting of the Dodo, said to have been drawn from nature.

This famous bird is said to earn its name from the Portuguese word meaning a simpleton or fool. The old time sailors landing on islands where no humans lived found many species which had no fear of humans. They had thrived for millions of years with no large enemies to trouble them. Meat hungry sailors found such birds easy prey and around the world they were named as foolish. In Australia we have noddies and boobies as tribute to their friendly nature.

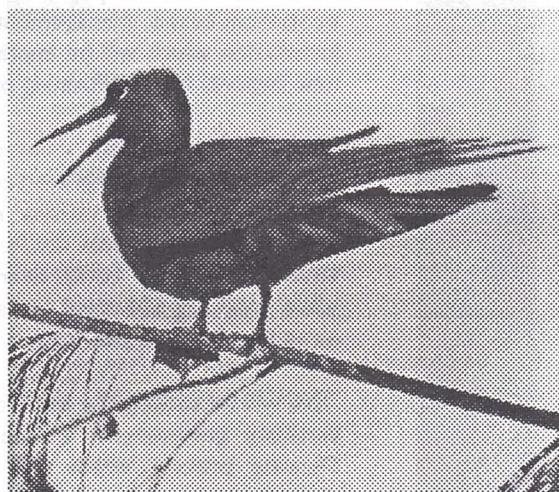
So the legend grew that the dodo was made extinct through the hunger of sailors. Even David Attenborough used this in his last series on Birds. David is a very accurate film maker and presenter but this time he erred.



A tropical booby-the red-footed often became food for hungry sailors.

Those early sailors described the bird as 'nauseous in taste' though a twenty kilogram bird should offer some cuts which could be made tasty enough for a ship's cook. However those early arrivals on Mauritius let loose more deadly hunters. Pigs and monkeys. Both would feed on the eggs and from experience in Australia feral pigs have little trouble in devouring lambs so an adult dodo might also fall victim. So it was not humans who made the bird extinct. Only humans at second hand so to speak;

This was also true of Australia. Rabbits, pigs, goats, foxes and feral cats swept many of our smaller animals into extinction. Not directly but sadly through stupidity in letting loose those most dangerous of all our pest species, rabbits and foxes, both brought in for sport.

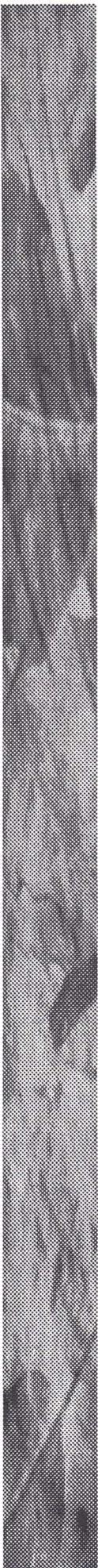


Noddies were regarded as stupid birds since they allowed sailors to kill them so easily. A lesser nody.

World First Plan to Safeguard Our Oceans

Australia is the first country in the world to develop a comprehensive, national plan to protect and manage its oceans.

Federal Environment and Heritage Minister Robert Hill has launched Australia's Oceans Policy and announced the allocation of \$50 million over three years for a range of actions associated with its implementation.



Senator Hill says the policy's main outcome will be a new and integrated planning and management regime that will allow the government and community to ensure the conservation of Australia's rich marine biodiversity and security for marine-based industries and all other ocean users.

"Australia's Oceans Policy will be the guiding force in the future use and care of Australia's marine and coastal resources.

"With this launch, the Howard Government is making clear its commitment to ensuring the long term health and productivity of Australia's oceans. As a nation, we have responsibility for one of the world's largest Exclusive Economic Zones.

"It is timely the policy has been released in the International Year of the Ocean.

"At the core of the policy is a commitment to ecosystem-based management of our marine jurisdiction which will be implemented through a new regional Marine Planning process.

"Regional Marine Plans - based on large marine ecosystems - will integrate sectoral commercial interests and conservation requirements. The process will ensure that the needs of our marine environment are comprehensively addressed while providing additional certainty and opportunities for all ocean industries and users.

"We will be seeking the involvement of State and territory governments in the Regional Marine Planning process which will also provide the opportunity to ensure consistent planning across Commonwealth and State jurisdictions.

"To drive the implementation of the policy and the Regional Planning process, the government will establish a National Oceans Ministerial Board which will include all relevant Commonwealth ministers.

"The government will also establish a National Oceans Office which will be housed in my department and report to the ministerial board. The Office will support the implementation of the oceans policy and the Regional Marine Planning process. It will also assist in improving co-ordination of marine issues within the Commonwealth.

The policy also sets out a range of key initial actions that will be undertaken by the government. These include:

- additional funding to improve understanding of the marine environment, including environmental baseline surveys, sustainability indicators, monitoring and improved assessment of the impacts of

commercial and recreational activities - these will be targeted to support the development of Regional Marine Plans;

- increased support for the declaration and management of new marine reserves in Commonwealth waters;

- support for the development of a single national ballast water management system;

- trials to treat acid sulfate soil problem areas;

- introducing a network of fisheries extension officers to promote environmentally sound fishing practices around Australia;

- a National Moorings Program for sensitive marine areas;

- the phased withdrawal of the use of toxic organotin (TBT) anti-fouling paints;

- legislating to create an Australian Whale Sanctuary;

- a new National Oceans Advisory Group to provide the opportunity for key stakeholders to participate in the implementation of the policy; and

- measures to increase the effectiveness of surveillance and enforcement of illegal fishing in Australia's marine jurisdiction.

The policy has been developed through extensive consultation between the Federal Government and the States and Territories, local government, industry, conservation groups, indigenous communities and the wider public.

"The Oceans Policy will lead to better coordination across all spheres of government, and partnerships between government, the private sector and the scientific and wider communities.

"Through the Policy's implementation we will be in a strong position to protect and sustainably manage our ocean resources. This will bring benefits in terms of investment security, soundly based conservation outcomes and minimising potential conflict between sectors over resource allocation", Senator Hill said.

The policy is set out in two documents, Australia's Oceans Policy and Specific Sectoral Measures, which can be obtained by telephoning Environment Australia's Community Information Unit toll free on 1800 803 772. Fact sheets are also available.

Media contacts: Trent Zimmerman (Senator Hill's office)
02 6277 7640 or 0419 690 617

Dr Ian McPhail (Environment Australia)
0419 673 931

Kathleen Mackie (Environment Australia)
02 6274 1625

hope the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia can help us inform your local community about this new electricity option, and encourage individuals to ring their power company and subscribe.

I have enclosed a brochure on the program for your information, and if you would like any further details, please contact the Sustainable Energy Development Authority on 1800 351 777.

Yours faithfully

Bob Debus
Minister for Energy

Green Power Accreditation Program

Dear Mr Medway,

I am writing to update the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia on the progress of the Green Power Accreditation Program, administered within my portfolio by the Sustainable Energy Development Authority. As you probably already know, Green Power allows electricity customers to choose renewable energy as their supply source.

Around 17,000 customers now support Green Power in NSW, with \$43 million of investments in new renewable energy projects under construction or operational since the schemes inception.

Projects recently commissioned include the 600kW wind turbine at Koragang Island, near Newcastle, a 6 MW hydro generator in the water supply pipeline for Wollongong, and the largest solar power station in the southern hemisphere at Singleton, in the Hunter Valley. Construction has begun on a 4.8 MW wind farm at Crookwell, in the southern highlands, a 50 kW solar farm at the Western Plains Zoo, near Dubbo, a 50 kW solar farm in Queanbeyan, and an additional 200 kW of solar capacity at Singleton.

Plans are also well under way for a 10MW wind farm at Blayney, in the central west of the State. This will be the largest wind farm in Australia, almost five times larger than the Esperance wind farm in Western Australia.

The program is now undergoing a major expansion, with electricity retailers in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia intending to seek Green Power accreditation for renewable energy options now in development. This means around 13 million Australians will have the choice of supporting environmentally-friendly electricity.

The NSW Government is very committed to Green Power and we will continue to advertise and promote the program into the new century. I

Letters to the Editor

The Editor
Dear Sir

Phil Colman is to be congratulated on clearing up any confusion regarding stormwater and sewage (SMH 6 January). Our Society is not happy about the disposal of either in the oceans. Governments conceal from the public the fact that by pumping sewage far out to sea, away from sight, they are throwing away two of our most valuable assets, freshwater and the fertility of our soils.

In other parts of the world sewage is treated to remove such assets so they can be used either as freshwater for all purposes and fertiliser on the land.

Dr Graham Harris, head of the CSIRO Land and Water division warned of the dangers of soil and water degradation in Australia. He stated we are well placed to '...lead a global effort to reverse the world trend.' (SMH 12 January 1998).

Our Society agrees, and in June, 2000 intends to hold a conference to bring these needs before both the public and governments.

Yours sincerely

The Hon. the Premier
Dear Bob Carr

The recent plans to add more buildings to the Royal Botanic Gardens has alarmed our Society. As a trustee in the nineties, I tried to have a conservation paragraph added to our report to Parliament. The chairman rejected that suggestion since plant conservation was not one of our roles under the Act.

Our Society tried to have this amended by an appeal to the premier and when this failed, I resigned as a trustee. With this recent development it is time an inquiry into the whole question of the role of the botanic gardens.

As far as our Society is concerned we consider this role should not be to raise money for grandiose schemes but to improve the plant life of the gardens, make the public more aware of these, play a leading role in plant research and offer expert evidence on botanical matters in conservation disputes. Also provide encouragement to regional botanical gardens in parts of the State outside Sydney.

Above all conservation should be a vital role, as it is in all significant gardens elsewhere in the world.
Yours sincerely

Vincent Serventy President

Good news later from the present director Frank Howarth

' I believe the position you put accurately reflects the view the Trust held some years ago. Fortunately things have changed very significantly in the last couple of years. Plant conservation is now arguably our number one priority.

The best way to illustrate this is to give you a copy of our corporate plan...You will notice that we identify plant conservation as an overarching issue relevant to the entire organisation.'

Thanks Dr Howarth

And from Malcolm Wilson

'...Having read your letter I am reminded of something I meant to do a few years ago when I was involved in drafting amendments to the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust Act.

....I uncovered your correspondence on the question of plant conservation...The folklore of the institution was that Lawrie Johnson ... added a rider that the Trust give particular emphasis to the encouraging and advancement of systematic botany...I could never understand why there was any objection to your proposal...I could see no harm in adding to Lawrie's rider the words 'and plant conservation'. In my amendment Carrick Chambers was more than happy with my inclusion, which duly went to the Trust..Carrick I'm sure would have been aware of your earlier difficulties and perhaps he chose not to unduly draw the inclusion to the Trust's attention. Or perhaps simply times and people changed..I do have concerns about the growing tendency for the Sydney site to be increasingly offered as a convenient CBD functions venue to provide essential

Trust income...If there is to be an enquiry it should be into the level of financial support the State government needs to provide...Otherwise with the Olympics approaching the Gardens could be further debased- and even trashed.

Yours sincerely Malcolm Wilson

26 February 1999

The Hon, the Prime Minister

Dear Mr Howard,

Recently there has been discussion on our migrant intake levels, linked with Australia's population growth or diminution.

Many of the opinions put forward are so much hot air, since there is no exact knowledge of our optimum population based on ecological sustainability. Our Society over the last forty years, has urged a committee be formed to examine this problem. It should consist of experts selected from conservation non-government groups, farmers, manufacturers, wildlife authorities etc under the leadership of Environment Australia.

At present our Society bases its predictions on a study done many years ago. This found the maximum sustainable population for Australia was twenty two million, with present exports maintained. Our own opinion is that Australia is not over-crowded, only too many people in too few cities. Recent figures from the United States shows folk are leaving mega-cities for smaller towns, where they can have a better life style, including clean air, less crime, and less noise as well as a better quality of life.

We urge your government to set up such a study as soon as possible, so we can organise plans to care for our future, based on facts rather than opinions.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Serventy President

The Editor

Dear Sir

With regard to the problems of the Murray-Darling Dr. Tim Hatton, (SMH 14 December) ...said yesterday that 30 to 50 percent of the basin needs to be replanted, which could need between five and ten billion trees. There is no simple way out of this...

Twenty years ago the Bulletin magazine sent our

representative to study the basin and we highlighted salination problems.

Ten years ago Our Society wrote to the prime minister suggesting he study how Roosevelt solved the unemployment problem as well as carrying out important public works on soil conservation, repair of national parks, lakes and rivers as well as many other worthwhile tasks. In the years between 1935 and 1941 the scheme employed some two million workers.

We suggested, with new methods, our unemployed could be used on a massive tree planting scheme. Nothing happened. Now we have a new warning. On ABC's Landline last year we noted a West Australian farmer who was planting thousands of trees a day to produce wind breaks.

With this new technology the problem would soon be solved. Do we have the political courage to treat this as a kind of ecological war, harnessing massive efforts to winning it?

Yours sincerely,

Vincent Serventy

29 March 1999

The Hon, the Premier
Dear Bob Carr,

Please accept our congratulations on the convincing win by your government in the election. As the 'greenest' premier in my 50 years of the conservation movement and my 30 years as president of this Society it is pleasing to consider NSW's environmental future is in such safe hands.

To that we would add the work of your environment minister the Hon. Pam Allan.

We did warn the conservation movement they should never consider their electoral position on the basis of a few government decisions with which they disagreed but always look at the whole programme.

Dr Wamsley whose work is useful in a minor way, had my conditional support which we withdrew when he decided to oppose Mr Debus with strong financial funding for the opposition campaign. Unfortunately he rushed into publication before the Council considered my recommendation, which I withdrew when I heard of the Debus position.

All the best in your next four years which we hope will continue even longer.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Serventy President

2 March 1999

The Editor

Dear Sir

I am sorry I will not be able to join those two old friends of environmental battles of the past, Shirley Strickland and Dame Rachel Cleland, in this new issue to stop clearfelling of West Australian forests.

The general public and many politicians as well as some conservationists do not understand the vital difference between logging and clearfelling. Before World War 2 all work in our forests was by selective logging where a skilled forester marked the individual trees to be felled.

Such forests remained havens for wildlife and all conservationists regarded foresters as friends, enjoying the forests together.

After the war the economic rationalists took over the exploitation. They pointed out selective logging was wasteful. We must copy sheep and wheat farmers. The forests had to be cleared with only a few seed trees left or even better, replanted with quick growing species. These new trees would face no competition as in the old time forestry practise. Also all the timber could be wood-chipped and not wasted as in the earlier days.

What was forgotten with the clearfelling of old trees, deformed trees, hollow trees, those with stags were also the sheltering places of many of our mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, all the variety of forest wildlife. Clearfelling destroyed bio-diversity in ecological terms.

We were not the only sufferers. The vast Scandinavian forests have lost eighty-percent of their diversity, Clearfelling turned once fascinating forests into regions like a wheatfield or sheep paddock, satisfying to farmers but of little use for the recreation of the general public,

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12 April *Dr. Penny Berents, Collection Manager Marine Invertebrates, Australian Museum.*
Tour of the Biodiversity Exhibition with Dr. Berents and other Specialists

10 May *Ross Bradstock, Bushfire research project Officer, National Parks & Wildlife Service.*
Bushfire and the Impacts on Biodiversity, Royal National Park

7 June *Andreas Glanznig, National Co-ordinator, Centre for Biodiversity Conservation & Research, Australian Museum.*
"So little known, so much to do" - Community, Education and Involvement

12 July *Duncan Leadbitter, Executive Director Ocean Watch, Editor Wetlands Australia & Member of the National Biodiversity Advisory Council.*
Biodiversity and Marine Environments

9 August *Tim Lynch, Project Officer Research, Jervis Bay Marine Park*
Tanya Adams, Marine Park Planning Officer, NPWS.
Biodiversity - Strategy for Marine Parks

13 Sept *Professor Ben Boer, Professor of Environmental Law International Centre, University.*
Biodiversity and Legislation.

11 Oct *Dr. Penny Greenslade, CSIRO.*
Invertebrates and Biodiversity

8 Nov *Speaker to be advised.*
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7pm...Australian Museum Theatrette
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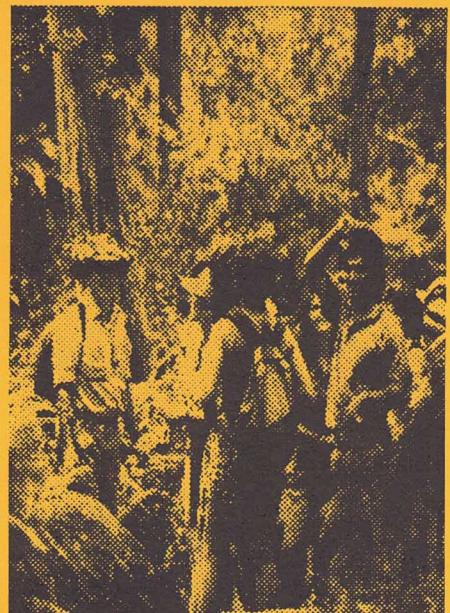
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“The challenge to the present adult generation is to reduce the increasing pressures on the Earth and its resources - and to provide youth with an education that will prepare them emotionally and intellectually for the task ahead.”

VINCENT SERVENTY

President