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Wildlife

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of Australia Inc. (Founded 1909)

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Annual General Meeting 2007

98th Annual Luncheon

Camping in the Australian bush

Wildlife walkabout

Cover photo: Campbell Island black-browed albatross (*Thalassarche melanophrys*)
(Photographer Bill Moorhead, SOSSA)

98th Annual Luncheon



Guests waiting to enter the Luncheon



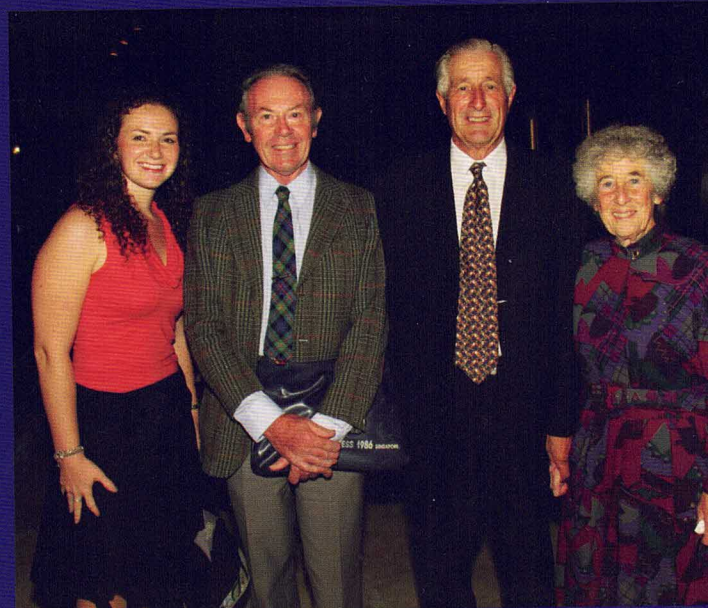
Dr Dick Mason, Vice President, presents Christine Anderson, Southern Tablelands Regional Councillor, with her certificate



Peter and Robyn Stock

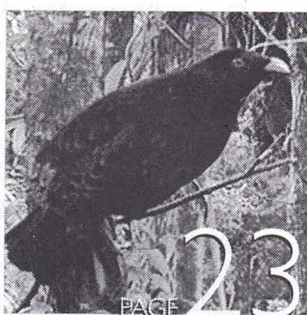


Jill Hedge and Margaret Deas



Rachel Gould, Dr David Murray, John Clarke and Carol

CONTENTS



From the President's Desk 5

Annual General Meeting 2007 6

President's report for 2006 6

98th Annual Luncheon 10

- **Address of welcome by National President**
- **A Message from our President of Honour, Dr Vincent Seventy AM**
- **Luncheon Host**
- **Special presentation**
- **Peter Cundall AM**
- **The Serventy Conservation Medal for 2006**
- **Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2006**

Camping in the Australian bush 23

Wildside 28
by Lance Ferris, Australian Seabird Rescue

Wildlife walkabout 33
by Dr Vincent Serventy AM,
President of Honour



'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.*

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MEMBERSHIP

Ordinary:.....\$35
Pensioner/ Student:.....\$25
Family:.....\$45
Conservation and School Groups:.....\$55
Institutions/Overseas Subscription:.....\$65

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appropriate attribution.

COUNCILLORS 2007

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Governor General of the
Commonwealth of Australia

National President: Patrick W Medway AM

President of Honour: Dr Vincent Serventy
AM BSc BEd DSc

Order of the Golden Ark

Vice Presidents: Dr Clive Williams
and Dr Richard Mason

Hon. Secretary/ Executive Officer/ Editor:
Suzanne Medway

Hon. Treasurer: Ralph Campbell

Councillors: Noel Cislowski, John Clarke
Tony Cornell, Judith May,

Colleen Murphy, Dr David Murray,
Carol Nolder, John Robertson,

Peter Stevens,

Peter Stock, Steve Wilson, Vanessa Wilson

Regional Councillors:

Christine Anderson,

Southern Tablelands, New South Wales

Dr Mike Augee, Western New South Wales
Max Blanch,

Newcastle/ Hunter, New South Wales

Bernie Clarke OAM,

South Coast, New South Wales

Linda Dennis,

Central Western New South Wales

John & Cecily Fenton, Western Victoria

Dr Al Glen, Western Australia

Ken Metcalfe, Central Australia

Lousie Ruhl, Northern Territory

Scientific Advisory Committee:

Dr Mike Augee – Mammologist/Paleontologist

Bernie Clarke OAM – Botany Bay

Professor Alan Keast – Ornithology

Dr David Murray – Botanical

Prof Richard Kingsford – Environmental Science

Geoffrey Ross – Wildlife management issues

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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 to have more suitably
qualified people with an intimate knowledge of local
wildlife issues across Australia.

Such regional councillors would be responsible to our
Council by providing regular reports on local wildlife
preservation issues in their region. Society members should
contact their local regional councillor through the National
Office on matters of local concern.

*All articles are written by
Suzanne Medway unless stated otherwise.*

From the President's Desk...

Congratulations to the new Council

We extend our congratulations and best wishes to the newly elected Council following the 98th Annual General Meeting last month. The fifteen Councillors of the Society carry the responsibility of moving the organisation forward towards our Centenary year and of caring for our native fauna and flora across Australian since.

Centenary coin

I am sure all our members are aware that on 11 May 2009 our Society will celebrate its centenary. We plan to mark one hundred years of wildlife preservation with events, functions, publications and, hopefully, a commemorative coin to mark 100 years of our Society's commitment to wildlife preservation.

The Director of the Royal Australian Mint has replied to our request for a special coin to be minted and we have been invited to a meeting with his Executive on Friday 20 April 2007 in his office in Canberra to discuss the work involved.

Earth Hour

Sydney's skyline was plunged into an unfamiliar darkness on Saturday 28 March as the Harbour Bridge and Opera House, along with 65,000 households and 2,000 businesses, flicked off their lights as part of an effort to cut the city's greenhouse gas emissions by five percent in the next twelve months.

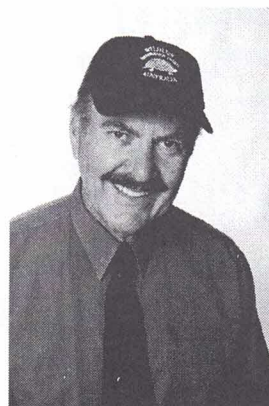
The carbon dioxide saved during Sydney's Earth Hour was equivalent to taking almost 50,000 cars off the road for an hour. What people would have learnt from this is that energy efficiency is quite simple – it's as simple as flicking a switch. Saving energy is one of the most practical things that we can all do to help reduce carbon emissions. It is possible that there will now be an annual national Earth Hour.

Our Society urged Sydney residents to turn off their lights and go outside to commune with nature and give their families the chance to see the Australian urban habitat like never before - as it comes alive with amazing nocturnal wildlife.

A high proportion of Australia's unique wildlife is nocturnal and emerges only at night. So if you want to see them you need to go out after dark. It is a whole different world - possums, wallabies, bats (the small insect eating ones mostly), owls and the odd gecko can be seen in urban bush habitat. Along with all these animals are thousands of species of insects and spiders and other mini creatures feeding and breeding at night.

Invitation to Government House, Canberra

The Councillors were delighted to receive an official invitation to visit the Patron of the Society, His Excellency the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, on the anniversary of our Foundation Day, 11 May 2007. His Excellency has been our Patron since he took office in 2003 and we deeply appreciate his kind support for the work of our Society.



Patrick W Medway AM
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Annual General Meeting 2007

The 98th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the Waratah Room at NSW Parliament House, Sydney on Monday 19 March 2007. Over 30 members attended the meeting and adopted the 2006 Financial Report and elected the new Council for 2007.

The elected Executive Officers for the Society for 2007 are:

President and Chairman – Patrick W Medway AM
Vice President – Dr Clive Williams
Vice President – Dr Dick Mason
Secretary/Executive Director – Suzanne Medway
Honorary Treasurer – Ralph Campbell

The members of the Council are: Noel Cislowski, John Clarke, Tony Cornell, Judith May, Colleen Murphy, David Murray, Carol Nolder, John Robertson, Peter Stevens, Peter Stock, Vanessa and Steve Wilson.



Patrick Medway, National President, presenting Tony Cornell with his Councillor's Commission



New Councillor Steve Wilson being presented with his Councillor's Commission by Patrick Medway



President's report for 2006

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc has broad and diverse projects and responsibilities in our mission of preserving Australia's unique and precious wildlife and this is evident in the range of our achievements over the last year. We deal with a broad spectrum of issues, deliver many different projects and operate in a number of different and sometimes difficult locations. Some of our projects focus on conserving a single species, while others deal with problems on a continental or global scale - such as climate change. Our volunteers work in locations all around Australia, from remote areas to the capital cities - and all show a commitment to conserving Australia's flora and fauna.

Premier as our guest of honour

We were all delighted that the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon Morris Iemma MP, accepted our invitation to be our guest of honour and guest speaker at the 97th Annual Luncheon. We were all very impressed with his address and his commitment to protecting the environmental and wildlife habitat and for that we are very grateful. He delighted the audience when he announced eight new national parks and nature reserves to preserve wildlife habitat across New South Wales.



Patrick Medway welcomes the Hon Morris Iemma MP

Premier launches our Centenary Appeal

We are indebted to the Premier for officially launching our special Centenary Appeal to raise funds for our new ECOWORLD GARDEN project at Rockdale. The Premier gave a moving speech on the urgent need to be involved and educate people about caring for our fragile environment. This innovative program to establish a new wetland environmental education centre in the Rockdale Wetlands will assist in educating pre-schoolers through to the senior citizens in our community about preserving and protecting our environment.

Serventy Conservation Medal

The 2005 Award was presented to Ken Metcalfe of Alice Springs by the President of Honour, Dr Vincent Serventy AM, at the Annual Luncheon in the Parliament House Dining Rooms Sydney. Ken joined our Society as a 19 year-old and has been active in volunteering his services to wildlife conservation ever since.

We were absolutely delighted to welcome past Awardees of the Serventy Conservation Medal: Margaret Throsborne from Cardwell near Mission Beach, Bernie Clarke from Sussex Inlet, Dr Judy Messer from the NCC, Ron and Val Taylor, John Fenton from Hamilton in Victoria and Wayne Reynolds from Cape Solander Whale Watching Team.



Dr Vincent Serventy AM presents Ken Metcalfe with his medal, watched by Alison Megarrity MP, Member for Menai, Parliamentary Secretary

President of Honour

Dr Vincent Serventy AM is still very active in our wildlife preservation programs. He is in almost daily contact with the media, mainly through Letters to the Editor and has many of his letters published on wildlife and conservation. He is working on three new conservation issues – global warming, particle pollution and global over-population. He is also keen to have his Bill of Environmental Rights adopted by the United Nations Organisation to better protect our world environment. We congratulate Vin on his continuing commitment to the work of the Society.



Vin Serventy at his 90th Birthday Party at Pearl Beach

Community Wildlife Conservation Award

We were pleased to present the 2005 Community Wildlife Conservation Award to Mareeba Wetland Foundation in Queensland. The Mareeba Troop Savanna and Wetland Reserve is located at the foot of the Hann Tableland, 6.5kms north of the township of Mareeba on the Cairns Highlands North Queensland.



Alison Megarrity presents a Certificate to Gwyneth Nevard of Mareeba Wetland Foundation with Clive Williams presenting the crystal award

Strategic Planning Day on our Foundation Day

A special Strategic Planning Day was held on 11 May 2006 in Sydney to organise and plan the future work of the Society. A lot was achieved in the directions set for the future work of the Society, including the development of new environmental education programs and the new ECOWORLD GARDENS project at Rockdale. This day was chosen to mark the Foundation Day of the Society on 11 May 1909 and will be commemorated each year with a special meeting to ensure the long term success of the Society.

Wildlife rescue calls

We continue to receive a large number of calls from concerned citizens across the country about sick or injured native wildlife. As our office operates on a 24/7 basis, we receive distress calls all hours of the day and night about injured animals. While we can offer limited advice over the telephone, we refer most calls to our partners in wildlife rescue – Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services or WIRES – who do a wonderful job with sick and injured animals. We continue to support both organisations and commend them for their dedication and on-going commitment in caring for injured wildlife and rehabilitation of injured wildlife.

Wildlife research grants

A number of special wildlife research grants were instituted and awarded in 2006. The University Wildlife Research Grants Committee awarded ten grants of \$1,000 each. The Grants Committee was chaired by Dr Al Glenn, who is a Regional Councillor for the Society and is currently working for the Department of Environment and Conservation in Western Australia.

NSW Pest Animal Control Council

Patrick Medway, our Society's National President, continues to act as the Society's representative on the NSW Pest Animal Control Council. The Council meets quarterly to look at ways and means to minimise the disastrous effects of feral animals on livestock and wildlife across New South Wales. This is an important, ongoing focus for the Committee, which is funded by the NSW Department of Agriculture. This is an area of conservation where valuable contacts are made for wildlife preservation issues that often seriously affect the agricultural industry.

Australian Wildlife magazine

We successfully launched our revamped coloured cover magazine *Australian Wildlife* in 2003 and it continues to be widely acclaimed by our members and the wider community. Our Editor, Suzanne, works tirelessly to gather articles and photographs for each edition and has raised the standards to a new height in reporting on our conservation work across Australia. More articles are always welcome to assist in making the magazine interesting and worthwhile. Plans are underway to explore the possibility of moving to full colour production in 2007.



Conferences and wildlife seminars

Councillors attended and contributed to a number of important wildlife meetings throughout the year. We actively initiated and sponsored some of these conferences:

- Australian Ecosystems Foundation Inc Annual General Meeting in Lithgow, 20 March 2006

- RSPCA Scientific conference, Canberra, March 2006
- ARAZPA Conference in Perth, Western Australia, April 2006
- Visit to Mt Rothwell Research Centre, 26 May 2006
- World Conservation NCC Dinner, 6 June 2006
- Hunter Wetland Conference, 29 June 2006
- Australasian Mammal Society Conference, July 2006
- National Tree Day planting, 30 July 2006
- Gosford Conservation Group tree planting with Vin Serventy, 6 August 2006
- Meeting with Queensland Preservation Society executive, 20 August 2006
- Wildlife Council conference at Randwick, October 2006
- National Parks seminar in Armidale, 16 October 2006
- Nature Conservation Council Annual General Meeting, 20-22 October 2006
- Tour of Kosciuszko National Park, 26-30 October 2006
- Taronga Zoo conference, 19 November 2006
- Wildlife Management Conference in Auckland, New Zealand, December 2006



Members of the Society enjoying their visit to Kosciuszko National Park, 26-30 October 2006

Wildlife Management Conference

Several members attended the Australasian Wildlife Management Society conference in Auckland, New Zealand in December 2006. One of our outstanding students was acknowledged with a highly commended award.

New Zealand is richly endowed with native wildlife, such as the kiwi, which form a strong attraction for local tourism. Delegates from all over Australia assembled to discuss and present papers on an extremely wide range of wildlife management issues. Many were from government departments, universities, and private and commercial institutions involved in finding solutions to

many contentious issues of wildlife management. This was a particularly rewarding conference and we made our mark by presenting and handing out hundreds of leaflets on the work of the Society.

Environment education

Our National Office continues to receive and answer hundreds of routine wildlife calls each week. The office distributes project material to school children and the general public every day throughout the year. Our reputation as a reliable source of wildlife information means that we are often called upon to supply additional information on current wildlife management.

Financial Report summary

The Society's Councillors continue to exercise effective control over our finances and reviewed and adjusted the investment portfolio during the year to take advantage of the interest rates. Using expert financial advice from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (our Bankers) we were able to realign our investments to take advantage of rising interest rates and now look forward to strong growth in our investment portfolio.

Donations, bequests and gifts

During the year we continued with our bequest program to encourage donors to support our work through advertising with the Solicitors' Pro-Bono publication and general publicity.

The future

We are now embarked on a very positive course of action to promote and market the Society and its vital work for Australian wildlife. Our quest for a permanent national office is under way and hopefully will reach an agreed solution in 2007.

Membership is vital for our long term success and it's important that all existing members continue to encourage family and friends to join us. Our membership brochure is freely available from the National Office.

Centenary celebrations in 2009

The Centenary Committee is drafting a full year's program of activities to commemorate our centenary and to assist in creating a greater awareness of the constant need to preserve and protect our precious native wildlife in all its forms. Please get involved in our centenary celebrations and encourage others to join the Society to assist us in the important environmental work. Contact the National Office for further details.



Centenary Committee members Peter Lazar, Patrick Medway and Noel Cislowski consulting with Vin Serventy at Pearl Beach

ECOWORLD GARDENS

We are in the final stages of the planning to establish the National Office in the new ECOWORLD GARDENS Environmental Education Centre at Rockdale, Sydney and are confident that membership will continue to climb when we have a successful operating base for members to visit and contribute to our vital wildlife preservation work.

It is proposed to name the new Education Centre after the Society's President of Honour, Dr Vincent Serventy AM.

Ranging over five hectares of the Rockdale Wetland Corridor, ECOWORLD GARDENS will provide an opportunity for all Australians to learn more about our unique natural heritage of fauna and flora and the urgent need to save and protect our native wildlife and its habitat for the next generation of young Australians.



Members of the Society planting native trees in ECOWORLD GARDENS on National Tree Day 2006.

L to R: Tony Cornell, Clive Williams and Ron Dennis

I am extremely grateful for the wonderful support received from all our elected Councillors. They work and contribute tirelessly behind the scenes to make the Society function.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the volunteers, especially Suzanne, who assist and run the National Office and the various projects and activities on behalf of the Society.

My sincere thanks to everyone concerned for their hard work and commitment!

Patrick W Medway AM
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
31 December 2006.



98th Annual Luncheon

At the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting members retired to the NSW Parliament House Dining Room for a very successful luncheon hosted by the Hon Bob Debus MP, NSW Minister for the Environment. Our Guest Speaker was Peter Cundall AM, of ABC TV's *Gardening Australia*.

Master of Ceremonies, Noel Cislowski, opened the luncheon proceedings and invited the newly re-elected National President, Patrick W Medway AM, to officially welcome the Minister, guest speaker, members and guests to the 98th Anniversary Luncheon.

Address of welcome by National President

Patrick Medway extended a very warm welcome to all life members, members and special guests to the 98th Anniversary Luncheon and Presentation of our Wildlife Conservation Awards for 2006.

He made a special welcome to the NSW Minister, noting that the Minister did the Society a great honour with his presence, possibly for the last time in this position. We have a good working relationship with the NSW Minister for the Environment, his Office and its many departments, in our ongoing quest to save our precious native wildlife in all its forms across Australia.

Patrick then welcomed Mr Peter Cundall from Tasmania and congratulated him on his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia in the New Year's Honour's list. He thanked Peter for taking the time to come to Sydney and speaking to our members.

Unfortunately Dr Vin Serventy was not able to travel to Sydney on this occasion. He and Carol Serventy were unable to make it to this Luncheon.



Patrick W Medway AM, National President

Patrick welcomed past recipients of the Serventy Conservation Medal: Bernie Clarke from Sullivan Inlet, Dr Judy Messer from the NCC, Ron Val Taylor from Sydney, Lance Ferris from Berrigan (Australian Seabird Rescue Service) and Peter Metcalfe from Alice Springs in the Northern Territory.

Our friends from other wildlife conservation groups, friends from NPWS and the Department of Environment and Conservation were extended a very warm welcome, along with our special Members: Dr Dick Mason, Joan Brandt, Dr Peter Williams, Philip Hammon and Joan Yap.

The two new Councillors were offered congratulations on election to Office.

A Message from our President of Honour, Dr Vincent Serventy

Blowing the Society's trumpet

As our Society's oldest Councillor, your President of Honour, and having been President of the Society for some thirty odd years, I believe we have a very proud record of achievement in our native wildlife right across Australia.

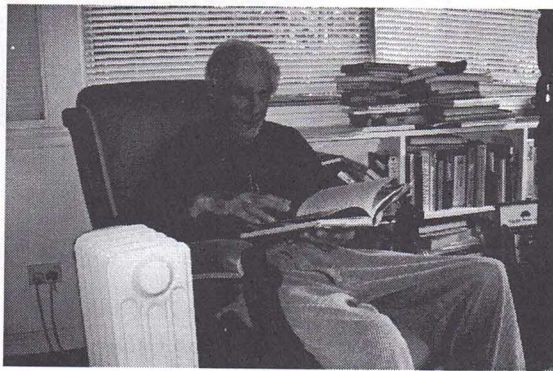
Conservation volunteers

In the famous words of Tennyson:

"Death closes all but something 'ere the end some work of noble note may still be done."

Our Council recently chose the world's urgent need for a Bill of Environmental Rights to be taken to the United Nations to complement the 1948 Bill of Human Rights. Our Society's book *Conservation Victories with Battles Yet to Win* tells the story. Patrick Medway and I provided the raw material, but our wives turned it into the greatest conservation book that I have been involved in.

In my long life I have visited most countries in the world to observe wildlife conservation in situ, yet our Society is still one of the very best conservation groups in action across such a large country.



Dr Vincent Serventy AM in his home at Pearl Beach, NSW

Environmental firsts

Our Society pioneered the recognition of the important need for legal protection for all Australian flora and fauna and has been the instigator of many firsts, including:

- Saving the koala campaigns
- Stopping the cruel trade in wild bird plumage
- Initiated the first World Conservation Day
- Developed the first wildlife corridor concept to help migrating wildlife to survive
- Campaigned to save the historic Towra Beach and Lagoon
- Worked to save the Dryandra Forest in Western Australia from mining
- Ongoing commitment to save habitat for native wildlife.

New Scientist some time ago pointed out that corridors that are oriented north and south will enable species to migrate and escape the effects of habitat destruction by global warming. Now Australia has the great idea to make our

east coast ranges one great corridor, a two thousand kilometre corridor to be established along the complete east coast of Australia. All state governments and the national government support the proposal. Our NSW State Premier, Morris Iemma, announced the first stage of funding for this innovative wildlife corridor recently and we applaud this strong and very worthwhile practical initiative.

Our Society has always known that a conservation battle is never really won until the victory is enshrined in legislation. We have always tried to convince politicians of the necessity to include the preservation of Australia's precious wildlife and its vital conservation habitat in all their planning and environmental issues and discussions.

Our Society has helped influence prime ministers in a wide range of conservation values; encouraged state politicians to create the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and to become actively involved in the establishment of the World Heritage Commission.

Our Society was associated with the instigation of the World Wildlife Fund and lobbied to make Fraser Island in Queensland a national park.

Also, since science is not enough, we also care for the ethics of wildlife conservation and lobbied our government to ban whaling in our territorial waters. No truly civilized nation could take part in this most cruel form of killing of wild animals.

Finally, our Society believes no nation is an island so, with the advice in the 1980s of the then Prime Minister of Norway, our Society decided our policy would be to take our Bill of Environmental Rights to the United Nations and include our Ten Green Values with the Bill of Environmental Rights.


In more recent times we have expanded our wildlife conservation ideas to support other similar wildlife organisations to form partnerships to be able to achieve even more support for the conservation of Australia's native wildlife in all its forms.

I sincerely congratulate all our Councillors of the Society for their commitment and dedication in what they are doing to save our native wildlife across this great country.

Luncheon Host

The Hon Bob Debus MP, Minister for the Environment, gave a short address, which appears below:

Thank you - it's a pleasure to be here. It is with great pride that I look back on the environmental



achievements over the last decade. I am especially proud of our work to protect and conserve Australia's precious wildlife during my eight years in the environment portfolio and would like to share some of that with you today.

Of course, though, we must acknowledge from the outset that while we have indeed come a long way in areas such as reserve conservation, research, threatened species legislation and native vegetation laws, there is still a way to go to stem the number of threatened species that are added to the list each year. And as the threat of climate change grows ever greater and we learn more about its impacts on our native species, we will need to look outside of the mainstream for solutions to ensure many species long-term survival.

Reserve protection

As you all know, national parks are an essential tool for conserving samples of all ecosystems and are a vital part of looking after our native wildlife.

This year we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the creation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and we have a lot to celebrate.

Just last week I announced an additional 120,000 hectares to the NSW reserve system including fifteen new reserves across the state. The new reserves and additions to existing ones means over 6.5 million hectares or more than eight percent of NSW was now protected forever in this State.

Connectivity

However these figures do not adequately represent the importance of where the national parks and wilderness areas have been created.

Our goal has been to not only ensure adequate representation of the many vegetation types across the state but to ensure connectivity of the reserve system. This is crucial in creating wildlife corridors, ensuring that animals can move between suitable areas.

Such wildlife corridors are becoming even more vital in the face of the impacts of global warming and the subsequent increase in the frequency of bushfire, drought and floods.

If a species is wiped out of an area - by fire for instance - connecting corridors mean that the species can re-colonise the area once the plants grow back. Without those connections, the future of our wildlife is bleak.

But I am proud to say that the recent addition of the reserve system put the final link in the chain of reserves which now stretch from the Victorian border right up to the Hunter Valley - a significant wildlife corridor.

Similarly the new Alps to Atherton initiative will mean public and private land owners and managers of all land tenures would work together to conserve, protect and restore ecosystems along the Great Eastern Ranges - from the Dandenongs to the Daintree.



The Hon Bob Debus MP, Minister for the Environment

Voluntary Conservation Agreements

Another essential element in species protection is some of the work done 'off park'.

Voluntary Conservation Agreements provide an opportunity for land to be permanently conserved - not just under current ownership, but by all future owners as well. Currently there are more than 220 agreements, covering over 1 million hectares in NSW.

Marine Parks

We have not only focused on land but also on environmental protection.

This government has also placed significant emphasis on the protection of our important marine ecosystems. The new **Bateman's Marine Park** and the **Greater Port Stephens Marine Park** bring the number of declared marine parks to six, protecting 345,500 hectares of estuarine and oceanic waters throughout the State.

Threatened Species

Creating national parks alone is not enough to ensure the long term survival of our native and threatened species of wildlife.

The Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 goes hand in hand with the creation of new national parks and wildlife corridors.

Further amendments to the Act, passed in 2004, have given it a strong regulatory focus. Enforcement and penalties have been strengthened alongside education for land owners and managers.

The NSW Government has also ended broadscale land clearing and introduced native vegetation laws to protect this important wildlife habitat.

Pest control

No amount of land declaration can save some species which are at risk from feral predators. For instance, foxes pose a lethal threat to brush-tailed rock wallabies.

To deal with this issue, we are embarking on an unprecedented pest control campaign across our great national park system.

The resources being applied at record levels with around \$18 million spent on pest animal and weed management last financial year. This has meant the National Parks and Wildlife Service could conduct more than 900 feral animal and 600 weed control programs in the State's national parks. Many of these involve working with neighbours and other Government agencies to reduce or eliminate feral pests.

Conclusion

I thank you for your time this afternoon and would like to commend you for the tremendous work the Society has done over the last hundred years. Community education, awareness and active participation in the protection of our environment have played a vital role in conserving the rich natural and cultural environment in NSW.

As fellow conservationists, I sincerely thank you for your belief and commitment in preserving this wonderful land that we have inherited and encourage you to continue to work with the government in preserving our precious native species for generations to come.

Your work is the living proof that we haven't inherited our world from our parents – we have borrowed it from our children.

Thank you - Bob Debus MP

Special presentation

The Minister is not expected to stand for re-election this year and plans to retire from the NSW Parliament after the next state election. At the conclusion of his address, Patrick Medway presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation to acknowledge the Minister's support to the work of the Society during his term of office.



The Hon Bob Debus MP, Minister for the Environment is presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by Patrick Medway

Peter Cundall AM

Peter Cundall is the host of the nationwide ABC-TV **Gardening Australia** program.

Peter writes and supplies photographs for the ABC's monthly *Gardening Australia* magazine. Books and other publications include the first gardening book printed on washable plastic paper for outdoor use *Year Round Gardening*, *Seasonal Tasks for the Practical Australian Gardener* and *Peter Cundall's Guide to Organic Growing*.

Peter gave a very moving and interesting address to the guests at the Luncheon and spoke "off the cuff". He said he never prepares a formal speech but just "rambles" on about his work. Everyone was certainly thrilled to hear Peter talk of his adventures and great love of the Australian bush. He spoke with committed eloquence about his experiences exploring the Tasmania wilderness and for the urgent need to better protect the temperate rainforests in Tasmania. Peter held the audience spellbound for nearly thirty minutes with his talk about saving the natural wilderness and the precious wildlife that inhabits the forests of Tasmania. His description of walking through the Tasmania wilderness and describing the uniqueness of it was truly very moving and emotional. We were all impressed and absolutely delighted with his talk to our members on this special occasion.

At the conclusion of the meal, Peter circulated among the guests. He was very approachable and "down to earth" when talking with his many fans in the audience.

We thank Peter for making such a special effort to travel all the way from Launceston in Tasmania to be our Guest Speaker for our 98th Anniversary Luncheon.

As a token of our appreciation, Peter was presented with a rare Wollemi Pine and gave his thanks to the Wildlife Society for this extraordinary and precious gift to him.



Peter Cundall being presented with a Wollemi Pine by President Patrick Medway

The Serventy Conservation Medal for 2006

Each year the Serventy Conservation Award is made to a very special person who has been outstanding in their commitment to the preservation of Australian wildlife. This year the Award was made to **Lindsay E Smith OAM of Unanderra** in New South Wales for his outstanding wildlife conservation work involving seabirds.



Lindsay Smith being presented with the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2006 by The Hon Bob Debus MP, Minister for the Environment

Lindsay Smith has, through his devotion to wildlife conservation, become one of Australia's experts on seabirds, especially the albatross. Although he would modestly describe himself as an amateur, he is frequently called upon by the media to speak about seabirds and in 1987 the Australian Museum employed him as an ornithologist for research on Middleton and Elizabeth Reefs. Lindsay, with others, has been actively studying the seabirds visiting the coast near Wollongong for over fifty years. This represents one of the longest continuous albatross studies in the world. He was involved in the foundation of the Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association in 1994. As a result of SOSSA's work, the plight of albatrosses and other seabirds was brought to the attention, not only of Australians, but of people throughout the world.

Lindsay believes the Illawarra coastline of New South Wales is one of the most unique places on the planet for marine wildlife. It is right on our doorstep and most people are totally unaware of its great diversity. Lindsay's lifelong mission has been to bring wildlife and people together. With seabirds it is often a case of "out of sight, out of mind". The greater albatross is one of the most regal of birds and has no fear of people. Many of the world's albatross and petrel species are threatened with extinction, mainly because of the impacts of long line fishing.

Lindsay's long dedication to the saving of endangered species makes him a worthy recipient and winner of the 2006 Serventy Medal and prize.

Acceptance speech by Lindsay Smith

I would like you to have a little understanding of how I came to be here today. I am a Naturalist and I study wildlife as do many of my colleagues.

Since I was a very young boy, I have been blessed with a fascination of the natural world and a passion to share it with others. *Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association* is the organisation I represent.



Members of SOSSA. L to R: Robert Thorne, Jackie Vrkic, Terrill Nordstrom, Lindsay Smith, Janice Jenkin-Smith, Carl Loves, John Boness

While it is not a true reflection of what we study, and what we can offer advice on, I am often called on to advise on all manner of natural history issues in the Illawarra region of New South Wales, seals, frogs, reptiles, fresh water fish, turtles, sea snakes, marine turtles, whales and dolphins.

My interest in seabirds began at a very early age when my family lived in a tent on an estuary adjacent to an extensive ocean beach.

This offered the opportunity to observe many species of seabirds, shorebirds and many other creatures found beach-washed on the shore, particularly after storms.

It was not until I moved with my family to Western Australia many years later that my interest in seabirds was rekindled and developed.

The turning point for me was when I came across *The Handbook of Australasian Seabirds* by Dominic Serventy, Vincent Serventy and John Warham in 1971.

At last, I was able to identify many of the seabirds that I had encountered in my youth. I also learned that there were a far greater number of species of seabirds recorded in Australia than I could possibly have imagined.

It was here too that I first read of the wandering albatross; Doug Gibson and others catching and banding them; right where I had lived!

On my return to the Illawarra I began studying the local breeding populations of sea and shore birds at the Five Islands Nature Reserve. These studies and more continue to this day.

It was here that I had the pleasure of meeting Doug Gibson and Harry Battam who introduced me to the New South Wales Albatross Study Group and the magnificent wandering albatross.

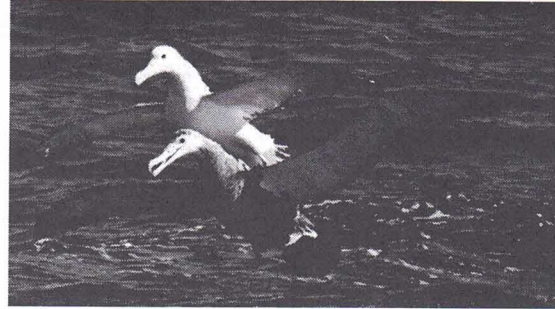
I soon joined the banding project, which was initiated by Doug Gibson and others at Bellambi in 1956.

Wandering albatrosses were the principle species studied, as they were plentiful and were far more easily captured than the smaller more agile species.

Each year hundreds of wandering albatrosses were drawn to the Illawarra in winter. The attraction was the annual post breeding die-off of the giant cuttlefish *Sepia apama*.

Whilst just to the north, at Malabar near Sydney, a sewage ocean outfall provided a constant supply of offal from the nearby Homebush abattoirs for over sixty years!

In the early 1970s albatross numbers began to dwindle. No longer were the birds to be seen in their hundreds.



Wandering albatross (adult and juvenile)
(photographer Darryl McKay, SOSSA)

An initial decline was to be expected after the closure of the Malabar ocean outfall in 1969. However by the early 1990s the birds had all but disappeared from inshore. In a normal season we could expect to capture over one hundred individuals within ten kilometres of shore. By the end of the century we were managing to catch fewer than ten individuals, for the entire season!

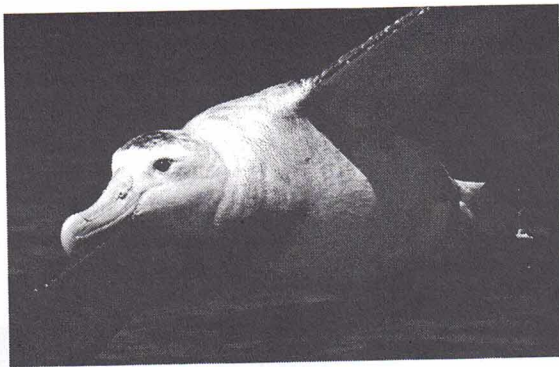
Something was seriously wrong!

An initial clue to this dramatic decline came in 1991 when Nigel Brothers of Tasmania published a paper on albatross mortality and associated bait loss in the Japanese longline fishery in the Southern Ocean. He conservatively reported a by-catch rate of **0.4 birds/1,000 hooks set**. In the Japanese fishery alone this accounted for **44,000 individuals per season!** Sixteen years later and "**still they die!**"

The problem became perfectly clear. Man was killing the birds faster than they could reproduce. They are on a fast track to extinction!

Albatrosses are not the only by-catch of modern fisheries. Just as longline fishing practices are not the sole culprit associated with the demise of seabird numbers.

There are many other factors and fisheries practices implicated by this decline. These include plastic ingestion, over-fishing of food resources, introduced pests and diseases and climate change - these are but a few of the problems that they are faced with.



Adult wandering albatross
(photographer Darryl McKay, SOSSA)

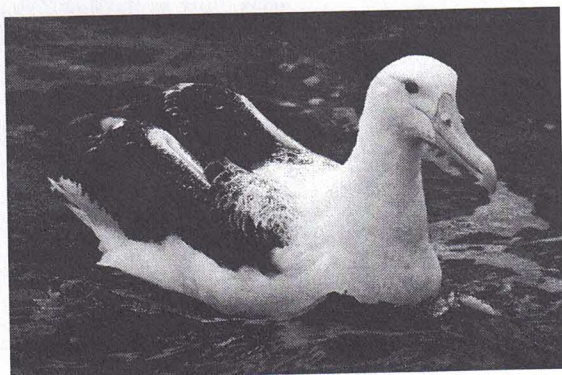
Government agencies have responded to the problems of incidental by-catch of seabirds in pelagic fisheries by implementing a Threat Abatement Plan, including a whole suite of mitigation measures. However, the existence of mitigation measures does not always mean their implementation or compliance. Instead it is often a case of out of sight out of mind, business as usual.

In January 2001, five wandering albatrosses that had been caught on a longline (line still attached) were found washed ashore on the south coast of NSW. This unfortunate incident was reported to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority for attention.

In recent years members of SOSSA have been working with teams from The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) based in Hobart, Tasmania and the New Zealand Department of Conservation in an effort to deter seabirds from taking baits.

In 1984 The Wollongong Seabird Group began conducting regular pelagic trips to beyond the continental shelf, up to thirty nautical miles to sea off Wollongong.

Initially these trips were intended to allow us to better understand the diversity and movements of seabirds and marine animals which occurred off our coast.



Southern royal albatross

An experience that was to change my life forever

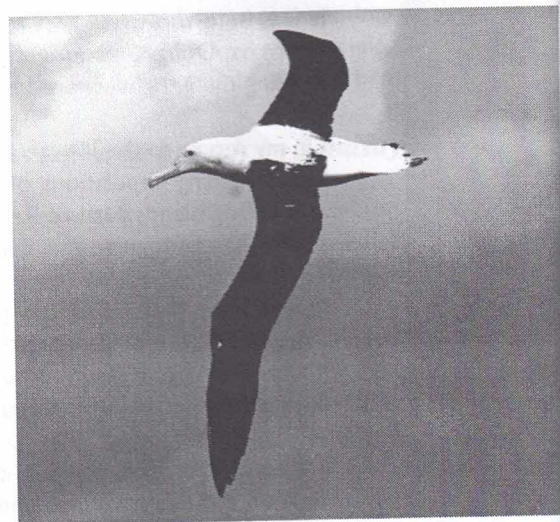
There are few animals that have the presence and charisma of the great albatrosses. I would like to convey to you my initial encounter with the magnificent wandering albatross.

There on the horizon, silhouetted against the sky, it rose, high into the air. I could see it at 1,000 yards, maybe more. Glistening white in the sun, growing larger as it bridged the gap between us. It came straight in, just a few feet above our heads. So close that we could hear the rush of air as it passed over its long narrow wings. It settled on the water, not a hundred yards away to feed on a moribund cuttlefish.

A few minutes later this giant bird was settled in my lap. The temperament of this magnificent old "snowy albatross" was amazing; docile and placid, showing no fear or aggression, despite having being captured only moments before. I was spellbound.

We had no idea how old this bird was. Its brilliant white plumage indicated that it was a very old male. Maybe sixty years or more! Where had it come from? How far had it travelled?

I needed to know more!



Northern royal albatross
(photographer Bill Moorhead, SOSSA)

Great albatross facts

Did you know? Wandering and royal albatrosses have the most expansive wing spans of any bird - more than three metres. Most will not breed until ten to twenty years of age. We still do not know how long they live (no one has studied them long enough to know).

They mate for life. If their partner dies, they do not attempt to breed again.

They produce only a single egg, once in two years. If the egg or chick is lost before it fledges, no replacement is laid.

Each individual has to live for at least thirty years, just to replace itself in the population.

They can travel over a thousand kilometres, just to find food for their chick.

Their home range includes the whole of the "Great Southern Ocean".

Eighty percent of their energy needs for flight is provided by the wind and waves of the ocean.

They regulate their body temperature by pumping blood through their feet and bills.



Juvenile Gibson's albatross
(photographer Darryl McKay, SOSSA)

Environmental education

I believe by bringing interested people and many species of seabirds and marine animals 'face to face' we were successful in not only adding greatly to our knowledge but also in bringing attention to the plight of these wondrous creatures.

"If wild animals and wild places are to survive into the future it is research based tourism that will give them economic value."

We are recognised internationally and not only by scientists. People come from all over the world to Wollongong to view our magnificent seabirds and

marine animals, along with supporting our valuable research.

Hopefully, they will learn more about them and respect their importance to our environment.

By working in pelagic waters and developing new strategies and techniques we were able to capture a far greater variety of albatrosses and petrels than we had been able to inshore.

By capturing the birds at sea and on their breeding grounds simultaneously we are gaining a greater insight into population structures and the health and diet of the birds at sea.

The latter has proven invaluable in advising zoos, vets, wildlife carers and rehabilitators on how to better care for albatross and other seabirds.

As part of our education program, we are distributing an educational kit about seabirds and other marine animals. Both my wife Janice and I present talks and presentations to school children of all ages, service clubs and institutions, and basically anyone that will listen.

At SOSSA we do what we can!

In accepting this award I would like to thank Bernie Clarke OAM for nominating me for this prestigious award. Bernie is a previous recipient of the Serventy Conservation Medal.

I would like to share this great honor with my wife Janice Jenkin-Smith OAM and long-time colleague and mentor Harry Battam. Without the ongoing support, dedication and commitment of these key people, SOSSA would not be where it is today.

Finally I would like to say that SOSSA is a registered, charitable, incorporated organisation (NGO). With donations and tax deductibility we have been able to continue this increasingly important work for the environment, just because we love it!!

We have a wonderful network, many volunteers both in the field and behind the scenes who share my commitment to preserving all manner of natural history.

I sincerely thank them all, the field workers, vets, and zoos, aquariums, WIRES, NANA, AWARE and the media, the list goes on and on and on.

Thank you once again for this prestigious award today!!

Lindsay Smith OAM

Serventy Medal runner-up

Our Society was delighted at the number of entries for the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2006 and was particularly impressed by the standard of the entries. It was decided to award a Certificate for the runner up and this year this was awarded to Linda Dennis of "Fourth Crossing" in Orange New South Wales.



Clive Williams, Vice President, presents Linda Dennis with her award

Linda established "Fourth Crossing" as a wildlife refuge that provides valuable habitat for animals that include platypus, echidna, wombat, kangaroo, wallaroo, wallaby, possums, gliders, more than one hundred species of native bird, and numerous reptiles. "Fourth Crossing" has been declared a wildlife refuge under the National Parks and Services Act. Linda Dennis is a wildlife educator. She has had seven year's experience in wildlife care and during that time has gained a wealth of information relating to the care of many native species. Linda's wildlife lecture program, fauna first aid, is presented to a wide audience, including veterinary nurse students, school children and the community. In recognising that wildlife care information is not easily available to all who need it, resources are also presented on the web at www.forthcrossingwildlife.com. Resource contributions are presented from all corners of the wildlife community, including veterinarians, specialist carers and zoo keepers.

Acceptance speech by Linda Dennis

In a nut shell, what I do is knowledge sharing.

Some time ago I recognised that wildlife care information is not easily available to all who need it and so I created my website, Fourth Crossing Wildlife and the Fauna First Aid wildlife lecture program. My program recognises the fact that any person who picks up a distressed or injured animal is a carer. It is my mission to support and educate these carers.

Through Fauna First Aid, I teach wildlife awareness, rescue and care to veterinary nurse students, community groups and school children, starting as young as pre-schoolers.

Through Fourth Crossing Wildlife and Fauna First Aid, I present quality wildlife resources to all wildlife carers, without prejudice or discrimination. Many others share my dream and resource contributions have been submitted from all corners of the wildlife community, including veterinarians, specialist carers and zoo keepers.

The Fourth Crossing Wildlife website has had nearly half a million visits since it was created. If just one of these visits has resulted in saving just one animal, then surely it's worth it.

Although my belief in "knowledge sharing" has brought frowns from some, I believe that our native animals can only benefit if knowledge is shared with all who seek it - and I am committed to this belief.

I am incredibly proud and honoured to have been acknowledged for my work - the blood, sweat and tears have definitely been worth it.

Just a few thank yous. Many thanks to Margie Creighton who nominated me for the prestigious Serventy Conservation Medal. Thanks to my fabulous family and wonderful friends for their support and encouragement. Particular thanks to my husband Todd, who has dealt admirably with my wildlife obsession! Thanks to Digital Pacific who sponsor the hosting of Fourth Crossing Wildlife and to the Australian Geographic Society for initial sponsorship of the Fauna First Aid program. Of course, many thanks to the Wildlife Preservation Society for seeing the value in my contribution to wildlife conservation.

And huge thanks to those who share my dream and have helped me make Fourth Crossing Wildlife and Fauna First Aid into what they have become today - the wildlife carers best friends.

Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2006

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

Dr Clive Williams announced that the Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2006 was awarded to the Friends of the Koala Inc from Lismore in New South Wales.



Peter Cundall presents Lorraine Vass, President of Friends of the Koala, with the 2006 Community Wildlife Conservation Award.

L to r: Rick Vass, Margaret Russell, Clive Williams, Pat Barnidge, Karen Jennison and Barbara Dobner

Friends of the Koala (FOK) is a non-profit community group run by volunteers dedicated to conserving koalas in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales.

Volunteer rehabilitators operate a twenty four hour rescue service for sick, injured and orphaned koalas. Koalas are cared for in home care or at the Koala Care Centre in Lismore, NSW. Critically ill koalas are transferred to the Australian Wildlife Hospital within Australia Zoo at Beerwah, Queensland.

A native plant nursery is attached to the Care Centre, providing koala food trees for free to local landholders. Over 90,000 such trees have been distributed. The proceeds from other native plant sales go towards the cost of koala care.

Friends of the Koala play an active role in promoting habitat restoration in the Northern Rivers Region. This includes encouraging landholders to commit to new plantings and maintaining and looking after remnant vegetation. They also act as consultant to the Lismore City Council as well as assisting other Councils in the region.

The group supports research, in particular into the prevalence of disease in koala populations and in mapping current koala populations and their distribution. The group has been chosen to receive The Society's Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2006 because it is a completely volunteer group that plays a significant educational, scientific and rehabilitative role in its region.

Friends of the Koala hope this national recognition will serve to focus attention on the relentless erosion of koala habitat in the State's north east, brought about by development pressure as well as agriculture and forestry. Many of the area's koala populations have a high incidence and variety of

disease and too few scientific studies have been conducted in the Northern Rivers region over the past decade.

Acceptance speech by Lorraine Vass, President of Friends of the Koala

Friends of the Koala's reason for being is to conserve the koala populations of the Northern Rivers Region of this State.

In various ways, members of our entirely voluntary group have been doing just that for twenty years. Initially, they focused on habitat that was being lost to urban growth around Lismore by drawing public attention to the plight of the resident koalas. They also organised tree plantings, an activity that continues to this day. Perhaps more important are the 90,000 koala food trees that Friends of the Koala has distributed to landowners across the Northern Rivers since 1990.

Some members in Lismore were persuaded to extend their activities to include the rescue and rehabilitation of individual koalas. This change of direction was not popular with some, but it prevailed. Similarly, when the group built its Koala Care Centre in the mid 1990s – a few home carers fell away, but the Koala Care and Research Centre prevailed. During the six months from July to December 2006, 248 koalas were reported to FOK. Fortunately many did not need to come into care.

Perhaps because we started off as a habitat conservation group and our rescue and rehab work is limited to a single species, the group has attracted sufficient people with a strong advocacy focus for us to have integrated with the energetic conservation lobby of the North East.

There we have the three strands of FOK's core business – habitat repair, rescue and rehab. and advocacy. Each is equally as important as the other. Over the years we have engaged an extraordinarily wide range of partners, corporate and individual, within the Northern Rivers and beyond to assist us to become more effective. I cannot talk about all of them here, but I will mention a couple.

The first and most enduring has been the group's relationship with Southern Cross University. FOK's Koala Care and Research Centre is built on university land; indeed its construction was managed by the University's facilities section. The University provides us with significant in-kind services, ranging from security patrols to a constant source of student volunteers and the occasional research undertaking.



The second partner of significance is the Australian Wildlife Hospital at Australia Zoo. When Steve Irwin head-hunted koala experts, Jon Hanger, the Chief Veterinarian at Dreamworld and Gail Gipp, President of Wildcare Australia, to be his Chief Vet and Hospital Manager respectively, a wonderful opportunity presented itself to FOK.

Since September 2004 some one hundred and fifty Northern Rivers koalas have been admitted to the Hospital which has built up a specialist staff including five wildlife veterinarians. Many Northern Rivers koalas have benefited from the ever increasing refinements of treatments as well as surgical innovation. Some have been part of the Hospital's on-going research on koala retrovirus (in partnership with the University of Queensland) and chlamydiosis (in partnership with Queensland University of Technology) as well as other research, including the treatment of cataracts.

The depth of diagnostics that the Hospital can undertake and the specialist knowledge of its vet team has accelerated knowledge and learning within FOK. Many of our members have regular opportunities to observe and discuss diagnosis, prognosis, treatments, and so on during visits. Our rescue and rehabilitative practices are constantly evolving in line with the Hospital's recommendations. Whilst we still experience disappointments, the joy of releasing a rehabilitated koala back into the wild is shared by the whole team.

But are we really making a difference? The Australian Koala Foundation's modelling has predicted a worse case scenario for the survival of the koala in the Northern Rivers Region at roughly nine to ten years. Best case scenario is about forty three years. That modelling didn't take account of climate change. The State Government has announced its twenty five year vision in the Far North Coast Regional Strategy, planning for 64,000 additional residents over that period of time.

Despite a plethora of legislative protection, habitat and populations continue to disappear. You may have seen reference to the recent report released by World Wildlife Fund Australia: Impacts of Land clearing: the Impacts of the Approved Clearing of Native Vegetation on Australian Wildlife in New South Wales. The report estimates the number of mammals, birds and reptiles that have been destroyed as a result of authorised clearing over the past eight years. The numbers are in the millions. They include something in the order of 30,000 koalas. Yes, an estimated 30,000 koalas destroyed as a result of authorised clearing in New South Wales over the past eight years.

Putting aside whether or not you believe that figure to be close to the mark, and putting aside the collateral damage of the unauthorised clearing that occurs, it is clear that legislation alone is no protection for our wildlife.

Like the Wildlife Preservation Society, FOK believes strongly that engaging peoples' hearts, imagination and intellect is what will count in the end. Education has to be the answer. In this regard I want to share with you an exciting development that will see schools in The Wilson, Southern Cross, and Richmond Valley Education Networks participating in our work. Known as Northern Rivers Koala Friendly Schools: a Project linking Northern Rivers Primary and Central Schools with Friends of the Koalas, it aims to:

- raise awareness in the community of the plight of local koalas
- generate funds and in-kind support for koala conservation
- augment the K-6 curriculum with real-life relevant study
- provide students with opportunities for hands-on environmental involvement; and
- link schools with community groups.

The programme has been signed off by the three regional superintendents, and schools are starting to sign-up. If we make a success of it, perhaps the model can be used in other parts of the State.

In conclusion, let me say that Friends of the Koala is extremely honoured by this Award. We would like to formally acknowledge Councillor Judith May who thought enough of our work to nominate us. We are particularly thrilled that the Award is for 2006 which was the 20th anniversary of Friends of the Koala's formation. The Award is recognition of the efforts of all those members who have gone before as well as those who are active today. This recognition will fortify us and strengthen our resolve as it must for you, the Society which confers it.

Thank you.



*Lorraine Vass,
President of
Friends of the
Koala*

A grand social occasion

The 98th Anniversary Luncheon was a tremendous social success with representatives of many conservation and wildlife preservation organisations attending as well as our loyal members and regular faithful supporters. With Peter Cundall as the guest of honour, the day was filled with much laughter and enjoyment and many interesting antidotes on his life experiences in Australia and overseas.

We held a very successful silent auction to support the work of the important conservation work of the Society.

Serventy Conservation Medal winners

When organising the Luncheon, we were particularly delighted that many of our past Serventy Conservation Medal winners were able to accept our invitation to attend the 98th Annual Luncheon.

The past winners since its inception in 1998 are:

- 1998 Margaret Thorsborne of Cardwell, Queensland
- 1999 Bernie Clarke OAM of Sussex Inlet, New South Wales
- 2000 Dr Judy Messer AM of Balmain, New South Wales
- 2001 Ron and Val Taylor AM of Roseville, New South Wales
- 2002 John and Cicely Fenton of Hamilton, Victoria
- 2003 Lance Ferris of Ballina, New South Wales
- 2004 Wayne Reynolds of Sutherland, New South Wales
- 2005 Ken Metcalfe of Alice Springs, Northern Territory
- 2006 Lindsay E Smith OAM of Unanderra, New South Wales

Bernie Clarke OAM came up from Sussex Inlet on the South Coast of NSW where he now lives with his wife Belle. He received the Serventy Conservation Medal in 1999. A strong Botany Bay conservationist and environmentalist he received the Award for his lifetime devotion as a local environmentalist and long-time Towra/Botany Bay campaigner to save the local wildlife and its vital habitat. Bernie also became Patron of the George's River Keeper program in 1997, which aims to keep the River and Bay free from pollution. He has been working and fighting to protect the Kurnell peninsula for decades. He was recognised and awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to conservation on 12 June 1989.

He is still an active campaigner to protect our environment and is a Regional Councillor of the Society for the South Coast region of New South Wales.



Bernie Clarke OAM

Dr Judy Messer AM, Vice-Chair of the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales, was awarded the Serventy Medal in 2000 for her outstanding contribution to both local and international conservation and environmental protection work. Judy has been, and still is, a tireless worker for biodiversity conservation and environment protection generally. She was Chairperson of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW from 1984 until 2000, with only a two-year break, and is currently the Vice-Chairperson of the NCC. She was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2005 for her services to conservation and the environment.



Dr Judy Messer AM

Ron Taylor AM and Valerie Taylor who have done so much to save the wildlife of the Great Barrier Reef were awarded the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2001. They have been tireless workers promoting a greater understanding of the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef and the urgent need to protect and preserve the unique wildlife found on this world heritage coral reef. On Australia Day 2003, Ron Taylor was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for service to conservation and cinematography.

Lance Ferris of the Australian Seabird Rescue Service travelled from Ballina. Lance was recipient of the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2003.

From meagre beginnings in 1992, the Australian Seabird Rescue Team at Ballina has been very active in saving and rescuing thousands of Australian wildlife particularly seabirds and other marine creatures from fishing hooks and lines. He and his volunteers are regularly conducting awareness campaigns warning of the dangers to wildlife caused by discarded fishing tackle, plastic bags and other pollutants right across Australia and is now forming new local branches of the Service.

Ken Metcalfe was the recipient of the Serventy Conservation Medal for 2005 and travelled all the way from Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. Ken has an inspirational love for Australia's wildlife and has a lifelong interest in nature conservation. In his older years Ken has continued his volunteer conservation work throughout most states of Australia. Ken acts as a Regional Councillor for our Society and assists with many Northern Territory Parks clean ups.



Dr Clive Williams presenting Ken Metcalfe with his Regional Councillor's Certificate

Thank you note from Peter Cundall

'Thanks Patrick and Suzanne for a wonderful and quite inspiring experience. It was a superb dinner we had together that lovely evening before the 98th Annual Luncheon of the Wildlife Preservation Society – and I'm not referring specifically to the gorgeous food we all enjoyed. It was such a pleasure to talk with and exchange ideas with such an extraordinary group of dedicated, self-sacrificing idealists, most of whom have long played such a significant role in helping protect and save our wildlife, our fragile environment and our precious heritage'.



Peter Cundall, Suzanne and Patrick Medway

'And on the following day, to meet with, listen to and even address so many of your Members and supporters at that amazing lunch, was such a wonderful honour. It is an enormous relief to know there are so many idealistic volunteers who quietly but relentlessly work away, year after year for the greatest cause of all. No wonder the Society has lasted for so long!

I do hope that Vincent recovers soon and that one day I may at last have the privilege of meeting this great Australian.

Thanks to you both for your kindness, generosity, courtesy and tolerance.

Thank you, Suzanne for that enormous bag of beautiful goodies.

I'll keep an eye on your great wetland developments Patrick – I am acutely aware of the enormous amount of time, planning and labour you have put into this remarkable concept. I hope that you will keep me abreast of things as this vitally-important ECOWORLD GARDENS educational and teaching centre at Rockdale starts to take shape. This is precisely what *Gardening Australia* is all about and our Executive Producer will, at the appropriate time, certainly be taking steps to feature and highlight activities at the ECOWORLD GARDENS on our program so those in other parts of Australia will be inspired to follow suit.

Best wishes to everyone
Peter Cundall



Camping in the Australian bush

by Suzanne Medway

One of the great joys for our family is camping each January in the Australia bush. This year we travelled to Huskisson on the NSW South Coast for a two week holiday of camping in a bushland setting, with open campfires, native birds and wildlife on the pristine waters of Currumbene Creek, which runs into Jervis Bay. Currumbene Creek is more like a river and is part of the Jervis Bay Marine National Park.

Our family, which included three grandchildren aged twelve, nine and five experienced some amazing encounters with native Australian wildlife, along with a few scary moments.



Our happy camping group.

L to r: Bruce Alden, Sean Murphy, Suzzette Alden, Brett Murphy, Suzanne Medway, Luke Murphy, Aislinn Murphy and Patrick Medway

Common huntsman spider

Each night we sat around the campfire swapping stories and sharing reminiscences of life. One night, much to my horror, a very large huntsman spider was seen sitting on the back of my chair. My alert son-in-law collected the spider and put it back in the bush behind me, but throughout the remainder of the evening I was very edgy, hoping the spider wouldn't return.

Australian huntsman spiders belong to the Family *Sparassidae* and are famed as being the hairy so-called 'tarantulas' that terrify people but, in fact, they are a diverse and relatively harmless group of spiders, with thirteen genera and ninety four described species.

Huntsman spiders are found living under loose bark on trees, in crevices on rock walls and in logs, under rocks and slabs of bark on the ground, and on foliage. Huntsman spiders of a range of

species sometimes enter houses. They are also notorious for entering cars when the windows are left down, and being found hiding behind sun visors or running across the dashboard.

These spiders are generally widely distributed throughout Australia, and are large, long-legged spiders, measuring up to fifteen centimetres across the legs. They are mostly grey to brown, sometimes with banded legs. They are not venomous, but should be treated with great respect.



Common huntsman spider (Isopeda, Isopedella)

The Australian emu

On one of our excursions from the camp site we visited a local emu farm to learn more about this fascinating bird and how a commercial emu farm operated.

Standing nearly two metres tall and weighing approximately fifty kilograms, the emu is Australia's largest bird. A nomadic flightless creature, the emu can be found roaming wild, from the lush high rainfall areas of southern coastal Australia, such as Wilson's Promitory, to the arid expanse of the inland region.

Feeding mainly on seeds and grains, insects, nuts and new seedlings, these attractive birds are sometimes found in large flocks, but more often in paired or family groups across Australia.

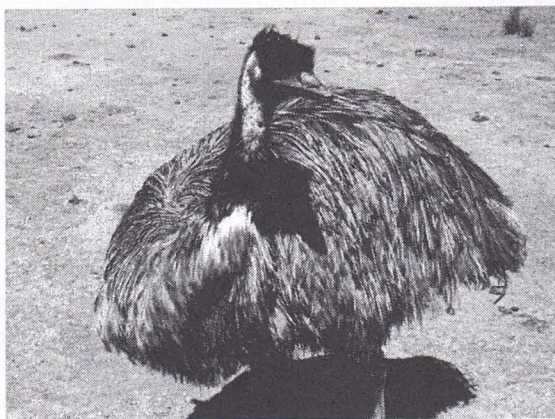
With the approaching rains, and the cooler weather in April, the female will lay one egg every three to four days, with the total egg clutch about twelve. The male takes responsibility for the nest, incubating the eggs over a fifty six day period (during which he does not eat or drink), and then rearing the striped coloured chicks until they are able to fend for themselves, usually taking twelve to fifteen months to do so.

The emu is principally farmed for low-fat meat, high quality leather and oil. Emu oil has a reputation largely derived from its traditional

use over hundreds of years by the Australian Aboriginals. Western Australia was the first state in Australia to allow commercial emu farming in 1970, with approval being given in Queensland in 1987 to the Cherbourg Aboriginal Community to capture three hundred wild emus for a primary breeding stock.

Now each state allows for emu farming in one form or another, with state and national associations formed to look after member needs. Emu farming is a growth industry, with massive potential to earn domestic and export dollars, and at the same time contribute to the ecological regrowth of the country.

An emu farm is a very environment-friendly operation, with virtually no ground clearance necessary, and often a tree planting program is required. Emus are soft-footed birds, ensuring no damage to the land on which they are farmed, and being native animals, are less prone to disease.



The Australian emu (Dromaius novaehollandiae)

Satin bowerbird (Ptilonorhynchus violaceus)

While camping, it is sometimes a nuisance to track to a distant toilet facility, but in our campground we found an active satin bowerbird bower quite close to the facilities, so each visit there was with the anticipation that we could be lucky enough to spot the bowerbird. Unfortunately, only daughter Colleen was lucky enough to see the male bird early one morning as he was leaving the bower.

Satin bowerbirds are medium-sized (27cm - 33cm) native birds. The adult male has striking glossy blue-black plumage, a pale bluish white bill and a violet-blue iris. Younger males and females are similar in colour to each other, and are collectively referred to as 'green' birds. They are olive-green above, off-white with dark scalloping below and have brown wings and tail. The bill is browner in colour. Young males may begin to acquire their adult plumage in their fifth year and are not fully 'attired' until they are seven years old.

Satin bowerbirds have an amazing variety of sounds, including whistles, buzzing and hissing, as well as mimicry. The male also gives a loud "weeoo".



Satin bowerbird

The bowerbird gets its name from the thatched structure (bower) built by the male as part of its courtship rituals. The bird defends a court or platform area where it constructs a bower and spends most of its time displaying and titivating. The bower is constructed in the undergrowth from twigs and coarse grass, and the cleared area may be as much as one metre across and several centimetres thick.

Adjacent to the bower, usually at the entrance, is a platform area on which is placed a collection of coloured display things. The satin bowerbird has a preference for blue objects that match its own blue, satin-like plumage. Before Europeans arrived these consisted mainly of flowers, berries and feathers, but since then the bird has had a field day with the caps of ball-point pens, crockery, rubber, clothing, paper, pegs and bottle tops.

The discarded plastic rings from two litre milk bottles are particularly dangerous to the bowerbird as they can get caught around the bird's neck. For this reason, our Society successfully lobbied the Government and milk manufacturers to stop using blue plastic for milk tops or replace them with blue rings that snap upon opening.

Most bowers are used for nine months of the year, during which they are continually being partially dismantled and rebuilt. During spring the adult male may spend nearly the whole of each day in his bower preparing for courtship. When the female arrives, he performs an elaborate display at the entrance as she approaches. Mating often takes place inside the bower.



Satin bowerbird in bower

A range of bowerbirds spread from Australia and throughout New Guinea. The satin bowerbird lives in the wetter parts of the forests of the eastern seaboard from Victoria to South-East Queensland. They are a popular icon of the east coast forested areas.

Bowerbirds are naturally territorial. Neighbouring birds may pilfer decorations from each other and even attempt to trash nearby bowers.

Bowerbirds eat various berries, fruits and insects. They sometimes visit orchards and back yards during the non-bower building part of the year. They can cause some damage to local orchards and fruit crops.



Satin bowerbird bower outside the toilet facilities

Port Jackson shark ***(Heterodontus portusjacksoni)***

heteros - different (Greek)

dont - tooth (Greek)

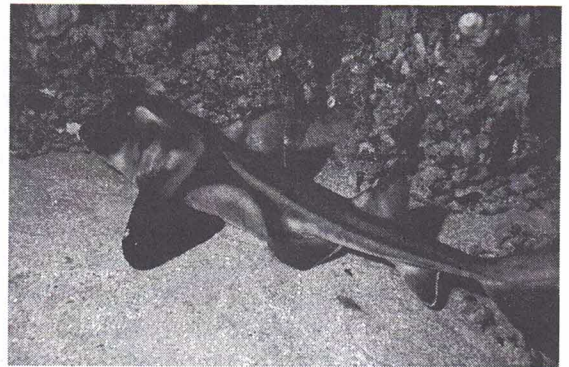
Refers to the pointed front teeth and the blunt rear teeth

portusjacksoni - named after Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour)

One very hot day our family spent the day at Collingwood Beach and during a lengthy walk along the sand, daughter Colleen was lucky enough to spot some shark eggs lying in the seaweed. She

picked up a couple that were obviously empty and then spotted an egg with a trace of yolk hanging out. On further investigation she discovered the dead embryo of a baby shark still in the egg. Adults and children alike were fascinated to see the perfectly formed baby shark still attached to the egg.

There are over 370 species of sharks world wide, 166 of which occur in Australian waters. The family Heterodontidae has eight species all in the genus *Heterodontus*, three of which are found in Australian waters. These are the Port Jackson shark, the zebra horn shark, and the crested horn shark.



Port Jackson shark (Heterodontus portusjacksoni)

The Port Jackson shark can grow to 1.65 metres. More commonly, however, the males grow to seventy five centimetres and the females between eighty centimetres and ninety five centimetres. When they hatch, juvenile Port Jackson sharks, called pups, are about twenty five centimetres long.

The Port Jackson shark occurs in southern Australian waters from southern Queensland south to Tasmania and west to the central coast of Western Australia. They usually live in rocky environments on, or near, the bottom. Sometimes they are found in muddy and sandy areas, or where seagrass occurs. Their diet usually consists of sea urchins, molluscs, crustaceans and fish. They forage for their food at night when their prey are most active, and often use caves and rocky outcrops as protection during the day.

Port Jackson sharks are considered harmless to humans, although the teeth, whilst not large or sharp, can give a painful bite. Port Jackson sharks are quite distinctive blunt headed-sharks that lay eggs.

Port Jackson sharks have harness-like markings which cross the eyes, run along the back to the first dorsal fin, then cross the side of the body. This recognisable colour pattern makes it very easy to identify this species.



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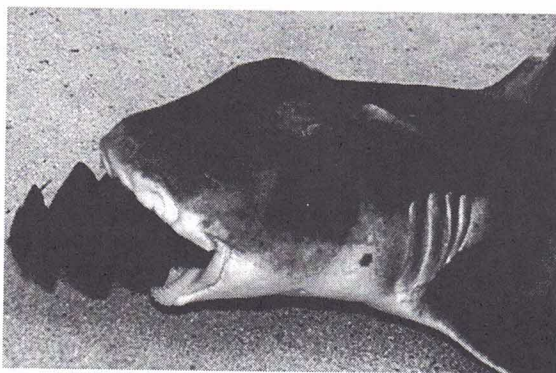
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The Port Jackson shark has two similar-sized dorsal fins. Each fin has a spine at the leading edge, which is reputed to be venomous. The spines of juveniles can be quite sharp, but those of the adults are usually blunt. The spines are sometimes found washed up on beaches and have been mistaken for all sorts of things from bird beaks to goat horns. These spines are believed to have given rise to the common name of the family, 'horn sharks'.

When most people think of shark teeth, they think of large, sharp teeth like those in the film 'Jaws'. Not all sharks have teeth like these. The teeth of the Port Jackson shark are not serrated, and the front teeth have a very different shape to those found at the back of the jaws, hence the derivation of the genus and family names. The anterior teeth are small and pointed whereas the posterior teeth are broad and flat. These teeth are perfect for holding, breaking and then crushing and grinding the shells of molluscs and echinoderms. Juvenile Port Jackson sharks have more pointed teeth and feed on a higher proportion of soft-bodied prey than adults. They can feed by sucking in water and sand from the bottom, blowing the sand out of the gill slits, and retaining the food which is swallowed.

Port Jackson sharks have the ability to eat and breathe at the same time. This ability is unusual for sharks which mostly need to swim with the mouth open to force water over the gills. The Port Jackson shark can pump water into the first enlarged gill slit and out through the other four gill slits. By pumping water across the gills, the shark does not need to move to breathe. It can lie on the bottom for long periods of time, a behaviour that is observed at mating time.

Port Jackson sharks are creatures of habit. They can migrate up to eight hundred kilometres north in summer, only to return in winter for the breeding season, usually to the same area and often to the same gullies and caves.



Port Jackson shark with an egg in the mouth

The breeding season is usually late winter and into the spring. At this time, divers regularly observe sharks congregating in caves, under ledges and in gutters. Port Jackson sharks are oviparous, which means that the female lays eggs. The egg case is a tough, dark brown spiral about seven centimetres to eight centimetres wide and fifteen centimetres long. It is common to see them washed up on our beaches.



Port Jackson shark egg and dead embryo

The egg case is soft when laid by the female. She uses her mouth to wedge the egg case into a rock crevice where it hardens, and from which one young shark emerges after ten to twelve months. Female Port Jackson sharks mature at eleven to fourteen years of age, whereas males only take around eight to ten years.

Brush-tailed possum (Trichosurus vulpecula)

Another delightful close encounter with the local wildlife occurred one night when we were playing cards. We heard a panting noise and looking down saw a very large, and we thought beautiful looking, brush-tailed possum helping "himself" to our supply of bread rolls. We shooed him away from his feed and put the bread out of his reach. Each night we eagerly awaited his return and were lucky enough to receive a second visit a few nights later when we had the camera ready to take his photo. A few nights later one of our group was lucky enough to see a male and a female walk through our campsite in the very early hours of the morning.

Brush-tailed possums are about as big as domestic cats, and have a pointed snout, pink nose, long whiskers and large ears. They also have sharp claws, which they use to climb trees and comb their fur.



This male brush-tailed possum visited our campsite at night

Brush-tailed possums vary considerably in size and colour throughout their range. In Tasmania, they tend to be black or dark grey, and have adapted to the cold climate by becoming much larger and furrer than brush-tailed possums on the mainland. In Queensland, however, the animals are more copper-coloured and tend to be smaller than elsewhere.

The brush-tailed possum is the most widely distributed possum in Australia. It can be found in forests and woodlands all along the east coast, and also lives in inland areas along tree-lined rivers and creeks. A nocturnal animal, it is active at night and usually spends the day sleeping in hollow logs or crevices.

In the bush, brush-tailed possums feed on leaves, buds, flowers and fruits. They have strong teeth and often use their front paws to hold their food while eating.

Except when breeding, brush-tailed possums tend to lead a solitary life. They stick to their 'home range', which they mark out by coating tree branches with a scent released from glands on their chests. If two possums meet at night they try to avoid each other – fights between adult possums are rare, although they may make threatening noises towards each other. Young possums may be attacked if they try to take over an adult's range or territory.

Brush-tailed possums are marsupials, and their young are usually born in May and June after a gestation period of seventeen days. The newborn possum finds its way to the mother's pouch and attaches itself to a teat. After feeding and growing for about five months in the pouch, the young possum spends another two months clinging to its mother's back as she moves about. Usually only one young is born at a time, and males do not take part in looking after the young. By the time they are seven months old, the young possums are usually independent of their mothers. They are fully grown by about ten months, and the females will usually start to breed for the first time when they reach twelve months of age.

Possums have adapted well to contact with people. However, at times this contact can be noisy and messy – particularly if the possum takes up residence in the roof of your house! If this happens, the possum can be trapped and removed from the ceiling cavity, provided you first obtain a special licence from the NPWS. You must release your resident possum back onto your property, as it will not survive if removed from the area. In some areas, wildlife rehabilitation groups will help you with this. The best solution is to actually make friends with local possums! If you encourage a possum to stay around and claim your yard as its territory, other possums will be discouraged from taking up residence.

Although you should not feed your resident possum, you could try building it a special shelter such as a large possum box, somewhere safe (and away from your roof cavity) where it won't be disturbed by dogs or people.

Bird life

For the ornithological minded members of our camping family, the birdlife around our campsite was magnificent. We were lucky enough to spot king parrots, crimson rosellas, New Holland honeyeaters, bronze winged pigeons, white cockatoos, yellow-tailed black cockatoos, king fishers, galahs, kookaburras, egrets, herons, gulls, ravens, the magnificent sea eagle, and rainbow lorikeets.

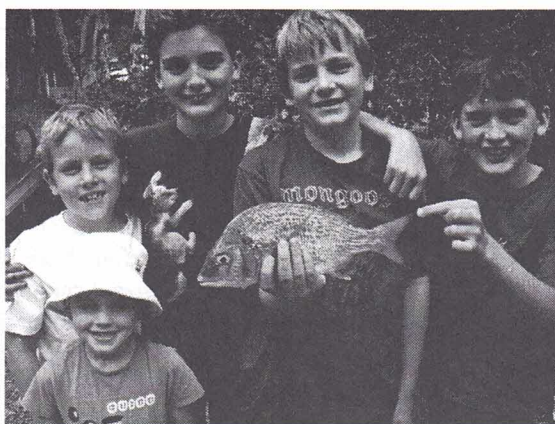
We were also on the look out for powerful owls, olive-backed orioles, spotted pardelotes, and white-fronted chats.

Fishing

Fishing on Currumbene Creek was a favourite dusk past time but, although we managed to catch a few very small bream, tailor, trevally and toads, these were all put back in the water to live another day.



Aislinn and Colleen Murphy fishing on Currumbene Creek



Fishing group from left to right: Julian Colman, Aislinn Murphy, Sean Murphy, Alex Colman, and Luke Murphy. The small bream was put back in the water and swam swiftly away into the depths



Wildside

by Lance Ferris, Australian Seabird Rescue

Second release of turtles at Byron

Another three turtles were recently released at Byron Bay, following rehabilitation at our Ballina WildlifeLink turtle hospital. The release of the smallest of the three turtles was a major success in techniques for turtles suffering from plastic ingestion. Initially, it had been virtually comatose for several weeks, before treatment took effect. During the turtle's time in care, it passed a total of 105 pieces of man-made rubbish.



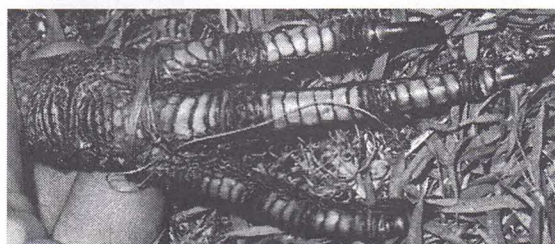
ASR Volunteers Sonya, Rod and Jeannie, release another three turtles at Byron Bay

Long toes, big trouble

Of all species of birds, those with long, slender toes are highly susceptible to entanglement in string and fishing line. Magpies, ospreys and ibises are just three of the many birds that are unfortunate enough to forage in an environment where discarded line poses a threat. These clumps of line are often used as nesting material, with disastrous long-term consequences.



The osprey (Pandion haliaetus cristatus), which rides the wind looking for fish and then dives for its slippery prey, is listed as vulnerable in NSW



The ibis' foot, showing the entangled fishing line

Ollie – the final frontier

The hearts of all our volunteers were with Ollie the Olive Ridley sea turtle as she travelled to Cairns for release into her home waters. The mission was completed in copybook style, and the successful 2,600 kilometre journey was the culmination of twelve months of intensive care for the ailing turtle at Ballina's WildlifeLink turtle hospital. The greatest fear was the temperature in the hold of the plane – 10-14 degrees – and on arrival in Cairns she suffered from temporary convulsions. However, the following morning, she was cruising the holding pond, desperately searching for a passage to the ocean... and freedom.

Fifty nautical miles from Cairns, on a day so perfect that only the Turtle God could provide, Ollie was placed in the ocean. Once our hands were free of her flippers, she sped like a bullet into the depths of the crystal-clear, turquoise waters off Northern Queensland.



Our old friend, Ollie the turtle, seconds from freedom in the waters off Far North Queensland

\$23,000 plastic bag

When foreign ships come to our shores, Quarantine Inspection officers routinely board them. Any 'suspect' items are placed in large, yellow plastic bags, marked 'QUARANTINE RISK'. The bags are then tagged with the ship's name and remain unopened, until the ship has departed and reached international waters.

A Russian ship, *Khudozhnik Zhukov*, dropped one of the quarantine bags overboard as it headed north along the Australian Coast. The bag was found on a beach near the Queensland town of Noosa. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) swung into action, bringing a successful case of pollution against the ship's owners, and the Master of the vessel.

In a Brisbane court, Magistrate O'Shea handed down her decision – a massive fine of \$20,000 for the ship's owners, and another \$3,000 against the ship's Master.

The case for the prosecution included expert advice from an AMSA officer, and a post mortem report submitted by Ballina's Australian Seabird Rescue, which proved, irrefutably, that sea turtles die from ingestion of plastics. Magistrate O'Shea noted the potential harm of the plastic bag and that it polluted the sea area near the World Heritage listed Fraser Island.

Byron hot-spot for turtles

While we continue on our roller-coaster of the plastic revolution, yet another sea turtle died from swallowing shards of plastics. Thirty three pieces were found inside the creature but, again, pieces of plastic bags accounted for a small percentage of the blockages, while hard plastic pieces took first place. We are yet to identify a tiny one centimetre plastic handle found amongst the ingested junk. Of four rescued over January, only two remain alive, one of which is also showing signs of gut impaction.

Byron Bay is fast becoming a hot-spot for sick turtles, with three being presented at our WildlifeLink turtle hospital during January.

Rare terns

The reason we only receive a few sooty terns per year is likely due to the fact that the species is listed as a vulnerable under the Threatened Species Act. Their populations have diminished to such an extent that their general habitat only spans a mere 10,000 hectares. They are also called wide-awake birds due to the noisy high-pitched sound they produce. How these birds become so

disoriented is a mystery, especially as there have been no recent significant weather conditions to cause them to stray off course.



ASR's Sonia Nourse takes care of a rare sooty tern

Pelican impaled in callous act of cruelty

In February, a pelican was reported at Bateman's Bay with an arrow impaled in its body. The arrow had lodged in the centre of its torso, and by some miracle had missed vital organs. After numerous calls from concerned members of the public, a specialist team of rescuers was despatched from the Australian Seabird Rescue (ASR) branch at Lake Illawarra.

ASR's South Coast Co-ordinator Julie Clarke said: "This was a highly emotive issue because of its callous and cruel nature. But let's not forget that this is only one pelican amongst 1,200 pelicans we have captured with potentially fatal fishing-line and hook injuries."

The arrow was successfully removed with no apparent damage to the bird's internals. It is in care for a precautionary course of antibiotics at the ASR centre in Illawarra.



Mindless cruelty: Our South Coast team travelled hundreds of kilometres to rescue this pelican impaled with an arrow

Nesting in ammo boxes

The barbaric shooting of ducks is still legal in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. As shooters clean their weapons for the Tasmanian duck season, rescuers from the Coalition Against Duck Shooting are again preparing to collect the wounded, as shotguns blast the skies over the precious wetlands.

Witnesses at opening day of the season liken it to a scene from the Vietnam war, with would-be 'Rambos' strutting through the swamps, adorned in khaki, multi pocketed vests stuffed with shotgun cartridges.

In a strange twist of irony, The Field and Game Association of Victoria prides itself on building nest boxes for the ducks, only to return later to pepper the new birds with lead. More ironic is the fact that some of the nest boxes are made from old ammunition crates!

Fortunately, the number of shooters has decreased over the years for various reasons, not the least of which are the pleas of wives and children of the shooters to stop the practice.

Although the shooters are instructed on the licensed species they can legally shoot, rescuers regularly retrieve protected species.

Desperate dolphin helped by fishermen

In early January, fishermen at Port Arlington, Victoria noticed a baby dolphin being pushed to the surface by its mother. The young dolphin was entangled in sixty pound breaking-strain fishing line, and was being pulled under by the weight of sinkers attached to the line.

The fishermen maneuvered their boat alongside, but the mother dolphin insisted on pushing the stricken calf away from the boat, not realising that help was at hand. After almost an hour of trying to bring the young dolphin close enough, they got hold of it. One end of the line was weighted in the water, with the other end wrapped three times around the dolphin, from the dorsal fin to the back of the head. The fishermen got hold of its tail and cut the line off. While all this took place, Mum remained near the vessel keeping a close eye on her baby.

Incidents like these are indicative of the desperate need for marine parks. These creatures need room to move and the least we can do is offer them some safe space.



A mother dolphin in a desperate bid to keep her tangled calf at the surface, to enable it to breathe

Plastic pieces are very mobile, and move thousands of miles around our oceans with prevailing winds, currents and tides.

Government agencies, on all sides of the political fence, are working feverishly to reduce the amount of plastic in our oceans. All of the local fishers that I know are what I call 'good blokes', and are very environmentally responsible, especially the local fishing clubs. Sadly though, from our fourteen years of studies of our coastline, the most common plastic bag discarded on our beaches and rock walls, over and above all others, is the bait-bag. Discarded fishing line is commonly found in the gut of dead turtles.

Swimming snakes

Jumping in the lake to avoid snakes might not be such a good idea. Almost all species of terrestrial snakes can swim. Not only are they quite adept at swimming but, on hot days, they can remain submerged for hours, with only their nostrils protruding from the water – an ideal vantage point to pick off frogs on the bank.

Sea snakes, on the other hand, are useless out of the water. In their evolutionary journey from the land into the sea, they lost all their ability to travel on land. For a sea snake, a couple of hours on a beach, in the hot sun, is fatal.



Land snakes are good swimmers. This python was observed at our WildlifeLink Sanctuary, submerged in our lake for two days

What goes up, does come down

Party balloons are a child's delight, especially if the balloon is filled with helium, and floats magically in the air.

Whilst these releases continue in many parts of the world, considerable information from overseas sources continues to support the fact that marine creatures are at risk from swallowing these balloons.

Whether the balloon is attached to a string or not, if it is filled with helium, it will float, and eventually come down still presenting a choking hazard or digestion hazard for marine turtles and many other species.

Recently, a Northern giant petrel, (a very large pelagic seabird), now listed as an endangered species, was presented with a ribbon hanging from its beak. The big bird was near death. Suspecting the ribbon was attached to a balloon, volunteers were initially unsuccessful in removing the balloon, when the ribbon broke.



Northern giant petrel, prior to removal of the balloon (with the ribbon hanging from its beak) and, as an inset, the balloon itself as it was in May 2006

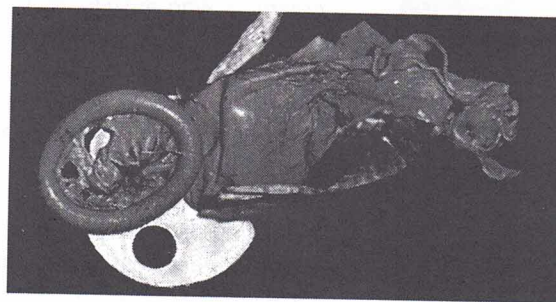
However, after rejoining the ribbon, and tubing some paraffin oil into the bird, the orange balloon was removed from the intestines of the bird. Within several minutes of the operation, the bird consumed almost one kilogram of fish, and was eventually released. Contrary to some beliefs, wildlife rescuers and rehabilitators, such as Australian Seabird Rescue, achieve an extremely high success rate in the successful release of over seventy species of seabirds, and five species of marine turtles.

As an experiment, the deflated balloon was towed around the bird's pool, to determine the bird's reaction. The petrel was intent on chasing the

balloon and volunteers had to be intensely alert, in order that the bird did not swallow the balloon, again.

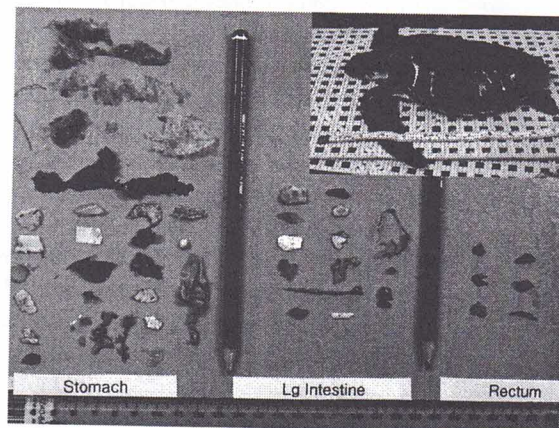
It has been said that helium-filled balloons rise to a height where they 'freeze to a state of brittle fracture' and 'burst into small pieces, whereupon the flutter harmlessly to earth'.

We placed several latex balloons, from various manufacturers, into a commercial freezer that was operating at fifty degrees Celsius BELOW ZERO. Despite two months in this sub-zero environment, the balloons retained their shape, albeit partially deflated. After the period of two months, volunteers entered the freezer, and waited until the temperature had returned to fifty degrees below zero. Even at that temperature, the balloons were still pliable and had not reached a state of 'brittle fracture'.



This is the SAME balloon, which was removed from the giant petrel in May 2006, ten MONTHS LATER. (Image dated 25 March 2007)

Ironically, even if balloons did fracture into small pieces, according to our studies and autopsies of marine turtles, each piece of balloon would present a significant threat to small, hatchling turtles. All species of sea turtles in Australian waters are considered endangered, threatened or vulnerable. According to Dr Colin Limpus of the Environmental Protection Agency of Queensland, the statistics indicate that only one in one thousand sea turtles survives to maturity!



An example of the host of different types of pollutants, ingested by ONE 38 cm green sea turtle



Agreed, latex is biodegradable. However, there are many marine creatures constantly searching for food sources. A floating balloon, or a piece thereof, represents a food source, whether it is biodegradable, deflated, blue, green, orange, or in small, so-called 'harmless' pieces... and continues to be a significant threat to our precious wildlife, irrespective of the size, colour, texture or shape of the pollutant.

In worldwide studies, (US Fisheries and Wildlife, UK Marine Conservation Society) it is estimated that a latex balloon may take as long as twelve months to bio-degrade. Meanwhile, as they degrade, thousands more are released into the environment at balloon releases... to 'top up' the constant threat to our wildlife.

Dumping of balloons into the environment, whether it is on the ground or in the air, is not only littering, but presents a hazard to marine creatures who mistake these items for food.

The 'jet-stream' air-flow across the continent is from west to east. Helium balloons are thus likely to reach the height of the jet-stream, and eventually find their way into the ocean.

Have you ever been to a party where helium balloons were floating around the room? And for those who stayed late, they would have noticed that these balloons slowly drifted to the floor.

There is a simple explanation; Helium is an expensive gas. Its atomic structure is very small, in fact the second smallest atom in the world. A balloon is filled with what is called 'balloon gas' – a mixture of ordinary air and helium – just enough to float the balloon. The Helium is small enough, over a time, to pass through the wall of the balloon, thus allowing the balloon to descend.

If one was to dump 1,000 balloons on the roadway, the action would incur a penalty for littering. What gives us the right to dump many thousands of balloons in the ocean? That is very likely where helium filled balloons will end up.

EVERY PERSON involved in the release of helium balloons creates a real threat to many endangered species of marine creatures.

At the closing ceremony of the Paralympics (2000), thousands of balloons were used in the display. Not one was filled with helium, and not one ended up in the ocean. There are many ways to celebrate with balloons, without recklessly endangering our wildlife.

Ask the children this: "Would you like a balloon to take home... or would you rather we just throw them away into the ocean?"

What goes up, DOES come down!

We are losing our endangered species.

Third World War

In late March I was in the middle of what seemed to be Third World War. The Northlakes State College in Brisbane was about to release 2,000 helium filled balloons into the air... to mark Harmony Day!!!

I was gob smacked that this practice was still continuing. I spent a day passing on evidence and information to all agencies, including the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, in an attempt to prevent what was happening.

The children of the school and some parents were seriously concerned about the welfare of marine animals as a result of the balloon release.

I can only say this...the WORLD EXPLODED when I sent the emails out requesting emails be sent to the Queensland Department of Education about the proposed balloon release at Queensland's Northlakes State School.

In fourteen years, I have NEVER seen anything like what happened. Even though the school decided to cancel the balloon release, the emails continued to roll in.

France, Greece, Athens, Hawaii, dozens of States of the US, the UK, Mexico, Hong Kong, New Zealand and other places I have never heard of, and every whistle-stop across Australia.

The qualifications of these people, and the organisations they represent, reads like a WORLD WHO'S WHO in the area of the environment, biology, wildlife, and every known facet of saving the planet. Even UNESCO!

Message from UNESCO

UNESCO emailed the Regional District Office of the Queensland Department of Education and secretary for the Director General of Education, Brisbane:

"I am disappointed to learn that 2,000 helium-filled balloons will be released at Northlakes State College in Queensland tomorrow. Please reconsider. Imagine the effect on the celebrations if a container of dead turtles was dumped at the college. It is very well known from observations all over the world, that turtles mistake balloons and plastic bags for jellyfish and swallow them. They die. Please think of this as you watch the gaily coloured balloons floating away in the sky.

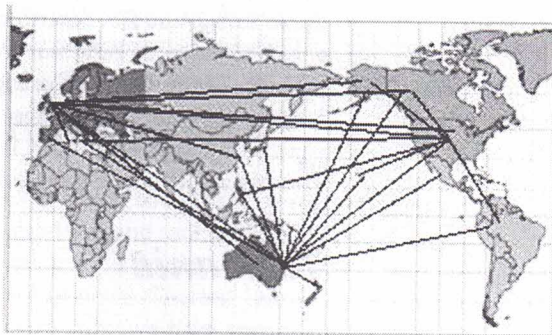
What goes up must come down, and your balloons will kill endangered species. If you have already cancelled the balloon release, THANKYOU. If not, I'd be grateful for a reply with an explanation of how you can justify this irresponsible act. It is just littering the oceans with unsightly and, for turtles, dangerous debris."

Yours sincerely,
Ian Redmond OBE, Chief Consultant, GRASP
- UNEP/UNESCO Great Ape Survival Project
Bristol, UK

For a while, I thought we might get twenty or thirty replies, AT LEAST 500 emails clogged the various computers of the Queensland Department of Education. Without a doubt, this was the MOST AWESOME EVENT I have ever experienced in fourteen years!

If this has been an example of how to change the world, by God, we can do it!

Just give me a project, a PC, and forty eight hours!!!!



Balloon Map

Above is where the message went, that we can ascertain... so far.

On a count-back, we did some calculations, with some very interesting results.

We received over 200 emails, here. Hundreds of replies went directly to the Department of Education without being cc'd here.

I did a simple census study with a number of the senders and it is averaged that every contact cc'd at least ten other people... some of which were organisations... also with many members.

So... very conservatively, the message reached over 2,000 people within twenty four hours and the first cc.

Cc's to other groups with members could well have reached more than 1,000 people, who in turn, likely cc'd the message on.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that within thirty six hours, (given world time-zones), the message was read by more than 3,000 people, by the time it was cc'd yet again.

And who knows how many times was it relayed from there?

For instance... I received a phone call from a lady in Sydney, who was part of an organisation in China which saves bears. Our message had gone to from Australia>US>China>Sydney> and back to me by phone.

Good God.. how many people or organisations did UNESCO contact???? Or the UK Marine Conservation Society??? The Turtle network alone has 3,000 members world-wide!

Of significance, is the fact that the vast majority of the recipients were scientists, researchers, rehabilitators, environmentalists or those who supported these organisations.

3,000 did I say? It may well have reached 10,000 people.

Hahahahaha... I think it is called... networking.



Wildlife walkabout

*by Dr Vincent Serventy AM
President of Honour*

International

Judgement Day

In the year 2000 I agreed with *New Scientist* that the world faced Judgement Day this century unless we worked to postpone it. Professor Ian Lowe the new as well as distinguished president of the Australian Conservation Foundation has written a good book 'A Big Fix' dealing with Australia and the world's environmental problems. Gro Harlem Brundtland, then the Prime Minister of Norway, now a distinguished member of the United Nations, told us how she had chaired an international committee to prepare a global agenda for change. She wrote a book called 'Our Common Future'. When I realised she had the answer, I took her message back to my Council at the time. They agreed with her major point that the United Nations needed a Bill of Environmental Rights to complement the 1948 Bill of Human Rights. This is flawed without the other half of the earth equation.

Our Council agreed on the need for ten green values in the Bill. The *New Scientist* had given as their reasons for the disaster coming as follows: global pollution, global warming and global overpopulation.

Our ten green values would deal with all of these. That is why our Council today is pressing; hopefully for our nation, or some nation, to take the Bill to the United Nations. With the combined consideration of all nations they may improve on our Bill. That is one of the world's most urgent need towards which our Society must work; so the whole world can come into harmony within nature.

Our Society realised the great truth; re-writing the poet John Donne:

'No nation is an island. When we ask for whom the bell tolls it tolls for all humankind'.

Our Society has a major task to have our Bill of Environmental Rights taken to the United Nations. Not only to save Australia but the world.

The great green wall of China

As part of a new environmental shift, this nation has begun the world's greatest ecological move to halt 2,460 square kilometres of land being lost annually to the expanding Gobi Desert, due to deforestation, overgrazing and drought, by the planting of 4,480 kilometres of trees. In recent years China has rapidly reversed some of its previously destructive policies. Perhaps it will begin to admire its philosopher of two thousand years ago, Confucius, who taught that humans are part of nature.

Doomsday vault

New Scientist reports Norway is working on a storage vault which will hold two million seeds of all the varieties of the world's crops.

If the worst comes to the worst and war or natural disasters destroy all farmland, we can start again to recreate agriculture as our conservation friend Jared Diamond describes in his famous book '*Guns, Germs and Steel*'.

There is only one world and we must praise Norway and Great Britain who are creating such 'banks'. We would be glad if they could convince their nations to take the Bill of Environmental Rights to the United Nations.

We need their help.

Climate change

The local media has reported that the United States has poured scorn on a French proposal to tax the imports of countries which refuse to sign the Kyoto Protocol.

Australia and the United States have not signed!

National

National and regional parks

It is surprising how many folk interested in conservation lack any real understanding of these two kinds of park, vital for conserving the world of nature.

The first is very simple. Ten percent of any nation should be conserved in this way to conserve our present bio-diversity. The world's biological hot spots are the obvious places, with Australia having two.

The regional park is how to manage the other ninety percent, where people live and work. Our book '*Saving Australia*' describes both. For example, a recent issue of *Australian Wildlife* describes the problem of the Murray-Darling Region. This is the food bowl of our nation. There is a possible solution - create a larger food bowl in Northern Australia. This has ample water, good soil and space.

Tasmania

Tasmanian devils

This fearsome looking creature in reality, when treated kindly, is as friendly as a dog. We have previously reported that the animal is facing extinction. Recent media reports have indicated that 'more than half of all wild animals had died of a facial tumour disease.' Now a desperate attempt to save them is being tried by sending forty seven animals to mainland zoos, including Healesville and the Gosford Reptile Park. We wish this venture well.



Tasmanian devil

Queensland

Using an enemy

Reintroducing dingoes would help control the population of nuisance pests and restore some of the country's dwindling native species, according to research by Professor Johnson of James Cook University.

Curiously, I had the same message from member Chris Anderson of Tahmoor in NSW.



The once feral pest brought to Australia long ago as a companion of the First Australians

Island sanctuaries

Our sister society's Queensland magazine has a plea for island sanctuaries. The most world famous are the Galapagos Islands, made best known by evolutionist Charles Darwin. Australia can be proud that we have conserved some of our most important island sanctuaries - the marine natural wonder of the world, the Great Barrier Reef, and on the west coast, the Abrolhos, the Ningaloo Reef and the Montebello Islands described to us many years ago at a dinner party by the world's most famous modern evolutionist the late Ernst Mayr as 'test tubes of evolution.'



Sooty terns in millions nesting on Pelsart Island. In the seas around are coral reefs, the most southerly in the world whose rich marine life sustained the spiny rock lobsters. This industry earned the World Wildlife Fund's first marine medal for a sustainable industry

The end of the Reef

University of Queensland scientists have warned that above-average sea temperatures on the Great Barrier Reef were causing coral bleaching, which could make much of the famous reef die.

New South Wales

Blossoms carry a rich fruit

Brad Law, an ecologist with NSW Primary Industries, has measured how much nectar can be produced by spotted gum and ironbarks when they burst into blossom. Such mature trees are of vital importance as they are a vital food source for many birds, bats, small marsupials and insects.

Trees

The Hawkesbury Forest experiment, conducted by University of Western Sydney scientists, comprises twelve giant chambers. Each holds a spotted gum sapling to provide field data to better understand how our woodlands and forests will respond to the carbon dioxide levels expected by 2100.

I trust they have read Dr David Murray's book '*Carbon Dioxide and Plant Responses*'. (David is a councillor and Scientific Panel member of our Society). He is a world authority on the topic. In a foreword I wrote to this book I explained how David came out of his university 'ivory tower' to educate our Society. Thank you David. I wish there were more like you. The world of nature needs all the help it can get.

A task force for the NSW Central Coast

Gosford is one of the six regional cities set up to improve 'their educational, cultural and community values'. I would also hope their environmental values. Actually most residents adopt our Society motto 'to live in harmony within nature'. I remember one morning I was taking a walk with a writer of children's books who asked didn't we ever have victories?

All her children knew was of defeats, like the death of the dodo and the Tasmanian tiger. I told her of our new book that listed many of our victories down the years with battles we still need to win. All can help.

As we walked along I saw a green lorikeet probing for nectar in a grevillea flower. I still do not know what drove me to try to stroke the bird. All I know is I put out my hand slowly and stroked

the nape of the neck without disturbing the bird's feeding.

My companion cried out 'Saint Francis'. No, I said, explaining that in Pearl Beach we lived in harmony within nature. So most wildlife treated us as large harmless animals that occasionally provided food.



Pelicans have nesting colonies on some rivers

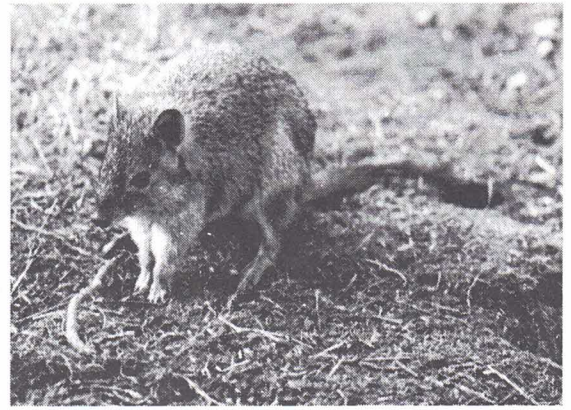


Silver gulls are the rubbish collectors who pick up food scraps

Western Australia

Woylies

The woylie, also known as the brush-tailed bettong wallaby, was once common in Dryandra woodlands. Sadly that is no longer the case and their numbers have declined, though the rate of decline has been slowed sufficiently to permit the translocation of some of the animals to the Eyre Peninsula, as indicated in the last issue of this magazine. Sixty woylies have been radio-collared in a comprehensive investigation into why the species has declined.



*The woylie (*Bettongia penicillata*) is also known as the brush-tailed bettong*

South Australia

The Coorong

These wetlands, listed by Ramsar, are a complex mix of water from the Murray River and the sea. They have recently featured in a television program on the problems of the Murray River. The Coorong, best known as the location of the children's book, *Storm Boy*, is now in a bad way and various universities and the South Australian Government are studying its problems.

The following excerpt from a recent copy of *Environmental News* illustrated the problem well.

'Henry has been a commercial fisherman all his life. When Henry wants to show his grandchildren silver perch, blackfish, catfish, Murray cod, he uses pictures in a book. These fish are now extinct from the lakes and the Coorong, a huge wetland system at the end of the great Murray while two thirds of the Coorong is now dying.'

No solution to the Coorong's problems can be found without solving the water usage issues along the Murray.



WPSA MERCHANDISE

Many of our members have expressed interest in purchasing gift merchandise for friends and family (or even themselves)! This is a great way to support WPS, so we have responded below with a mail order system. Simply send your cheque or credit card details (with expiry date) and we will post your order out to you. All prices include GST and 20% member's discount. All proceeds go towards our conservation projects.



Polo shirts: \$25.00
(white with navy logo)



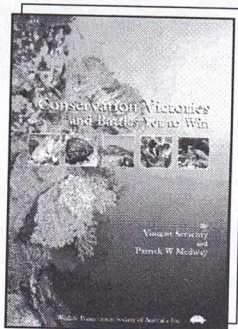
Kids T-shirts: \$10.00
(navy with white logo/ white with navy logo)



Cap: \$10.00
(navy with white logo)



Drink bottle bag: \$10.00
(navy with white logo, bottle not included)



**Conservation
Victories and Battles
Yet to Win**
By Vincent Serventy and
Patrick W Medway
Price: \$20.00



**Conserving Australia's
Wildlife**
By Dr Joan Webb
Price: \$15.00

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Drink bottle bag	_____	n/a	\$10.00	_____
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PATRICK W MEDWAY AM
National President

98th Annual Luncheon



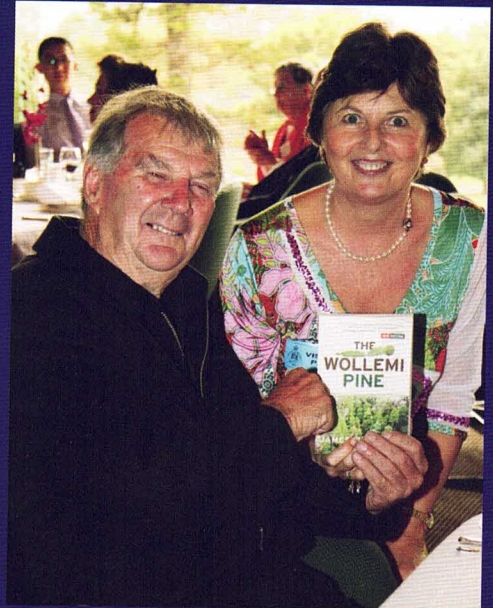
Suzanne Medway, Colleen Murphy, Philip Hammon (Life Member), Patrick Medway, Peta Hammon and Joan Brandt (Life Member)



Peter Cundall and John Clarke



John Brandenburg, Jill and Geoff Hedge



Peter Cundall and Suzanne Medway



The ladies from Brighton Le Sands



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