

From the President's desk

Doctor Julie Old - President

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I am greatly honoured to be undertaking a new role in the Australian Wildlife Society as its 19th President, with Suzanne Medway AM's retirement. Suzanne was an inspirational President, and on behalf of myself and all members of the Society, I would like to wish Suzanne all the best in her well-earned retirement. President of the Australian Wildlife Society is a role I am proud to be undertaking and one I will be passionately dedicated to. As a long-standing member of the Society, I recognised the vital role the Society and its members played for more than one hundred years in preserving Australia's unique plants and animals. I am committed to continuing this great legacy for the next generation of young Australians.

Last year, Australia was on fire. We had millions of animals die either from the flames themselves or the associated lack of food availabilities for months after. We had wildlife carers in higher demand than ever for their skills in rehabilitation and emergency relief. They spent hours, days, and weeks of their time caring for sick, injured, and displaced native wildlife. The Australian Wildlife Society established a fire relief fund that supported wildlife rescue groups in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, and Western Australia in their efforts to care for injured and orphaned wildlife and provided much needed additional resources. More recently, we have seen fires in Western Australia, and we were again able to donate 100 percent of all donated funds directly to frontline carers to support their efforts in saving our precious wildlife and their habitat.

It will take decades for the habitat in many places to return to what it previously was. In some areas, little impacted by us, we may even have lost complete species we never even knew about. The devastation has been immense, but we all need to continue to move forward to ensure Australia's unique biodiversity is conserved for future generations.

Wildlife populations hard-hit by the bushfires and drought have been dealt another blow, with recent flooding in New South Wales likely to place

even more wildlife species at risk of extinction. Everything from bandicoots to tiny turtle hatchlings were found dead on the beaches of New South Wales. Wildlife groups fear that the populations already ravaged by prolonged drought and catastrophic bushfires will plummet even further. There are only so many extreme weather events that wildlife populations can take.

Action to protect and ensure native wildlife against increasingly frequent extreme weather is desperately needed. We must increase our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as utilising carbon-capture technology, planting more trees, integrating climate change measures into national policies, and reducing land clearing and deforestation.

I am very proud to be the President of a Society that has been advocating and supporting the preservation of Australia's fauna and flora for well

over one hundred years. In my role as President, I will strive to continue the work of previous Presidents. I will work with the Society's members to ensure the Society continues to protect and conserve Australia's natural heritage by actively advocating for the preservation of our unique flora and fauna, whether it be supporting direct conservation efforts or educating the broader community about the importance of retaining our unique biodiversity.

I am incredibly passionate about increasing the education of children and youth because they are the environmental saviours of the future. The youth of Australia make significant contributions to the wildlife conservation movement through innovative projects and ideas. It is young people who can drive lasting and sustainable change, who will become the next ambassadors in wildlife conservation, and the successors to the Australian Wildlife Society's current board.



L to R: Suzanne Medway AM and Doctor Julie Old.