

# From the President's Desk

Doctor Julie Old - President

The Board of the Australian Wildlife Society is proud to have chosen Australia's amphibians as the Australian Wildlife Society's wildlife of the year!



## Welcome to the Summer 2022 Edition of Australian Wildlife

The Society has been busy over the last few months. We called on the Tasmanian government to remove the protected status of feral deer and reduce numbers to a manageable level, advocated for the protection of the blue gum high forest and Sydney turpentine-ironbark forest in West Pennant Hills, New South Wales, which provides habitat for the critically endangered powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*) and Dural land snail (*Pommerhelix duralensis*), commented on the Draft Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan and Warragamba Dam Raising Project, and called on the South Australian government to cease any attempt to bring the Pastoral Lands Bill 2020 to the South Australian Parliament to help preserve the South Australian outback and set it aside for biodiversity and wildlife conservation.

The Society continued to advocate for the protection of wildlife threatened by enclosed yabby traps and received a response from the Federal Environment Minister. The Minister supports a coordinated and nationally consistent approach to using alternate trapping methods to minimise impacts on native wildlife such as the platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*), rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*), and water dragon (*Intellagama lesueurii*).

We received a response to our #SnipRingsforWildlife petition, which acknowledged the importance of the campaign. The response focused on plastic waste reduction and stated that the Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Bill 2021 might provide a framework to address ring-shaped items in the future. The response highlighted that the New South Wales Plastics Action Plan outlines a commitment to review other plastic items for a future phase-out, such as plastic cups and their

lids (including dome-shaped lids), in three years to determine whether a phase-out is appropriate at that time. The response stated that the government recently released the New South Wales Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041. The strategy outlines the government's approach to transitioning to a circular economy over the next twenty years and introduces a new overall litter reduction of sixty percent by 2030 and a plastic litter reduction target of thirty percent by 2025. The strategy will invest \$38 million over five years in litter prevention programs to help protect the natural environment, waterways, and wildlife.

In the spring edition of Australian Wildlife, I mentioned that I had been spending a great deal of time in the backyard, like many of you, and the importance of a backyard pond, or another water source, such as that established at the Australian Wildlife Society's National Office, to support our native wildlife, particularly during our hot Australian summers. I have striped marsh frogs (*Limnodynastes peronii*), and Peron's tree frogs (*Litoria peronii*) visit my backyard pond. Sometimes I even see the occasional eastern water skink (*Eulamprus quoyii*) or blue-tongued lizard (*Tiliqua scincoides*). Once, I had a white-faced heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) carefully selecting its next tadpole meal, something I was not ever expecting to see in my suburban backyard.

Although the striped marsh frog and Peron's tree frog species are relatively common in urban areas of Sydney, the green and golden bell frog (*Litoria aurea*) is listed nationally as Vulnerable and Endangered in New South Wales. In Sydney, they were discovered in 1992 during the development of the Homebush Bay site for the 2000 Olympic Games. Its discovery led to the construction of vehicle

overpasses, frog underpasses, frog-proof fences and the removal of frogs and tadpoles from development areas. They are large frogs, and as their name suggests, they have gold or white stripes on either side of their usually pea-green body, with metallic brown or gold splotches. While the green and golden bell frog remains under threat from a range of factors, including water pollution, loss of habitat, and the invasive and highly fecundate eastern mosquitofish (*Gambusia holbrooki*), there have been some successes, including their ongoing occurrence in areas where captive-bred individuals have been released.

While many threats to the green and golden bell frog are not unique to the species, one of the greatest threats to amphibians worldwide is a disease called chytridiomycosis. Internationally, over 500 species have declined, and at least ninety species are thought to have been lost forever due to this disease. Likewise, in Australia, chytridiomycosis has led to the decline of many frog species and the extinction of at least six, including the unique gastric-brooding frog (*Rheobatrachus silus*). For this reason, the Board of the Australian Wildlife Society is proud to have chosen Australia's amphibians as the Australian Wildlife Society's wildlife of the year! Funds contributed by the Society have assisted Doctor Conrad Hoskins, from James Cook University, to monitor armoured mist frog (*Litoria lorica*) populations and implement a translocation program to protect this species for future generations. An article on the armoured mist frog research project will be featured in a future issue of Australian Wildlife. The Society has also contributed funds to Brittany Mitchell's frog research project, featured on pages 32-33. We hope you enjoy this amphibian-packed edition of Australian Wildlife and help support our unique Australian amphibians. Donations are always welcome at [aws.org.au/donate](http://aws.org.au/donate)

## 2022 Wildlife of The Year Australia's Amphibians



Red-crowned toadlet (*Pseudophryne australis*). Image: Dr Jodi Rowley.