

2021 Youth Conservation Award

The youth of Australia make significant contributions to wildlife conservation 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 hopefully the successors to the current Board of the Australian Wildlife Society. We aim to inspire young people to have a stake in wildlife conservation by rewarding and recognising their efforts.

The award for 2021 was presented to Nabilah Chowdhury of Ashfield, New South Wales.

Nabilah works tirelessly for a sustainable future for the next generation while participating in other extra-curricular activities. Nabilah is part of Taronga's Youth at the Zoo program. She was the School Strike 4 Climate organiser in Sydney and is part of the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme. Her most significant personal achievement was stopping Samsung from funding the Adani coal mine and acting as the host of the Sydney school strike in May 2021, where over 10,000 people were in attendance.



L to R: Nabilah Chowdhury, Dr Julie Old, Dr Robin Crisman, and Patrick Medway AM.

Acceptance Speech from Nabilah Chowdhury

To be able to receive the Youth Conservation Award is a great honour. I started my journey with wildlife at such a young age, having always been interested in plants and animals, especially when I moved to Australia in 2014. From as far as I can remember, my love of wildlife has grown, and from the support of my family and everyone around me, I have been able to do what I love.

It was not until 2017, when I joined Taronga's Youth at the Zoo program, that I realised how passionate I was about wildlife and their conservation. That was when I realised that there was so much more to do to protect nature. Through the program, I realised I could do work to conserve wildlife for the rest of my life and that there was a career for this type of work, and it pushed me to continue to do as much as I could for the environment. As part of Taronga's Youth at the Zoo program, I participated in various wildlife conservation projects, such as partnering with the Jane Goodall Institute Australia to inspire people to protect our natural environment and participating in the City2Surf to raise awareness of the threats to our oceans and marine life. I raised over \$550 towards marine turtle conservation. In 2019, I was given a leadership position in Taronga's Youth at the Zoo program, and I still volunteer there to this day.

In 2019, climate change started to become more prevalent in the media, and, at the same time, I was organising the School Strike 4 Climate on both a national and local scale. I was involved in election campaigns and strikes. I spoke with politicians and climate scientists to ensure that Australia does something about climate change, or our generation will be left to face the effects of climate change. We only have a couple of years left to prevent the irreversible damage climate change has caused.

Young people are experiencing climate change in a more intense and life-changing way. We are constantly breaking record temperatures, and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, as witnessed during the horrific 2019-2020 bushfires. The race to protect Australia's native wildlife is real. The decisions made today will affect the rest of our lives and impact the future of our native wildlife.

At the end of 2021, I was asked to join the Jane Goodall National Youth Leadership Council, which is made up of a passionate group of young people from around Australia who are dedicated to making positive change happen for animals, people, and the environment.

It is an incredible honour to accept this award. I aim to inspire many people to look after the natural world. I have been provided with a fantastic opportunity to share my experiences and speak up for what I believe in. Thank you again for this award.