



The prestigious Serventy Conservation Award was inaugurated in 1999 to commemorate the outstanding wildlife conservation work by the members of the Serventy family – Vincent Serventy, his brother Dr Dominic Serventy, and his sister Lucy Serventy. Each member of the Serventy family has given a lifetime of commitment to conserving Australia's wildlife. The award is intended to recognise and celebrate wildlife conservation work not done as part of a professional career. It is awarded to those who labour in the field for a love of nature and a determination that it should be conserved. Often, these have been non-scientists who have earned their wildlife conservation skills through sheer hard work.

### **The award for 2022 was presented to Patricia LeeHong of Murphys Creek, Queensland.**

Patricia is passionate about educating young people on the importance of wildlife conservation, showing them what she does, and allowing them to help so they can continue to conserve our precious native species. Patricia focuses on rehabilitating orphaned echidnas but does not ignore the cries for help from other orphaned species. She has helped native wildlife by nursing them until they are well enough to return to the wild and defend themselves.

In 2010, Patricia established the Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation and Education Association, a non-profit organisation with members from diverse backgrounds to unite in a common goal to provide resources for the rescue and rehabilitation of Australian fauna.

Patricia has given thirty years of service to wildlife conservation. Her ability to work tirelessly makes a difference, and this award is recognition that her work has not gone unnoticed. We need more people like Patricia, and it is with great honour that the Society awards Patricia the prestigious Serventy Conservation Award for 2022.

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### **Acceptance Speech from Patricia LeeHong**

I thank the Australian Wildlife Society for the honour of being awarded the prestigious Serventy Conservation Award. I feel privileged to be recognised for my dedication and commitment to wildlife and conservation.

My interest in wildlife began in the outback in the 1980s when I first started caring for wildlife, including emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) chicks. It seemed incredulous that after many phone calls, the knowledge I required to raise emu chicks came from the local sheep farmer. I realised that a grassroots approach and hands-on skills were the easiest way to learn about the local wildlife and appreciate the natural environment surrounding me.

In the years to follow, I established a wildlife park that operated on a system of guided tours only, allowing me to share my wildlife knowledge and experience with the local community whilst ensuring that the welfare of the wildlife remained my primary focus.

In 1999, I moved east, settling in the Lockyer Valley, Queensland, and became involved in various environmental community groups. I further extended my focus to include the care of all native species, with a particular interest in koalas, echidnas, and birds of prey.

Late in life, I gained formal qualifications through various degrees in animal studies majoring in Wildlife Biology at The University of Queensland, my research focus being

on the short-beaked echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*). My greater goal in gaining formal education was to expand my knowledge and incorporate this with my hands-on experience to share with the broader community. Consequently, this new-found knowledge and experience resulted in the formation of Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation and Education Association Inc. in 2010.

Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation and Education Association Inc provides a grassroots, inclusive centre where the wider community can get involved and learn about wildlife, rescue, rehabilitation, and conservation. It provides opportunities for local volunteers, and national and international students of all ages and educational backgrounds. This opportunity offers the fundamental approach to learning which I was so fortunate to have experienced.

In receiving this award, I would like to acknowledge other various wildlife groups and individuals: Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Toowoomba Regional Branch, Queensland Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, Darling Downs Environment Council, Koala Conservation Project Working Group, Sonya Fardell, and lastly, the dedicated work and support from volunteers of Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation and Education Association Inc.

**Top:** Patricia LeeHong with her certificate and trophy and Rusty the koala [*Phascolarctos cinereus*].