

President's

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023



A Year in Review

I was delighted and humbled to be appointed President of the Society in November 2023. As a long-standing member of the Society, Board Member, and Life Member, I am dedicated to supporting the ongoing wildlife conservation work of the Society. I want to acknowledge and thank our resigning President, Dr Julie Old, for her valuable contribution to the Society and wildlife conservation. I am pleased to announce that we also welcomed two new Directors to the Board, John Creighton and Dr Mike Swinbourne. Their expertise and passion for wildlife conservation will undoubtedly strengthen our organisation and help us succeed in our endeavours.

One of the highlights of the year was presenting our four annual awards – the **Serventy Conservation Award, Community Wildlife Conservation Award, Wildlife Rehabilitation Award, and Youth Conservation Award**. We are aware of the wonderful work conducted by wildlife conservation organisations and volunteers. We know that many organisations and thousands of volunteers are working tirelessly to save Australia's threatened wildlife, the humble and more common species, and the habitats in which they live. We are proud to acknowledge and reward these individuals and wildlife conservation groups and encourage them to continue their wildlife conservation work on behalf of the community.

The Society established a Roll of Honour to highlight past luminaries who have significantly contributed to the longevity and success of the Australian Wildlife Society and are respected in the wider conservation field for their contribution to the preservation of Australian wildlife. The luminary added to the Roll of Honour for 2023 was Dr Al Glen.

Another highlight was the awarding of our University Research Grants offered to honours or postgraduate students at Australian universities for research projects of direct relevance to the conservation of Australian wildlife – flora or fauna. The Society is immensely proud to have awarded our first Dr Clive Williams OAM Memorial Wildlife Conservation Scholarship in honour of our former Director, Dr Clive Williams. The scholarship was awarded to the highest-ranked application of all our University Research Grants.

We also awarded three special scholarships at the University of Technology Sydney, the University of New South Wales, and the University of Newcastle. The Society is proud to support the next generation of young Australians and their research on conserving Australia's biodiversity for future generations.



Our Mission: Australian Wildlife Society, founded in 1909, is a national not-for-profit wildlife conservation organisation. We are dedicated to protecting Australian wildlife (flora and fauna) through national environmental education, public awareness, advocacy, hands-on wildlife conservation work, and community involvement.



Australian Wildlife Magazine

The magazine has a proud record and history and has proved extremely popular amongst all our members. The magazine's readership has spread across Australia and internationally, carrying a strong message of environmental education, wildlife conservation issues, and the preservation of native wildlife. We invite members to distribute copies to family and friends and invite them to become members.



E-newsletter

Our monthly e-newsletter, *Wildlife Wisdom*, has also proven extremely popular with our members. The content and quality of the newsletters have developed over time. It continues to feature the vital work of the Society and news from our members. We encourage members to forward *Wildlife Wisdom* to their family, friends, and networks to help spread the important message of wildlife conservation across Australia.

Website

Our 2023 wildlife of the year, Proteaceae, was featured. Changes to the structure and layout of our website will be an ongoing process as we strive to make it more user-friendly and informative for our users.

Social Media

We are active on five social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube). We aim to keep our followers up to date with important actions of the Society and the collective work being promoted nationally. We reached sixteen thousand followers on Instagram and fourteen thousand followers on Facebook. Our followers continue to grow each month, and we thank you for your support.

Membership

As of December 2023, we had 549 members in total, consisting of: 108 Individual Members, 13 Family Members, 45 Concession Members, 11 Corporate Members, 41 E-Mag Members, 14 Associate Members, 24 Life Members, 9 Complimentary Members, and 284 Student Members. Please consider becoming a member of the Society to help protect Australia's native wildlife and natural habitats. Student membership is free.

Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarships

The **University of Technology Sydney Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship** was awarded to UTS School of Life Sciences PhD student, Lisa Danzey, for their research on 'Alpine Plant Thermal Tolerance in a Mosaic of Extreme Microclimates.'

The **University of New South Wales Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship** was awarded to NSW Centre for Ecosystem Science PhD student, Jan Kreibich, for their research on 'Large-scale restoration of indigenous-managed wetland in Eastern Australia, focusing on flood-dependent vegetation health using remote sensing.'

The **University of Newcastle Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship** was awarded to UON School of Life and Environmental Sciences PhD Candidate, Nadine Nolan, for their research on 'Does seasonality and genetic diversity influence sperm quality in the endangered amphibian *Litoria littlejohni*?'

Conservation Group Grants

The Society carefully considers all requests for grants from conservation groups emphasising wildlife and habitat preservation.

This year, we were fortunate to be able to offer five Conservation Group Grants:

Invasive Species Council

Funds assisted the Invasive Species Council in preventing the impact of feral species on Australia's native species and their fragile habitats nationally.

Bangalow Koalas

Funds assisted Bangalow Koalas in planting and maintaining 333 trees over three years as part of a wildlife corridor.

Murdoch University Wildlife Association

Funds assisted Murdoch University Wildlife Association with its club activities, particularly its Wildlife Necropsy Workshop and Quiz Night.

Rainforest Rescue

Funds assisted Rainforest Rescue in planting 500 trees to restore damaged rainforest and rebuild the habitat of countless Daintree flora and fauna.

Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue

Funds assisted Rainforest Rescue in developing temporary enclosures to provide shelter for echidnas, koalas, and other native species in the event of a bushfire or any other event causing capacity overflow.

Annual General Meeting and President's Luncheon

The 114th Annual General Meeting of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited, trading as the Australian Wildlife Society, was held on Wednesday, 1 March 2023, at Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, Sydney, New South Wales. The President of the Society, Dr Julie Old, welcomed the esteemed guests and announced the Society's 2023 Wildlife of the Year – Proteaceae. She also proposed a toast to 114 years of wildlife conservation by the Society.

The President then introduced the Guest Speaker, Caitlin Gallagher, who presented a talk on 'the significance of youth participation and engagement in wildlife conservation now and in the future'.

The Society was pleased to announce the winners of its prestigious awards for 2022 during the luncheon proceedings.



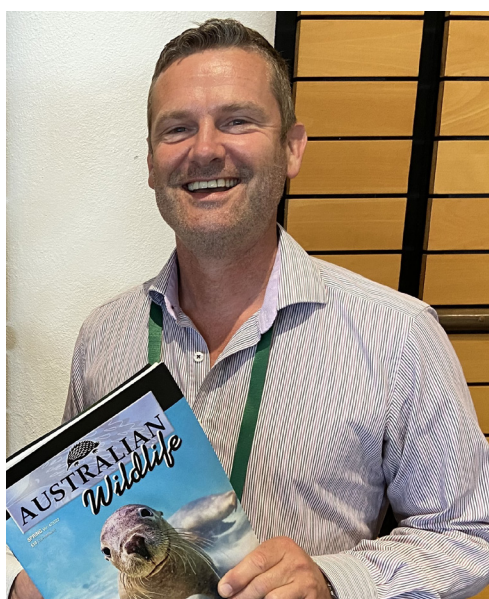
L to R: Wayne Greenwood, John Creighton, Noel Cislowski AM, Trevor Evans, Dr Julie Old, Patrick Medway AM, Dr Robin Crisman, and Stephen Grabowski.



Guest Speaker, Caitlin Gallagher, spoke about the significance of youth participation and engagement in wildlife conservation now and in the future.



L to R: Dr Robin Crisman, Dr Julie Old, Trevor Evans, Alison Williams, Catherine Williams, Patrick Medway AM, John Creighton, and Stephen Grabowski.



Dr Al Glen was added to the Society's 2023 Roll of Honour for his outstanding and continued commitment to the Society and its University Research Grants.

The Society also announced a new University Scholarship in Honour of Dr Clive Williams OAM to pay tribute to Clive's dedication and contribution to wildlife conservation. The Dr Clive Williams OAM Memorial Wildlife Conservation Scholarship is offered to honours or postgraduate students at Australian universities. The scholarship is available for research projects directly relevant to protecting Australia's wildlife, both flora and fauna. Each year, one \$5,000 scholarship will be awarded. We were joined by Clive's daughters, Catherine and Alison Williams, who were presented with a Certificate of Appreciation and a native plant – Grevillea 'Big Red'.



Dr Clive Williams OAM

Memorial Wildlife Conservation Scholarship



Dr Clive Williams OAM Memorial Wildlife Conservation Scholarship

The Dr Clive Williams OAM Memorial Wildlife Conservation Scholarship is named in Honour of Dr Clive Williams OAM. Clive joined the Society in 1986 and served on the Board of Directors for over thirty years. Clive significantly contributed to the Society's major wildlife conservation projects, including Towra Point Nature Reserve rehabilitation and restoration work for migratory wading birds, Rockdale Wetland Corridor restoration, and National Tree Day programs.

Wildlife Conservation Awards



Patricia LeeHong with her certificate, trophy, and Rusty the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*).

Serventy Conservation Award

The winner of the **Serventy Conservation Award** was 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. In 2010, Patricia established the Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation and Education Association, a non-profit organisation with members from diverse backgrounds who 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.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Award

The winner of the **Wildlife Rehabilitation Award** was Quoin Turtle Rehabilitation Centre of Gladstone Harbour, Queensland.

Quoin Island Turtle Rehabilitation Centre is located on Quoin Island in Gladstone Harbour, the gateway to the Southern Great Barrier Reef. They are dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of critically endangered and endangered sea turtles. Of the 236 turtles taken in by Quoin Island Turtle Rehab Centre, 213 were green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), 14 hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), 6 flatback sea turtles (*Natator depressus*) and 3 loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*). All species are either endangered or critically endangered.



2022 Wildlife Rehabilitation Award. L to R: Dr Julie Old, Kim Oudheusden, and Dr Robin Crisman

Community Wildlife Conservation Award

The winner of the **Community Wildlife Conservation Award** was the Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue LAOKO Inc. of Berridale, New South Wales.

Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue LAOKO Inc., formed in 1988, is the second longest-running wildlife rescue group in New South Wales. It is a community organisation run entirely by volunteers caring for orphans, rehabilitating injured wildlife, and providing community education and training programs. Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue rescues injured and orphaned native fauna in the entire Snowy Monaro region. They have an emergency phone number operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by volunteers.



2022 Community Conservation Award. L to R: Dr Julie Old, Lisa Petroff, and John Creighton.

Youth Conservation Award

The winner of the **Youth Conservation Award** was Talitha Huston from Gidgegannup, Western Australia.

Talitha wrote a bird book called Birds of the Perth Hills, complete with hand-painted maps, all her own photographs, her own 'skittish rating', and photography tips for each bird. The book was received well because there is no bird book for the Perth Hills. She sold 120 copies at the Blue Sky Festival launch in Mundaring, Western Australia, and, within one week, had sold two hundred copies. To date, Talitha has sold over 6,000 copies and donated the proceeds to a wildlife charity in her region.



2022 Youth Conservation Award. L to R: Dr Julie Old, Wayne Greenwood, and Talitha Huston.

Key Projects

Platypus Alliance

We continued our efforts on a national scale to protect semi-aquatic air-breathing species, such as platypus, rakali, and turtles. Enclosed yabby traps are banned in Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania, Western Australia, New South Wales, and, most recently, South Australia (1 July 2023). We strongly advocated that Queensland take action and join the other states and territories in banning enclosed yabby traps. Unfortunately, platypus and rakali are still reported trapped in enclosed yabby traps.

Snip Rings for Wildlife

The Society continued our efforts to educate the community about the negative impact of ring-shaped items on native wildlife and the actions they can implement to help prevent wildlife from falling victim to the risk of entanglement and death. We embarked on an exciting new project: creating a children's book centred around the Snip Rings for Wildlife initiative. This captivating book aims to educate young minds about the importance of protecting native species from the detrimental effects of plastic ring-shaped items. We are finalising the book and hope to see it published next year, reaching a wider audience and instilling a sense of responsibility towards wildlife conservation in future generations.

Australian Wildlife Week

Australian Wildlife Week is an annual nationwide celebration during the first week of October. This year, to celebrate, we hosted a Webinar and Art Exhibition. Through these engaging activities, we hope to encourage Australians to develop a deeper understanding of wildlife conservation issues, equip them with the necessary skills to make informed decisions and inspire them to take concrete actions to protect our precious wildlife. A recording of the webinar is available on our YouTube channel.

Wildlife Photographic Competition

The annual judges' prize of \$1,000 was won by **Beth Walker** for their photograph of a **Gouldian finch (*Erythrura gouldiae*)**.

The Gouldian finch is an endangered species, and there are more Gouldian finches in captivity than in the wild. This photograph was taken in Wyndham, Western Australia. There are ten different finch species in the Kununurra and Wyndham regions, and they are often seen together at waterholes, but the most beautiful of all is the Gouldian finch. There are also three different face morphs: red, black, and yellow, with yellow being extremely rare. This photograph features a black and red-faced Gouldian finch staring directly at the camera.



Gouldian finch (*Erythrura gouldiae*). Image: Beth Walker

Colouring-in Competition

The national colouring-in competition is designed to inspire the younger generation to learn about Australia's native wildlife via visual art and creativity. The response to the colouring-in competition was overwhelming, with a remarkable 158 entries received. Each entry showcased the talent and creativity of our young participants, making the judging process incredibly challenging. Our panel of experts had the difficult task of selecting three winners from each state and territory. Thank you to Dr Oselyne Ong for drawing our beautiful 2023 Wildlife of the Year – Proteaceae – a waratah.

Webinars, Conferences, and Presentations

The Society focuses on continuous improvement and enhancing the impact of wildlife conservation. We actively participated in various wildlife conservation conferences, webinars, and meetings. These included the annual conference by the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales, Narrandera Koala Festival, Camden Wombats Landcare's Open Day, Australasian Ornithological Conference, Campbelltown Koala Forum, Australasian Bittern Conservation Summit, Port Macquarie Koala Conference, Australian Mammal Society Conference, Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference, and Australian Association for Environmental Education Biennial Conference. Additionally, we delivered presentations to first-year students at Charles Sturt University and students (and teachers) from the University of North Carolina as part of their global immersion elective organised by Global Academic Ventures.

Penny Harnett won the annual people's choice prize of \$500 for their photograph of a **Littlejohn's tree frog (*Litoria littlejohni*)**.

This species reaches up to nearly 7 centimetres, but the juvenile pictured, showing its flexibility and white belly, is about the size of a 20-cent coin. Native to eastern New South Wales, this frog was photographed at Watagans National Park, New South Wales. A team of scientists from the University of Newcastle are working on an integrated conservation approach to save the endangered species.



Littlejohn's tree frog (*Litoria littlejohni*). Image: Penny Harnett

University Research Grants

The Australian Wildlife Society's University Research Grants are offered to honours or postgraduate students at Australian universities conducting research that contributes to the conservation of Australian wildlife (flora or fauna). Ten grants are awarded each year: one \$5,000 scholarship and nine \$3,000 grants. The Society is proud to have awarded our first Dr Clive Williams OAM Memorial Wildlife Conservation Scholarship in honour of former

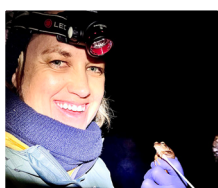
Director Dr Clive Williams. The scholarship is awarded to the highest-ranked applicant of all our University Research Grants. Grants may be used to purchase equipment and consumables, travel expenses related to field research, or attend a conference where the student presents their research. We are delighted to announce the winners for 2023:



Jack Bilby
(Dr Clive Williams Scholarship Recipient),
School of Biological, Earth and Environmental
Sciences, University of New South Wales.
Project Title: Beating the Heat: How do
Bandicoots Respond to Extreme Heat in Burnt
and Unburnt Habitat?



Natarsha McPherson
School of Biological Sciences,
The University of Adelaide.
Project Title: Distribution and Density of the
Southern Hairy-Nosed Wombat (*Lasiorhinus
latifrons*) under the Influence of Future Climate
Change and Invasive Rabbit Competition.



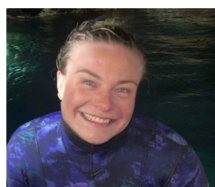
Anne Ibbotson
School of Biomedical Sciences and Pharmacy,
The University of Newcastle.
Project Title: The Potential for Stress and
Reproductive Hormones to Inform Conservation
Decisions for Endangered Amphibians.



Oceane Attlan
School of Biological Sciences,
The University of Western Australia.
Project Title: Temperate Marine Ecosystems
under Tropicalisation: An Insight of Species
Reshuffling and Ecological Function Changes
along the Western Australia Coastline.



Hannah Gerke
Fenner School of Environment and Society,
The Australian National University.
Project Title: Measuring Movement Behaviour
and Personality of Eastern Brown Snakes
in Urban Areas: Snaking our Way Towards
Successful Conflict-Driven Translocation.



Olivia Johnson
Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies,
University of Tasmania.
Project Title: Safeguarding Threatened
Reef Species.



Holly Farnan
Centre for Tropical Environmental
and Sustainability Science,
James Cook University.
Project Title: Investigating the Effects of
Insecticide Exposure and Pathogens on
Bee Diversity, Abundance, and Health.



Paula Ruiz
Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies,
University of Tasmania.
Project Title: Mechanisms of Stability for
Degraded 'Turf-Dominated' Reef States.



Natalie Grassi
School of Environmental and Conservation
Sciences, Murdoch University.
Project Title: Faunal Assemblages and Ecology
at Conservation Connectivity Areas Within a
Fragmented Agricultural Landscape.



Raquel Parker
School of Life and Environmental Sciences,
The University of Sydney.
Project Title: Using Carcasses to Investigate
Ecosystem Processes in Feral Predator-Free
Fenced Areas, NSW.

Donations, Bequests, and Gifts

We continued with our bequest program during the year to encourage donors to support our wildlife conservation work across Australia. We are incredibly grateful to all our members for considering using the bequest program to help the Society with its long-term planning. Do not hesitate to contact the National Office for more details on the bequest program and how to join 'Friends of the Australian Wildlife Society' to make a regular monthly donation to support our national wildlife conservation efforts and programs. We are a tax-deductible gift recipient registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission. Our public fund is listed on the Register of Environmental Organisations under item 6.1.1 of subsection 30-55(1) of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*.

Financial Report Summary

The Society's Directors, Finance and Investment Committee, and the Public Fund Committee continue to exercise tight and effective control over the Society's finances, reviewing and adjusting the investment portfolio as required throughout the year.

A Special Thank you to all Members

This will mark our 115th anniversary. We thank you most sincerely for your tremendous support and continued dedication and commitment to helping the Society preserve and protect Australia's native wildlife and natural ecosystems for future generations. I wish every member of the Society a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2024.

Stephen Grabowski
PRESIDENT | 31 December 2023