

President's

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024

A Year in Review

We held our 115th Annual General Meeting and I was officially elected National President of the Society. Having served on the Board for over ten years, I am enthusiastic about continuing to serve the Society and participate in all our wildlife conservation activities. We said goodbye to Wayne Greenwood, Dr Michael Swinbourne and our first National Officer Manager, Megan Fabian. We welcomed Steve Wisbey OAM and Mitchell Brennan to the Board of Directors.

For the first time in over one hundred years, the Board of the Society purchased and established a new National Office and Education Centre at 9/121 Queen Street, Campbelltown, New South Wales, which was officially opened on Tuesday 20 August 2024 by Mr Gregory Warren MP, Member for Campbelltown.

One of the highlights of the year was presenting our five annual awards – the Serventy Conservation Award, Community Wildlife Conservation Award, Wildlife Rehabilitation Award and Youth Conservation Awards. 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.



Gregory Warren MP, the Board of Directors of the Society, Steve Wisbey OAM and Councillor Warren Morrison cut the ribbon to mark the official opening. Image: Megan Fabian.

Another highlight was the awarding of our University Research Grants offered to honours or postgraduate students at Australian universities for research projects directly relevant to the conservation of Australian wildlife – flora or fauna. The Dr Clive Williams OAM Memorial Wildlife Conservation 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 among all our members. Its 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 2024 wildlife of the year, Greater Gliders, 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 17.4 thousand followers on Instagram and 15.4 thousand followers on Facebook. Our followers continue to grow each month and we thank you for your support.

Membership

As of December 2024, we had 436 members in total, consisting of: 100 Individual Members, 14 Family Members, 30 Concession Members, 9 Corporate Members, 42 E-Mag Members, 18 Associate Members, 24 Life Members, 12 Complimentary Members and 187 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 PhD Candidate, Natasha Bartels, for her research on 'Coral "Conversations": can corals communicate with each other via chemo signalling under stress?'

The **University of New South Wales Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship** was awarded to UNSW PhD Candidate, Ann Nielsen, for her research on 'Restoring Seagrass Scars by Combining Shoot Transplanting with Mimicry of Facilitation Processes.'

The **University of Newcastle Wildlife Ecology Research Scholarship** was awarded to UON PhD Candidate, Charlotte Rigolot, for her research on 'Understanding Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) Population Dynamics to Inform Conservation Management Interventions.'

Annual General Meeting and President's Luncheon

The 115th Annual General Meeting of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Limited, trading as the Australian Wildlife Society, was held on Wednesday 6 March 2024 at Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, Sydney, New South Wales. The President of the Society, Stephen Grabowski, welcomed the esteemed guests and announced the Society's 2024 Wildlife of the Year – Greater Gliders. He also proposed a toast to 115 years of wildlife conservation by the Society.



L to R: (Standing) Ken Mason, Dr Robin Crisman, Trevor Evans, Brian Scarsbrick AM, John Creighton, and Suzanne Medway AM. L to R: (Seated) Stephen Grabowski, and Patrick Medway AM.

The Society was pleased to announce the winners of its prestigious awards for 2023 during the luncheon proceedings.

Wildlife Conservation Awards



L to R: Robert Westerman and Trevor Evans.

Serventy Conservation Award

The winner of the **Serventy Conservation Award** was Robert Westerman of Hope Island, Queensland.

Robert (Bob) is a retired TAFE teacher and passionate birdwatcher. For more than two decades, he has dedicated his time to safeguarding the endangered migratory shorebirds of Broadwater

on the Gold Coast by monitoring and collecting data. His quest has led him to map and record how shorebirds are distributed throughout the Broadwater and its associated systems. His efforts have resulted in a comprehensive database of around three thousand records from forty sites. Bob is always happy to share the recent figures of migratory birds on the Broadwater, including Curlew Island and Curlew Banks, using illustrated counts to showcase the importance of protecting these precious sites. Bob's efforts in educating the community and safeguarding these birds are vital for their conservation and long-distance journeys.



L to R: Dr Robin Crisman, Heather Stephens, and Patrick Medway AM

Wildlife Rehabilitation Award

The winner of the **Wildlife Rehabilitation Award** was Warrumbungle Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Inc. of Mendooran, New South Wales.

Founded by Tanya O'Donoghue in December 2022, Warrumbungle Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Inc. is a small group of passionate

and dedicated volunteer wildlife carers specialising in rescuing and rehabilitating Australian native animals in the beautiful Warrumbungles area of New South Wales. Despite operating in a remote, poorly serviced area, the group tirelessly works to assist a variety of native wildlife year after year, from birds and kangaroos to snakes and platypuses. Their primary goal is to nurse these animals back to health and release them back into their natural habitats whenever possible. They are building a triage centre, complete with a special humidity crib for pinkie animals that come into care.



L to R: Brian Scarsbrick AM, Alison James (Treasurer, The Agile Project), and Patrick Medway AM.

Community Wildlife Conservation Award

The winner of the **Community Wildlife Conservation Award** was The Agile Project – Wildlife Rescue Inc. of Cairns, Queensland.

The Agile Project is a dedicated team rehabilitating native animals in Cairns and surrounding regions. Over the past four years, they have successfully relocated

880 agile wallabies (*Macropus agilis*) from the suburbs of Cairns to a safe habitat. They provide a 24-hour hotline and offer animal rescue and care courses to ensure any distressed, injured, or displaced animals can be rescued and rehabilitated. The group actively engages with the community through educational talks at local schools and community events and hosts informative stalls. They also work closely with and bring together regional stakeholders, such as the community, local Council and developers, to ensure the conservation of native wildlife.



Caitlin Gallagher presented Matthew Brooker with the Youth Conservation Award.

Individual Youth Conservation Award

The winner of the **Individual Youth Conservation Award** was Matthew Brooker of Whitwarta, South Australia.

Matthew took it upon himself to volunteer and conduct work experience at Kangaroo Rescue South Australia, where he assisted the team in caring for kangaroos and other wildlife.

He also successfully secured a scholarship with Earthwatch Australia as part of their student challenge program. Living and working at Calperum Station, a reserve on the north side of the Murray River, South Australia, guided by Earthwatch scientists, Matthew conducted hands-on research surveying fauna and flora and monitoring carbon and water. Matthew has also assisted with bird monitoring with Birdlife Australia, where he travelled to the Yorke Peninsula, South Australia, to monitor the nests of the endangered eastern hooded plover (*Thinornis cucullatus*). Matthew has a keen interest in wildlife and land conservation and hopes to one day become an ecologist.



2023 Group Youth Conservation Award (Group). L to R: Zoe (Student), Katherine Gotera (MOSHC Coordinator), Imogen (Student), and Bella Campbell (MOSHC Lead Educator).

Group Youth Conservation Award

The winner of the **Group Youth Conservation Award** was MacGregor Outside School Hours Care of MacGregor, Queensland.

MacGregor Outside School Hours Care has been operating for four years. Their sustainability group meets regularly to conceptualise ideas to promote conservation within the community. The group periodically goes to the park for clean-ups, has engaged an Indigenous consultant to facilitate education and conservation programs with staff and children, has planted a native garden space with native bees and has numerous recycling/litter collection programs within the school. No single-use items are allowed. Over 450 children are involved each week, and their practices have started to be embedded in their program.

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, the Invasive Species Council's exclusive evening, the 3rd Australian Biosecurity Symposium, Southern Highlands Landcare Network greater glider event, Rural Women's Network volunteer thank you evening, Campbelltown Chamber of Commerce dinner and networking events and the Macarthur Business Showcase. Additionally, we delivered presentations to first-year students at Charles Sturt University.

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. The Society is endorsed as a deductible gift recipient under Subdivision 30-BA and registered with the Australian Taxation Office. Its gift fund is also administered under the Australian Taxation Office.

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 2024:

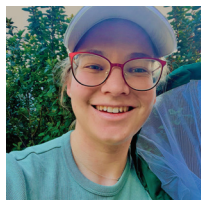


George Lester

(Dr Clive Williams OAM Memorial Wildlife Conservation Scholarship Recipient)

School of BioSciences, The University of Melbourne

Project Title: Pollination Networks in East-Arnhem Land: Analysing Effects of Climate Change on Stingless Bees through DNA Metabarcoding of Foraged Pollen



Rose Lownds

School of Science, Western Sydney University

Project Title: Determining the Distribution and Migratory Flyways of Bogong Moths (*Agrotis infusa*) Using Genetic and Stable Isotope Analyses.



Alexandra Ikpe

School of Science, Technology and Engineering, The University of the Sunshine Coast

Project Title: Tracking an Elusive Predator, Mature Male Tiger Sharks, Along Eastern Australia.



Jasmine Towle

School of Biological Sciences, The University of Adelaide

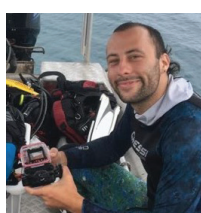
Project Title: Climate Change Impacts on Marine Invertebrates in Temperate Australia.



Alice Howie

School of Natural Sciences, Macquarie University

Project Title: Sound as an Emerging Technology to Monitor Biodiversity Across Seascapes.



Matthew Rose

Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania

Project Title: SCollapsed Habitat Threatens Australian Marine Wildlife.



Emmeline Norris

Centre for Tropical Environmental and Sustainability Science, James Cook University

Project Title: Utilising Drone-Based Thermal Imagery to Accurately Estimate the Abundance of the Endangered Spectacled Flying-Fox (*Pteropus conspicillatus*) and Model Population Trajectories.



Natalie Grassi

School of Environmental and Conservation Sciences, Murdoch University

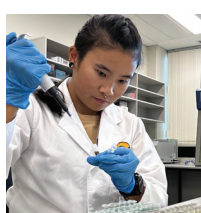
Project Title: Does Fragmentation Alter Predator Diets?



Luke Florence

Department of Environment and Genetics, La Trobe University.

Project Title: Mycorrhizal Diversity in Australian Temperate Forests in the Context of Drought and Nitrogen Deposition.



Rebecca Quah

School of Science, Edith Cowan University

Project Title: Is There Mush-Room for Bettongs? Resource Use and Availability for Bettong Reintroductions to Dirk Hartog Island.

Wildlife Photographic Competition

Greg Dawson won the annual Judges' Choice prize of \$1,000 for his photograph of two diamond firetails (*Stagonopleura guttata*). The diamond firetail is a member of the grass finch family. They are listed as Vulnerable. This image was photographed at Monarto Woodlands in South Australia.



Diamond firetails (*Stagonopleura guttata*). Image: Greg Dawson.

Judy Leitch won the annual People's Choice prize of \$500 for her photograph of two grey-headed flying-foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*). The grey-headed flying-fox is listed as vulnerable due to droughts, flooding rains, tornadoes, cyclones, and heat stress events, significantly impacting pollen eaters like the grey-headed flying-fox.



Grey-headed flying-foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*). Image: Judy Leitch.

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 nineteen Conservation Group Grants:

Wildlife Queensland

We partnered with Wildlife Queensland to raise the profile of our 2024 Wildlife of the Year – Greater Gliders and provide additional support to ensure their survival in the future. Funds were allocated to Wildlife Queensland's new Greater Glider Project, which assisted Wildlife Queensland to: 1. identify preferred trees, hollows, and nest boxes, track glider movement with VHF collars, and employing specialists to catch individual animals; and 2. determine ideal environmental conditions in greater glider hollows using data loggers, comparing conditions between different populations and seasons. In addition, we created a fundraising campaign – *Guardians of the Greater Gliders*, to raise additional funds to meet the outcomes above.

Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre

Funds assisted Kaarakin in rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing black cockatoos into the wild.

Insect and Acacia Study

Funds assisted Dr Kit Prendergast in creating an open-source database on all the known insect visitors to the different Acacia species.

S.A. Native Animal Rescue

Funds assisted S.A. Native Animal Rescue in obtaining food supplies, an incubator, an aviary and miscellaneous items such as thermo-controlled heat mats, rescue baskets, syringes, teats, and nets to help sick and injured wildlife with their rescue, rehabilitation, and release.

Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter

Funds assisted Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter in obtaining additional supplies, such as enclosures, netting, carrier baskets, hanging baskets and colostrum, to improve their shelter husbandry and allow for more sick and injured wildlife to be rehabilitated.

Morton Bay Koala Rescue

Funds assisted Morton Bay Koala Rescue in obtaining ten Ledlenser Outdoor Headlamps to assist with their nighttime rescues of sick, injured, orphaned, displaced and deceased koalas.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting

Funds assisted RVOTDS in erecting a sign and publishing two half-page ads to help the coalition raise awareness and publicise its campaign against duck shooting in Victoria.

Sunraysia Wildlife Carers

Funds assisted Sunraysia Wildlife Carers with developing a flight cage for birds of prey.

Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary

Funds assisted Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary in purchasing crates to rescue and transport injured wildlife.

Green Heroes

Funds assisted Green Heroes in developing the OceanID mobile digital application.

Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary

Funds assisted Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary in establishing a Youth Wildlife Conservation, Environmental and Cultural Education program.

Save our Wildlife Foundation

Funds assisted Save our Wildlife Foundation in purchasing fifty possum nesting boxes to provide essential shelter for ringtail and brushtail possums when they are released back into the wild.

Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue

Funds assisted Southern Koala and Echidna Rescue develop their koala kindy precinct.

Wombat Enclosures

Funds assisted Ms Laura Davidson, Wildlife Carer, in developing multiple wombat enclosures for different stages of wombat care and rehabilitation.

Murrindindi Ranges Wildlife Shelter

Funds assisted Murrindindi Ranges Wildlife Shelter with their rescue, rehabilitation and release operations, including purchasing rescue and transport equipment, Wombaroo milk formula, medical supplies, improving enclosures and petrol expenses to transport animals.

Nepalese Association of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment in Australia

Funds assisted the Nepalese Association of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment in Australia with purchasing native grasses, shrubs and ground cover plants specifically suited to Tooarrana habitat requirements for their 'Tooarrana Haven: Bringing Back Bush Cover Project' to assist in the recovery of the broad-toothed rat.

We Spot Turtles!

Funds assisted We Spot Turtles! with facilitating a sea turtle monitoring pilot program with NGOs and community groups during the nesting season, particularly with travel and logistics to trial sites for setup and support, marketing and communication to onboard pilot users, and sighting data processing during the trial period.

Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre

Funds assisted Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre in treating, rehabilitating and releasing injured and sick marine turtles brought in from the Great Barrier Reef and Cape York Peninsula.

Cedar Creek Wombat Rescue and Hospital

Funds assisted Cedar Creek Wombat Rescue and Hospital in continuing its work in rescuing wombats and other wildlife that need medical care, whether from accidents, injuries, mange, or extreme weather events.

Key Projects

Guardians of the Greater Gliders

We established *Guardians of the Greater Gliders* – a fundraising campaign that aimed to raise as much funds as possible between the end of February and 30 June 2024 to provide additional support to ensure greater gliders survival in the future. One hundred percent of the funds raised went to Wildlife Queensland's new Greater Glider Project.

Platypus Alliance

We continued our efforts 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 South Australia. Queensland is the only state in Australia that has not fully banned the use and sale of enclosed yabby traps. However, the state government is considering a ban.

Snip Rings for Wildlife

The Society continued its 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.

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.

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 8 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 Megan Fabian for drawing our beautiful 2024 Wildlife of the Year – Greater Gliders.

Short Story Competition

The Society developed a new Wildlife Fiction Short Story Competition. This national competition sought original short stories that entertain, convey a message, capture a moment, or evoke a certain mood about Australian wildlife (flora or fauna) while shedding light on the challenges they face in the modern world. This was the competition's inaugural year and we were extremely impressed with the interest in and the quality of entries, with many stories being incredibly emotive and powerful. The response to this competition was overwhelming, with a remarkable 166 entries received. Winners received a cash prize, a certificate and their short story published in the *Australian Wildlife* magazine.

Homes for Koalas

A new initiative by the Australian Wildlife Society, *Homes for Koalas*, was launched on Wednesday, 11 December 2024 and officially opened by The Hon Stephen Kamper MP, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Sport. *Homes for Koalas* is a fundraising campaign to purchase trees and land to provide homes for our iconic koalas. I invite all members to support this new project to save our local koala population from extinction. Please give generously so we can make our mark on saving these precious native animals and their habitat for the next generation of young Australians.



Homes for Koalas Launch. L to R: Mr Stephen Kamper MP and Stephen Grabowski.



CEO Patrick Medway AM gave a talk on the history of the Society and our involvement in koala conservation over the past 115 years.



Members and guests at the launch of *Homes for Koalas*.



Children from Campbelltown Public School hold a framed image of koalas killed for their skins in 1927.

Financial Report Summary

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

Thank you to all our Members

This will mark our 116th anniversary. We thank you most sincerely for your tremendous support, 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 2025.

Stephen Grabowski, PRESIDENT | 31 December 2024