

newsletter of australian wildlife conservancy

# wildlife matters

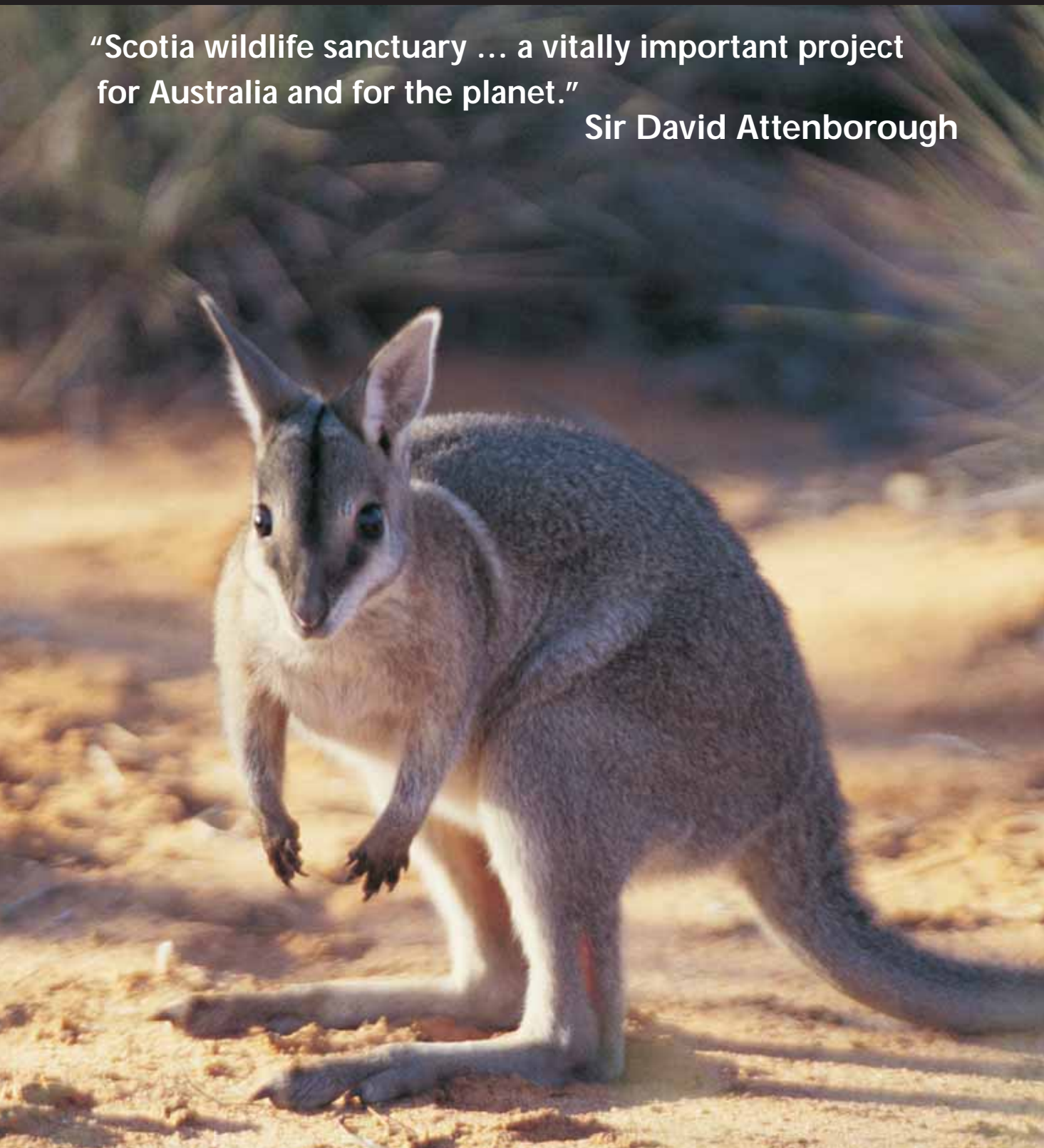
australian



wildlife  
conservancy

**"Scotia wildlife sanctuary ... a vitally important project  
for Australia and for the planet."**

**Sir David Attenborough**



september 2003



Mala (Photo: W Lawler/Ecopix)



Sir David Attenborough (Photo: BBC)

# scotia wildlife sanctuary

**mission:**  
save seven threatened mammal species

**strategy:**  
create the largest feral-free area on mainland australia

## saving australia's threatened wildlife

Welcome to the latest edition of *Wildlife Matters*. I am pleased to report that, with your support, it has been a productive year so far for Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC). Our on ground programs for saving Australia's threatened wildlife and ecosystems are making a real difference.

Some of the highlights of 2003 to date include:

- We have acquired two spectacular properties, Taravale and Curramore.
- Our practical, on ground management is paying dividends with endangered wildlife populations increasing at key sanctuaries such as Faure Island, Scotia and Paruna.
- Significant research projects have been initiated at Faure Island, examining the ecology of Burrowing Bettongs, and at Mornington, unlocking the secrets to survival for the Gouldian Finch.
- Great progress has been made toward our goal of enhancing public awareness of Australia's threatened wildlife with the opening of the Mornington Wilderness Camp and implementation of a program of school visits at Yookamurra.

Thank you to all of our supporters for making these achievements possible. You really are playing a critical role in the development of AWC. While AWC is still a relatively young organisation, I have no doubt that with your continued support we are destined to make a vital contribution to the conservation of Australia's threatened wildlife and ecosystems.

Unfortunately, the state of Australia's wildlife continues to decline, highlighting the desperate need for an organisation like AWC. A recent government report identifies nearly 3,000 threatened ecosystems across Australia and more than 1,500 threatened species. Key threatening processes such as feral animals, altered fire regimes and habitat degradation are taking an enormous toll on our wildlife. The challenges are enormous, meaning we must carefully focus our efforts on species and places where we can make the greatest contribution.

One of the secrets to our success to date has been the skill and dedication of AWC's staff. Most of our staff (around 80%) are based in the field, often in remote and difficult conditions. They do a tremendous job implementing programs to control feral animals and weeds, managing fire and monitoring endangered wildlife. Look out for some staff profiles in future editions of *Wildlife Matters*.

Finally, I would like to thank Sir David Attenborough for his support (see page 3). Sir David Attenborough is a source of inspiration and encouragement for the many people around the world committed to wildlife conservation. We are honoured to have his support for our Scotia project.

Atticus Fleming  
Chief Executive

## the awc mission

Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) is dedicated to saving Australia's threatened wildlife and ecosystems. To achieve this mission, our actions are focused on:

- Establishing a network of sanctuaries which protect threatened wildlife and ecosystems: AWC now owns 12 sanctuaries across Australia covering 595,000 hectares (nearly 1.5 million acres).
- Implementing practical, on ground conservation programs to protect the wildlife at our sanctuaries: these programs include feral animal control, fire management and the translocation of endangered species.
- Conducting (either alone or in collaboration with other organisations) scientific research that will help address the key threats to our native wildlife.
- Hosting visitor programs at our sanctuaries for the purpose of public education and promoting awareness of the plight of Australia's wildlife.

## about awc

AWC is an independent, non-profit organisation based in Perth, Western Australia. Donations to AWC are tax deductible.

During 2001-2002, over 79% of AWC expenditure was incurred on conservation programs. 15% of our expenditure was on development (fundraising) and 6% on administration.

*Cover photo: Bridled Naitail Wallaby at Scotia wildlife sanctuary (courtesy of Steve Parish Publishing Pty Ltd, reproduced with permission).*

*Photo this page: Atticus Fleming with Queensland Pebble-mound Mouse (courtesy of Pictograph).*

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AWC staff monitoring endangered mammals (Photo: W Lawler/Ecopix)



Woylie (Photo: W Lawler/Ecopix)

*"Seven of the world's rarest mammals can be brought back from the edge of extinction by helping AWC's project at Scotia. It is a vitally important project for Australia and for the planet."*

*Australia has a unique flora and fauna that is sadly under enormous threat. However, I believe if we act now it will not be too late. Through Australian Wildlife Conservancy, individuals can help support practical, on ground action to save Australia's wildlife from extinction.*

*The Scotia project is AWC's most ambitious project to date and is vital for the survival of 7 threatened mammal species and the semi-arid ecosystems in which they live. Its success will be a turning point for conservation. Your help will make a real difference."*

**Sir David Attenborough**

Australia has the worst mammal extinction rate in the world. Surviving medium-sized mammals, such as Bettongs and Hare-wallabies, have virtually disappeared from mainland Australia. Many areas of Australia are 'marsupial ghost towns'.

The primary cause of the mammal extinction crisis has been predation by foxes and feral cats and competition from other introduced species. Alarmingly, a recent government report concludes that 'evidence suggests that the wave of mammal extinctions in Australia is continuing'.

AWC is determined to halt and turn back the tide of mammal extinctions. At Scotia sanctuary in the Murray-Darling region of western NSW, we are planning to create the largest feral-free area on mainland Australia. This will allow AWC to establish self-sustaining, wild populations of at least seven mammal species which are currently at risk of extinction including Bilbies, Bridled Naitail Wallabies and Numbats.

- Our initial objective is to establish secure, wild populations of each threatened species within an 8,000 hectare feral-free area, which will be the largest fox, cat and rabbit-free area on mainland Australia. This area will be surrounded by a feral-proof fence.
- The ultimate objective is to identify strategies which will enable us to establish populations outside the fenced area.
- At a broader level, the management techniques and research outcomes generated at Scotia will assist in the recovery of threatened ecosystems and wildlife across Australia.

Our project at Scotia will make an immediate, practical contribution to saving our threatened wildlife. However, we cannot implement this project without your help. AWC needs to raise \$1.5 million to make the Scotia project a reality. This will fund the construction of more than 32 kilometres of feral-proof fencing as well as translocation and monitoring costs. It will also help establish an endowment to support future management including on-going feral animal control. The enclosed brochure provides further information on our plans.

Please help us raise the funds to implement the Scotia project - our threatened wildlife needs your support now more than ever.

# saving the taravale wilderness

“One of Australia’s most important wildlife havens”

*The Australian Newspaper*

Peter Stanton (AWC Land Management officer) has more than 35 years experience in the Queensland bush. He has been involved in the management of almost every national park in the eastern half of Queensland. So when Peter described Taravale as a ‘must have’, we knew it would prove to be a very special property.

- Taravale is located next to AWC’s existing Mt Zero sanctuary in north Queensland. Together, Taravale and Mt Zero cover 60,000 hectares.
- A unique combination of climate, topography and geology create at least 21 different ecosystems on Taravale, 11 of which are listed as threatened. Taravale’s ecosystems include threatened rainforest, magnificent eucalypt forests and rich open woodlands which are literally teeming with wildlife.
- Taravale is home to an incredible 70 mammal species, more than Kakadu National Park. Taravale also protects more than 180 bird species and 70 reptiles and frogs.
- The Taravale fauna is particularly rich in rare and threatened species – so far, we have identified 7 nationally threatened species and a further 10 state listed species that are likely to occur on the property. These include Northern Bettong, Green Ringtail Possum, Sharman’s Rock-wallaby, Masked Owl, Southern Cassowary and possibly Red Goshawk.
- A species of cycad, new to science, was recently discovered on the property (see picture).
- A special feature of Taravale is the Star River system and its escarpment. This is a world of broad alluvial valleys and tall fringing forest. Deep ravines and gorges produce a well-watered refuge in an otherwise dry, hostile land.

In late August 2003, AWC acted on Peter Stanton’s advice and completed the acquisition of Taravale. Its wildlife is now safe from threats such as logging, overgrazing and inappropriate fire regimes. A special thanks must go to the following supporters, who made the acquisition possible:

- The Federal Government, which provided financial assistance under the Natural Heritage Trust.
- The Nature Conservancy, a US based organisation dedicated to protecting the world’s last great places.
- Wind Over Water Foundation, which makes a vital contribution to the conservation of Mt Zero and now Taravale.

Thank you also to each AWC supporter who has generously contributed to the acquisition. There are many management challenges at Taravale – your continued support will help AWC protect Taravale in perpetuity.



Sugar Glider (Photo: M Morcombe)



AWC staff examine a new species of cycad on Taravale (Photo: G Crouch)



Mornington wildlife sanctuary, home to nearly 15% of the surviving Gouldian Finch population (Photo: R Woldendorp)

## a golden day for the gouldian finch

**One of the largest gifts ever made to an Australian environmental charity will support a ground-breaking program to save the endangered Gouldian Finch.**

The \$600,000 donation to AWC will protect populations of the Gouldian Finch at AWC’s Mornington wildlife sanctuary. Located in the remote Central Kimberley, Mornington is one of the few remaining strongholds for this beautiful bird. The Gouldian Finch was once widespread across northern Australia, but has now disappeared from large areas of its former range. The wild population has crashed to less than 2,500 birds, primarily due to the impacts of cattle grazing and altered fire regimes.

In order to unlock the secrets to its continued survival, AWC’s Gouldian Finch Project will involve high priority research as well as practical, on ground conservation measures at Mornington such as targeted fire management and the protection of key breeding and feeding sites.

AWC hopes that the information generated by the Project will assist in the conservation of the Gouldian Finch across northern Australia, ensuring the benefits of our work extend well beyond the boundaries of Mornington wildlife sanctuary. Look for progress reports in future editions of *Wildlife Matters*.

On behalf of the Gouldian Finch, AWC would like to thank Mike Fidler for his generous and timely donation. Mike is a successful businessman who has dedicated much of his life to saving the Gouldian Finch. His support is vitally important to the survival and recovery of the Gouldian.

A Gouldian Finch makes an early morning visit to a Mornington waterhole (Photo: M Fidler)



A tributary of the Star River meanders through Taravale (Photo: G Spanner)



Chuditch (Western Quoll)



Bilby (Photo: W Lawler/Coopix)



Boodies are thriving on Faure Island (Photo: CSIRO)

## chuditch returns to paruna wildlife sanctuary

Paruna wildlife sanctuary was established in 1998 after AWC purchased 8 separate blocks of land to form a 2,000 hectare corridor linking two national parks. Since then, AWC and the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management have joined forces to implement a regional feral animal control program, allowing the reintroduction of rare mammals such as Woylie, Tammar Wallaby, Quenda and the Black-flanked Rock-wallaby.

To the delight of AWC staff, our regular monitoring program has now revealed a population of Chuditch within Paruna wildlife sanctuary. Fifteen Chuditch, including young and breeding females, have been recorded during 2003. They are the first Chuditch to be recorded at Paruna. Chuditch have returned to Paruna under their own steam, demonstrating the importance of wildlife corridors and the success of AWC in re-establishing a healthy ecosystem, including prey species for this top carnivore. The control of foxes within Paruna and adjacent national parks is a critical factor in the re-appearance of the Chuditch.

## yookamurra bilbies boost national recovery program

Two Bilbies from AWC's Yookamurra wildlife sanctuary in South Australia were recently transferred to Monarto Zoo to ensure the viability of the zoo's captive breeding colony.

Yookamurra sanctuary is home to a thriving wild Bilby population. Originally reintroduced by Earth Sanctuaries Limited, the Bilby population at Yookamurra has grown over the last 12 months to more than 50 animals.

As a member of the National Bilby Recovery Team, AWC is working with other organisations to provide a secure future for the Bilby. One of the issues addressed by the Recovery Team is the need to maximise genetic diversity within different Bilby populations, particularly captive populations. To this end, two Bilbies from Yookamurra were recently transferred to Monarto Zoo to bolster the genetic diversity of their captive breeding program. The transfer is an example of AWC's strong relationship with partner organisations – we are always willing to share our good genes!

## island paradise for endangered mammals

In just 12 months, founder populations of Burrowing Bettongs (Boodies) and Shark Bay Mice are increasing and expanding across the 6,000 hectare world heritage listed Faure Island.

Our previous newsletter included a report on the translocation of Boodies and Shark Bay Mice to AWC's Faure Island sanctuary. AWC is delighted to report that the Boodies have increased from 17 individuals to over 40 since the original translocation in June 2002 and active warrens are now widely distributed across the island. Felicity Donaldson, a PhD student, has commenced genetic and ecological studies on the Faure Island Boodie population.

Whilst the Shark Bay Mice initially suffered heavy predation by Boobook Owls and the local goanna population, AWC staff member Jo Williams believes that the population has made a strong recovery. During the August monitoring survey Jo captured 29 individual mice, up 300% from the monitoring period only three months earlier.



Bridled Nailtail Wallabies are breeding at Scotia (Photo: W Lawler/Coopix)

## scotia wildlife numbers increase

With your support, 8,000 hectares of Scotia wildlife sanctuary will soon constitute the largest fox, cat and rabbit-free area on the Australian mainland (see page 3 of this newsletter). As Sir David Attenborough states, the Scotia project "is a vitally important project for Australia and for the planet".

Populations of several endangered species, originally translocated by Earth Sanctuaries Limited, already inhabit Scotia within smaller fenced areas ranging in size from 8 hectares to 150 hectares. The purpose of the smaller fenced areas is to allow the translocated populations to breed up, and to acclimatise to the environment at Scotia, so that animals can be released into the 8,000 hectare feral-free area in 2004.

The population of key species has increased significantly since mid 2002, when AWC acquired Scotia:

- The Bilby population has increased to more than 45 animals, up from an estimated population of 11.
- Bridled Nailtail Wallabies now number more than 130, up from around 83.
- Boodies have increased from around 31 to more than 50.
- The fledgling Mala population has increased from 8 to 12.

While this is encouraging news, AWC supporters should remember that the population of many native species will fluctuate naturally. Ultimately, the size of populations will be limited by the carrying capacity of the local environment. It is critically important that AWC raise the funds required to complete the 8,000 hectare feral-free area as it is large enough to accommodate self-sustaining, wild populations of species such as the Bridled Nailtail Wallaby, the Boodie and the Bilby.

## biodiversity audit highlights urgent need for action

A landmark assessment of terrestrial biodiversity in Australia has highlighted the urgent need for practical, on ground action if we are to save Australia's wildlife. Some of the findings of the Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment, prepared for the Federal government by a range of experts across Australia, include:

- There are 2,891 threatened ecosystems across Australia.
- More than 1,500 species are listed as nationally threatened, with many more species listed under State legislation as being at risk of extinction.
- The most significant threatening processes include feral animals, vegetation clearing, changed fire regimes and overgrazing.
- The assessment confirmed that 'Australia's terrestrial mammal fauna is particularly susceptible to declines and extinction'. We have more mammal extinctions (22) in the last 200 years than any other nation on earth. Of most concern, the assessment concluded that 'evidence suggests that the wave of mammal extinctions in Australia is continuing'.
- The prognosis for our bird fauna is also alarming - populations of some species have markedly decreased and there is an 'extinction debt' that is yet to be realised.

AWC is determined to take action to fight the extinction crisis. You can help us by joining Sir David Attenborough and supporting projects such as the reintroduction of mammals at Scotia and the conservation of Taravale's threatened wildlife.



awc sanctuaries



Assessing the forests of Curramore



Richmond Birdwing Butterfly (Photo: D Sands/CSIRO)

## STOP PRESS

# new rainforest sanctuary in south-east queensland

AWC has moved quickly to acquire a valuable property in the heart of one of Australia's true 'biodiversity hotspots' – the South Eastern Queensland bioregion. The property, known as Curramore, is located on the western escarpment of the Blackall Range, near Maleny in the Sunshine Coast hinterland.

Covering 170 hectares, Curramore is home to a remarkable concentration of threatened ecosystems and wildlife. Our assessment of Curramore, conducted with the assistance of Caloundra City Council, highlighted the following features:

- several rainforest and wet sclerophyll communities, including at least 2 threatened ecosystems;
- a remarkable floristic diversity with several threatened plant species including a large population of the rare vine, *Aristolochia praevenosa*, the obligate food plant for the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly (itself an endangered species);
- 26 species of mammals, including the nationally threatened Grey-headed Flying-fox;
- over 160 bird species, with at least 4 of those listed as threatened; and

- nearly 50 species of reptiles and amphibians.
- These lists will increase significantly after further surveys for small mammals, birds and reptiles.

AWC would like to thank Caloundra City Council for its assistance in identifying Curramore, commissioning preliminary biological surveys and assisting in its acquisition. We look forward to a long and productive partnership with the Council and the local community in south-east Queensland. Please contact Trish Gardner (08 9572 3169) if you are interested in volunteer opportunities, mainly weed control, on Curramore.

Finally, AWC wishes to send a warm thank you to the very special couple who made it possible to acquire this rich and diverse property.

We need new supporters, particularly in south-east Queensland, to help fund the management programs essential to the conservation of Curramore's stunning biodiversity. If you are an existing AWC supporter, please help us save places like Curramore by introducing a friend to AWC.

## ANZANG nature and landscape photographer of the year 2004

A unique new photographic competition, ANZANG Nature and Landscape Photographer of the Year 2004, is helping to raise awareness of the flora and fauna of Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Antarctica. Amateurs and professionals are invited to submit their best photographs of animals, plants and landscapes taken in the region. Total cash prizes of \$17,000 are being offered for winning photos in nine categories. A selection of the highest quality photographs will be featured in a major exhibition.

Profits from the annual competition will be donated to conservation organisations actively purchasing and managing habitat in the region.

**For more information:** [www.anzangnature.com](http://www.anzangnature.com) **Phone:** 08 9321 3685 or **Email:** [compete@anzangnature.com](mailto:compete@anzangnature.com)

## yes, I want to help awc save our endangered wildlife

I wish to become a regular supporter and give a tax deductible gift each month of:

\$10     \$25     \$50    \$

Other (minimum \$10)

I wish to pay by:  Direct debit from my bank account (AWC will send you the bank authorisation form)

Credit Card – Please fill in details opposite or ring (08) 9226 0340

I am unable to give monthly but would like to make a single tax deductible donation of:

\$100     \$250     \$1000    \$

Other

I wish to pay by:  Cheque/Money Order (enclosed) payable to the Australian Wildlife Conservancy Fund.

I wish to pay by:  Credit Card - Please fill in details opposite or ring (08) 9226 0340

Name: Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms .....

Address: .....

State: ..... Postcode: .....

Phone: ..... Email: .....

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I am interested in making a gift in my will. Please send information.

Please tick here if you do not wish to receive further information.