



wildlife matters

australian



wildlife
conservancy

MARCH 2004



Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary



saving australia's threatened wildlife



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 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 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 2002-2003, over 90% of AWC's total expenditure was spent on conservation programs, including land acquisition. Less than 10% was on development (fundraising) and administration.

Cover photos: Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary (R.Woldendorp) L to R Gouldian Finch (D.Morris) Northern Quoll (Thomson / Burnett), Yellow-spotted Monitor (D.Morris).

australian wildlife conservancy

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Welcome to the March 2004 edition of *Wildlife Matters*. As you will read in the following pages, AWC is making great progress in implementing an ambitious program of action to protect Australia's threatened wildlife. If we are to help provide a secure future for Australia's biodiversity, however, it will be necessary to do even more. Your continued support is vitally important.

All AWC donors (and staff!) should feel proud of what the organisation has achieved to date. Some of our achievements include:

- AWC has successfully implemented more than 25 translocations of threatened mammal species. In 2002, AWC began translocating threatened species from our sanctuaries back into national parks!
- AWC's Faure Island sanctuary in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area is the third largest island in the world from which cats have been eradicated.
- AWC staff have a proven track record of successful fire management (eg, 10 years effective management at Karakamia and Paruna sanctuaries in the south-west forests).
- The creation of Paruna Wildlife Sanctuary by AWC has created a 2,000 hectare, 14 kilometre wildlife corridor linking two national parks.
- Our Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary in the Kimberley is probably the largest non-government wildlife sanctuary in Australia.
- Our commitment to research means we have important management-focused research projects being carried out on AWC sanctuaries.

How do we now build upon these achievements? Firstly, we must continue our commitment to on-ground action. There is no substitute for having experienced field staff who can deliver practical programs designed to control feral animals, remove weeds and otherwise deliver sustainable land management. Around 80% of AWC staff are based in the field and we are determined to maintain this tradition of practical sanctuary management.

Secondly, we must continue to build partnerships with other organisations which have similar objectives. AWC currently works with a wide range of organisations including national parks agencies in several states, the Tropical Savannas CRC, various museums and universities, other non-government environment organisations and our neighbours. Innovative partnerships with these and other stakeholders will help increase the level of resources available for conservation and will enhance our collective ability to halt the decline in Australia's biodiversity.

Finally, we need to design our projects so that AWC sanctuaries play a catalytic role in encouraging broader landscape-scale conservation efforts. This is precisely what we are doing in north Queensland, where our acquisition of Mt Zero and Taravale has been the catalyst for joint efforts by AWC, the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Commonwealth Department of Defence to begin co-ordinating management over an area of more than 300,000 hectares.

By looking to build innovative partnerships, by operating at a landscape level and by retaining our commitment to practical, on-ground management, AWC is set to play an increasingly significant role in biodiversity conservation in Australia. With your continued support, we will provide a more secure future for Australia's threatened wildlife.

Atticus Fleming
Chief Executive

Protecting Wildlife in the Kimberley

Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary, located in the heart of the Kimberley, is one of northern Australia's most important nature reserves. Cradled by the ancient sandstones of the King Leopold Ranges, it hosts a landscape of spectacular scenery. Flat-topped mesas cut by steep-sided valleys and gorges overlook vast savanna woodlands and a network of tropical rivers and streams.

Some of the features that make Mornington so important include:

- Covering in total more than 312,000 hectares (780,000 acres), Mornington is one of **Australia's largest non-government protected areas**.
- Mornington is located in the Central Kimberley bioregion, one of the highest priority bioregions in Australia

for the development of the National Reserve System.

- Mornington protects a **diversity of ecosystems**, including several ecosystems that are not protected in any existing national parks.
- Several **rare and threatened species**, such as the Gouldian Finch and the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, find refuge on Mornington. In total, over **170 bird species** and potentially more than **40 mammal species** occur on Mornington.

It is an enormous challenge for any organisation to implement an effective conservation program over such a large and remote area. However, with support from our donors and assistance from key organisations such as the Tropical Savannas Co-operative Research Centre and the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management, AWC is aiming to establish Mornington as a model for conservation and land management in northern Australia.

Our activities at Mornington in 2004 will include:

- AWC will complete the destocking of approximately 50,000 hectares along the Fitzroy River, which will require the construction of an additional 27 kilometres of a stock-proof fence.
- We are aiming to conduct a detailed baseline biological survey of the destocked area, including riparian and catchment areas of the Fitzroy River.
- AWC will participate in a CALM survey of small mammals at a key site on Mornington. This is part of a larger Tropical Savannas CRC project examining the decline of small mammals in northern Australia.
- A fire management plan, which has as its primary objective the conservation of biodiversity, will be developed.



The Fitzroy River in flood

R.Woldendorp



AWC Staff at Mornington - Junior and Bluey

R.Woldendorp



Rainbow Bee-eater at Mornington

D.Morris

The Gouldian Finch will be used as an indicator species, given the recognised impact of altered fire regime on granivorous birds across northern Australia. Dr Jeremy Russell-Smith, from the Tropical Savannas CRC and one of Australia's leading authorities on fire management in northern Australia, is assisting AWC in the preparation of this plan.

We need your help to protect Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary.

AWC needs to raise at least \$85,000 to construct a fence that will exclude stock from priority areas of the Fitzroy River and to conduct a baseline biodiversity survey of this area. Please help by donating to AWC – your contribution will provide a more secure future for endangered wildlife such as the Gouldian Finch and the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren.



Australian Wildlife Conservancy conservation strategies

Faure Island Wildlife Sanctuary (6,000ha)

R.Woldendorp

Acquiring high conservation value properties is a vitally important contribution to the protection of Australia's biodiversity. However, AWC recognises that acquiring properties is, by itself, not enough to provide a secure future for Australia's threatened wildlife and ecosystems. The real challenge is to **deliver effective on-ground land management** at our sanctuaries and to structure our conservation projects so they act as a catalyst to engage other landholders, government agencies and the community in broader **landscape-scale conservation** programs.

Therefore, in addition to establishing wildlife sanctuaries in strategically significant areas around Australia, AWC focuses on implementing three key strategies:

- 1 delivering practical and effective on-ground land management;
- 2 conducting priority research in collaboration with partner organisations; and
- 3 environmental education and awareness-raising.

Land Management

AWC's highest priority is to deliver practical and effective on-ground land management. To this end, 80% of our staff are based in the field. It is this team of around 20 sanctuary-based staff that face the great challenge of implementing conservation programs at 12 AWC sanctuaries covering 595,000 hectares (1.5 million acres) across Australia.

Some of our field staff are scientists, such as Dr Joss Bentley at Scotia, or have formerly worked with National Parks and Wildlife agencies, such as Peter Hensler at Mt Zero-Taravale. Others, such as Bluey (Jay Gook) at Mornington, have developed a wealth of land management experience through managing cattle or sheep stations.

AWC's field operatives are the 'front line' in our battle against the forces that threaten our wildlife and ecosystems, such as weeds, feral cats and foxes and altered fire regimes. Living and working in remote locations and difficult conditions, it is the dedication and hard work of our field staff that enables AWC to deliver effective on-ground management.

A day at the 'office' for our field staff is never boring. It might involve implementing a prescribed burn, cutting and removing invasive weeds such

as lantana or mustering feral horses. There are also roads to maintain and infrastructure and vehicles to repair, not to mention monitoring of wildlife and hosting visitors.

Delivering effective land management is a great challenge. It requires committed staff and substantial resources. However, there is no substitute for 'on ground' action in the race to save Australia's wildlife.

Research

Another critical component of AWC's strategy is to conduct practical, management-focused research on key issues affecting biodiversity conservation in Australia. The outcome of such research will help inform AWC's land management practices. Perhaps even more importantly, the outcomes of such research will also be shared by AWC



Ecopix

Monitoring the feral-proof fence - Scotia



Northern Bettong research using camera traps

with other land managers. In this way, the benefits of our research programs will extend well beyond the borders of AWC sanctuaries.

We seek to develop and conduct research programs in collaboration with partners such as universities, museums, government agencies and co-operative research centres (CRCs). Examples of current research programs include the following:

- At Mt Zero-Taravale, AWC is working in collaboration with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) to examine the role of different fire regimes on wet sclerophyll ecosystems. Outcomes from this research project will help AWC and QPWS protect these endangered forests and their threatened residents such as the Northern Bettong and the Yellow-bellied Glider.
- At Faure Island, AWC is supporting work by a PhD student into the ecology of the Burrowing Bettong (Boodie). This research, examining issues such as the genetics of our translocated Boodie population and its social structure, will help AWC manage populations of endangered species.
- AWC's Gouldian Finch project at Mornington incorporates research on the effects of altered fire regimes on the Gouldian Finch and other northern Australian birds.

- At Scotia, AWC is working with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to design a biodiversity research and monitoring project which will be carried out in conjunction with the proposed release of threatened mammals during 2004.

Environmental Education

Promoting greater public awareness of Australia's wildlife – and the threatening processes that affect our wildlife – is a third central element of the AWC conservation strategy.

We seek to implement this strategy through the conduct of visitor programs at AWC sanctuaries. The objective of these visitor programs is to educate people about the plight of our wildlife and, through such education, to influence community attitudes and individual behaviour.

Like our research activities, AWC's visitor programs enable us to extend our influence beyond the boundaries of each AWC sanctuary. By providing an environment within which visitors can connect with nature and by providing high quality interpretive material, AWC hopes that a visit to one of our sanctuaries will inspire a renewed commitment to conservation.

Our visitor education programs include the following:

- At Yookamurra, AWC hosts a series of visits each year from a range of Adelaide schools. Students have a unique opportunity to see endan-

gered species such as the Bilby and the Woylie in the wild. AWC values this opportunity to engage school students, recognising that the students of today are the decision-makers of tomorrow.

- At Karakamia, visitors enjoy a 90 minute evening walk through a spectacular world of jarrah forest, heath communities and wandoo woodland. During the walk, AWC guides identify



Evening spotlighting tours - Karakamia

WATC

the different ecosystems, describe our management strategies and introduce visitors to the threatened wildlife of south-western Australia.

- A visit to Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary is the highlight of any trip to the Kimberley. Mornington is a birdwatcher's paradise, with over 170 species recorded to date. Visitors can stay in the creekside campground or in a semi-permanent safari-style tent overlooking Annie's Creek. Interpretive material focuses on issues affecting the conservation of tropical savanna ecosystems.



Visitor Centre - Karakamia

WATC



awc sanctuaries

Scotia endangered mammal recovery project



Dr Tim Flannery, AWC Director and one of Australia's leading mammal experts, shares his thoughts on the significance of AWC's Scotia project.

The first European explorers to penetrate Australia's inland found a region rich in wildlife, most prominent of which were the medium-sized mammals. Near Broken Hill in the early 19th century, for example, Charles Sturt saw hundreds of now-extinct Long-tailed Hopping-mice; indeed there was almost a plague of them in the region. Today such native mammals are almost entirely absent from western New South Wales, only large kangaroos and the mouse-sized species surviving, a fact as tragically true of our national parks as it is of other land.



Existing fence

Ecopix



Modified feral-proof fence

Ecopix

The extinction of these once abundant creatures has been a tragedy for Australia's ecology, for many of the vanished mammals played important roles in maintaining the region's biodiversity and ecological health. Bilbies and Burrowing Bettongs once dug up fertile subsoils on which particular plants grew, while Woylies dispersed truffles which are vital to the health of trees and bushes. Remarkably, scientists have not come to a firm conclusion as to why these dramatic extinctions occurred.

The work being undertaken by AWC at Scotia Wildlife Sanctuary is a vital step in addressing these problems, and in restoring ecological health to the arid inland. At Scotia an area of 8,000 hectares will be fenced so as to exclude feral predators, and wild populations of seven mammal species which are considered extinct in the state will be re-established. Numbats have already been released into the area where they are doing well, and if sufficient funds can be raised, they will soon be joined by Burrowing Bettongs, Bridled Naitail Wallabies, Woylies and Bilbies. This is the most ambitious program of its kind in the world, and one that will lay the groundwork for the return of endangered marsupials to the inland on a far larger scale.

Through study of the complex interactions between the medium-sized marsupials and their environment, scientists will have the opportunity to learn something of



Bridled Naitail Wallaby with joey

Ecopix

the causes of the extinction in the first place, as well as how biodiversity is maintained. Just as importantly, visitors will be able to see an example of how the western plains and mallee woodlands were before the extinction of so many species.

The initiatives at Scotia are very timely. Fifty years ago few people cared about the fate of Australia's marsupials, and fifty years hence it will be too late to save the remaining species. This generation thus has a very special responsibility in regard to our wildlife, and the Scotia project is a powerful way to contribute. Ensuring the success of the Scotia project is the best way I can think of for giving a future to a large percentage of Australia's endangered mammals. I look forward to returning to Scotia in future to see the land abounding in mammals - a sight not seen since the days of the early explorers such as Charles Sturt.



Monitoring wildlife at Scotia

B.Hartwig

Thank you to all of our donors who have already contributed to the Scotia Endangered Mammal Recovery Project. The response has been very good and we have already constructed a trial section of the new, feral-proof fence. However, we will need to raise additional funds to make this project a reality. You can help by becoming a monthly donor or by introducing a friend to AWC. Remember, a donation of \$1,000 will build around 100 metres of the feral proof fence while a monthly pledge of \$25 will, over one year, protect 10 Numbats.

Endangered wallaby located on Mt Zero-Taravale



Peter Hensler and Sharman's Rock-wallaby

A joint operation conducted by AWC and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) has confirmed the presence of the endangered Sharman's Rock-wallaby on Mt Zero-Taravale Wildlife Sanctuary. The Sharman's Rock-wallaby, a small wallaby weighing a little over 4 kilograms, is listed as endangered because of its extremely restricted distribution in north Queensland. Known from only a few locations, the discovery of a new population on Mt Zero-Taravale provides renewed hope for the survival of this elusive wallaby.

The search for the Sharman's Rock-wallaby was carried out by Peter Hensler, AWC's Manager at Mt Zero-Taravale, and Dr Peter Johnson (QPWS), one of Australia's leading macropod experts. A specific location on Taravale was targeted on the basis of advice from the previous owner of the property, who reported seeing small wallabies in a remote gorge in the eastern section of the property. This local knowledge proved invaluable and a single wallaby was captured and released in late 2003.

Sharman's Rock-wallaby looks very similar to several other Queensland Rock-wallaby species. To confirm the identity of the animal captured last year,

a DNA sample was flown to Brisbane for analysis by the Queensland government. The results proved conclusively that the rock-wallabies on Taravale are Sharman's Rock-wallaby rather than the closely related Allied Rock-wallaby.

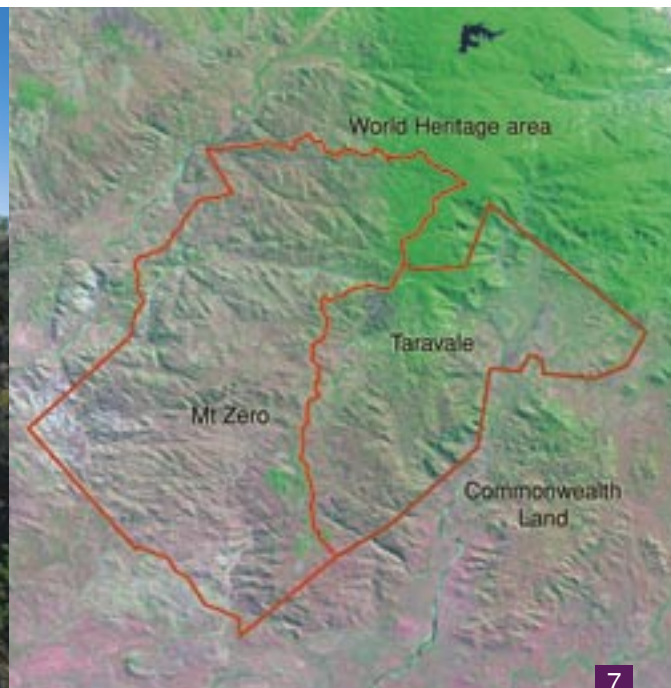
AWC and QPWS plan to conduct further surveys on Mt Zero-Taravale to determine the size and distribution of the resident population of Sharman's Rock-wallaby. It is likely the establishment of Mt Zero-Taravale Wildlife Sanctuary will play a pivotal role in the conservation of this beautiful wallaby.

Other news from Mt Zero-Taravale

- Mr Peter Hensler, together with his wife Pam, has settled in as the permanent sanctuary manager. Peter has more than 20 years prior experience with QPWS. His expertise in wildlife management and his practical property management skills represent an invaluable addition to the AWC team.
- A detailed geological map of Mt Zero-Taravale has been prepared by David Stanton. The geological report prepared by David will form the basis of detailed habitat mapping of the property and is an important input to the design of future biological surveys.
- AWC and QPWS have commenced a research program examining the role of fire in the conservation of wet sclerophyll communities on Mt Zero-Taravale and the adjacent World Heritage Area and State Forest (see pages 4-5).
- Russell Cummins, from the Queensland Herbarium, is continuing his botanical survey of Mt Zero-Taravale.
- The north Queensland group of Birds Australia (BA) is returning to Mt Zero-Taravale over the easter weekend to conduct further bird surveys. We thank BA for its support and look forward to seeing their bird list and input into future management and monitoring on the property.



Taravale Gorge

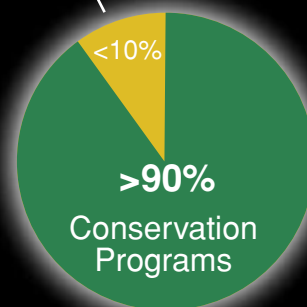


Satellite image of Mt Zero - Taravale

Ensuring your donation makes a real difference

Total AWC Expenditure

Administration & Fundraising



AWC is committed to delivering practical, on-ground results. We therefore make every effort to maximise the percentage of our expenditure which is allocated to conservation programs.

In 2002 – 2003, over 90% of AWC's total expenditure was incurred on conservation programs, including land acquisition. That is, less than 10% of our overall expenditure was incurred on administration and development (fundraising). AWC is very proud of this result, which we believe reflects our commitment to on-ground action. It compares very favourably to other international and national environmental non-profit organisations.

One of the reasons for the high percentage of AWC expenditure on conservation is the fact that 80% of our staff are based in the field, rather than in head office.

Even if capital expenditure on land acquisition is not taken

into account, 80% of AWC's total operational expenditure is dedicated to conservation.

Accordingly, you can be confident that your donation to AWC is making a real contribution to the conservation of Australia's threatened wildlife and ecosystems. It is being spent on programs such as feral animal and weed control, fire management and the protection of endangered species. Your donation is not being diluted by unreasonably high administration and fundraising costs.

Thank you to all of our donors for their valuable contributions. With your continued support, AWC will continue to deliver practical, on-ground conservation programs for the benefit of Australia's threatened wildlife.

Tura New Music Presents 'Karakamia'

A program of new music inspired by Karakamia Wildlife Sanctuary will be performed at the Perth Concert Hall at 8pm on Saturday 22 May 2004. Composed by national award winning composer, David Pye, and performed by *pi*, a new voice in Australian music. Part proceeds of ticket sales will support AWC conservation projects. For further information contact Tura (telephone (08) 9380 6996 or email tura@tura.com.au).

we urgently need your help

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: \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ other

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 below or ring (08) 9226 0340.

I am unable to give monthly but would like to make a **single tax deductible** donation of: \$150 \$250 \$1000 \$ other

I wish to pay by: **Cheque/Money Order** (enclosed) payable to the Australian Wildlife Conservancy Fund.
 Credit card - please fill in details below or ring (08) 9226 0340.

Name: Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms _____

Address: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Credit Card Details Mastercard Visa AMEX Bankcard Diners

Card No. Expiry Date /

Signature _____

Cardholder's Name: _____



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