

The Norman Wettenhall Foundation

Second Annual Report

1998

Chairman's Report

The Norman Wettenhall Foundation was established on June 13, 1996 and the Trustees met for the first time on 26 June 1996 when \$20,000 was committed to Birds Australia (formerly the RAOU) to enable the card entries of the Nest Record Scheme, begun in 1965, to be transferred to a computer base and thus become more readily available for research purposes.

The Trustees meet 3 or 4 times a year, and a finance sub-committee also meets as required to oversee our investment policy. From a basis of \$300,000 in mid-1996 capital funds have grown through gifts of \$812,020 to a total of \$1.2 million on June 30, 1998 with an annual income of over \$40,000. This capital has enabled distribution of grants to a total of approximately \$20,000 per annum. With promised donations and capital increments from investments, the fund should reach a total around \$2 million by the end of 1999.

The grants made to date have made a real difference to the approved applicants and already show evidence of long-term value.

- The Nest Record Scheme data will all be on computer by the end of 1998 and are already proving very valuable for research on particular species and in providing important data for the "Handbook of Australian New Zealand and Antarctic Birds".
- Professor Seddon's book "Landprints" has been very favourably reviewed and has received several awards. Prof. Seddon himself gives considerable credit to the illustrations the Foundation provided.
- The work by Ray Thomas of the Molyullah Tatong Land Protection Group in helping to restore the natural landscape in north east Victoria has involved many individual groups in the district and is proving a model for others to follow.
- The studies by Dr Kristidis and by Prof. Pruett-Jones are providing an international flavour to our policy, and Dr Kristidis is breaking entirely new ground in DNA studies.

There are other worthwhile projects which the Foundation has not been able to support, but as further donations to The Norman Wettenhall Foundation are made we will be able to do more. Any such donations will be greatly appreciated and are of course tax deductible for the donor. The support of all those who have already contributed, especially when the Foundation was being founded, has been invaluable and to all donors we are most grateful.

Report on Distributions made by The Norman Wettenhall Foundation since inception.

Birds Australia (previously Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union)

A commitment of \$23,000 was made in December 1996 towards the Nest Record Scheme. \$8,000 was paid in December 1996, a further \$7,500 in August 1997, and the balance of \$7,500 in June 1998. Dr Stephen Ambrose is coordinating the project which began in 1964 and is Australia's longest running wildlife research and conservation database. The type of information recorded includes a description of the nest site, clutch and brood sizes, and timing of nest building, egg laying and incubation, and fledging. Only a small percentage of the Nest Record Scheme data

sheets and cards were stored on computer, but the Foundation's grant has supported this goal, which is expected to be achieved by December 1998.

Birds Australia (previously Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union)

A commitment of \$10,000 was made in February 1998 towards the Oral History project "Australian Ornithologists Speak" being undertaken by Dr Libby Robin of The Australian National University. \$5,000 was paid in February 1998, with a further \$5,000 advanced in June 1998. The Foundation's grant will cover the cost of travel and related expenses to conduct interviews with significant Australian ornithologists, and to undertake background archival research.

Environmental Defenders Office (SA)

A grant of \$3,500 was made in February 1998 towards the Environmental Fact Sheet on the Protection of Native Animals and Their Habitat; and the Freecall Line to be run by the Environmental Defenders' Office. A draft copy of the Fact Sheet has been prepared, but publication will be delayed until new commonwealth environmental protection legislation is introduced. The Free Call line is planned to be listed in S.A. rural telephone books, which come out in February and March of 1999.

Molyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group Inc.

A grant of \$20,000 was made in August 1997 towards improving the habitat of Regent Honeyeaters and other endangered species in north-eastern Victoria. Mr Ray Thomas, the Coordinator of the Regent Honeyeater Project, has reported that large scale habitat protection is not achievable by over-stretched landholders in their "spare time". The project has featured effective cooperation between landholders, schools, tertiary students, community groups, local business houses and grants from both State and Federal governments. The Foundation's support has been important in ensuring the ongoing coordination of the many facets of the project.

Museum of Victoria

A grant of \$5,800 was made to Dr Les Christidis in March 1998 to elucidate the genetic taxonomy of Australian grasswrens. The project aims to investigate in detail the taxonomic status of all forms of the Striated, Thick-billed and Dusky Grasswren complexes; to assess the taxonomic status of the newly discovered population of the Carpenterian Grasswren, and to provide a molecular phylogeny of relationships within the genus *Amytornis*.

Prof. Stephen Pruett-Jones, University of Chicago, U.S.A., Ecology & Evolution

A grant of \$4,000 was made in September 1997 towards the comparative biology of Australian Fairy-wrens project, which focuses on the distribution, ecology, and social and reproductive behaviour of fairy-wrens, grass-wrens and emu-wrens. Field research has been undertaken at three sites - the comparative study of fairy wrens at Brookfield Conservation Park in South Australia, the initiation of research in Western Australia on the black form of the white-winged fairy-wren, and the initiation of research on the red-backed fairy-wren in Queensland.

Prof. George Seddon, University of Western Australia, English

A grant of \$3,000 was made in May 1997 towards the book "Landprints" by Prof. George Seddon, published by Cambridge University Press. The Foundation's grant subsidised the use of colour for over twenty images in the book, including its cover.

The Norman Wettenhall Foundation

Foundation Profile

Founded in June 1996

Chairman: Dr Norman Wettenhall, AM
Trustees: Miss. P.E. Feilman, AM
Mr. A.I. Sinclair, FCA
Mr. W.L. Weatherly
Mr. G.B. Wettenhall
Mr. P.J. Willcox

Trustees meet four times per year.

Assists individuals, organisations and institutions.

The purpose of the Foundation is to support and encourage research, education and recording of all aspects of the **natural living environment**. Initially, there will be an emphasis on birds and their habitats, but it is not intended that these will be the sole interests of the Foundation.

Enquiries to:

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Grants made since inception

Birds Australia (previously RAOU)

\$23,000 towards the Nest Record Scheme

Birds Australia (previously RAOU)

\$10,000 towards the Oral History project
“Australian Ornithologists Speak”

Environmental Defenders Office (SA)

\$3,500 towards the Environmental Fact Sheet on the Protection of Native Animals and Their Habitat; and the Freecall Line

Molyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group Inc.

\$20,000 towards improving habitat of Regent Honeyeater and other endangered species in the north-eastern region of Victoria

Museum of Victoria

\$5,800 to the genetic taxonomy of Australian grasswrens project by Dr Les Christidis

Prof. Stephen Pruett-Jones, University of Chicago, U.S.A., Ecology & Evolution

\$4,000 towards the comparative biology of Australian Fairy-wrens project

Prof. George Seddon, University of Western Australia, English

\$3,000 to illustrations for the “Landprints” book

Guidelines for applications

Principles

- Innovative projects are to be encouraged and preferably act as a model for other developments in the future.
- The result should have a long-term effect.
- Publication of funded studies is regarded as important and will be supported.
- Encouragement of individuals, as well as organisations, is possible provided the project is well planned
- Dissemination of information which will benefit the natural living environment.

Exclusions

- projects concerned with buildings, art, general education, social welfare and medical research or health matters.
- capital or endowment funds established to provide a corpus for institutions

Procedure

Applicants are asked to send a brief, one or two page letter describing the proposed project, its objectives and the approximate level of funding required. Further information, including budget details and a time-schedule may be requested.

Closing dates

Last working day of March, June, September and December