

2024 Annual General Meeting

Honorary Life Member Citations

HONORARY LIFE MEMBER OF BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA

Honorary Life Membership is awarded to someone for making a distinguished contribution to the objects of BirdLife Australia and its predecessor organisations. It is the highest award to recognise our members for their distinguished contribution to the organisation.

Alison Russell-French OAM

Ms Alison Russell-French OAM is a keen bird watcher with a lifetime interest in Australia's birds, especially migratory shorebirds. She has made major contributions to their conservation over many years.

Alison has also made a considerable contribution to the work of BirdLife Australia and its predecessor organisations over a significant period of time. She joined Birds Australia in 1996. She was elected to the Birds Australia Council in 1998, becoming Vice President in 2002 and President in 2004. She remained President until 2011 when Birds Australia merged with Bird Observation & Conservation Australia to form BirdLife Australia.

As an active member of the Birds Australia Council for thirteen years, Alison provided important leadership and strategic direction to the organisation. She did this as a member of both the Council's Governance Committee and its Finance Committee as well as Vice President and President of the organisation.

As Vice President and then President of Birds Australia, Alison actively engaged with the organisation's membership as well as with other like-minded environmental organisations, including Bird Observation & Conservation Australia. Alison and John Barkla, the President of Bird Observation & Conservation Australia, had the foresight to realise that, together, Australia's two largest bird conservation organisations could form a much stronger voice for Australia's birds than they could separately. Additionally, there would be significant efficiencies and economies of scale if they were to merge.

Together, Alison and John championed the merger into BirdLife Australia with their respective Boards and memberships. Alison worked tirelessly with the Birds Australia Board as well as with Bird Observation & Conservation Australia in mounting the case to put to members. She attended meetings with members around Australia and, while there were differing views along the way, including members' loyalties to their own organisations, in the end, more than 90 per cent of the memberships of both organisations supported the merger.

Alison has also been a driving force behind the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG), a Special Interest Group of BirdLife Australia. She joined AWSG in 2008 and has been its Chair since 2011. As Chair of AWSG, Alison has been influential in the work of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), a multinational voluntary partnership between governments, non-government organisations, international conventions and corporations with the objective of conserving migratory shorebirds and their habitat within the Russian Far East, Alaska, East Asia, South-East Asia and Australasia.

As Chair of the AWSG, Alison represents AWSG-BirdLife Australia as one of the founding Partners in the Flyway. She played a key role in the eleventh meeting of the EAAFP Partners held in Brisbane in March 2023. She is also a member of the EAAFP's Finance Sub-Committee. Her influence across the Flyway continues to be important to the conservation of migratory birds.

Alison has also had a long involvement in the organisation of, and support for, the Australasian Shorebird Conferences (ASC), ever since her attendance at the first ASC, as a side event of the Ramsar Conference of the Parties in Brisbane in 1996. Alison was especially involved in the organisation of the last ASC in October 2022.

Alison has achieved considerable recognition within both the ornithological and wider community for her knowledge of, and passionate advocacy for, Australian birds. She is often a spokesperson in the media in discussions about birds and nature conservation more broadly.

This recognition is not limited to her involvement with BirdLife Australia. She is also a member of the Canberra Ornithologists Group, an affiliate of BirdLife Australia, and was President from 2012 to 2016.

Alison has also been President and Chair of the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust in Canberra since 2014, a partnership between the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, the Australian National University, and the community to enhance management of Mulligans Flat Sanctuary and the Jerrabomberra Wetlands Nature Reserve. The Mulligans Flat Sanctuary, surrounded by a predator-proof fence, is Australia's largest reserved area of Yellow Box/Red Gum woodland. Jerrabomberra Wetlands is a unique wetland sanctuary in the heart of Canberra, supporting over 170 bird species.

Alison's career as a senior executive in the Australian Public Service also added to her reputation as a champion of Australia's birds. She had wide experience in policy and program management and administration across a range of nature conservation areas. In particular, she led Australian delegations at international meetings of the Ramsar Wetlands Convention, the APEC Marine Resources Working Group, Wetlands International, and Australia's Bilateral Migratory Bird Agreements with Japan, China, and the Republic of Korea. Alison was the Australian Government member on the Board of Wetlands International and Chair of the Wetlands International (Asia-Pacific) Council. She also took a guiding role in the development, promotion, and implementation of the Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy and subsequently the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership.

Alison was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 2018 for service to conservation and the environment.

Her outstanding contributions to BirdLife Australia and its predecessor organisations and to the wider conservation community over many years make Alison a most worthy recipient of Honorary Life Membership of BirdLife Australia.

Duncan MacKenzie OAM

Gluepot Reserve.

Duncan was Chair of Gluepot Reserve for 23 years, stepping down in 2020. During this time, his vision, passion, and energy has helped to create a carbon-neutral, world class conservation reserve. What was once a pastoral lease is now the largest block of intact mallee left in Australia.

Duncan has an incredible capacity to engage with people which has been a vital part of the success of Gluepot. He knew that establishing local collaborative relationships would be key to the growth and sustainability of the reserve. To that end, over many years he tirelessly built relationships with pastoralists, NGOs, community groups, friends' groups, schools, universities, overseas students, and NRM groups.

One of his greatest strengths and achievements has been his work with a passionate group of volunteers who are the backbone of Gluepot. Under his leadership, he recruited a diverse team of highly skilled experts in their respective fields to the Gluepot Management Committee. This committee is supported by a myriad of committed on the ground volunteers who devote thousands of hours to maintaining and protecting the reserve.

Duncan's achievements for Gluepot are inspiring. Examples include: -

He spearheaded the creation of the Gluepot Reserve Foundation securing \$2.5 million dollars which secured the sustainable future of the reserve.

- Being the recipient of over 40 awards, at both state and national level in environmental management, education, eco-tourism, landcare, leadership, and science.
- Establishing Friends of Gluepot who run the mallee fowl monitoring project and other on ground activities.
- Sourcing multiple grants allowing extensive infrastructure development including:
 - a. An education and research centre where environmental courses have been run for 15 years.
 - b. A well-resourced visitor centre highlighting Gluepot's conservation success.
 - c. The construction of multiple bird hides.

d. The construction of 60km of electric fencing for feral animal control.

e. An accommodation block for researchers.

BirdLife Australia

Duncan joined the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union in 1956. He was appointed to the board of BirdLife Australia in May 2014, stepping down in May 2023. During this time, he was a member of several board subcommittees: the Finance and Audit Committee, the OHS Committee, and the Australian Bird Fund Committee. He is a life member of the BirdLife Photography Special Interest Group and was granted a life membership of EMU in 2023.

National Recognition for His Achievements

In June 2009, Duncan was awarded an OAM for his service to the environment through Birds Australia, Gluepot Reserve, and to the community.

Publications

Duncan is the author of over 450 papers, article and books across diverse fields including conservation, the environment, ecotourism, and bird photography as well as Iodine Deficiency Disorder and information technology.

Other Conservation Work

Most would think that Duncan would have had to devote all his time to Gluepot to achieve all that he did, but this is not the case. Many conservation organisations have been, and still are, beneficiaries of Duncan's conservation expertise. These include:

- The President of South Australia's Friends of Park.
- Chair of the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary Partnership Group.
- A member of the South Australian Parks and Wilderness Council, formed by the government to advise the Minister for Environment on matters pertaining to the environment and conservation in parks and wilderness areas.
- He is a member of the Volunteering SA/NT Strategy Working Group.
- He is Chief Scientist on the Management Committee of the Scientific Expedition group.
- He was recently appointed to the National Council of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition Club (ANARE).
- In January 2020, Duncan was appointed to the "Wildlife, Ecosystems and Habitat Recovery Task Force" to assist SA in planning and instituting, long-term fire recovery and the DEW 'Nature Based Tourism Reference Group'.
- The past Chair of Ecotourism Australia (8 years).
- The past Chair of the South Australian Tourism Industry (8 years)
- A past member of the Management Committee of the Landcare Association of SA.

Duncan MacKenzie enriches all organisations and people he engages with. A people person, a passionate bird conservationist, and scientist. He has more than earned the level of recognition an Honorary Life Membership Award affords.