

FROM THE EDITOR

BY SAREN STARBRIDGE

Enticing introductions to a tantalising few

Wildness won Best Documentary at the Australian Film and Television Awards for 2003 in Melbourne this November. Congratulations to Director Scott Millwood (interviewed in WAM Spring 2003) and everyone associated with the film. It's great to be able to put you in the lead paragraph. When I checked a couple of news sites to check how *Wildness* fared on the night, I not only had to read through all the awards scooped up by *Japanese Story* (an impressive eight) and other feature films, plus a few TV awards; I also got to find out about who was there and what they wore before an outstanding documentary on two superb interpreters of some of Australia's great wilderness areas got a mention.

And so, to an issue of *Wildlife Australia* themed around 'little-known Australians'. It's a depressingly large subject when it comes to Australian wildlife. Many thanks to Gary Clark for giving it, as always, a twist of humour and giving the Grassland Earless Dragon what I suspect could be its first

airing as a cartoon character.

Or maybe it's an excitingly large subject, as Scratcher & Rustler Greg Czechura reminds us. We can find little-known Australians right in our own garden leaf litter, closets and cupboards – especially if we live in one of those old Queenslander-style house much beloved by Granny Cloak Moths. Carol Booth is now getting more closely acquainted with the wildlife at her commuter ferry landing and Sandra Brunet shares her discovery of some good news rats.

There's a worry that so much Australian wildlife is little-known due to lack of interest, and that much of it may remain little-known because we'll clear away its habitat before we ever discover anything about it. Yes, we need homes and agricultural land, but I don't know where we think our supplies of soil and fresh water are going to come from as we destroy the forests and grasslands that maintain these vital cycles, and protect our biodiversity. As Wildsider John Stanisic observes, 'Land clearing is without doubt the greatest single threat to our faunal biodiversity, vertebrate or

invertebrate.' As far-sighted land managers, we need to incorporate an understanding of the importance of large areas of natural bushland into our culture. And so we keep reminding our politicians and supporting our environmental groups.

But hopefully, one of the reasons so much Australian wildlife is little-known is that – there is such a variety of Australian wildlife. Our feature writers and photographers have done a fantastic job of discovering and unfolding some enticing introductions to a tantalising few: a bird, a reptile, a couple of macropods and a group of magnificent winged insects that are guaranteed to enrich your summer of wildlife watching.

Also, please check the back cover for our great subscription offer. We are pleased to be able to offer our wonderful new, renewing and gift subscribers another winning opportunity, courtesy of regular WAM contributor and amazing wildlife photographer Darren Jew.

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Swamp

