

## D. L. Serventy Medal 2008: Citation

PROFESSOR STEPHEN THOMAS GARNETT AND  
DR GABRIEL MARY CROWLEY

*The D. L. Serventy Medal is an award of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (now Birds Australia) that honours members who have made outstanding contributions to publication in the field of ornithology in the Australasian region.*

Stephen Garnett is Director of the School for Environmental Research, Institute for Advanced Studies, at Charles Darwin University and Gabriel Crowley is a Project Officer with the Tropical Savannas Management CRC. Partners in life and work, Stephen and Gay have made a significant, pivotal and unique contribution to the knowledge and conservation of Australian birds. This contribution has been through hands-on intensive research, through the compilation of systematic overviews of the conservation status of Australian birds, and through the development and maintenance of networks of ornithologists and others, nationally and internationally, with interest in the management of Australia's threatened birds.

Much of this very substantial body of work has been undertaken jointly, which gives it an unusual depth and richness. While Stephen is an excellent ornithologist, Gay also brings to the research partnership particular expertise in botany. This added perspective has proven invaluable, allowing them to fully document and understand the intricate and essential links between, for example, the management of Glossy Black-Cockatoos and their primary food source, casuarinas, and between Golden-shouldered Parrots, grass seed availability and the response of grasses to cattle and fire. Conservation ecology depends upon untangling these nuanced relationships and dependencies, and the work of Stephen and Gay represents some of the most outstanding examples of this discipline.

Stephen has been undertaking research on Australian birds for more than 30 years, beginning at secondary school with a major banding study of Pied Currawongs and, until recently, largely outside the formal university environment. His research and publications have been unusually diverse, including an Honours thesis on the behaviour of Dusky Moorhen, aerial surveys of waders in northern Australia, island biogeography of birds in the Torres Strait, the conservation ecology of Glossy Black-Cockatoos on Kangaroo Island, the conservation ecology of Golden-shouldered Parrots on Cape York Peninsula, the conservation of birds in northern Australia generally, the responses of birds to climate change, and innovative research on the prioritisation, efficacy and cost-effectiveness of conservation management options. This bird-focused research represents just a segment of his even broader research interests, which also include crocodiles, marine turtles and Indigenous Land management, environmental insurance, integrated conservation and development, uranium trading policy and the mobility of dentists.

Stephen's publications include over 90 peer-reviewed journal articles, 20 peer-reviewed book chapters, seven authored and three edited books, 70 research reports and 200 popular articles



related to research and innovation, illustrating his commitment not only to science but also to its practical application to environmental management and its dissemination to the wider public.

The Serventy Medal also recognises contribution to reviewing, editing and the promotion of publication, and here Stephen has also excelled, not only reviewing for several professional journals, but sub-editing and editing for publications that include *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, *Geo Magazine*, *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of Australia* and *Search*, the journal of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, and sitting on the Editorial Boards of *Emu*, *Ecological Management and Restoration*, *Biodiversity and Conservation* and *Bird Conservation International*. He also initiated and coordinated the important five-year project to digitise the first 100 years of *Emu*.

Gay's research on Australian birds has been nearly as long-standing as Stephen's and her research interests also include a substantial publication record in palynology, vegetation ecology and fire management. Her publications include over 30 peer-reviewed journal articles, five peer-reviewed book chapters, 30 research reports and countless popular articles. She also serves as a reviewer for several international and regional professional journals.

The breadth and relevance of this body of research would of itself justify recognition within the elite level of Australian ornithology, but Stephen and Gay have also added the pivotal

reviews and documentation of the conservation status of, and outlook for, Australian birds – *The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000* and its forerunner *The Action Plan for Australian Birds (1992)* – cornerstones of the conservation of Australia's avifauna.

These carefully considered compilations form the essential texts for bird conservation in Australia and have been the basic reference for all those who manage Australian birds and the Australian environment generally. These works crystallise the commitment of Gay and Stephen to undertake research strategically and meaningfully, and to ensure that the results of the research are communicated and applied to improve the management of birds and their environment.

Further evidence of this commitment is seen in their joint contribution to recovery plans (and their application) for several threatened species. Stephen has also maintained a major role in linking the conservation management of Australian birds to international initiatives and contexts, and in networking those with research and management interests in Australian birds (and particularly threatened Australian birds). His contributions in these fields include being a Governor and member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of World Wide Fund for Nature Australia, the convenor of the Threatened Species Committee of Birds Australia, a member of Birds Australia's Research and Conservation Committee and a member of the Technical Committee for Pacific Important Bird Areas of

Birdlife International. He also coordinates the Important Bird Area (IBA) Technical Committee for Birds Australia, having initiated the project to identify Australia's IBAs in 2003. This is an extraordinary commitment to the conservation and management of Australia's and the world's birds.

Gay is known for her expertise in biodiversity conservation, fire management and communication of conservation across northern Australia, serving as an advisor on 10 different biodiversity panels for natural resource management bodies and government agencies. Her focus has been on assisting land managers make and meet their own conservation objectives, and her current work delivers property-specific biodiversity information through a stable of Tropical Savannas websites. She is president of the Northern Territory Field Naturalists Club.

Both Gay and Stephen have a long-standing association with Birds Australia, Stephen on several committees and Gay as a researcher. Together and separately they have made a major contribution to our knowledge of Australian birds, and an unrivalled contribution to their conservation. Their significant contributions to the publication of pure, applied and popular ornithology and conservation, make them most worthy recipients of the D. L. Serventy Medal.

Penny Olsen and John Woinarski