

Plenary

DAN LUNNEY: Two themes emerge as important. If urban wildlife were to be a course at university or TAFE, what would the subjects be, who would it be organised by and where would its graduates hope for jobs? Secondly, if we were to run a second day of this forum, if we had known everything that we now know, what would we include? What would be the themes and the individual topics?

When we were putting the program together, Richard Davies looked at the heading for the last one, 'The Way Forward' and said, "Do you mean miscellaneous, Dan?" I said, "Well, no, certainly not." But 'The Way Forward' is, in fact, only a miscellaneous set of ideas. It is not yet thematic. We do not yet have a way forward. We have ideas, like 2020, and we have much inspiration from what a miscellaneous collection of things that have yet to be connected. So, if we were to run a second day of this forum, what would be we like to include, what themes and what individual topics?

HARRY RECHER: Daniel, I think you have created a lot of work for yourself with that question. What is missing is a synthesis, and what is feasible is a synthesis of all the papers presented today because there is a lot of commonality to them, as well as a lot of diversity. Somebody, some group, needs pull together those common themes and come up with a common strategy for managing wildlife in the urban environment, otherwise we are just going to be stuck again with a series of separate statements and nothing that gives direction to the future.

DAN LUNNEY: The applause for Harry will be recorded in the printed record of this forum.

PETER HOWARD: We have touched on some of the socio-biological aspects of maintaining our environment. I suggest the second day might be dedicated to the socio-political aspects of maintaining our environment. We talk about managing wildlife. Let's talk about managing developers - sorry, development. (Applause.)

SHELLEY BURGIN: And maybe politicians and their advisers.

JONATHAN SANDERS: (National Parks and Wildlife Service). One of the really essential questions that we still have not come to grips with, and it is visible in the urban environment, but even more visible outside the urban environment, is that we are still essentially a European culture living in a very different country. I think that it is one of our fundamental issues, especially because some of the speakers talked about the differences from 20 or 30 years ago, such as contact with native animals.

We are now not only in a circumstances where a lot of our kids are not coming in contact with native animals, but a lot of our aspirations are even more thoroughly focused on foreign concepts and foreign situations, such as what is happening in America, or what might be happening in particular cultural movements overseas. I think we have a real problem as far as our cultural aspirations and our whole adjustment to living in Australia is concerned.

DAN LUNNEY: Jonathan, we have a problem, but I know you have some answers.

JONATHAN SANDERS: I went to Britain last year, and one of the fascinating issues was the fact there was a real valuing of the countryside by people who lived in the city. One of the things that the British people identified to me was the fact that there was an encouragement of people in the cities to get out and interact in the countryside, which has a lot to do with access.

It has a lot to do with the whole style of life. Whether you live on a block of land with a fence around it, or you have a very small house with a very small backyard, you have a lot of collective open space with common access to it so that you have more community ownership, more responsibility and more encounters with the land.

There is a lot of focus on the management of public land, the management of council-owned land, but the vast majority of New South Wales is still private land, and that is where the major management problems occur. We cannot walk there, we cannot go there, we cannot do things there. This means that when we have to deal with subsidising managers of private land, why would you pay money to a private individual to spend time conserving his/her wildlife if you cannot go and see that wildlife?

So we are individuals cut-off of from nature, and a lot of it has to do with our attitude to tenure, to access, as well as our basically just not ever having adjusted to living in Australia.

DARRYL JONES: In 1999, a few of us here had the privilege of going to the Third International Urban Ecology Conference in Tucson, Arizona. I thought I was the only person in Australia interested in urban ecology at the time. It is amazing to see how many people are here today. It is a reflection that this is a very major feature.

One of the things in 1999 that people noticed, and there was a lot of talk about it, was that the real emphasis from the beginning was on the conservation of urban wildlife, how to bring animals back into the environment. More than half of the talks were about the management of native species in urban areas. There was this other big thing, and it seems to be a fairly recent phenomenon that we have heard lots of examples today, of native species becoming superabundant and posing interesting and difficult management problems.

So there are three things: there are the conservation issues; there are the management issues; and the third, which is absolutely essential if you are going to talk about urban ecology, and that is the people side of everything. You cannot avoid the fact that people define this problem. We would not be in this room today if people did not live in big cities. There has only been a couple of talks today of trying to understand where the people fit into this whole equation. So there are three possible sub-themes for a future conference like.

DAN LUNNEY: Thank you. In fact, when I was talking to Chris Dickman the other day, he made a similar point and noted that we were only focusing on Australia.

CHRIS DICKMAN: (University of Sydney). While we were talking the other day, Dan, the things that came to mind were that we were coming to this issue a bit later in Australia than in other parts of the world. If you look at parts of Europe and North America, there are already well-developed urban ecology societies, movements and groups, and certainly international conferences of the kind that Darryl has just mentioned. There has been a little more time for an appreciation of the importance of urban wildlife, and urban ecology in general. We are coming to this a bit later than in some other parts of the world and we do have much we can learn from the experiences elsewhere.

JANET UDEN: (Wildlife Ark). We get a lot of calls from the public concerning urban wildlife. It seems to me that the main problem is that many people are afraid of the wildlife in their garden. They like to view it, but view it from a distance. They are not sure whether they should be feeding the wildlife or not, they are not sure whether they should be handling it or not, because they are told by various groups you have to be trained to look after these animals. We get calls all the time, "Come and remove this snake from my property and I do not want it here any more."

DAN LUNNEY: So, you would say that if you were going to run a second day, the question should be addressed as to who can do what with which animals? Can you touch them, can you feed them, can you eat them, can you have them as pets?

JANET UDEN: These messages need to get out there. You can plant your back garden with plants for wildlife, and when the wildlife comes into your garden the animals are just passing through. A lot of people think they need to remove the wildlife. They think that we are here to get the wildlife and put it somewhere else; put it back into the bush where it belongs. But our bush is disappearing at an alarming rate.

That comes back to what we have been saying all afternoon: it is education. We need to start somewhere. I do not know whether that means National Parks and Wildlife Service go and lecture at schools. That might be an option, but that comes back to government funding.

GREG CLANCY: (Ecologist from the Clarence Valley.) There is a cultural cringe. We are Australians and we should have backyards that reflect that fact. We have to look at things from an ecological perspective, not just from a narrow bird or reptile point of view. That was dealt with to some degree today, but I think we could firm up on that, we need to get the overall picture of what is going on in urban areas, not just, "I'm interested in possums," or, "I'm interested in birds." We have to see the whole lot. I presented a paper in last year's RZS forum, *A Zoological Revolution* [edited by D. Lunney and C. Dickman RZS 2002] about my backyard, and hopefully there are some pointers for anyone who wants to implement what was talked about to day: how do you bring the wildlife into your yard.

DAN LUNNEY: Indeed, as I sat editing Greg's paper that he gave as a five-minute presentation in the forum on 'A Zoological Revolution' last year, I thought, "That's not a five-minute talk, that's a whole day." Now here I am turning it into a two-day event. Greg, look what you have done.

LIBBY HALL: (Wildlife supervisor at the Taronga Zoo.) As far as education goes, we have a school program with wildlife that is being rehabilitated or rescued. We recognise that individual animals may not do much for the actual environment, so we use them as living tools for conservation. In other words, we give them to the schools and in that way the children learn about that bluetongue lizard. It may not ever be released, but we do talk to them about the environment. They go out into the habitat, and they actually care for that animal.

When children care for individuals in their own environment they become personally attached to them, then they are very easily educated into any other aspects of conservation. Let's face it, our future is with our children. Inside the school environment, using our native wildlife as tools for conservation, is a good way to educate.

RICHARD DAVIES: I was trained as an ecologist, but you can tell from my latest enthusiasm that I work with the social aspects of ecology. We need to be careful about saying we have to take an ecological focus. We really have to take a people focus. I have noticed a huge increase in the population of humans in urban environments, and they are established by humans for humans in the eyes of a lot of people. So we need to try and find a way to seeing the people side of things, which is why I think art and involvement are so interesting.

CARLA CATTERALL: What is on my wish list, if you were doing more, would be to think more about urban mosaics, urban areas as spatial mosaics. Rather than to talk in general terms about how all yards could be made wildlife friendly, or how people do not want to interact with wildlife. There are some kinds of land management options within urban areas that will produce particular winners and losers, in terms of wildlife. If you plant scattered native trees, flying foxes might be winners, but small insectivorous birds might be losers.

So in my urban mosaic of the future, you would have some areas of that type and you would have some bushland patches of reasonable size, connected to other areas, set aside to support different kinds of fauna and flora. Then people can have the opportunity to encounter wildlife in day-to-day life by moving to those areas without having to drive 50 or 100 kilometres to do so. There would be other areas needing attention - the more built-up and consolidated areas - where people do not contact wildlife on a regular basis. The challenge is how do you incorporate all these types of areas in an ideal, sustainable urban area.

ROB CLOSE: (University of Western Sydney.) I would like to see some discussion on the way legal decisions are made regarding the environment. Having just spent a traumatic couple of days in the Land and Environment Court, I realise the immense power that the judge has, a

man who calls *Phascolarctos cinereus* koala bears, and yet it was obvious that he knew nothing about the environment. Yet he had the decision to make on an area that is going to impact on about 60 hectares of transition-zone forest on the banks of the Georges River. So I would like to see some discussion about the legal side of the environment.

DAN LUNNEY: Yes, I agree. We ran a 'Zoology in Court' forum in 1990 [*Zoology in Court*, edited by D. Lunney RZS 1992], but it looks like there could be merit in a second run.

TERRY DAWSON: The major thing is that we come back to the notion that it is people that we are involved with. The point is that we want a more enriched environment. Fundamentally, it is for our own pleasure. We talk about conservation. We talk about the poor little frogs and all these sorts of things, but in reality, in the urban scheme of things, we are talking about enriching our own environment and getting more pleasure out of it.

Generally speaking, we are talking about how do we involve a larger mass of people in this enrichment process so that those of us that are interested in conservation have something to work with so that the majority of people are more fulfilled. Harry Recher particularly points to this. The sociological aspects of this whole operation are important so that we can start to move the mass of people in the sorts of directions where they will be more enriched and, for us far to the right in this, we do much better as well.

JENNY TURPIN: (Environmental artist.) Just following on with the people issue: my suggestion is that, to widen the scope for day 2, you invite people other than scientists, ecologists and conservationists. Invite the judges from the

Land and Environmental court, invite the developers, invite politicians to speak on the specific issues that everybody today has been talking about to get views from other members of the community.

ANNE CONWAY: (Countrywide Ecological Services.) I would like to follow up on the point made by Rob Close. As well as the legal things, one of the important elements that would be useful is to educate the decision-makers, the really critical decision-makers. That follows from the last speaker. There is a lot of people that we do not ever get our message to who make decisions that impact on urban wildlife. If we can make the people who make the fundamental decisions aware of how important these things are, we would have a great chance of making significant changes. It would be relatively easy to make those decisions if they are made very early on, when it is not too late to change a plan.

DAN LUNNEY: Yes, I agree with you, Anne. We gained one glimpse today through Kim Buckley's talk.

PETER HOWARD: In the subjects for a second day I would have marketing; I would want people to be able to promote their ideas; I would want to see environmental economics taught, to actually start to develop economic arguments for sustaining the environment; I would like to see some philosophy, the philosophy of science, make sure the science that we have is good science and it stands up in court; and finally, I would want to see political science. I'd like to see people being savvy to how the system works and how decisions are taken.

DAN LUNNEY: We have indeed outlined a second day of an urban wildlife forum, but today we have run our course. Thank you.