

# Society of Wetlands Scientists Oceania Chapter

## February 2020 Newsletter

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### Happy World Wetlands Day!

World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 2 February, marking the date of the adoption of the Ramsar Convention in 1971. This year's theme is **Wetlands and biodiversity**.

A list of World Wetlands Day activities and events can be found here:

[www.worldwetlandsday.org/events](http://www.worldwetlandsday.org/events)

Or follow the action online using the hashtag **#WetlandBiodiversityMatters**



### Free webinar: The value and state of the world's wetlands and the role of Ramsar Convention in wetland conservation

Sydney Olympic Park will be hosting the next in their series of free webinars on 20 February at 3:00PM AEDT presented by Professor Nick Davidson. To register, visit

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/3027748663252808972>

### Wetlands, bushfires and a drying climate

SWS-O is seeking to bring together members' experiences and knowledge of wetlands that may have been affected by the recent catastrophic bushfires, as well as the effects of drought on wetland susceptibility to bushfires.

We hope to use this information to plan a short workshop or symposium in this area, and bring together members for discussion, knowledge sharing and support. Please get in touch with any projects, papers, anecdotes or other relevant information, or just to register your interest. Be sure to let us know where you are based for planning purposes.

### Notes from the field

The Oceania chapter covers a very large region with an amazing diversity of wetlands and wetland projects. To capture this diversity, we'd like to showcase a wetland project or two from around our region in each newsletter. If you have an interesting project on the go or just a great wetland experience that would make others smile, please share it with us!

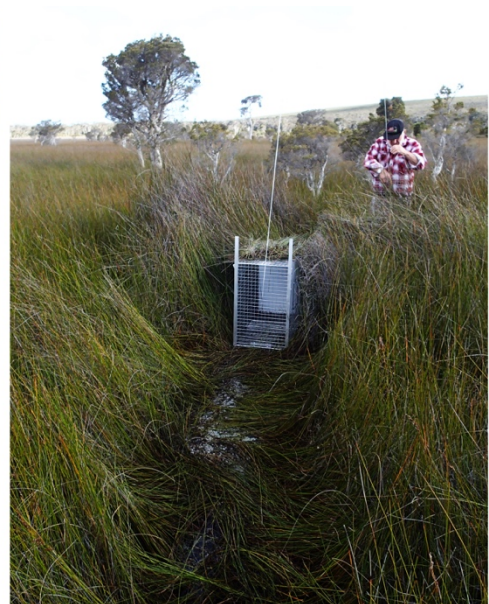
## Saving the boordenitj boom - Adrian Pinder, Western Australia

The boordenitj (Australasian bittern, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*) has one of the more distinctive bird calls, but its 'boom' is far less commonly heard than it once was. To prevent the boom becoming a bust in Western Australia, a new management plan for this threatened wetland dependant species is being implemented, partly through a collaboration between the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and Birdlife Australia (DBCA), supported by the WA State NRM office.

The range and the number of wetlands inhabited by this species has declined significantly in recent decades, with major threats including introduced predators and habitat loss through land clearing, climate change and fire. Unfortunately, current population size and patterns of habitat use remain major knowledge gaps. Even at close range they can be hard to detect unless they are calling or are flushed out so the new collaborative project is using camera traps and autonomous recording units to supplement traditional surveys, together with depth and rainfall loggers to better understand variability in habitat availability. In addition, the project team are attempting to capture bitterns to fit satellite transmitters to better understand movement patterns by individual birds. Unfortunately, 2019 was a very dry year in south-western Australia and wetland depths were so low in spring that little breeding was occurring so males could not be lured into the cage traps with recordings of rivals. Trapping will be attempted again next year but, in the meantime, feathers are being collected for genetic analyses that may also provide information on populations, breeding and bittern movement between wetlands.

While undertaking this research to improve knowledge of the species biology, DBCA and Birdlife are working towards protecting its remaining habitats. Activities include working with private landholders and traditional owners to identify and protect wetlands, promoting bitterns through environmental education, managing introduced predators and other feral animals, managing vegetation and weeds, and fire planning and management.

Key staff working on this project are Sarah Comer, Alan Clarke and Allan Burbidge (DBCA) and Plaxy Barratt and Vicki Stokes (Birdlife).



Photos: Alan Clarke, Cheyne Road Nature Reserve. Photo on the right shows long-time volunteer Tony Bush helping to set up a trap.

## Changes to SWS-O Executive

We'd like to welcome Phil Papas to the role of acting president! Sam Capon gave the re-invigorated SWS-O chapter a fabulous start and has since stepped down. Phil was vice president and will take on the role of acting president until our next elections.

## Bring a friend

Do you have a friend with a watery-bent? Do you have colleagues in the wetlands space? Please share this newsletter with them! We'd love to bring more people together who are working, studying or just interested in the wonderful world of wetlands.

If they'd like to know more about the benefits of being an SWS member, visit [www.sws.org](http://www.sws.org)

## Don't forget

The **Quebec RE<sup>3</sup> Conference**, a joint conference between the Canadian Land Reclamation Association (CLRA), the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) and the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) is coming up fast, June 7-11 2020. Abstracts close 30 January. <http://www.re3-quebec2020.org>

Closer to home, the **11<sup>th</sup> INTECOL International Wetlands Conference** will be held in Christchurch, NZ, 18-23 October 2020. The theme is *Traditional knowledge and innovation science in wetland research and management*. This conference is only held every 4 years, so it's exciting to have it in our region! There will be a strong SWS presence both from SWS-O and internationally. Abstract submission now open. <http://clpinz.org.nz/intecol20>

**Questions? Comments? Reply to this email, we'd love to hear from you!**