

Sydney Aquarium Conservation Fund
(SACF)

Inspiring stewardship of our aquatic environments



Annual Report 2011

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's been busy central at SACF with both staff tag teaming on maternity leave between the latter half of 2010 year and the beginning of 2011. But that hasn't slowed us down. With just one full time equivalent staff member, it's been busier than ever.

The year kicked off with new owners; UK based Merlin Entertainments took over Sydney Attractions Group which includes Sydney Aquarium (and SACF), Wildlife Sydney, Oceanworld Manly, Sydney Tower Eye and Wildlife Hamilton. Luckily for SACF, Merlin Entertainments have been more than supportive of our work and have happily continued on as our primary corporate sponsor.

Despite having just a couple of hands on deck SACF managed to contribute to several new research and education initiatives including monitoring wild dugong populations in Queensland, turtle tagging in Port Stephens/Great Lakes Marine Park, restoring habitat for native fish, and a real highlight, piloting a Coast Guardian school stewardship program with York Public.

With environmental issues regularly making the headlines these days, **SACF's mission of inspiring stewardship of our aquatic environments is more critical than ever.** Climate change is posing a huge threat to our oceans, with acidification and rising temperatures wreaking havoc on aquatic species and habitats. Human pollution continue to devastate wildlife. The sustainability of our seafood weighs heavily in the balance. Funding for environmental projects, particularly aquatic, has decreased and so we face some hefty challenges ahead if we are to address some of these pressing issues. By inspiring our visitors and the wider public to become stewards of our aquatic environment we aim to put people on the solution side of the equation.

Our animal adopters, members, corporate sponsors and visitors who donate via our spinners all enable us to continue inspiring stewards of the aquatic environment, whether it is research based, through schools, or helping to restore habitat. Every little bit helps.

Individually we are a drop, together we are an ocean.

Sincerely,

Claudette Rechterik

President | SACF Management Committee

www.sacf.org.au for more information on all our projects and campaigns

SACF Management Committee Members

President – Claudette Rechterik
SACF Program Manager

Vice President – Dr Sam Gilchrist,
Vet - Sydney Attractions Group

Treasurer & Public Officer – Brian
Owles, former CFO Sydney
Attractions Group

Secretary – Kait McManus,
Aquarist Oceanworld Manly &
Adopt an Animal Co-ordinator

Ordinary Members:

Kris Lim - General Manager,
Oceanworld Manly

Amy Wilkes – Aquarist, Sydney
Aquarium

Tim Marshall – Online marketing
Manager - SAG

Some of the stewards SACF funded in 2011

Monitoring wild dugongs in Qld

In June 2011, a team of researchers from UQ, Sydney Aquarium, Sea World and Taronga Western Plains Zoo worked together to catch dugongs from Moreton Bay to assess the health and reproductive status of wild populations.



There have been over 100 dugong deaths in Queensland this year alone. Dugongs are like the canary in the coal mine of the marine environment due to their very specific habitat requirements. The Brisbane floods earlier in the year along with dredging in Gladstone are having untold impacts upon seagrass beds, critical habitat for dugongs.

Turtle tagging with NSW Marine Parks Authority

SACF funded 3 satellite tags for turtle monitoring in the Port Stephens/Great Lakes Marine Park. Turtles are subject to a huge array of human impacts such as boat strikes, pollution, and drowning in fishing gear such as crab traps. Tracey, Crabby and Lucy are currently being closely monitored by marine parks staff including scientific officer, Dave Harasti to find out more about where turtles hang out so we can better protect them from



Crabby with her tag. Photo: Dave Harasti

some of these threats. Our marine parks stewards actually saved both Crabby and Lucy from drowning in crab traps. You can find out more about this project [here](#).

Investigating the Impacts of shark attacks on public policy - PhD candidate Chris Neff, USyd



Port Jackson shark caught in shark nets. Photo: Matt Sullivan

Chris Neff has been in the press quite a bit lately due to several shark interactions occurring in WA. Chris' research 'Once Bitten, Twice Shy: The impact of shark attacks on public policies in Australia, South Africa and USA' endeavours to ask how the social and political framing of shark attacks impact the development of shark conservation policies in these countries.

Information gathered from Chris' research has already fed into beach safety policy development in WA in light

of several interactions that occurred there in recent months. Thankfully the option of shark meshing was ruled out. We'd like to think it was because of Chris and his amazing work! Chris Neff - inspiring responsible and sustainable stewardship of our marine life.

Pilot of the Coast Guardian program – York Public School, Penrith



Program Manager Claudette Rechterik with students from York Public on World Oceans Day for coral reef tank launch

Whitney said she believes 'children are our future' and we agree. The next generation will inherit some serious issues some of which we're starting to see today. Creating young, passionate, engaged stewards is key to ensuring we get back on track to a healthy planet.

We celebrated World Oceans Day, 8 June, launching the installation of a stunning coral reef tank in Class 2/3 of York Public School, Penrith, a pilot school for our Coast Guardian

stewardship program. The school held a special assembly to honour the day and to screen a very touching video the kids had made about making personal changes to help our marine environment. Salt Aquariums, a local aquarium supplier, generously matched SACF's \$3,000 to create one spectacular live learning tool.

'My kids have never been so excited and enthusiastic about going to school. Thank you!'

Parent of York Public student

According to teacher and project manager Ben Eggins, learning rates of the kids have increased exponentially since the tank's implementation. Parents informed us of a new enthusiasm in their children's learning behavior as well as excitement about going to school.

"Thanks for everything you've done this year. Without even realizing you are helping revolutionise education..." - Ben Eggins, teacher and project manager, York Public School

Ben has opened up his classroom to other classes, and other schools in the area book regularly for visits to see the tank. Teachers from a special needs school that visited the tank, witnessed a significant positive change in their students. Ordinarily subdued students became animated in the presence of the tank which gave the teachers valuable information regarding the learning potential of these

students.

We aim to include the potential for live learning tools to be installed in schools as part of the Coast Guardian school stewardship program, a program based on Qld's Reef Guardian program. Unfortunately we were not successful with our Envirotrust grant application and so will be actively seeking funding for this program in 2012.

Ben Eggins and York Public School – truly inspirational stewards for now and the future.

The 1,000km Fish Habitat Challenge!



Did you know freshwater fish are the most endangered group of animals on the planet?

As part of Native Fish Awareness Week we began our freshwater campaign to restore native fish passage by raising funds to remove redundant fish barriers.

The 1,000km Fish Habitat Challenge has already raised funds to remove the first weir, Bangate Bridge, on the Narran River in west NSW (pictured above). By removing this redundant barrier, over 50km of native fish passage will be restored. Only 950km to go! You can help directly by holding your own fundraiser to remove a fish barrier. See www.sacf.org.au for more information on how you can get involved.

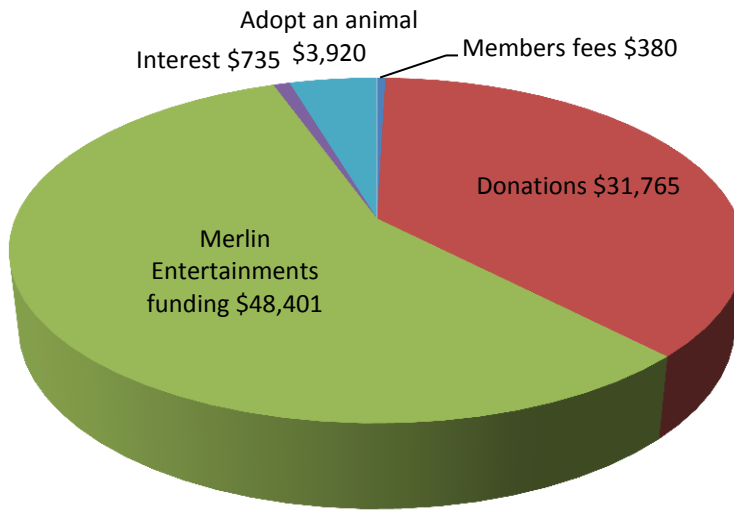
Partners in the 1,000km Habitat Challenge include Caring for Country, Recreational Freshwater Fishing Trust and NSW DPI – passionate stewards of native fish habitat.

To find out more about SACF's other projects go to www.sacf.org.au

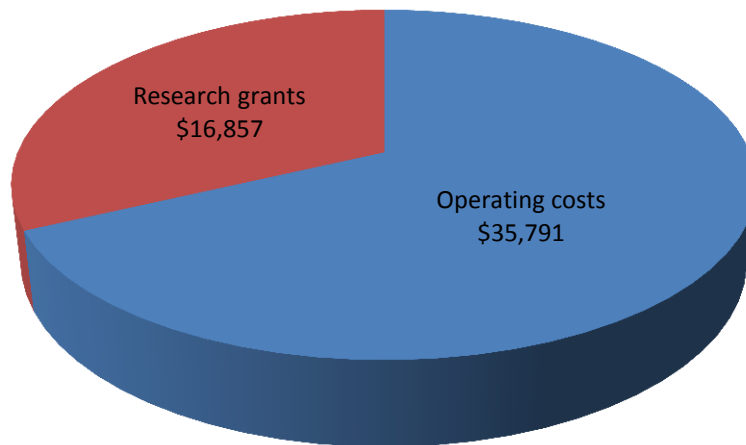
Finances

As Merlin Entertainments is a European based company accounting is on a calendar year rather than a financial year. However as this is a transitional year the following financial data is to June 2011.

Income



Expenditure



Surplus of income over expenditure	28,633
Less withholding Tax	(335)
Net surplus for period to June 2011	<u>28,298</u>

In addition, income carried over from previous years (\$100,000) has been placed in a term deposit which ends January 2012. These funds will be used to leverage for further funding from government and private grants to expand our education and research programs.

Our supporters

A huge thank you to our corporate sponsor, donors, members and supporters, without which we would not be able to do the work we do.

- Merlin Entertainments – Corporate sponsor
- Recreational Fishing Trust - \$5,000
- Catherine Colwill - \$500
- Animal Adopters - \$50
- Members - \$10

A huge thanks to our volunteers Brian Owles, Alicia Burns, Andrew Aylett, Jackie Walker, Jodie Frew, and Juan Mendoza, who do a tremendous and valuable job.

Thanks also to all the researchers who through their passion and dedication, inspire stewardship of our natural environments.

You can donate, become a member or adopt an animal via our website www.sacf.org.au. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

We look forward to updating you on exciting

upcoming events In 2012!

Claudette Rechterik

SACF Program Manager

SACF in-kind contributions

Although we have limited funding we try and help worthy projects and other NGOs wherever we can. This may consist of offering Sydney Aquarium's spectacular Reef Theatre or Oceanworld Manly's auditorium free of charge for special functions and events.

Events supported in 2011:

- Greenpeace Sustainable Tuna Report media launch
- NSW DPI Native Fish Awareness Week media launch
- Presentation by Tim Silverwood, co-found of Take 3 and 'Bag it' documentary screening
- Safcol's new sustainable pole and line caught canned tuna media launch

Room hire is valued at \$2,500 **resulting in SACF contributing \$10,000 in-kind.**