



SEA LIFE Conservation Fund

ANNUAL REPORT 2012



SACF Management Committee 2012

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Claudette Rechterik
SLCF Program
Manager

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Sam Gilchrist, Vet -
Merlin
Entertainments

Treasurer – Jade
McKellar - Cluster
Manager, Merlin
Ent. Australia/NZ

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Hill, Operations
Manager SEA LIFE
Sydney Aquarium

Secretary – Belle
McCarthy, SLCF
Program Co-
ordinator

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Manager, Manly SEA
LIFE Sanctuary

Amy Wilkes –
Aquarist, SEA LIFE
Sydney Aquarium

Tim Marshall –
Online Marketing
Manager, Merlin Ent.
Sydney

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's been another crazy year at SEA LIFE Conservation Fund (SLCF) - formerly Sydney Aquarium Conservation Fund (SACF). **Which brings me to our first piece of big news** - we've rebranded as part of the relaunch of the new SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium. Merlin Entertainments have spent over \$10 million upgrading the old aquarium, introducing 14 new themed zones and a lot of excitement. The place looks great with a really immersive feel & lots of conservation messages!

With this relaunch come the increased opportunities to spread our conservation work across the Merlin family, including the newly rebranded Manly SEA LIFE Sanctuary, Underwater World Mooloolaba, Melbourne Aquarium & Auckland's Kelly Tarlton's SEA LIFE Aquarium. These are five sites across Australia/NZ where we can collaborate on aquatic conservation projects and spread the love. Pretty exciting times!

Marine issues have become mainstream news. The GBR has lost 50% of its coral in the last two decades, plastic pollution is increasing its dangerous reach into our food chains, and super trawlers are lurking in the background, ready to plunder whatever healthy fish stocks we may have left.

SLCF's mission of inspiring stewardship of our aquatic environments continues to be the driver to turning this ship around. By inspiring our visitors, staff and the wider public to become stewards of our aquatic environment we aim to engage people to protect our magnificent aquatic environments, with the precarious situation they're in.

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

***UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
Things are not going to get better...They're not.***

Dr Seuss - The Lorax, 1972

Claudette Rechterik

President | SLCF Management Committee



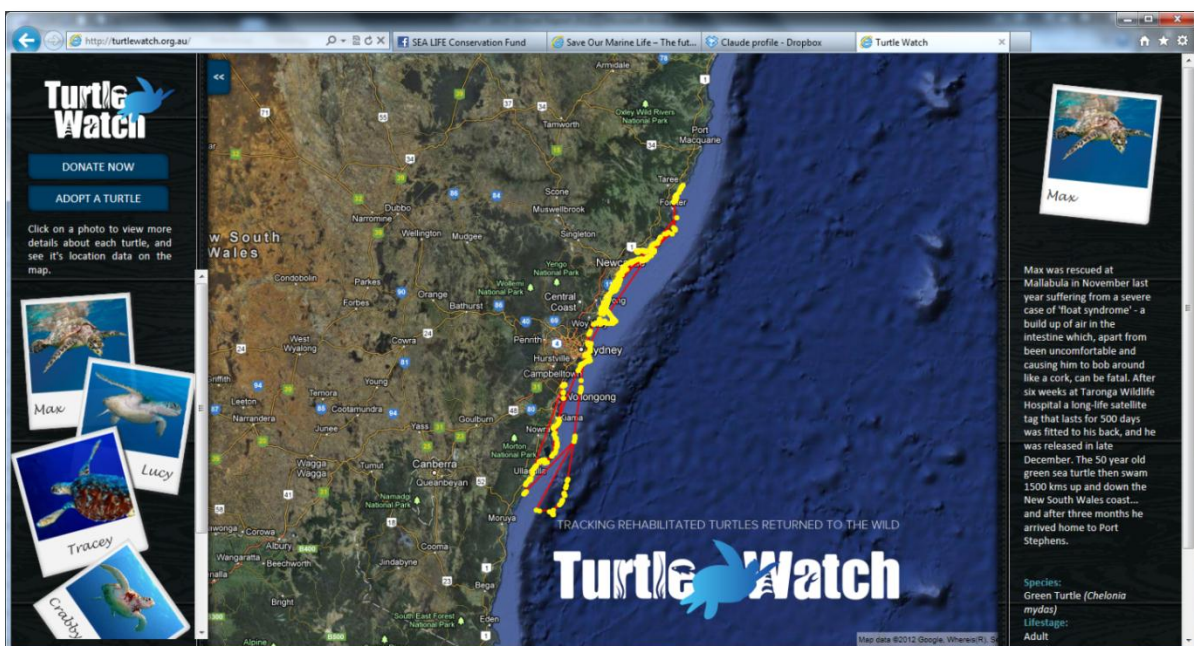
Our turtle tagging activity continued with the release of Flipper, a three flippered turtle into Port Stephens/Great Lakes Marine Park in June. Flipper was found caught in discarded fishing gear. Such were his injuries that Taronga Wildlife Hospital amputated the flipper.

With a little trepidation, he was fitted with the best satellite tag and released back into the wild. Any trepidation about how he'd do in the wild was instantly gone as he gracefully glided off into the sunset.

Thanks to Taronga Wildlife Hospital and PS/GL Marine Parks for their work in helping get Flipper back up and running and back home. As of this month (December) we are still getting information on Flipper's whereabouts. It's great to know Flipper's doing well back in the wild which we wouldn't be able to without the use of satellite tags.



This year we created www.turtlewatch.org.au to enable us to follow the journeys of our rescued turtles as well as communicate our work across the wider community.





A hugely exciting result was **SLCF's success in winning a 'Caring for Country' grant of \$19,000** for its freshwater habitat restoration project, the '1,000km Habitat Challenge'.

NSW DPI and State Water Corporation have identified Woorawadian Weir (pic left) as a priority weir for removal to return another 50kms to fish passage in the Murray Darling Basin.

In just 9 months SLCF has contributed \$30,000 to remove two redundant weirs and restore over 100km

of freshwater habitat for our endangered native fish.

We've got our eyes set on our next weir, Shannon Brook in the state's north, which will restore over 140km fish passage. We have applied for a habitat action grant with the Recreational Fishing Trust for this project and it's looking promising, so watch this space.

Freshwater fish are the most endangered group of animals on the planet (IUCN 2011). It is absolutely critical that we do all that we can to enable remaining populations the best opportunities to increase their populations. This means improving habitat outcomes in often heavily regulated environments.



In less than 12 months we've contributed funds to restore over 100kms of freshwater fish passage!

COAST GUARDIANS – supporting people making a difference!

Educational tools

Holbrook Public school is the latest to receive an aquarium installation as part of our environmental stewardship program, Coast Guardians. Assisted by NSW DPI Fisheries Scientist Luke Pearce, the aquarium will be used to house local endangered freshwater species to inspire environmental learning within the school and the wider Holbrook community. We hope to link up our 1,000km habitat challenge with the school to restore more freshwater fish habitat in 2013.



York Public School (left) is still going strong with the coral reef tank installed in 2011 with many students now taking over key keeper duties of the tank.

Ben Eggins, the project leader opens up the room that houses the tank so that other schools in the area are able to view and plan lessons around the aquarium.

Tony Burke – National Network of MPAs announcement

Minister of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Tony Burke (right) announced the proposed National Marine Parks network in the Reef Theatre of SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium.

What a day for marine conservationists around Australia who have worked tirelessly for years to see this network put on the map. Public sentiment is overwhelmingly supportive of the proposal and so it's just one final hurdle before lines are finally drawn on the map.

Well done Minister Burke and the Australian public for making a difference to the marine environment!



ENVIROBANK - Rewards for Recycling



In January this year SLCF initiated the installation of an Envirobank machine, effectively a mini container deposit scheme. By offering rewards for recycling, **visitors have recycled the equivalent number of bottles & cans to date to power a computer for over 1.5 years!**

Ian Kiernan, founder of Clean Up Australia (pictured left with SLCF Program Manager Claudette Rechterik), kindly attended the launch of the Envirobank at SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium's Aqua Café.

CONSERVATION RESEARCH

Monitoring the health of wild dugongs - \$5,000



Belinda McCarthy, SLCF's Program Co-ordinator was the lucky lady to head up to Moreton Bay to join the UQ team for the second stage of the annual wild dugong health check. Sixteen dugongs were sampled on this trip. The first stage was carried out in July 2012.

Dr Janet Lanyon, principle researcher, is aiming to sample at least 90 dugongs for baseline reference ranges, and is keen to sample dugongs in urban versus non-urban areas to

look for trace elements and other pollutants in dugong tissues and the environment - all aspects of the program with important health implications.

Potential for clownfish to ameliorate the impacts of sea temp rises on anemones - \$8,000



Drs Anna Scott (NMSC) and Ross Hill (UTS) are working on a project which aims to determine the importance of the presence of anemonefish in the recovery of host sea anemones following bleaching.

Other work has recently shown that nutrients from fish waste increase photosynthesis, zooxanthellae densities and the protein content of zooxanthellae. It is therefore likely that the anemonefish might be able to assist in the recovery of anemones following a bleaching event.

The results will be highly significant as they will provide a greater understanding of the complex relationship between anemones and their

resident fish. They will also have implications for aquarium collecting, as removing fish from the anemones is likely to have adverse impacts on anemone resilience and their capacity for recovery from bleaching.

Events

Meet the Scientist @ SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium

A range of fantastic early career scientists joined us to share their research findings. Dr Ross Hill (Oceans & Climate Change), Dave Harasti (Turtle Tagging), Chris Neff (Politics of Shark Attacks), aquarist Marty Garwood (Sex, Lies & Squid) and Dr Amy Smoothey (Bull sharks in the harbour) all provided a fascinating insight into the lives of our fabulous marine critters.

'Another great talk last night. I'm really enjoying them and finding them extremely inspiring. It's great to listen to people with such passion talk about marine life'. Ben, WWF

Recycled Art Workshop



'Trash or Treasure', the recycled art workshop @ Manly SEA LIFE Sanctuary was a busy, and very industrious event. Little people along with their parents got serious about turning the various bits of rubbish that had been picked up on our beaches into cute, quirky and very arty pieces.

All attendees great and small were shocked to learn that all the bits and pieces they were using: straws, bottle lids, and other bits of plastic miscellaneous items, had been picked up off our local beaches.

When relating that back to our Little Penguin friends, whose space we shared, it was clear that plastic rubbish was not a good idea and we all should do our bit to stop it from ending up in the environment and reduce its use when we can.

Bag It – Is your life too plastic? – documentary screening

SLCF hosted a screening of the entertaining and very educational documentary 'Bag it – is your life too plastic' for educators. Over 40 school principals, HSIE teachers and university lecturers came to find out how plastic is taking over our lives, literally, and some things that we can do to reduce our plastic impacts.

We were joined by special guests from Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College and John Dee of 'Do Something' to inspire all the need for action. Several schools expressed an interest in becoming plastic bottle free within their schools, having heard the case study presented by Monte. We will be working on this in the New Year.



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

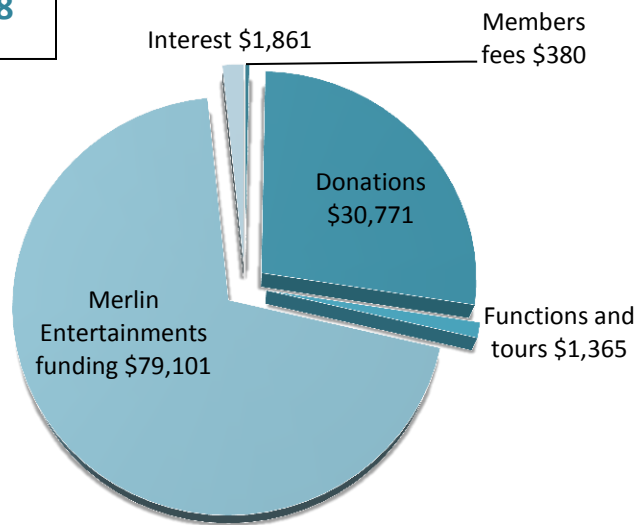
Auditor's Report

I have audited the Income Statement and Balance Sheet together with the Notes to the Financial Statements and confirm that in my opinion they give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of Sydney Aquarium Conservation Fund Inc for the year ended 30 June 2012.

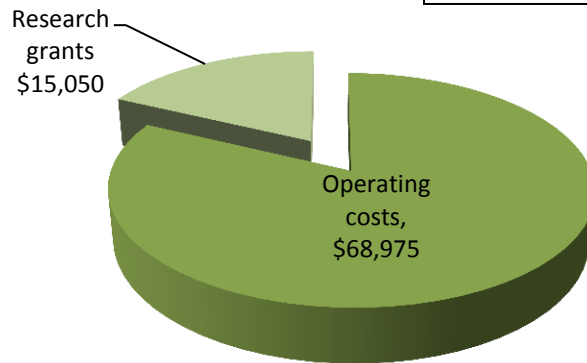
Brian Beaumont Owles FCA

17th October 2012

SLCF Income - \$113,478



SLCF Total Expenditure - \$84,025

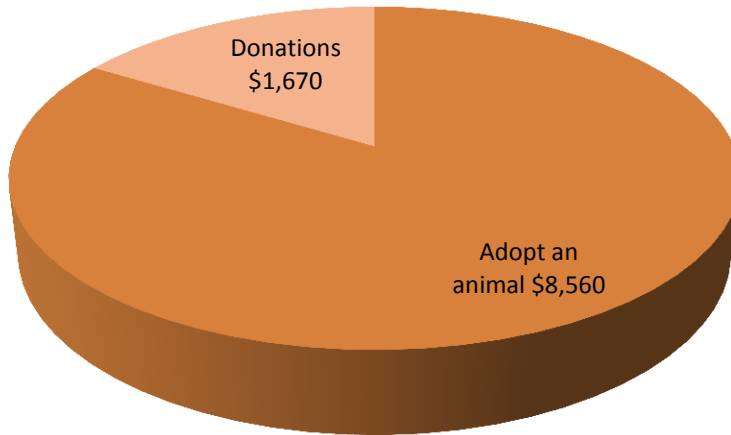


Net surplus of income over expenditure

\$29,345

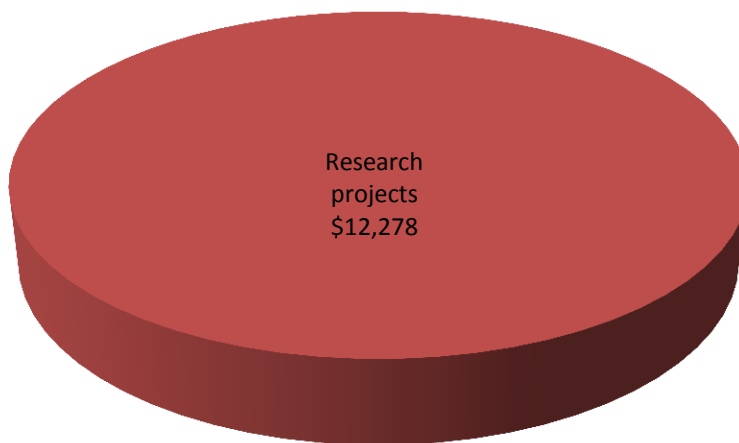
Increased operational costs are a result of Claudette increasing her hours from 3 to 5 days per week but still on part-time hours. Belle McCarthy is a casual with SLCF working 2 days per week, replacing Kait McManus.

SLCF PUBLIC FUND Total Income - \$10,230



Sustainability fact: Since 2009 SLSA has saved approximately 72,000kg of organic waste (lettuce from our dugongs) from going to landfill, and generated about 18,000 kilowatt hours of renewable energy. This equates to the electricity used to watch a flat screen TV non-stop for 11.6 years!

SLCF PUBLIC FUND Total Expenditure - \$12,278



For the financial year 2011/12 the SACF Inc Public Fund expended \$12,278 of funding for two projects:

Turtle Watch – monitoring rehabilitated turtles returned to the wild - \$6, 778

Two satellite tags were purchased to monitor turtles that had been rescued, rehabilitated and returned to the wild. SACF collaborated with Port Stephens/Great Lakes Marine Park scientists for the fitting of the tags and post-release monitoring. The two turtles continue to transmit data and have since been found to show habitat preference based on seagrass abundance within the marine park. The study has also brought to light threats to turtles within the area which include plastic ingestion and hooped crab traps (witches hats). As a result SACF is consulting with recreational fishing groups to amend some forms of fishing gear that pose a threat to local turtles. There is also a campaign proposed for the summer period by the local CMA to clean up all ghost nets in the park (dislodged and discarded nets and traps that continue fishing and causing fatalities to local wild life).

1,000km Habitat Challenge – restoring freshwater habitat - \$5,500

In November 2011, as part of Native Fish Awareness Week, SACF launched the 1,000km Habitat Challenge which was to raise funds for the removal of redundant and/or unlicensed weirs that obstruct native fish passage, particularly in freshwater systems. Collaborating with NSW DPI and State Water Corporation, this funding contributed to the removal of Bangate Bridge weir on the Narran River in western NSW, restoring over 50km of passage for native freshwater fish.

Where to from here?

We are putting the final touches on our Conservation Strategy for 2013 – 2018 to enable us to continue to meet SEA LIFE's conservation values of 'Breed, Rescue, Protect' and work towards our goals as a conservation organization. The strategy consists of three platforms:

1. Sustainable seafood
2. Sustaining marine wildlife
3. Sustaining healthy habitats

The three platforms incorporate our main projects of:

- Turtle Watch
- Penguin Watch
- Fish for the Future
- Coast Guardians
- 1,000km Habitat Challenge

We will also have a schedule of events that incorporate our popular 'Meet the Scientist' series as well as

SACF in-kind contributions

for 2012

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

Events supported in 2012:

- Greenpeace's UNESCO welcome & media launch
- UTS Marine Science student famil
- Minister Tony Burke's Marine Parks media launches x 2

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

increasing our advocacy on a range of issues including shark finning, improved outcomes for marine parks, and reduced threats from certain types of fishing gear on our marine life all of which will be made available on our website once finalized - www.SEALIFEconservation.org.au.

Thank you



Once again, a huge thank you to all our animal adopters, visitors who donate to our spinners, members & sponsors for enabling us to fund the work we do. A particular thanks goes to SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium (Merlin Entertainments) who cover a large % of our operational costs which we would not be able to survive without.

Thanks also to our many volunteers who drop in and out but provide a huge array of value to our business; whether it's updating our website, IT, or design, it's all very valuable work that we as a one full-time equivalent operation can't always get to.

How you can help

Become a member for just \$10 per month. **Every dollar raised goes directly to our projects** as our admin costs are covered by our main sponsor, Merlin Entertainments.

Attend one of our events – all proceeds raised from our events go straight back into our projects.

Adopt an animal or **Sponsor a turtle tag** to enable us to continue monitoring our rescued turtles once released back into the wild.

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

You can do all of the above including making a general donation or learning more about SEA LIFE Conservation Fund via our website www.SEALIFEconservation.org.au.

We look forward to updating you on exciting upcoming events In 2013!

Claudette Rechterik

SLCF Program Manager & President of SLCF Management Committee