

VALE JULIA LINETTE McCONNELL

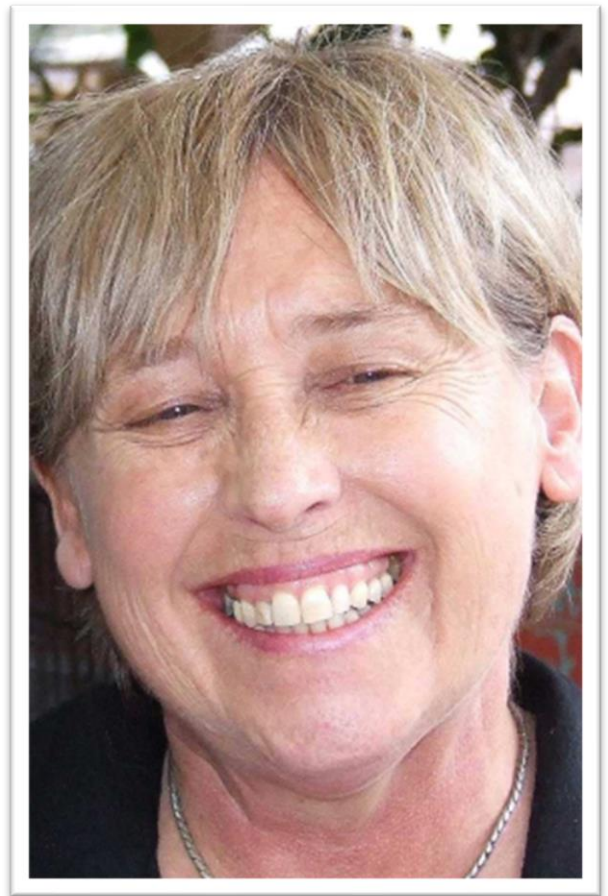
NSW Wildlife Council is saddened by the death in hospital over the Christmas 2021 period of Julia McConnell one of NSW's early wildlife rehabilitation pioneers.

Julia and her late husband, Bill, joined WIRES in the group's formative years and Julia was Secretary of Blue Mountains WIRES branch and an integral part of its management team. As well as their active WIRES involvement Julia and Bill joined the pioneer reptile training team with Bill as a Trainer and Julia as part of the family support team attending handling courses which were operating to an intensive schedule during the height of the summer reptile seasons.

Specialisation into herpetofauna saw Julia and Bill gaining an Independent General Licence from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the formation of Reptile Rescue and Education Service from their home base at Bullaburra.

As passionate advocates for greater understanding and conservation of the reptile species Julia and Bill were founding members when the Hawkesbury Herpetological Society was formed in August 1993.

She was Treasurer 2009-2010 and 2013-2014 and Secretary 2011-2012. Fran Stopford, editor with Stephen Boys, of "The Hawkesbury Herpetologist Retrospective" remembers Julia as an always willing participant in reptile expos and other events to promote the importance and conservation of our native wildlife. Fran recalls Julia's particular love of Tiger Snakes and NWC Secretary Meredith recalls their interest in dingo education and how they shared their observations of their captive dingoes at Bullaburra. Julia was a staunch advocate through local conservation groups of protection of wildlife through control of free-living cats in the Blue Mountains environment.



L-R Julia McConnell, Audrey Koosmen, Lorraine Vass AM, Sonja Elwood.

Julia took animals that were unable to be released and worked with National Parks and Wildlife Service about rehoming them with licensed herpetologists according to the rules.

Julia was part of the steering committee that formed the New South Wales Wildlife Council and was Treasurer from 2007 to 2011. Other roles Julia held were as Insurance Officer and she represented the interests and was spokesperson for the NSW Independent General Licensees on the Council from 2007 to 2014

Lorraine Vass AM remembers Julia's passion about strengthening the wildlife rehab sector and said "from time to time we collaborated on policy issues of mutual interest. We got on well - she was knowledgeable, diligent, forthright, and enjoyed a laugh".

Though short in stature Julia was a straight shooter and freely made her opinions known, often intimidating those who thought she might be a "pushover" and not so adamant and convincing in her wildlife advocacy.



Julia made a strong and lasting contribution to the wildlife sector, not only to rehabilitation, but to protection and conservation.

Audrey Koosmen, Chair of the New South Wales Wildlife Council, said "Julia's legacy to wildlife education, conservation and to the rehabilitation sector will be long remembered. Her commitment was enormous and engendered huge interest particularly in the region's reptilian fauna".

Julia in reflective moments

*Meredith Ryan,
Secretary
NSW Wildlife Council*

30 December 2021

