

Australian GEOGRAPHIC



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2018 AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY AWARDS *THE BEST IN ADVENTURE AND CONSERVATION*

On Friday 26th October, the Australian Geographic Society will host its annual awards ceremony at the Grand Ballroom, Shangri-La Hotel, Sydney. The prestigious event will acknowledge this year's most remarkable Australians in the fields of adventure and conservation.

Respected journalist and broadcaster Ray Martin will act as Master of Ceremonies and Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Sussex will attend the gala on their first visit to Australia since their recent marriage.

The Australian Geographic Society is proud to host the royal couple as Prince Harry is both an adventurer and a passionate conservationist. He has an association with the Australian Geographic Society Awards as in 2013 he accompanied two Australian soldiers to the South Pole who were subsequently awarded the Spirit of Adventure award. The Duke is currently leading the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy Project which aims to create a network of forest conservation projects linking all 53 countries in the Commonwealth.

The Australian Geographic Society Awards are Australia's longest running awards for adventure and conservation and its winners are exceptional people who serve as inspirational role models to all Australians. The Lifetime Achievement Awards for adventure and conservation are the Society's highest honours, recognising those Australians who not only have a lifelong commitment to their chosen field but who have given back to the nation and inspired countless other Australians.

The ceremony brings together past winners, adventurers, scientists, conservationists and Australian Geographic Society enthusiasts to celebrate the passion, drive, courage (and sometimes resilience) of all the winners. Those in attendance include the founder of the AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC journal and patron of the Australian Geographic Society, Dick Smith AC.

Please see over page for list of winners and their bios.

The Australian Geographic Society Awards are being presented on the evening of Friday 26th October 2018 at Shangri-La Hotel Grand Ballroom, 176 Cumberland St, Sydney NSW 2000, from 6pm

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2018 Australian Geographic Award winners

➤ Lifetime of Adventure, **SYD KIRKBY AO**



At the age of five, after contracting polio, Sydney Kirkby was told he would never walk again. However a strict exercise regime involving swimming and boxing proved medical practitioners wrong, and by the time he was 20 in 1954, after being indentured to the Surveyor General of Western Australia, Syd was chosen for a surveying trek in the Great Sandy Desert.

Beginning his polar career two years later as leader and surveyor at Mawson Station, Holme Bay, East Antarctica, Syd is attributed with surveying more of the Australian Antarctic Territory than any other explorer including Douglas Mawson himself. From his first year in Antarctica in 1956 to his last trip in 1979-80, Syd mapped the region by dog sled and theodolite. His crew was the first to view the world's largest glacier, Lambert Glacier and explore the Prince Charles Mountains.

In honour of his achievements, Syd was awarded a Polar Medal in 1958 and an MBE in 1966, and has several Antarctic landmarks to his name – Mount Kirkby, Kirkby Glacier, Kirkby Shoal and Kirkby Head. He received an Order of Australia earlier in 2018 in recognition of his service to surveying, to polar exploration, research and mapping expeditions, and to professional scientific societies.

➤ Lifetime of Conservation Award, **ATTICUS FLEMING**



After growing up in the bush in central-west NSW, Atticus has dedicated his professional life to the conservation of Australia's endangered wildlife and habitats, leveraging a combination of private (commercial) sector, government, charitable (non-profit), political and legal experience. As the inaugural Chief Executive of the non-profit Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) from 2002 – 2018, Atticus oversaw its growth from a

small WA operation to the largest private owner of land for conservation in the world, managing 4.65 million hectares across iconic regions such as the Kimberley, the Top End and the central Australian outback.

Atticus led the organisation in developing a new model for conservation, protecting some of the largest remaining populations of many of Australia's threatened species. AWC is now the custodian of some of the largest remaining populations of many threatened species, including bilbies, numbats, bridled nailtail wallabies, Gouldian finches, purple-crowned fairy-wrens and more.

➤ **Conservationist of the Year, NUMBAT TASK FORCE (Robert McLean & John Lawson)**



[L-R] John Lawson and Robert McLean with conservationist Tim Faulkner

A meat-truck driver and former stonemason, Robert and John make up one half of the 'Numbat Task Force', along with airline worker Sean Van Alphen and power-company employee Matthew Willett. They all met while photographing numbats in the Dryandra conservation area, 170km south-east of Perth, WA.

The Numbat Task Force was initially formed to lobby for protection for the numbat from feral cat predation. But when plans were announced to site a major rubbish tip just

6km from Dryandra, McLean says it was "all hands on deck" in a campaign to save the creatures. The four friends set up a Facebook page and now post every numbat image they capture on their cameras. Their efforts have managed to overturn a decision by the state's Environmental Protection Authority not to assess the tip proposal. It was a significant victory for the team and means the potential impact of the waste facility on Dryandra will now be examined by the environmental watchdog.

➤ **Adventurer of the Year, STEVE PLAIN**



In December 2014, Steve Plain suffered an almost fatal injury. He broke his neck bodysurfing at Perth's Cottesloe Beach, which left him in a halo brace for four months with another month spent in a neck collar. But incredibly, just 11 months after his accident, he began his world record breaking attempt to climb the Seven Summits – Vernon, Aconcagua, Kilimanjaro, Carstensz, Elbrus, Denali and of course, Everest, in just four months.

Prior to his accident, Steve had spent some time researching the seven summits, but had always put it off to pursue goals in his professional career as an engineer instead. Steve's passion for high-altitude mountaineering came from his time in scouts, most memorably, when he

climbed to Everest Base Camp when he was sixteen years old. But he hadn't attempted an ambitious climb since.

Steve officially kicked off Project 7in4 in January this year, beginning with Mt Vernon in Antarctica, then Aconcagua in Argentina, Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and Carstensz Pyramid in Indonesia, all completed by March.

➤ **Young Adventurer of the Year, JADE HAMEISTER**



Sixteen-year-old Jade Hameister set five new records after successfully completing her epic 1,300km, 37 day journey along the Amundsen Coast to the South Pole in January this year. Jade is officially the youngest person and first Australian woman to ski from the coast to the South Pole (unsupported and unassisted) and the first woman to set a new route through the Transantarctic Mountain Range.

In April 2016, aged 14, Jade completed a record-breaking ski to the North Pole, for which she was named the Australian Geographic Society's Young Adventurer of the Year. Then in 2017, she became [the youngest woman to cross Greenland](#). With the completion of her South Pole adventure, Jade is now the youngest person to ski to both Poles and the youngest person to complete the Polar Hat Trick, a dream of hers for some time.

Her message to other young women dreaming of adventure is: "We need to shift our focus from how we appear to exploring the possibilities of what we can do. Don't wait until you think you can do something perfectly. Just get started and have a go," she says.

➤ **Young Conservationist of the Year, SOPHIA SKARPARIS**



Earlier this year 15-year-old Sophia Skarparis started a petition to ban plastic bags in New South Wales. In August her second meeting with NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian took place; the first having happened in early May. "When I [first] met her I only had 7000 signatures so she was only going to respond by letter. After the meeting, I advised her office that I would set up a meeting with her when I obtained 10,000 signatures, as that means that she has to table the petition in NSW Government and it guarantees a conversation," Sophia said. Since then Sophie has discovered that her petition has been tabled by Gladys Berejiklian, her local member, and is scheduled for a conversation in NSW Parliament

on Thursday, 25 October at 4.30pm, the day before the AG Awards.

“I believe my generation can be the ‘game changers’. We are more conscious about the environment and looking for a more ‘shared’ economy. Also through the use of social media we can mobilise interested supporters in a way that has not been seen before. Our generation is seeing the negative impacts on marine and bird life that plastic is having. We are not tied to a need for plastic for bin liners or dog waste. We want the change where we can reuse bags, coffee cups, not use plastic straws or balloons and reduce plastic packaging of food.”

Spirit of Adventure, **PAUL PRITCHARD**



During an attempt in 1998 to climb Tasmania’s infamous Totem Pole – a slender dolerite column at Cape Hauy – Paul Pritchard’s climbing rope dislodged a block that scythed 25m through the air, smashing his skull. The traumatic brain injury resulted in hemiplegia, which is the loss of movement on one side of the body, and aphasia, an inability to comprehend or formulate language.

During a year spent in hospital, Paul realised that his adventurous spirit was still thriving, despite his physical barriers. When he walked 100m around the rehab centre Paul thought that, with perseverance, he might be able to claw back some tiny semblance of the life he had before. So, he slowly got back to mountains again. Firstly hill walking in Wales, then three trips to Africa - climbing 1000m higher each time and culminating in an all-disabled expedition to Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania seven

years after the accident.

Paul has continued to pursue an adventurous life as a kayaker, cyclist and rock climber. In 2016 Paul climbed, one-handed and one-footed up a rope, to reach the top of the Totem Pole that had evaded him 18 years earlier. In 2017 he led a team of disabled cyclists from Australia’s lowest point Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre its highest -the summit of Mt Kosciuszko- a journey of more than 2000km.