



INVERTEBRATES AUSTRALIA



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We respectfully acknowledge Australia's Traditional Custodians and that their sovereignty over Australian lands and waters was never ceded.



INVERTEBRATES AUSTRALIA

ABOUT US

OUR VISION

A future where Australian invertebrates are appreciated and valued so their biodiversity is sustained across our lands and waters.

OUR MISSION

To provide an integrated scientific approach to the conservation and promotion of Australian invertebrates.

OUR PRIORITIES

Invertebrates need resourcing in many areas. These are our priorities for invertebrate conservation in Australia for 2023-2025.

1. Identify, protect, and restore areas of importance for invertebrates.
2. Secure the animals providing our ecosystem services by developing survey and monitoring standards.
3. Reduce pesticide use and support sustainable pest management starting in cities.
4. Increase and communicate scientific knowledge on the vulnerability of invertebrates to threats, especially fire
5. Protect iconic and priority invertebrates and engage the public through Community Science.
6. Increase threatened invertebrate species listings on the IUCN RedList and in Australian legislation.

OUR ORGANIZATION

We aim to become a well-known, sustainable, national charity that positively impacts the future of Australian invertebrates. We have eight major foci to achieve this: strong governance, dedicated leadership, inclusive culture especially for First Nations Australians, steady growth, measurable performance, an appetite for learning, clear capacity and sound financial management.



INVERTEBRATES AUSTRALIA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



MELISSA CUTLER



DR ROB BURDOCK



DR KATE UMBERS



KATE PEARCE



JENS KARNOE



INVERTEBRATES AUSTRALIA

CHAIR'S REPORT

A Unified Vision

This was a year Invertebrates Australia has made significant progress on developing our strategy and value proposition, ensuring our resources and actions are appropriately delivering to that overarching mission.

A key highlight for the year was a four-day February offsite held at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science facility in Sydney's Chowder Bay. This was the first opportunity the Board and Management teams had to meet in person. The time was well spent in developing our mission, vision, strategy, values and culture. This collective effort into building a shared and unified vision provides a clearer pathway for the future with all involved coming away with an understanding of their roles and responsibility.

A natural progression from this has been the Board Partnerships, Communications and Fundraising Sub-Committee developing a summary strategy and unique value proposition to use for outreach to potential partners and funding providers.

Financial health and wellbeing continues to be a key focus for Invertebrates Australia, acknowledging the organisations ability to survive into the future is dependant on receiving new sources of funding.

At the time of writing our Deductible Gift Recipient status application has been submitted with a final decision by the Register of Environmental Organisations pending. Efforts continue to explore alternative channels of fundraising and philanthropy which are accommodating to registered charities still in the process to obtaining DGR status.



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CHAIR'S REPORT

Board and Governance Membership

On 24 November 2022 we welcomed our inaugural Company Secretary, Liz Pearson. As a qualified lawyer, Liz has provided an incredible amount of value in supporting the board with its governance and compliance duties in addition to informing some of the organisational policy development work.

Invertebrates Australia welcomed two new board members on 24 February 2023, Jens Karnoe and John McCaskill. John and Jens joined both the Board and the Board Partnerships, Communications and Fundraising Sub-Committee. They were nominated for their experience, networks and skills across partnerships, marketing, strategy and fundraising.

I was very pleased to announce existing Board member, Rob Burdock, as Invertebrates Australia's inaugural Deputy Chair at the November 2022 Annual General Meeting. I am grateful for Rob's enthusiasm, commitment and generosity of spirit which he brings to the role.

More broadly I'd like to acknowledge the enormous contribution of the Board of Directors, members of our Board Sub-Committees and our Company Secretary for volunteering their time, talent and networks in the support of Invertebrates Australia. It is an incredibly talented and passionate group of people.

Acknowledging this annual report is for the year ending 30 June 2023, further board renewal has occurred and there are current efforts to grow the existing membership from five to up to nine with advertisements currently available on the Invertebrates Australia website.

Melissa Cutler, Chairperson



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MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dear Members,

We have enjoyed an exciting and energising second year with many new connections formed, programs launched and invertebrates championed. We are focused on identifying and carrying out the most impactful activities to generate substantial and meaningful outcomes for invertebrates in Australia. Our approach has been to focus on collaboration and connection and both have grown substantially this year.

We launched a new campaign No Spray Spring which has been received with enthusiasm. We attended insect expos, scientific conferences, appeared on telly, and hosted book launches. We have represented invertebrates at important events such as the Australian Council for the IUCN and the Australian Land Conservation Alliance meeting. We remain delighted to have secured three years of sponsorship from the ANU and are continuing to establish meaningful relationships across higher-education sector.

In all our interactions, our vision has been enthusiastically shared and representation of invertebrates has been warmly welcomed as a previously missing part of conservation in Australia. We're excited to continue this important work.

Dr Kate Umbers, Managing Director



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PROGRAMS

The last year has seen a period of strengthening and consolidating our programs team. In mid-2023 we underwent an internal restructure. Our three pillars, Investigate, Inspire, and Inform remain as outward facing themes and to which each of our projects aligns. Internally our teams are now separated into analytics, outreach and conservation. This new internal structure aligns better with our activities, makes roles clearer, and allows for more natural collaboration between teams.

Our second year of operations has seen some projects come to an end and others begin. This natural turn-over of projects has allowed us to focus in on our strategic priorities. We initiated our Invertebrate Hotspots project, launched our No Spray Spring campaign, applied for funding to develop technology for monitoring invertebrate biodiversity, and were awarded of funding to discover more about the biology and ecology of the threatened Kangaroo Island Assassin Spider.

Through all our projects, Invertebrates Australia is working to build partnerships with other organisations and research institutions to increase the impact of our work and improve outcomes for invertebrate conservation.

On the following pages, I summarise some highlights over the last year for the projects within each of our program pillars.

Dr Megan Head, Programs Manager



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INVESTIGATE

Over the last year we remained committed to improving fundamental knowledge of threatened and vulnerable species that will aid in their conservation, we worked toward identifying high priority geographic regions for invertebrate conservation and building a national invertebrate trait database to investigate the susceptibility of invertebrates to key threats.

Invertebrate Hotspots

One of our most important projects is identifying biodiversity hotspots for invertebrates, as this work will inform key areas to focus conservation efforts when protecting threatened and vulnerable species. This year our analytics team has been working to develop analysis workflows for the Australian Mygalomorph spiders as a case study that can then be applied more broadly.

InverTraits

This database is open access and provides a critical resource for invertebrate research and conservation. To date we have compiled traits data for 4364 taxa, for 52 traits, from 156 sources specifically targeting traits related to species fire susceptibility. Future priorities for the database include developing

- tools for researchers to submit their own data,
- an up-to-date and comprehensive taxonomy for all of Australia's described invertebrates,
- inclusion of a wider range of predictive variables to allow susceptibility analyses for a broader range of threats.



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INVESTIGATE

Our investigate projects also include 'deep-dives' into specific taxa. We are currently hosting two amazing projects on Lord Howe Island snails and the pollinators of threatened orchids.

Lord Howe Island Snails

We are assessing the genetic health of Critically Endangered land snail *Pseudocharopa ledgbirdi* on Lord Howe Island, to assist in conservation planning and management. We have collected non-lethal tissue swabs from 102 snails from 11 sites on Mt Gower and Mt Lidgbird, confirming the presence of the snail at several sites where it has not been previously found. We are currently undertaking DNA extractions and preliminary analysis, to be followed by the addition of more samples. This project is in partnership with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, the Australian Museum, and the Lord Howe Island Board.

Orchid Pollinators

Ideal spring conditions have spurred a productive start to the 2023 field season. We have made our first pollinator observations for the climatically sensitive and critically endangered Wyong sun orchid (*Thelymitra adorata*). We have also recorded several minute flies visiting the variable midge orchid (*Genoplesium insigne*) and are working with project partners at the Australian National Insect Collection to identify them. We have built significantly on the work completed last year and anticipate a successful summer surveying a third critically endangered orchid, *Genoplesium branwhiteorum*. Working closely with the project funders – the NSW Saving Our Species program – we continue to make progress towards revealing pollinator identities and attraction mechanisms of these orchids to improve future conservation management.



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INSPIRE

Our inspire pillar aims to engage the Australian public with invertebrates and increase their appreciation for them. This year we launched our flagship long term community science project, the Christmas Beetle Count and have begun plans for a new community science project called Bogong Watch. We also launched our first campaign, No Spray Spring.

Christmas Beetle Count

This project aims to understand the distribution of these iconic and culturally important shiny flying Christmas baubles across Australia. This year we delivered webinars and conducted many media interviews discussing the plight of Christmas beetles and how people can engage in the project. We reached an audience of over 2 million people. 2966 people contributed 4696 observations to the project including occurrence data for 34 species, some of which had not been recorded for several decades. With time these data will enable us to determine whether populations are declining and the factors are contributing to decline. Look out for us on Gardening Australia's 2023 Christmas Special!

Bogong Watch

We have also begun building a partnership with Western Sydney University, Xerces Society, Zoos Victoria and Lund University for a second community science project, Bogong Watch. Bogong Watch will call on people to tag and record sightings of tagged bogong moths to help establish their migratory flyways and identify threats to their survival.



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INSPIRE

No Spray Spring

This year we launched our first behaviour-change campaign in line with our strategic priority to reduce pesticide use in cities and promote alternative means of pest control. No Spray Spring is a national campaign that encourages people across Australia to put down the insect spray, cancel their yearly broad-spectrum garden spray, and instead learn about the invertebrate life around their homes and gardens. We aim to educate people on sustainable pest management. Content includes information on the harms of using insecticides, alternate pest management tactics, and profiles of invertebrate experts and why they avoid spraying. We have also provided information on beneficial insects and sustainable pest control on our website. Throughout the first month of this campaign we have made 140 posts across 4 social media platforms, the campaign has attracted new members, increased visitation to our website and attracted significant media attention. The number of users that engaged with our social media posts during this time increased by over 400%. This successful first campaign cements our reputation as Australia's only national Invertebrate charity and builds our reputation for science led invertebrate conservation.



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INFORM

One of our most important priorities is to increase the representation of invertebrates on threatened species lists and we have been working on assessing species both for the Commonwealth Government and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Commonwealth Conservation Assessments

In the last year we have prepared sixteen conservation assessments for consideration by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee under the EPBC Act. These sixteen species were chosen for their broad taxonomic and geographic representation. They represent six families including snails, velvet worms, and grasshoppers, from fire impacted sites around Australia, in the Stirling Ranges (WA) to Kangaroo Island (SA) and Mount Kaputar (NSW).

IUCN Conservation Assessments

IUCN assessments for their IUCN Red List of Species are important for informing governments of the conservation status of invertebrate species and advocating for their conservation needs to be considered in conservation planning. This is especially true for invertebrates that can often be missing some of data that the Commonwealth requires. By training our volunteers to conduct IUCN conservation assessments we are increasing our capacity to deliver assessments and therefore raise awareness of the plight of our invertebrates - an important step toward ensuring their protection through Australian legislation.



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FUNDRAISING

This year has been a busy and successful one for fundraising, with fundraising goals met and potential new avenues for funding opened up. Fundraising activities were largely centered around applications for grant-based funding and it was a hive of activity, with 11 grants submitted, totalling a value of approximately \$1,718,000 for projects with IA as the lead, and \$2,475,000 as project partner. Of these grants, one has been successful, one unsuccessful, and nine are pending.

Diversifying our funding sources has been a focal area of activity. Fundraising licenses have been obtained for all states and territories, enabling us to conduct fundraising activities across Australia. Our first run of merchandise, including t-shirts and art prints, all but sold out. We continue to attract donors, stimulated by No Spray Spring and Christmas Beetle Count. We have secured sponsorship through the Australian National University and we are developing relationships with corporate partners that align well with our vision and mission.

While our Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status is pending we have been preparing for the opportunities it offers. One of our key activities has been forming and growing connections with the Australian Environmental Grants Network (AEGN). We look forward to continuing to develop these connections and working together to build a better future for Australia's invertebrates.

Dr Jess Marsh, Fundraising Manager



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COMMUNICATIONS

With the growth of Invertebrates Australia, we have been focusing our communications to build recognition of our organisation and our work. We bid a fond farewell to our fundraising and communications officer, Emma Patterson, who developed a strong communications and marketing strategy and will stay on with IA on our Communications Advisory Committee. I am delighted to step into this role and deliver this strategy.

Dr Lizzy Lowe, Communications Manager

Social media engagement

In the last 12 months, regular and consistent delivery of content on social media has led to increased engagement and follower numbers on all platforms. Instagram has proved to be especially successful, with 691 followers and 2124 accounts reached in the 90 days prior to publication of this report. We also have 594 followers on Facebook, on 505 LinkedIn and 671 on X (formally twitter).

Newsletter

Thanks to the work of Hannah Zurcher our quarterly "snail mail" newsletter is sent out to over 200 members and subscribers each season (winter, spring, summer and autumn editions). These newsletters provide a summary of invertebrates Australia activities and updates on upcoming events and activities.

Merchandise

Thanks to some amazing work from Charlotte Stone, Invertebrates Australia now have t-shirts, stickers and will soon be releasing a tea towel. Charlotte has very kindly donated the images that she produced to be used by Invertebrates Australia, so there is potential for further merchandise in the future.



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COMMUNICATIONS

Website

The website has received a number of rounds of updates to reflect the structure of the organisation, our strategies and reports, and updated information on our projects. We now also have a members areas for the release of members events and information. We plan to develop our website further over the next year.

Expert Committees

Invertebrates Australia now has a well-established Scientific Advisory Committee, consisting of scientists from around Australia, who meet quarterly to provide feedback on our research priorities, review our activities and suggest areas for growth. We have also recently established a Communications Advisory Committee to advise and support strategy development and broaden our audiences.

Events

The presence of Invertebrates Australia at a number of national and international events this year has helped to raise our profile and provide opportunities to discuss our goals and activities with potential collaborators and supporters.

- Jess Marsh attended AC IUCN's Global Biodiversity Frameworks meeting in Canberra in May
- Kate Umbers and Megan Head attended ACLA's 'Unite for Nature' in Canberra in October
- Lizzy Lowe presented at the Biodiversity Conference in Perth in October
- Kate Pearce and Mel Cutler attended the Insect Expo in Melbourne in September and staffed an IA stall with information and merchandise.
- Invertebrates Australia hosted James O'Hanlon's book launch "Silk and Venom" in Sydney with Dr Caitlyn Forster as MC.



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FINANCIAL REPORT

Revenue during the year for Invertebrates Australia was \$445,150, primarily derived from grant funding from government and organisations and to a smaller degree from membership fees. Grant revenue are recognised as contractual obligations are met, using expenditure incurred as an indicator of those obligations being performed.

Expenses for Invertebrates Australia were \$421,189. Payroll costs in programs and overheads account for 82% of these costs, with project expenses (10%) and other costs (8%) accounting for the remainder of the expenses.

This resulted in a profit of \$23,961 for the financial year 2022/2023. Invertebrates Australia has a sound balance sheet with a healthy cash position that continues to provide a stable basis for operations in financial year 2023/2024.



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CONTACT US

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



Image credits

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Back Page - Kate Umbers