



STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 7AM, WEDNESDAY 28 OCT, 2015

2015 AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY AWARDS *THE BEST IN ADVENTURE AND CONSERVATION*

On Wednesday 28th October 2015 at Doltone House Hyde Park, the Australian Geographic Society (AGS) will host its annual awards ceremony. The prestigious event will acknowledge this year's most remarkable Australians in the fields of adventure and conservation. To be hosted by Catriona Rowntree, the 2015 Australian Geographic Society awards event will feature special guest speaker Jessica Watson, winner of the 2010 AGS Young Adventurer of the Year Award and the youngest person ever to sail around the world solo and unassisted at 16 years of age.

The AGS 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 who have inspired countless other Australians.

The ceremony brings together past winners, adventurers, scientists, conservationists and AG 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**.

2015 Australian Geographic Award winners

➤ **Lifetime of Adventure, [ERIC PHILLIPS, OAM.](#)**

Born in Melbourne, Victoria, Eric Philips is an adventurer dedicated to exploring the vast and varied icescapes that typify our polar regions. His outdoor career spans more than 25 years during which time he has worked professionally as an outdoor educator, adventurer and polar guide.

As an adventurer, Eric has visited every continent on earth, often leading lightweight and self-



supported expeditions to remote polar regions. He has explored the world's four largest icecaps and was the first Australian, together with companion Jon Muir, to ski to both the North and South Poles, locations that he has visited annually as a polar guide since 2004. Eric's Antarctic highlights include skiing a new route to the South Pole, sailing with high school students across the Drake Passage, guiding HRH Prince Harry to the pole and taking his family to Mawson's Hut. And in the Arctic, making one of the earliest kite-ski traverses of Greenland, skiing from Russia to the North Pole and from North Pole to Canada, working with Greenpeace on climate change projects and organising the first North Pole wedding.



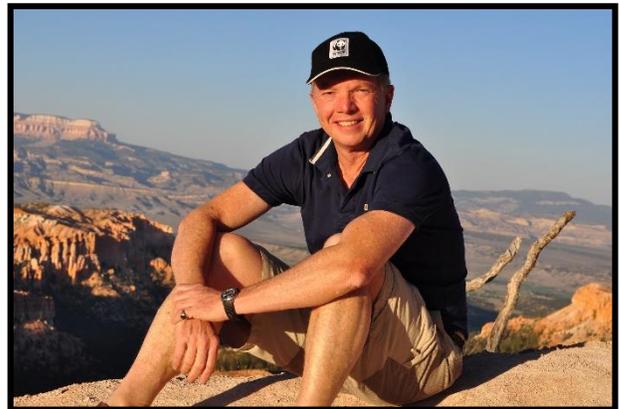
Eric is the inventor of Flexi Polar Ski Bindings, the most widely used ski bindings on polar expeditions and used extensively by the US military.

Eric is the author of *Icetrek. The Bitter Journey to the South Pole*. His expeditions have spawned four internationally-screened documentary films, most notably, the Emmy Award-winning Greenland production, *Chasing the Midnight Sun*. He is also the founder of the International Polar Guides Association and owner and director of Icetrek Expeditions and Equipment.

Eric currently lives in Hobart with his family.

➤ **Lifetime of Conservation Award, [ROBERT PURVES AM.](#)**

A Sydney-born businessman and a dedicated environmentalist, Robert is currently the President of WWF Australia and is a former board member of WWF International (the world's largest science based conservation organisation). Robert is also a founding member of The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, a Director of Earth Hour Global, a Director of Climate Council of Australia, a Patron of the Lizard Island Research Station, and a Governor of Australian Youth Climate Coalition.



In 2004 Robert established the Purves Environmental Fund, whose core objectives are to support advocacy and education on climate change and landscape management, and to improve environmental policy through the use of science, as well as to strengthen targeted NGOs through capacity building. In addition, Robert has had a long career in business including being the Chairman of a publicly-listed company, DCA Group Limited, the then leading provider of radiology and the largest private operator in aged care in Australia. In 2008 Robert was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for service to conservation and the environment, and awarded an Honorary Fellow from the University of Sydney. Robert lives between Sydney and his farm in Bungendore, NSW.

➤ **Adventurer of the Year, JOHN JACOBY, CHRIS PORTER, ANDREW MAFFETT, JIM BURCIDE.**

John, Chris, Andrew and Jim were all experienced sea kayakers, but their previous expeditions were nothing compared with their circumnavigation of Antarctic island, South Georgia, in January 2015. Their 500km paddle around this wilderness oasis, which lies 800km north of Antarctica, saw them encounter massive icebergs, powerful swells and ferocious storms. They were fortunate to experience some clear weather, however, and, as a result, completed their journey faster than the three teams that had kayaked around the island in the past. Having made such good time, they then traversed South Georgia – following in the footsteps of Sir Ernest Shackleton, who'd landed there in 1916 – and are the first Australian team to complete both a crossing and a circumnavigation.



John Jacoby and Chris Porter were born in Melbourne, Victoria. John currently lives in Jan Juc, Victoria and Chris currently lives in Angelsea, Victoria. Andrew Maffett was also born in Melbourne, Victoria and now lives in Perth, Western Australia. Jim Burcide was born in Hobart, Tasmania and now lives in Snug, Tasmania.

➤ **Conservationist of the Year, TIM FAULKNER.**

Born in Greystanes, New South Wales, Tim is a recognised leader in the Australian zoo industry and in conservation organisations. His working life has been dedicated to hands-on wild life education and conservation. Tim currently lives in Wamberal New South Wales and as General Manager, is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Central Coast's largest tourism attraction, the **Australian Reptile Park**. Along with 35 staff and 50 volunteers, Tim is credited with the growing success of the park as the leading wildlife tourism attraction in NSW for both regional and global markets, attracting over 220,000 visitors a year, including regular bus tours of visitors from North and South East Asia. Many will recognise this environmentalist from his TV show, *The Wild Life of Tim Faulkner*, which airs on Channel 9 and the National Geographic Channel. Each series boasts a global audience of 180 million people. Tim led an initiative to reverse the extinction rate of small mammals on the Australian mainland, through the reintroduction of Tasmanian devils to the NSW landscape and has also played a pivotal role in efforts to curb the extinction of the Tasmanian devil itself.



➤ **Young Adventurer of the Year, DANIELLE MURDOCH.**

In 2010, New Zealand born Danielle Murdoch became the very first recipient of the AGS Nancy Bird Walton grant for female adventurers. With the support of the AGS behind her, Danielle travelled by motorcycle from Brisbane (where she currently resides) to Darwin, before transporting her bike by ship up the Indonesian archipelago.

After crossing Sri Lanka and India, she bunkered down in Pakistan for six months, waiting for the civil war to end in Syria. When it didn't she headed across anyway. After riding through the Middle East, she motored down the east coast of Africa, where she broke down and had to be towed 760km by another motorcyclist to the nearest mechanic. In October 2014, four years after she'd left, Danielle surrendered her broken motorcycle to Customs at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.



Her journey spanned 27 countries and she weathered a total of eight bike breakdowns.

➤ **Young Conservationist of the Year, AMELIA TELFORD.**

Amelia Telford is a 21-year-old Bundjalung woman from Tweed Heads who had planned to study medicine after high school. Instead she joined the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, and in July 2014, founded SEED. This network of young Aboriginal people provides access to training and support for those keen to make a difference in the areas of climate change, sustainability and conservation.



In 2014 Amelia was awarded the joint title of 'Youth of The Year' by NAIDOC (*National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee*). Many indigenous communities are facing the loss of sacred country and culture, says Amelia, and they are feeling the effects of environmental degradation.

Amelia currently lives in Melbourne, Victoria.

➤ **Spirit of Adventure, HUW KINGSTON.**

Born in the UK, veteran adventurer Huw Kingston finished an AGS-sponsored, 14000km circumnavigation of the Mediterranean Sea by foot, kayak, ocean rowboat and bike in April 2015. The 12-month journey was a fundraiser for Save the Children Australia and saw Huw become the organisation's most successful individual campaigner ever.

After convincing his hometown of Bundanoon in NSW to ban the sale of bottled water (it was the world's first town to do so), in 2009 Huw Kingston was named one of Time Magazine's 25

Worldwide Responsibility Pioneers. But this wasn't Huw's first turn as a game-changer. More than 20 years ago, he launched the Don't Bag The Environment campaign for outdoor-equipment store Paddy Pallin.

It's still going strong – each time a customer refuses a plastic bag, Paddy Pallin donates 10 cents to an environmental campaign.



The Australian Geographic Society Awards are being presented on the evening of Wednesday 28 October at Doltone House Hyde Park, 3/181 Elizabeth, Sydney.

TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS, PICS & FOOTAGE

For media enquiries interviews, pictures and footage, contact:

Caitlin Maxwell (Momentum²) (T) 02 9252 4800 (M) 0415 316 554/ cmaxwell@momentum2.com.au
Lyn Tuit (Momentum²) (T) 02 9252 4800 (M) 0405 160 275 /Ltuit@momentum2.com.au