

**2008 Australian Ecology Research Award (AERA) Recipient
Professor Bob Pressey**

The ESA was delighted to announce that Professor Bob Pressey had been selected to deliver the inaugural Australian Ecology Research Award (AERA) Lecture in 2008.

Bob Pressey is widely credited with establishing the important and emerging field of systematic conservation planning and he continues to be recognised internationally as its leading proponent and innovator. His journal papers include some of the classic and most widely cited papers in his field. Pressey leads a global shift towards translating the concepts and techniques of systematic conservation planning into actual conservation decisions on the ground and we are pleased to recognise the importance of this influential body of work in awarding him the inaugural AERA 2008.

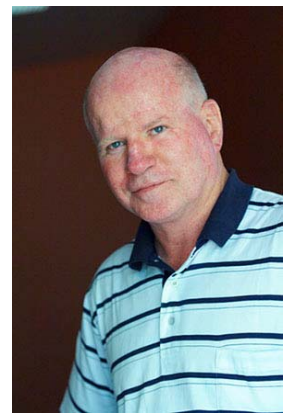
The 2008 AERA Lecture ‘Conservation planning in a changing world’ was delivered at ESA08 (abstract below)

Professor Bob Pressey

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www.coralcoe.org.au/research/bobpressey.html

Systematic conservation planning is arguably 25 years old this year, dating from Jamie Kirkpatrick’s first journal papers on the subject in 1983. From small beginnings, the field is now changing rapidly, synthesising ideas from diverse disciplines, and having a real influence on conservation outcomes on the ground and in the water. In several ways, the world is also changing for conservation planners, and that makes this field continually exciting. I’ll try to summarise three sets of issues here.



First, conservation planners are increasingly aware of the need to plan not just for snapshots of biodiversity, but also for the persistence of processes. Given that “natural” processes are everywhere, operating across scales ranging from molecular to global, and given that, by definition, they involve things moving around, it’s not immediately clear how we should plan for them. I’ll outline some ways in which planners can decide which processes to plan for, then describe some early steps toward dealing with them adequately. Second, people are changing the planet in many ways and at many scales, along the way removing biodiversity and other natural assets such as ecosystem services. That means that planners have to consider not just where, but also when and how, to invest in conservation action. This is also something we haven’t done all that well. Most reserve systems are predominantly in areas that people are least interested in, thereby avoiding the biodiversity most in need of protection. But there is some progress and potential to report on planning to address threats. Third, we are becoming increasingly aware of the social, economic and political context for the biological and technical aspects of planning. We are realising that effective implementation of conservation action is much more complicated than we thought, say, ten years ago. This is particularly so in regions where developed-country planners interact with developing-country communities who have their own ideas about management of the natural resources on which they depend. Making the transition from plans to real action in these situations is our ultimate challenge.