

Brenda Holden

# Wonderful Wildlife

By Trevor Lang

Talented South Australian artist Brenda Holden operates the Porter Street Wildlife Gallery in Goolwa and pursues an ongoing passion for painting wildlife subjects – particularly birds.



**B**renda Holden spent her formative years in the foothills of Adelaide. Hiking around waterfalls in the area, she grew to love the abundant birdlife. While young, she spent many years in Broken Hill and outback Western Australia – all the while developing an appreciation for native wildlife. Her extensive travels in the country and the Australian Outback have lent authenticity to the wildlife habitats depicted in her paintings.

Brenda worked mainly on commissions early in her career, then started to exhibit her work in the late '90s. After joining the Wildlife Art Society of South Australia in 1996, she received the prize for 'Best Watercolour' at the society's annual exhibition in 1997. She is an exhibiting member of The Wildlife Artist Society of Australasia and the Queensland Wildlife Artists Society; and past President of the Wildlife Art Society of South Australia. Brenda's work is represented in galleries and collections throughout Australia and Europe.

Brenda Holden's recent awards are too numerous to mention. They include many prizes at the Royal Adelaide Show and the City of Campbelltown Art Exhibition; and a host of other noteworthy achievements.

Born in Adelaide in 1955, Brenda now resides at Goolwa with her husband, her dog ... and 'Ossie', her hand-raised Eastern Rosella.

She studied Art and Graphic Design in the early '80s. After years of 'doing ads' for newspapers, she decided to turn her hand to something she felt real affection for. Brenda tried her hand at many forms of art including seascapes, landscapes, still life ... even 3D ... but having grown up surrounded by birds she kept going back to what she knew and loved most.

She started painting in watercolour and gouache but was never really happy with the colour; then experimented with oils but found that her style of painting (layers upon layers) took too long to dry. She also disliked the smell and mess that accompanied oil paints. When Brenda discovered acrylics she thought she had finally discovered her ideal medium. But her search was still not over.

Early in 2006, Brenda Holden discovered Genesis Heat Set Oil Paints and embarked on an exciting new learning curve. She has been more than delighted with the medium.

"The colours are wonderful, consistency and coverage are great, and I am really enjoying getting texture into my work," she claims. "I still use acrylics, but I am using Genesis Heat Set Oils more and more – especially on canvas."

"I love to get my paintings to look real," Brenda explains. "The use of airbrushed backgrounds achieves this by giving the paintings depth. I have actually been asked if I take a photograph and then paint the birds on top!"

Brenda travels widely and takes a camera everywhere, collecting thousands of photographs for reference. Zoos, wildlife parks and National Parks are all favourites. She photographs not only birds and animals, but also old fence posts; wire; weeds; even cobwebs.

Her painting of 'Cyclone the





Macaw' came about after a trip to Kuranda, where she met the colourful Cyclone at a wildlife park. He was so named because he was hatched on the day of the cyclone that devastated Innisfail.

"He was only three months old and, having been hand-raised, was very friendly ... I just had to paint him." Brenda relates.

In 2002, Brenda opened the Porter Street Wildlife Gallery in Goolwa with long-time friend and fellow wildlife artist Kathleen Cain.

"We saw a niche for a gallery that specialised in wildlife art and, as we had both been presidents of the Wildlife Art Society of South Australia, we were acquainted with many like-minded artists," says Brenda.

"Kathleen has left the gallery and is now working from home, but I still have about 40 artists involved – doing things such as silver jewellery, pottery, silks, bronze, copper, and painting. Now that I'm at the gallery seven days a week, I have my studio there and I do all my paintings there. Being able to paint at the gallery provides opportunities to talk to all sorts of people about my art, as well as my passion for birds."

Brenda Holden exhibits her work less these days. The gallery keeps her really busy, and demand for her paintings is so strong that she rarely has enough work to exhibit anywhere else. Some of her larger paintings take weeks to complete, and she commonly has a list of commissions also waiting to be done.

Brenda's passion for her art and her considerable skill have led to her well-deserved successes. Her work is infused with colour and enduring charm. **n**

