



Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Assn Inc.

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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **February Gecko Talk** **“How to train your raptor”**

Australia is home to 24 species of raptor, from the small sparrowhawk to the impressive wedge-tailed eagle. Few people get close enough to appreciate the vast wingspans and powerful talons and beaks of these avian hunters unless they visit a zoo or wildlife centre. This month's Gecko Talk will offer the public the opportunity to learn more and get close to these magnificent birds.

Paul Mander is one of the rare people to keep company with birds of prey, and we are proud to present him as our first speaker for 2017's program of Gecko Talks. Paul is a master Falconer and licensed raptor trainer in Queensland. His collection of birds is impressive, with falcons, eagles, kites, buzzards and owls all based at his training and rehabilitation centre on the Gold Coast. Broadwings is where injured birds learn to 'free-fly' using techniques that mimic the hunting process. This helps them rebuild their strength and flying ability after an injury or long term hospital care.

Paul has worked with raptors for nearly 30 years and has trained many birds for free-flight shows around the country. As falconry is not a sport practiced in Australia the experience levels here are very low; as such Paul's skills, and birds, are in high demand. Soren is his 16-year old wedge-tailed eagle whose apex predator status has been used to rebalance local wildlife populations. Soren's presence has an instant threatening effect on birds and other animals that makes them vacate the suburban areas where they take up residence.

Come along to meet some of Paul's other avian accomplices and hear more about how they are used in conservation efforts on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Paul will discuss the training involved in raptor rehabilitation and demonstrate his techniques with an array of live birds. This very special event will be held at Gecko Hall, upstairs at 139 Duringan Street, Currumbin. Please arrive early to get a seat for what will surely be a popular event. Gecko Talk starts at 7pm sharp and refreshments will be provided.

For interviews please contact Paul Mander at [broadwings@bigpond.com](mailto:broadwings@bigpond.com).

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