

The Armidale Express

Scientist Paul is a Young Tall Poppy

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Dr Paul McDonald is the only representative of a regional university among the nine young scientists to receive the award.

A LECTURER in animal behaviour at the University of New England, has won one of this year's state Young Tall Poppy Science Awards.

Dr Paul McDonald is the only representative of a regional university among the nine young scientists presented with these awards during a ceremony at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

The award, by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science (AIPS), recognises Dr McDonald's ability to conduct scientific research and to communicate his findings – and his love of zoological science – to a wide and varied audience.

"All the awardees recognise the importance of scientific research and the more important goal of ensuring all society benefits from their shared knowledge," Acting Executive director of AIPS, Camille Thomson, said.

Dr McDonald will visit schools and attending seminars as part of the AIPS Tall Poppy Campaign.

"Dr McDonald's research seeks to understand both how and why animals cooperate," his award citation reads. "He uses Noisy and Bell Miners – birds that live in complex societies similar to those of humans – as ideal model species for his research."

"Paul takes advantage of the public's interest in birds to engage with them about his research into animal behaviour. He is curator of the Zoology Museum at UNE, managing visits from school groups and private visitors. He has also regularly prepared articles for the media, both newspaper and radio, as well as presenting to groups from Birdlife Australia and the Victorian Ornithological Research Group.

"I've always been interested in animals – and birds in particular," Dr McDonald said. "There are just so many unanswered questions in animal behaviour – and answering one question usually gives rise to several more.

Having his own young children, Paul McDonald is used to answering children's questions about animals and birds and is looking forward to more contact with school groups.

"I love working with kids and seeing how they're thinking," he said. "You're never sure what questions are going to come."

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