

Bird artist William T. Cooper dies aged 81

By ANITA BEAUMONT
May 12, 2015, 5:30 p.m.



Ornithological artist, William T Cooper, with a print of a 2010 painting he did of two Gang Gangs. Picture: Graham Tidy.

See your ad here

[William T. Cooper: Artist of avian splendour](#)

THE man legendary British wildlife filmmaker Sir David Attenborough described as being one of the world's best bird artists has died, aged 81.

Internationally acclaimed artist William T. Cooper was born in Newcastle on April 6, 1934.

He died on Sunday, May 10, at his home in tropical north Queensland.

Cooper, who painted professionally from 1964, spent his early years running around the bush at Adamstown near the Fernleigh Track, and working as a teen taxidermist at the now defunct Carey Bay Zoo.

He attended Newcastle Boys High.

The self-taught artist was the subject of Attenborough's 1993 TV documentary *Portrait Painter to the Birds*, and the two men became good friends.

Attenborough viewed Cooper as "Australia's greatest living scientific painter of birds," adding, "he is possibly the best in the world."

Cooper's last visit to the Hunter was in October 2013, when he held a sold-out exhibition at Morpeth Gallery.

See your ad here

Cooper illustrated many books, including *A Portfolio of Australian Birds*, *Parrots of the World*, and *Birds of Paradise and Bowerbirds*.

He and his wife Wendy also released *Fruits of the Australian Tropical Rainforest* and *Australian Tropical Fruits: A Field Guide*.

He was also the subject of a book, and then a documentary, called *Birdman*.

Cooper was awarded an Order of Australia in 1994 for his contribution to art and history.

His biography, *An Eye for Nature, The Life & Art of William T. Cooper*, was published in 2014.

