

Wild News

ISSUE 65 - SUMMER 2013

Education & Conservation

Rat Lungworm

Rescue Story

Turtle Tale

+ Loving our Local Plants continued



President's Report



By Karen Scott

As I write this, South-east Queensland is once again in the midst of extreme weather events.

It was only a few weeks ago that a number of us were discussing keeping our animals cool with the higher temperatures and then this week, the concern is about keeping them warm and dry.

I hope that none of our members ended up with substantial damage to their properties during the recent storms and flooding and everyone is safe and well and our thoughts are for those wildlife carers and wildlife in the Bundaberg and far north Queensland regions.

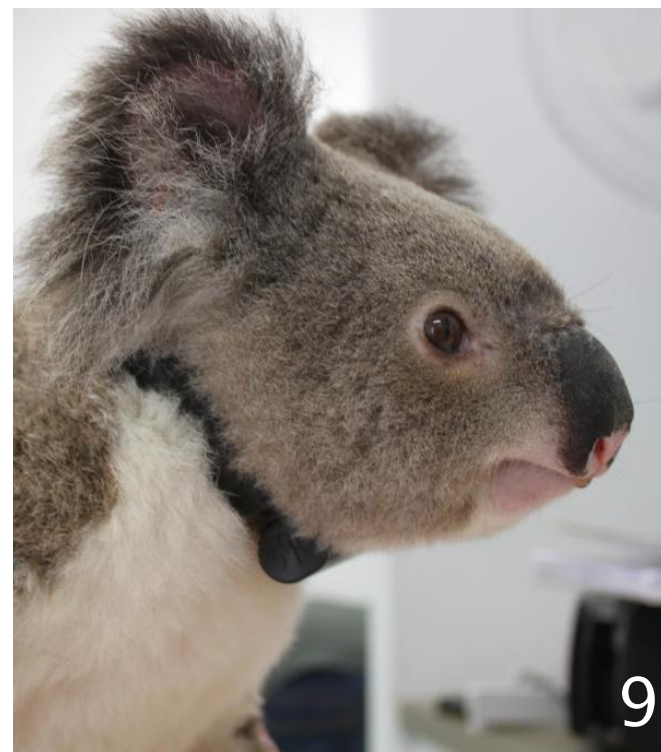
We are once again in the middle of another busy summer season. One question that I am often asked by new members is what species do we most need carers for? The answer – EVERYTHING. Sadly, we just simply don't have any enough carers for all of our common species of wildlife.

We are now facing the sad task of making much harder decisions when it comes to wildlife coming into care and unfortunately this is starting to result in animals being euthanased simply because there are insufficient carers and resources to care for them. I would strongly urge all members, particularly those that haven't at yet jumped in, to consider taking just one or two individuals to help reduce

this unnecessary fact. Regardless of your work or home situation, there are always animals that could fit into your routine.

Lastly, a huge welcome to a number of Wildcare members that have been helping the Committee considerably during recent months. Debbie Overall and Nicole Walters have both taken on roles that have helped the Committee considerably. Debbie has undertaken a tremendous amount of work with raising Wildcare's profile around the Gold Coast region and Nicole has become invaluable with securing much needed grant funding. Thank you both for your hard work to date.

I hope everyone stays well during the coming months and I hope that the busy season starts to unwind very shortly



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OUR MISSION

To protect and enhance the environment by providing a high standard of rescue, care and rehabilitation for sick, injured, orphaned and displaced native fauna with the goal of successful release into the natural environment.

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cover photo: Deb Turnbull

A Warm Welcome to our New Members

Wildcare Australia welcomed the following new members in October November & December

Yvonne & Lance Wilkinson; Sean Fitzgibbon; Nicola Dawber; Brandon Collier; Jeanette Sheppard; Peter Ford; Lauren Keller-Mills; Josh Trickey; Scott Jeffries; Julie Byrd & Daniel Clapp; Kelly Matthews; Corinne Lawless; Phoebe Rutter; Natasha & Daniel Zoucha; Robyn McGuin; Megan & Susan Devlin; Nicole Blake; Clara Fryer; Patricia Ferguson; Elle Yantsch; Vicki & Khaleem Ash; Tanya Thorpe; Natasha & Ross Sheppard; Tegan Thacker & Chris Armstrong; Hiromi Johnson; Gamayne & Hannah Wihongi; Sophie Dodson; Lynsey Allett & Matthew Rissman; Colleen Bertschinger & Natalie Kurstjens; Dawn Astley; Emily Burton; Jane & David Greenwood; Anna Dorrington; Teruyo Payne; Cathy Hodges; Hannah Honnef; Kristy Kuhnert; Anne Moreland; Aparna Cheerah; Adam Clarke Ian MacKenzie-Ross; Jason Caswell; Alana Kyle & Aaron Twomey; Sarah Fraser-O'Brien; Katie Sonder & Zac Birkill; Chook Larson; Lisa Anici; Silje Vindenes; Fran Fleming; Sheena Parfitt; Sandra Reynolds; Brianne Stone; Amy Edgar; Leah Ryder; Laura Parry; Ingrid Ehnhuus; Angela Bourne & Andrew El Kazzi; Kate Jeffrey; Jenny & Adam Ayling

By joining Wildcare Australia you are demonstrating your commitment to the welfare of Australia's native animals. Please don't hesitate to get involved in this, your organization. If you are unsure of where your personal niche may be, contact us and I'm sure we will be able to help you. We hope you have a long and happy association with Wildcare Australia.

Thank you to all those members who have renewed their Wildcare membership subscription for another year. Your ongoing support is much appreciated.

Help Needed

By Simone Smith

As we are mid-way through the busy season I would like to ask all Wildcare members for their help. We are inundated with all sorts of bird life at the moment. Out of our entire member database we are down to only six carers for all the species here on the Gold Coast.

We have some birds that are self-feeding and only require one or two feeds per day, which can be done before work or after work hours. Even if you can only take two at one time, it would be so much appreciated. Depending on species some birds are only in care for one week before being able to be released.

As one of the bird co-ordinators, I am trying to work on projects and initiatives to help tree loppers and spotter catchers identify baby birds, before they are brought into care unnecessarily. However I haven't been able to dedicate any of my time to preventing these birds from coming in, as I have had to take on caring for them.

Any help you could give makes all the difference. I am happy to take calls 24 hours a day and to help you one on one. Please call me on **0400 100 638** or email **simonesmith_82@hotmail.com** Natasha, Dianna or I would be happy to hear from you.

On another note please be vigilant. It is snake season. Triple check to ensure all your cages are snake proof. It is amazing what a snake can do to get inside a cage. If he can get his tiny little head in, he can get his whole body in. Be careful that perches are not widening bars and creating more space for snakes to get in. Also make sure all doors are secured and pegged.

We still have many baby birds coming into care. Phone volunteers and rescuers please ensure you call your co-ordinators straight away, for advice on immediate care or rescue for the particular species.

Thank you all. I hope you had a very special Christmas. We look forward to a productive 2013.



Scales and Tails Reptile Expo

By Annette Bird

Well, what a day! Wildcare attended the Reptile Expo held at the Ipswich Showgrounds again this year.

We had an awesome day and I'd like to thank all the members (and some non-members), who came along and made the day a huge success for us: Sharon and Tim and their young son, Kelly Clark and boys, Andrew and girls, Lewis, Tammy, Mary and Ryan, Alan and Jan, and the relentless Shane. A huge thank you to all. There is no way we could have achieved everything thrown our way without the united effort of all present.

The weather was miserable, with the first rain we've had for months - great when I had to transport a fully functional reptile enclosure in the back of a ute! But the rain didn't dampen anyone's enthusiasm. Last year, the formidable team at Scales and Tails were very good to us and organized sizable proceeds to come our way. They had their challenges though, with regards to catering for the day. This year, the Wildcare team assisted with the cooking and we had Tim, Shane, Andrew, Alan and Chris cooking for hundreds. The lovely Jan also assisted and worked on the sandwiches all day. Poor Tim had his work cut out for him with the weather resulting in just about everyone wanting hot chips. One time I went to check on them, the chip line up was out the door and poor Tim was going bald prematurely. I promptly disappeared, as the others were giving him as much support as possible.

Mental note: next year, two chip cookers. Other than that, the day went without a hitch.

Then there was Lewis' brief absence while he heroically volunteered to transport a staff member from one of the stalls to hospital, for a tetanus shot and some attention to a bite wound on her finger from an indignant Blue Tongue Skink. No way was I going, as hospital has been my home on and off for the last seven weeks. Thank you Lewis for saving me that trauma!

Additional to our usual stall, this year we ran a colouring competition for the kids. I drew up three templates and we had prizes for three age categories. The Wildcare kids (and ring-ins) present supervised the new initiative tirelessly all day. Thank you guys. We had some tables and chairs suitable for kids set up and heaps of pencils. The kids supervising the kids were supervised by various adults all day and this was very well received. Templates were handed out to the kids on entry and they paid a gold coin donation to enter. We had reptile vet Danny Brown, the staff from Reptile Publications and Ranger Cameron judging the entries. Reptile Publications couldn't decide between two entries in their category and so I left them arguing for a while!

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Scales and Tails Reptile Expo

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On return, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that they had kindly donated a book for a runner up prize. Young Ryan also showed his enterprising side and put together a snake jar where people paid a 50 cent entry fee to guess how many snakes were in the jar. Incredibly, young Alexis won the jar, guessing one off the number! Well done.

The rest of the team spent the day answering the endless barrage of questions, manning the stall and ferrying drinks to the 'cooks'. The day finished with an auction, where all stall owners donated something that was auctioned by visiting reptile 'god' and snake man Brian, who was very entertaining. The Scales and Tails team very kindly donated all proceeds of this to Wildcare. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all very much. It is humbling that they have been so supportive of our cause for a second year. I look forward to further collaboration with them in their endeavours such as the Reticon Reptile Conferences as well. These guys are leaders in their field.

There were demonstrations about reptiles to watch with many species of reptile represented, educational videos to watch, heaps and heaps of stuff to buy (I came home broke – Tammy, I'll get the money I borrowed from you

when I run out to you soon I promise!), displays and awesome guest speakers such as Bob Irwin and the mayor of Ipswich, Paul Passale. I accepted a \$2000 cheque (and a hug) from Paul on behalf of the people of Ipswich and delivered a speech to the public about what we do and how we do it. You didn't even have to particularly like reptiles to have a ball; there was so much to see and do. The only downside was that after the day's event, I had to return to my hospital bed (yes - they actually let me out for the day with a promise that a) I would return, and, b) that I wouldn't touch a reptile. I achieved one from two. I would have gone on my deathbed and it was very hard to return after such a great day!), but that wasn't the end – the 'ever-ready' team of Chris, Shane and Lewis cooked dinner for the evening function for Scales and Tails. Thank you guys.

One more thing of note – I also have to acknowledge my pet Central Bearded Dragon Lizbert aka 'Beetle', who attends all of our reptile events as an ambassador for how we house our rehab reptiles and always draws a crowd. He is a big hit and often a conversation starter. He loves to people watch anyway, so he gets something from the day as well! All in all, it was a great day and we look forward to next year's reptile expos.

Expos, Open Days, Sausage Sizzles

By Debbie Overell

My name is Debbie Overell. In August last year I was appointed Wildcare Community Liaison Co-ordinator for the Gold Coast.

This role has been perfect for me, as I am not in a position to care for injured wildlife or assist on the emergency phone as yet, however, I did have some spare time and some enthusiasm. So I can now report on some events Wildcare Australia Inc has been involved in during the past several months on the Gold Coast.

In September we attended the Pet and Animal Expo held on the 29th and 30th September at Varsity on the Gold Coast. It is a diverse event with a large focus on domesticated animals, but Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and Wildcare Australia represented our Australian wildlife.

As usual we had a group of dedicated volunteers to assist with the display. Special thanks to the Meza family, who helped set up and pull down and even gave life to "Wilbur Wildcare" our Expo koala mascot. Also to Andrew, who found furry talents he didn't even know he had. A big thanks to Nicole whose face painting is a sight to behold. What a talent! Nicole was supported by Sally (the tiger), Bridget, Britta, Andrew (who was multi-skilling), Samantha and even Robyn, who found artistic talents of which she was totally unaware.

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Expos, Open Days, Sausage Sizzles

continued

Our display visitors were welcomed by Ann, Nina, Joanne, Dianna, Joseph and Judy, who all did a good job in encouraging our shop sales and getting visitors interested in our informational display and raffle.

We handed out many membership brochures and made many more people aware of Wildcare Australia through our competition for a family pass to Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. Participants had to answer a question about Wildcare Australia. The Winner of this competition was Donna March.

On the 17 November Diana represented us at the Centracare Albert River Community Farm Open Day situated at Yatala. Although the day was stormy, Diana was able to pass out many brochures and take some donations in the northern area of the Gold Coast.

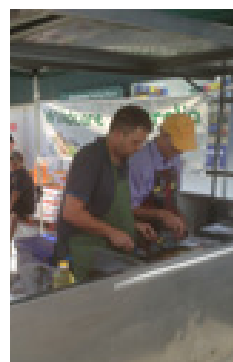
Also in November and December we had an opportunity to have displays at the Pines Shopping Centre at Elanora. This too was a great opportunity to get the Wildcare Aus-

tralia message out there, particularly in an area with such a large koala population. With the help of Amber, Kirsten, Jo, Jan and Brenda and Eric we focused on selling merchandise and a raffle for a family pass to Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. The winner of this raffle was Perry Wilson.

Finally, I can report that the first Saturday in January we held a sausage sizzle at Bunning's Nerang. With the help of Ann, Tom, Lindy, Robyn, Sharon, Tim, Dianna, Dianne, Mike and Eric we sold over 30-40 kilos of sausages and numerous soft drinks.

Through these wonderful events and the dedication of our volunteers we have jointly raised approximately \$2,500 for the day-to-day operations of Wildcare Australia as well as communicating to a wide audience the aims and objectives of our organisation.

On behalf of Wildcare Australia Inc THANK YOU to all the volunteers for these events. Well done!





A Turtle Tale

By Annette Bird

On the 6th January 2013, I was called to an address at Priestdale (Brisbane South area) to rescue five baby turtles that I was told were Eastern Long Necks.



On arrival, I found they were actually Broad Shells that had been prematurely knocked out of their eggs when an excavator was doing some work near a dam on the property. They were in a pretty sad state; cold, covered in ants and only one was showing any signs of life. Being reptiles though and cold, I was unconvinced they were dead. I confirm this with a Doppler at home once they have been warmed slowly to Preferred Body Temperature (PBT) for at least two hours. So, I cranked up the heat in the car (note that it was 38 degrees outside on the day) and made a mad dash for home. The things we do for our reptiles! There were also three eggs that had babies still inside but all three were badly cracked. I took these as well.

At home things looked bad for them – they were still cold and the one showing some signs of life was no longer. I placed them in a small tub in the incubator (that had Bearded Dragons actively hatching at the time) where I could control both the heat and the humidity. Every hour I checked on them and poked them to stimulate them into moving. This went on all night and by morning all five were slowly rallying. I transferred them into a small tub in the morning with a heat pad under and a heat lamp over as they were still not tolerating even ambient temperatures well. For the next three days I poked and prodded and tried to get them to eat. The eggs also needed urgent attention and so I put Tegaderm over the cracks and defects to prevent as much fluid loss as I could.

On day three when they were all still alive and better able to tolerate a car trip, I took them to Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, where the veterinarian agreed that they were at least one month premature and an ultrasound revealed that three had no internal yolk sac, meaning that they would soon die if not eating. So, these three were tube fed and I persisted with the other two. Because they were attempting to swim in the shallow water I had provided, I also transferred them into a small aquarium where I could also provide necessary UV light, filtration and a dry-dock. Here they excelled and grew stronger every day. They began eating by themselves as well. Then on the 18th, the most amazing thing happened: one of the smashed eggs began hatching. I carefully peeled away the Tegaderm to allow the baby to hatch unimpeded and he soon joined his five siblings. All six babies were returned to their mother's dam a week later – six out of eight.

I cut the last two turtles out of their eggs yesterday and had them under ICU conditions. I barely took my eyes off them - but it paid off - today they are swimming and eating. The last two will remain in care for another week. I'm sure you will agree this is a very good effort, when all the odds were very much against them. All eight survived when they should have all died!

Here are some photos of my brief but rewarding time with them.

Coordinator Reports

KOALAS

By Karen Scott

We still continue to see a relatively large number of koalas coming into care around the South-east Queensland area. Surprisingly though, over the Christmas and New Year period, there were few koala rescues on the Gold Coast, although they still continued to come into care in their usual numbers in other regions. Sadly, there was an increase in the number of sick koalas being found on the ground. They were suffering from diseases such as Chlamydia and a variety of cancers.

Another notable occurrence, particularly around the southern end of the Gold Coast, is the number of koalas coming into care that are 'repeat offenders' (i.e. they have been in care before). All released koalas are ear tagged and micro chipped prior to release and this gives us an opportunity to obtain their history when they come back into care. It is always interesting to look up their ear tag number and find out just who they are. There are also those that we recognise immediately, as they just don't seem to be able to stay out of trouble!

Overall it is a very sad state of affairs for our poor koalas who are not only struggling with the loss of habitat but also with such a high rate of disease.

We have however had an opportunity to follow the progress of a young female koala called 'Fleay' who has been mentioned in WildNews previously. Fleay came into care

with her mother Joy-Rosemary several years ago when they were found in a precarious location at Burleigh Heads with mum suffering from dermatitis. At that time Fleay was only a wee pouch young. Several months later she and her mother were released back in the Burleigh region. A little while later Fleay turned up on her own and she was sent up to 'koala kindy' at Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital to finish growing. She was then released in the location where she and her mother had been released previously. She managed to stay out of trouble for quite some time but in December found herself in a little spot of bother in a yard surrounded by dogs. After a health check at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, there were some concerns raised about her ability to cope with climbing large trees. We were very fortunate that we were able to arrange to have a radio tracking collar fitted to her, so that we could track her progress and make sure that she was coping well. Fleay has proved us all wrong and is doing remarkably well. Now, we just have to wait for an opportunity to catch her again to remove the tracking collar.

A huge thank you to the staff at AZWH and CWS for their help with organising the tracking approval and to the GCCC Koala Conservation Team members, John and Tina, who have volunteered their time for the past six weeks to track her several times a week. Little Fleay is pretty special to quite a few of us and it is great to see her doing so well.



1. Checking it for size
2. Hold still
3. Home again
4. Up we go
5. It's all good!



Coordinator Reports

SMALL MAMMALS

By Karen Scott

Quite typically at this time of year we see the arrival of a variety of species of small mammals.

Several litters of antechinus are being raised by our dedicated small mammal carers along with an influx of baby and juvenile bandicoots. We have also seen a variety of native rodents arrive into care, which is stretching our carers' resources a little thin this year.

Thankfully we have a few new bandicoot carers who have successfully rehabbed and released a number of juveniles that had been attacked by cats.

Please remember to check the pouches of bandicoots that you may find on the road, as there will often be a number of babies tucked up and just waiting to be saved.

ECHIDNAS

By Karen Scott

The past few months have actually been relatively quiet for echidnas. We have even noticed a reduction in the number of enquiry calls coming into the Wildcare Hotline.

The three puggles in care are progressing well and will be ready for release in another few months.

Over the next few months we will probably see a number of youngsters requiring care, as nursery burrows are inadvertently excavated, or young ones leave the burrow for the first time. Some of these young ones may struggle to find sufficient food, or will come into contact with domestic pets.

Coordinator Reports

POSSUMS

Gold Coast *By Eleanor Hanger*

South-east Queensland is an area of enormous biodiversity, having as it does remnants of our Gondwanan past, not to mention the effects of volcanism 24 or so million years ago, the rising and falling sea levels, uplifts and erosion which have created the landscape we see today.

Unfortunately the richness of flora and fauna species is under serious threat from the exploding human population, which is attracted to the area for the very qualities it then sets about destroying.

We have nine possum species in South-east Queensland, but on the Gold Coast three of those species (Greater Glider, Yellow-bellied Glider and Eastern Pigmy Possum) are rarely encountered and with increasing loss of habitat it is highly probable that they will become locally extinct. What an indictment! Will our Common Brushtail Possum and Common Ringtail Possum go the same way?

Over the past six months possum carers have been overwhelmed with the number of animals, both orphans and adults, needing care. Adults are returned to their place of origin in most instances, as that is their home territory, unless, of course, the area has been totally cleared for development. Orphans, however, are a different matter, as they do not have an established territory, although we do try to keep them within range of their place of origin.

Pre-release facilities for these orphans are becoming increasingly difficult to find, so Wildcare Australia and Land for Wildlife have been looking at developing a partnership, whereby Land for Wildlife property owners allow their properties to be used as release sites.

Nicole Walters, a Logan City Council's Land for Wildlife Officer and one of our members, facilitated the first workshop for interested property owners at the Beenleigh Library. I presented it and it was very well attended. There was a high level of interest, which resulted in a number of landholders offering their properties to assist the wildlife housing crisis. Several of the property owners also expressed interest in joining Wildcare and becoming more deeply involved. It was a very exciting outcome and far exceeded our expectations. So if you are looking for a hard release site in the Logan City Council area, please contact one of your species coordinators and they will be able to put you in contact with a landholder with suitable habitat and a property that meets the requirements for the species.

Our sincere thanks to Nicole Walters and the Logan City Council. We look forward to continuing to work together for the benefit of our wildlife.

Short-eared Possums
(formerly called Mountain
Brushtails)

Photo: Carla Harp



Coordinator Reports



BIRDS

By Ailsa Watson

Once again we are at the height of the baby bird season. With the strong winds, they have been coming in right, left and centre.

I never cease to be amazed at the antics of our furry and feathered friends. I heard a commotion out in the large tree in the back yard last week, so grabbed my strong torch and shot outside. It sounded as if a bat was in trouble and I was worried about carpet snakes, which we have in abundance. It was not a carpet snake, it was a ring tail possum and the bat going at it hammer and tongs. The possum was snarling and hissing and the bat was waving a wing around and screaming. It seemed as if they both wanted the blossoms on the same branch. As it appeared neither was going to hurt the other, I just left them to it.

I had a late arrival the other night and being short of time popped it (a quite young kookaburra) in the same cage as

a couple of baby currawongs. They seemed to get on well as they were all about the same size and, I would say, same age. They snuggled up together, so decided to leave them alone for a couple of days, as it is much easier to feed with them all in the same cage.

Can you imagine my amazement when I walked out on to the verandah and observed one of my local kookaburras, not only feeding his own kind through the bars, but offering food to the currawongs? Perhaps it is not so unusual when you consider the number of birds who feed the koels, but I have to admit I found it interesting. This behaviour has continued on and off for the past week, so I will await developments with interest. When the currawongs are released will the locals take them on as one of their own? Time will tell.

Oh how we love our native food!

By Clare Boyd

When contemplating the cost of lettuce and thinking of appropriate native food for my clutch of Pacific Black ducks, I decided to put a handful of duck weed from our dam into a small container. The ducks went berserk and straight away began syphoning through the plant matter. Now, each day as an extra, I add some duck weed to their pen and each day they get just as excited.

The species of duck weed are *Lemna disperma* and *Azolla pinnata*. Please ensure that you are feeding your animals native species and not weed species, which can cause severe problems in waterways. Ed.



Summer: Soaring Heat and Starving Pythons By Deb Turnbull

Summer can be a difficult time for wildlife carers. We struggle through Spring with orphans coming at us from all directions, only to be faced with a new range of problems in Summer. For a few carers this means battling bushfires, and we all hope that none of our carers need to face that problem personally. In terms of care and rehabilitation, fires generally have little impact – most animals simply die. Survivors are placed with our most experienced carers and the cost is high in terms of emotions, time and financial commitment. Let's hope there aren't too many fires this season.

At home our Spring babies are now big, and outside in aviaries getting ready for release. This brings two potential problems: caring for animals in extreme heat, and dangers facing animals released in Summer. The ideal aviary set-up is to have them under large shade trees, but this is not always possible in a suburban backyard. The focus of protection from heat is on the western and southern sides of the aviary, and the roof. If the aviary has solid sides, these should face south and west as this is where the worst weather comes from. Having mesh sides facing north and east allows for the coolest of any breezes into the aviary. The solid sides of the aviary can be shaded by native shrubs or vines, bales of hay, or shade sails. The roof of the aviary can be shaded with leafy branches, preferably with a gap between the branches and the roof to allow some air to circulate. Many things can be used to create a gap, from aviary mesh to an old sling-style dog bed frame. Heat reflective paint may also help reduce heat inside the aviary. Having plenty of cut leaf inside the aviary can also help reduce heat. Make sure it is in containers with plenty of water. Hosing the leaf periodically can also help keep things cool.

Summer is reptile time. Pythons are warm and active, and looking for a tasty small mammal for dinner. Pythons can be a problem while possums and gliders are in pre-release aviaries, and also immediately after release. The first task is to ensure the aviary is snake-proof so the animals inside are physically safe. Stress must also be considered. Make sure there are plenty of places where the animals can hide – boxes, hollow logs, thick vegetation. It may be necessary to cover part of the aviary with a sheet to help minimise visual contact between predator and prey. Trees over the aviary provide much needed shade, but low hanging branches also provide easy access for pythons.

On release, a couple of factors may help reduce the chance of our babies becoming instant python food. Pythons are most active on the hottest days. Keep an eye on the weather conditions in the weeks before and after an impending release. A cool change straight after a hot period is a good time. Ask your neighbours about python activity that they have seen. A python curled up asleep in a neighbour's shed is good news – at least one python in the area has a full belly! If you are lucky enough to have a decent sized property, having a second release aviary some distance away may be useful. The bottom line is that possums and gliders are the natural prey of both pythons and powerful owls. By necessity they share the same habitat. It is impossible to release an animal where there are no predator-threats. Personally, though, I would rather see one of my possums taken by a wild powerful owl than see it hit by a car on a suburban or peri-urban street.

This aviary is shaded by trees on the western side, and Johnson grass (also food for my pet parrots) on the southern side. Old browse is thrown over mesh on the roof.

Photo: Deb Turnbull



During 2012 I had my first experience of a possible rat lungworm case in a brushtail possum. We treated Gonzo on suspicion after he presented with neurological symptoms.

Unfortunately it was not a good outcome for Gonzo, but it prompted me to look a little further into this parasite. This review is of the following journal article: **Ma, G.; Dennis, M.; Rose, K.; Spratt, D. and Spielman, D. (2012). Tawny frogmouths and brushtail possums as sentinels for *Angiostrongylus cantonensis*, the rat lungworm. *Veterinary Parasitology*, 192: 158-165.**

The rat lungworm (*Angiostrongylus cantonensis*) is a parasite with a rather complex lifecycle including definitive hosts (Norway rat and black rat being the most common) and intermediate hosts (molluscs, including snails). Larvae moult twice within the intermediate host. At the third stage they are infective to rats and other non-target hosts such as birds and mammals, including humans. To develop to adult stage the larvae must migrate, via the bloodstream, to neural tissues of the brain or spinal cord of the definitive host (rat, wildlife or human). Rats are considered the target definitive host, and other species are non-target definitive hosts. This means the parasite at its third larval stage is most commonly ingested by rats. Incidental ingestion by a tawny frogmouth, possum or human will also provide the right environment for development of the adult worm. The attached diagram shows the life cycle using a human as the non-target definitive host.

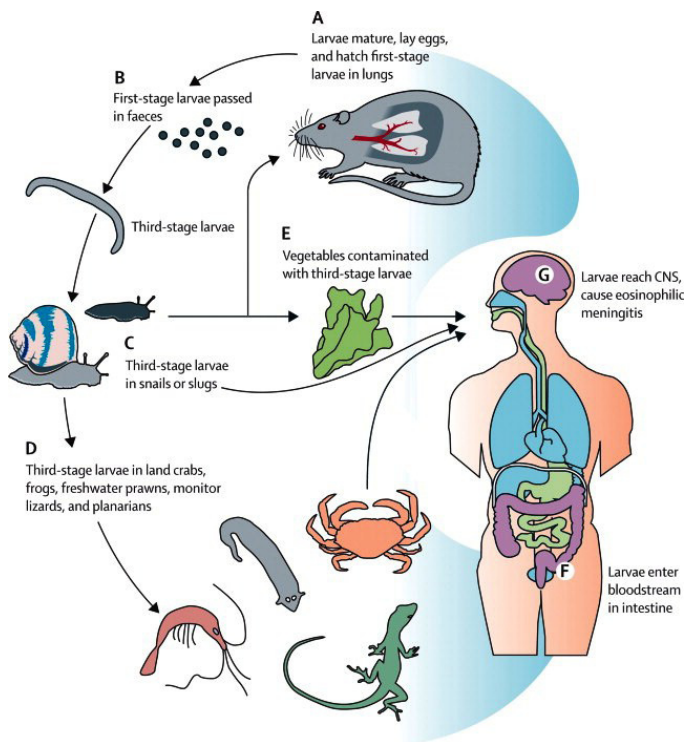
The worm does eventually leave the brain or spinal cord for the next stage of its life cycle. Death of the host is from damage to the brain or spinal cord caused directly from the nematode, from inflammation resulting from the worm's presence, or from the consequences of debility in a wild animal (starvation, increased predation etc.). It sounds simple to just kill the worm, but then it remains in the host animal's brain causing further immune responses and complications. Treatment is the administration

of strong anti-inflammatory drugs to minimise potential damage to the neural areas while the worm works its way out of the host's body.

In this Sydney study, 100 tawny frogmouths and 31 brushtail possums were examined over a twelve year period. All animals presented with neurological disease and were included in this study post mortem. Pathology, histology, patient history, clinical examination and gross post mortem findings were used to classify the cause of disease. There were five categories for the tawny frogmouths: *Angiostrongylus* sp., trauma, protozoal, unknown, or other. There were three categories for the brushtail possums: wobbly possum syndrome, *Angiostrongylus* sp., other. Wobbly possum syndrome is not a term I am familiar with and I will endeavour to find out more about this for the next newsletter. The tawny frogmouths showed the highest incidence of infection with 80% having *angiostrongylus* as the cause of disease. 11% had concurrent *angiostrongylus* infection and trauma. Only four (13%) of the brushtails were diagnosed with *angiostrongylus*, with hand-raised juveniles being over-represented.

Of the 80 *angiostrongylus* tawny frogmouth cases, there was no difference in prevalence between males and females. 32 were considered to be in good body condition and 30 were considered to be in excellent condition. 13 were in poor body condition. All tawnies were unable to fly well (some not at all) and were described as having some degree of weakness, particularly of the legs. 45% lacked a righting reflex when placed on their back. There were seizures in 6% of cases, and tremors in a further 4%. Duration of illness was up to fifteen days at an average of just over two days between presentation and death or euthanasia. None of the birds kept in care for seven or more days improved clinically.

continued on next page



In this Sydney study there was a definite seasonal variation with most cases occurring between February and May, and a lull occurring between September and December. This is consistent with reports of infection in dogs in Queensland. A recent cluster of ten tawny frogmouths during a period of particularly heavy seasonal rain in south-east Queensland supports seasonal variation in the incidence of angiostrongylus infections.

One free-range adult male brushtail possum presented with hind limb paralysis, and a large adult nematode was found in the lumbar spinal cord. Two hand-raised juvenile possums had large nematodes in the brain. Another hand-raised juvenile had multifocal haemorrhages throughout the brain associated with multiple nematode larvae. The three hand-raised possums were with different carers across two care groups. All four possums presented with sudden onset paralysis, particularly of the hind limbs. Mental alertness of three possums was normal, but one became moribund after 24 hours. The fourth possum was severely depressed on presentation.

Infection of hand-raised possums in aviaries is likely due to the ingestion of slugs or snails, or contamination of food bowls with snail or slug slime.

The most common clinical feature found in both tawny frogmouths and brushtail possums was acute hind limb paralysis. In tawny frogmouths hind limb paralysis was often indistinguishable from general weakness as the birds were frequently severely debilitated when found. Birds presenting with hind limb paralysis as the major symptom may have been in the early stages of infection.

Angiostrongylus has been reported in macropods, flying foxes, tawny frogmouths, brushtail possums, domestic dogs and humans. Permanent brain damage and death have been reported in humans. Symptoms in humans include: headache, neck stiffness, paraesthesia (numbness or tingling), vomiting, fever, nausea and blurred vision. Infection of humans is the same as infection of other animals; by eating raw infected snails, or unwashed leafy greens such as lettuce that an infected slug or snail has crawled over leaving a slime trail. As always, if you experience unusual symptoms tell your doctor you are a wildlife carer.

In all cases of an animal coming into care with neurological symptoms, an immediate veterinary assessment is required. An examination under anaesthetic, including x-rays, is necessary to rule out other causes such as trauma. A detailed history of the circumstances surrounding the rescue of the animal is also an important component of any diagnosis.

Further reading:

Gelis, S., Spratt, D. M. & Raidal, S. R. (2011). *Neuroangiostrongyliasis and other parasites in tawny frogmouths (Podargus strigoides) in south-eastern Queensland*. Australian Veterinary Journal, 89 (1-2): 47-50.

Wang, Q-P; Lai, D-H.; Zhu, X-Q.; Chen, X-G.; Lun, Z-R. (2008). *Human angiostrongyliasis*. The Lancet: Infectious diseases. 8 (10): 621-630 (source of life-cycle diagram).



RAINFORESTS OF SOUTH EAST QLD

Once upon a time, (around 23 million years ago!), volcanic eruptions in our region produced lava flows that oozed down over the landscape spreading rich basalt deposits. This fine grained volcanic rock weathered over time to form the rich soils that became the foundation for rainforests to grow and flourish.

A walk in subtropical rainforest is a magical, exhilarating trip away from our modern madness. The fresh, moist, cool air, encompassing rich green vegetation, the huge old tree trunks hosting lichens and mosses, and the beautiful and intriguing sounds of Catbirds and Wompoo Fruit Doves resonating way up in the canopy, are just a small portion of an experience that can stir our senses into wonder of ancient days when life on earth was in its infancy.

Subtropical rainforest relies on warm sites with high rainfall (to 1300mm each year) and rich, volcanic soil. The dense canopy consisting of 10 to 60 species (approx.) reaching up to 50 metres in height, creates a unique moist, protected environment below, full of palms, epiphytes (orchids, stag-horns, bird's nest ferns) barks encrusted with lichens, vines, plank buttresses, ground ferns, herbs and fungi. Fungi are a vital part of the system, helping break down rotting matter for plant uptake and providing food for many creatures including bobucks, pademelons, bandicoots, and brush turkeys.

Subtropical rainforest tree leaves are usually large and smooth edged to catch more sunlight and perform photosynthesis (the process of producing energy). Rainforest saplings are capable of going into dormancy, waiting a break in the canopy or death of a parent tree to trigger further growth. The greatest diversity of creatures is found in subtropical rainforest. All have evolved to fit a very specific niche. Countless species of insects dominate the canopy and litter layers. Flying foxes, and many frugivores including the vulnerable Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove feed on the succulent fruits and bright coloured berries of many species including lilly pillys, figs, and quandongs. Uncommon Riflebirds probe the bark of

trees for insects, and the superbly coloured, ground dwelling Noisy Pittas feed on native snails, earth worms and leeches.

Small scattered remnants of subtropical rainforest occur in Tallebudgera and Currumbin valleys, Austinville, Bonogin, and Lower Beechmont. The largest area in our region is in Springbrook.

Dry rainforest occurs in warm sheltered sites where the rainfall is not as high (600 – 1100mm) per year. Species can be more variable and include semi-deciduous trees, and the leaves generally have adapted to cope with seasonal dry conditions by being tougher and smaller. The understorey has a more consistent and often prickly shrub layer inhabited by Whipbirds and Pale-yellow Robins. Vines are very common. Palms and tree ferns are absent.

Our local region has sporadic pockets of dry rainforest in Burleigh Heads, Elanora, and Bonogin, but the hinterland areas have some larger pockets including Currumbin, Tallebudgera, Mudgeeraba, Austinville, Lower Beechmont, and Numinbah Valley, and Springbrook.

The lowland rainforests, (0-900m) are now mostly gone and the remaining fragmented patches are mainly in areas of difficult terrain that were too impractical for farming and housing. As our region is the fastest growing in Australia, we need to ensure that these remaining remnants are nurtured, expanded and connected by sizeable corridors to help rainforest animals that need to migrate and/or get to seasonal food sources. You might have rainforest shrubs full of delicious berries in your garden, but many of the shy rainforest animals won't venture out over exposed territory to access them.

There are now some great education programs and initiatives through council and community groups like Land for Wildlife, Gecko, Greening Australia, Land Care, Bush Heritage, to help us engage in rainforest regeneration.

NATIVE PLANT FOODS FOR RAINFOREST ANIMALS IN SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

TREES

Bangalow Palm (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*) Palm that grows to 25m. The flowers feed Lorikeets and Flying Foxes. Bright red 1cm fruit is eaten by Short-eared Possums (Bobucks), Flying Foxes, Fruit Doves, King Parrots, Lewin's Honeyeaters, Currawongs, Brown Cuckoo Doves.

Sandpaper Fig (*Ficus coronata*) Small tree to 12m with rough textured leaves. Soft brown/red fleshy fruit to 1.5cm is a food source for Bobucks, Bowerbirds, Brown Cuckoo Doves, Figbirds, Catbirds, Flying Foxes, Silvereyes.

Tulipwood (*Harpullia pendula*) Medium tree to 20m. Orange capsule with an 8mm hard brown seed is eaten by King Parrots, Lewin's Honeyeaters, Currawongs, Native Rodents and Brown Cuckoo Doves.

Wild Quince (*Guoia semiglauca*) Small tree to 12m. Fruit is a 2-3 lobed capsule, contains seed eaten by Crimson and Eastern Rosellas, Figbirds, Olive-backed Orioles, Currawongs, Varied Triller, Fawn Footed Melomys, Ringtail Possums.

Durobby (*Syzygium moorei*) Vulnerable tree to 30m. Beautiful lolly pink flowers along the branches have nectar that attracts Lorikeets, Friarbirds, Blue-faced and Lewin's Honeyeaters. It is thought the 6 cm white fruit used to be eaten by Cassowaries now extinct in our local area, but Native Rodents, Bandicoots, and Brush Turkeys eat the fleshy seed coating.

SCRUBS

Scrub Turpentine (*Rhodamnia rubescens*) Large bushy shrub to 8m. New leaves are eaten by Bobucks, Ringtail Possums and Brushtail Possums. The reddish black 5mm berries are eaten by Brown Cuckoo Doves, Figbirds, Bowerbirds.

Smooth Psychotria (*Psychotria daphnoides*) Large shrub to 5m. 10mm greenish fruit is eaten by Lewin's Honeyeaters, Catbirds, Brush Turkeys, King Parrots.

Bleeding Heart (*Homalanthus nutans*) Shrub to 5m. Fruit is a bluish-white capsule eaten by Mistletoebirds, Silvereyes, Olive-backed Orioles, Brown Cuckoo Doves and Bobucks.

Glossy Laurel (*Cryptocarya laevigata*) Large shrub to 5m. Leaves are host plant for the Blue Triangle Butterfly. Fleshy red 15mm fruit is eaten by Catbirds, Olive-backed Orioles and Figbirds.

SMALL PLANTS/HERBS

Rainforest Wandering Jew (*Aneilema acuminatum*) Succulent scrambler with white flowers. Leaves and flowers eaten by Swamp Wallabies, Pademelons. Seed eaten by Wonga Pigeons, Emerald Doves.

Rainforest Matrush (*Lomandra spicata*) Strap leaf plant to 1m. Orange fruit eaten by Emerald Doves, Bush Rats, Bandicoots, Brown Cuckoo Doves, Currawongs.

Pademelon Grass (*Oplismenus hirtellus*) Leaves eaten by Pademelons, Swamp Wallabies.

Alpinia caerulea (*Native Ginger*) Long stemmed clumping plant to 1m. Blue 6mm berries eaten by Native Rodents, Bowerbirds, Brown Cuckoo Doves.

VINES

Richmond Birdwing Vine (*Pararistolochia praevenosa*) Leaves are the only food source for Richmond Birdwing Butterfly caterpillar.

Native Raspberry (*Rubus rosifolius*) Prickly trailing shrub. Leaves eaten by Swamp Wallabies and Pademelons. Fleshy red berries are eaten by Brush Turkeys, Pademelons, Bowerbirds, Emerald Doves, Land Mulletts.

Sweet Sarsaparilla (*Smilax australis*) Tough wiry scrambler with small prickles. Young leaves eaten by Possums, Swamp Wallabies. Black 5mm fruit eaten by Lewin's Honeyeaters, Olive-backed Orioles, Bowerbirds, Currawongs, Figbirds.

Photos (Michelle Benson) from left to right:

1. *Dendrocnide moroides*
2. *Rubus rosifolius*
4. *Smilax australis*
5. *Cyptotrama aspratrum*



Request for Unwanted Cages/Aviaries

Wildcare has been fortunate recently to have offers of new soft release sites for a variety of species. However, we are struggling to get started due to a lack of aviaries.

Do you have any unwanted cages or aviaries that you are willing to donate?

Do you know of anyone who is giving away cages or aviaries?

Do you know of any cages or aviaries being sold for a reasonable price?

Do you have, or know of anyone with a ute or trailer, who would be willing to help move an aviary once in a while?

Grants

As a non-profit organisation we have been extremely fortunate over recent years to obtain sponsorship and grants through a number of different programs.



SCENIC RIM

Funding was received to assist with the high costs associated with providing an emergency response to critically injured large animals (such as macropods) in the Scenic Rim area. This area has one of the highest rates of injury in macropods. Funding will help cover some of the costs associated with the cost of drugs to sedate and euthanase injured wildlife and a small portion to assist with fuel costs.



GOLD COAST CITY COUNCIL

Funding was recently received to assist with koala rehabilitation facilities as a result of the increase in the number of koalas coming into care from the Gold Coast region.



CITY OF IPSWICH

Funding of \$2,000 was received to purchase rescue equipment for our dedicated reptile rescuers.



MAZDA FOUNDATION

Funding of \$4,700 was received for koala rescue and rehabilitation. Funding will enable rescuers to be better equipped, particularly in regions where there are currently very few koala rescuers or none at all.

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