

# Wild News

ISSUE 77 - SUMMER 2016

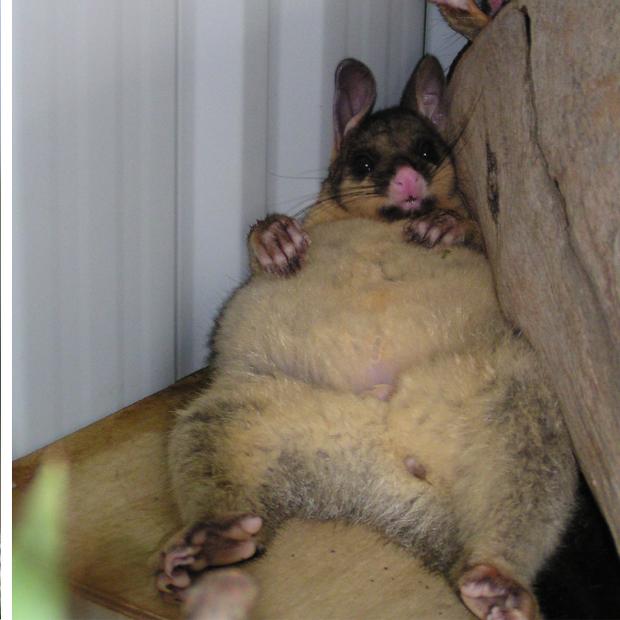
Education  
Bowra  
Sanctuary

Rehabilitation  
First Aid  
in Wildlife

Discover...

# All News & Events

+ Species Coordinators' Reports



# President's Report



*By Karen Scott*

**Welcome to the latest edition of WildNews.**

**We warmly welcome everyone who has recently joined Wildcare. We have had over 120 people join this year alone, thanks largely in part to our new online membership option. This brings our total to nearly 800 memberships.**

## **Wildcare Australia Inc**

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**[www.wildcare.org.au](http://www.wildcare.org.au)**

For those of you who may not be aware of the fact, Wildcare has been operating now for over 23 years! What started out as a small group of committed wildlife carers in the Gold Coast region has evolved into a large organization, which covers the entire South-east Queensland region. We have progressed from having one workshop every few months, to having one just about every weekend. We have over 1,200 workshop attendances each year and this number continues to grow.

An organization of this size cannot operate without a team of very dedicated volunteers and we are very fortunate that we have a tremendous team behind Wildcare; from our volunteers who keep our emergency hotline operating, our rescuers who race out to assist wildlife in need, our carers who open up their homes to care for injured and orphaned wildlife, our volunteers who help with the never-ending administrative tasks, to our sponsors who help us achieve our goals. To each of you, thank you for making a difference to the lives of our local wildlife. A special thank you to those who decided many years

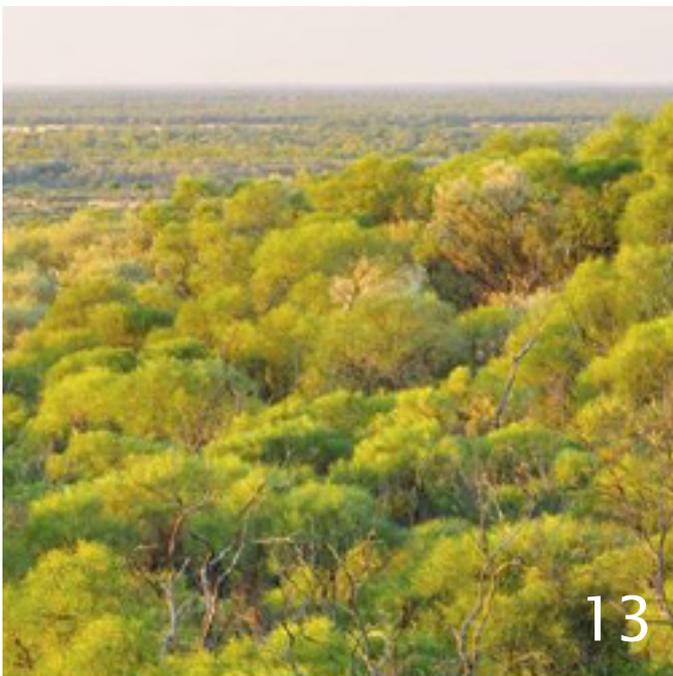
ago to create what has become the amazing group that is Wildcare.

Hopefully now that Summer has moved on (or it should have), our wildlife carers are managing to get the spring/summer babies released and will now get a chance to take a bit of a break over the cooler months. Sadly though, for many of our mammal species, the winter period brings with it an increase in the number of fatalities and orphans, as more animals fall victim to road trauma.

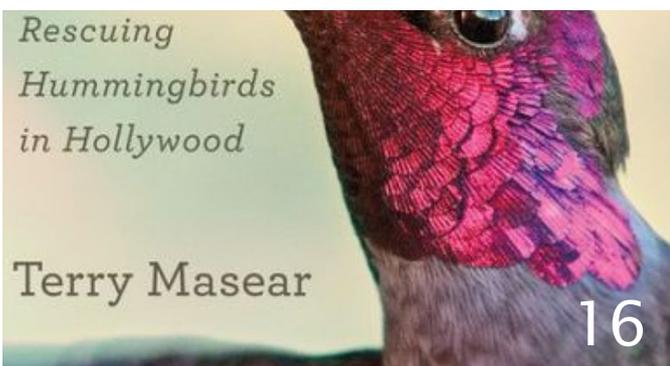
I hope that 2016 is kind to each of you and to our wildlife!



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*Rescuing  
Hummingbirds  
in Hollywood*

Terry Masear

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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.

### EMAILS

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### MAIN COMMITTEE

President Karen Scott  
Vice-President Lewis McKillop  
Secretary Danni Bettridge  
Treasurer Tracy Paroz  
Committee Members Samantha Longman, Fiona Davy, Caitlin Rayner, Brigitte Blakeway

### NEWSLETTER TEAM

Eleanor Hanger & Deborah Bianchetto.  
Submissions can be sent to news@wildcare.org.au  
Cover photo: Allison Roberts

# A Warm Welcome to our New Members

**Wildcare Australia welcomed the following new members in October, November and December:**

Alexis Dean-Jones; Andrew Austin; Michele and David Briggs; Gayle and Jonathan Morris; Dane Green; Kirsten Cunningham and Colleen Botha; Cristy Gearon; Kirri Grey; Naomi Harvey and Chaim Kolominskas; Kelly Hinchy; Kristia Huddleston and Shannon Moss; Shiralee Rimmington; Claudine and Brett Tucker; Brooke Baker; Rachel and Keith Mason, Amber and Brett; Suzanne Tonga; Tara and Darcy Piper; Nicole Phillips and Joe Dibella; Shona and Graeme Ford; Kianee Fiedler; Niall Turner; Natalie Harvey; Linda Millott; Alexandra Griffiths; Nikola and Roxy McKee; Kylie and Nadia Regli; Nicola and Tim Grey and James; Kelly Winter; Cathy Mofflin; Peter Barnes; Paula and Neil Hodgkinson; Jasmin Wildwood; Kim Fulton; Simon Turner; Ryan Spargo; Nynke van der Brug and Stephen Gensemer; Nicholas Hooper; Meng Tze Chia; Amy Dawes; Kodie Clissold; Clodagh O'Driscoll; Christine Harding and Russell Gardner; Lauren Walmsley; Kimberley Tozer; Sarah McDonald; Sarah Williams; Jack Dyer and Mikaela Sano; Carol Timbrell; Michael Ashe; Craig and Carol Cavanagh; Sandra Migale; Julia Page; Emily Radermacher and Dylan Sutton; Macey Reilly; Linda Simister and Barry Chatel; Amy Smith; Liz and Alan Miller; Kim Carroll; Chrissy Joester; Helen Riddington and Paul Garrett; Kaysie King; Ella Meeve; Elisha Strazan-Burrows; Samantha and Stacie Lawson; Tiffany Harrington; Rebecca Gallagher; Declan Turner; Brodee Wright; Alice Woskanian; Lisa Fritz; Maree-Alana Mills; Ruby and Natalie Peinke; Jessica Krainik; Hayley Simpson; Rebecca and John Barrett; Jackie Ramsay; Neysa Pratignyo; Katarina Fossey; Eloise Stephenson; Tara Clark; Dana Flynn; Angela Wayland; Emma Gale; Elizabeth and Glenn Hanson; Juliet Saltmarsh; Leah Allen; Sophie Rolls and Philip Potter; Tini Ivins; Edgar Bayola and Furlong Lee; Zara McLean; Deborah Knox; Lizzie Cann and Benjamin De Kruiff; Andrea Daely; Sarah Hawes; Sarah Coxhead; Tianah McCubben-Gray; Michelle and Lulu Kazukaitis; Karen and John Hutt; Lee Sievers; Leisa Cornford; Katelyn Brew; Jane Menere; Michelle Neil; Lisa Waters; Madeline McGrory; Rob and Jewel Lucas; Kathleen Miller; Eleesa Zlatic and Ayla Gray; Kelly Withers; Lauren Bauer; Jason and James Cartwright; Christine Murray; Peter Davies; Rowland Davis and Belinda Finch; Rachel and Sam Fossey; Yasmin Haines and Selim Abed Chafloque; James Ridgway; Jennifer and Alice Myers; Hayley Chambers-Holt; Michael Salmon; Annaliese Walker; Rebecca and Christina Stephenson; Joshua Hungerford; Elizabeth Johnston; Lacey and Hayden Jackson; Dimity Drew; Melanie Groves and Mili Kemenyvary; Sue Owens; Sharon Warne; Elizabeth Ellis; Daisy Murray; Claudia Young; Helen Dransfield; Jennie Delany; Tony Brinkhoff; Lee Evans; Andrew Greenwood; Holly and James Coupe; Anita and Ben Kaa; Kate Mullen and Luke Campbell; Tina and Andrew Oldfield; Rosemary Pearse; Cassandra Swan; Catherine McKechnie; Jayde Caban; Jan Collins; Joey Kingman and Trinity Hamilton; Tineke Reed; Natalie Doble; Amanda and Madilyn Bray; Jennifer Thornton and Tia Thornton; Akane Hatai; Kayla Ousley; Lauren McGuckin; Mitchell Roberts; Marian Wall; Hamish Noller; Lisa Clancy; Jennifer Timbs and Daniel Roe.

**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.**

## NEXT ISSUES SUBMISSIONS DATES

**Autumn - Issue 78: 30th May**

**Winter - Issue 79: 20th June**

**Spring - Issue 80: 20th September**

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Wildcare Australia or of the editors.

# Education Report

**Our January to June 2016 Education Calendar commenced with a great deal of enthusiasm from members.**

Again this Calendar, we have seen many workshops at capacity and some workshops having additional dates scheduled to accommodate new members.

As some members are aware, we have had to make some scheduling changes to this Calendar due to the personal commitments of our trainers. Our thanks to everyone for your understanding in this regard as we are sure you are aware, our trainers are all volunteers and sometimes unexpected commitments arise.

Our thanks to the Brisbane City Council for their support under their Lord Mayor's Community Sustainability and Environmental Grants Program 2015-2016 which has funded three specialised training workshops in this Calendar as well as the printing of training manuals.

The first of these workshops, Veterinary Aspects of Possum Rehabilitation, was held in February with 65 members taking advantage of Dr Robyn Stenner's experience and knowledge. The second, Advanced First Aid for Wildlife, also run by Dr Robyn, was again a huge success with 38 members taking time out from their Easter celebrations to extend their knowledge and skills.

We have already commenced working on the July to December 2016 calendar and are scheduling several new advanced workshops for birds and reptiles.

## Annual General Meeting

Please note that the 2016 Wildcare AGM will be held on Sunday the 25th June 2016. This year we are holding the AGM at the Nerang Bicentennial Centre on the Gold Coast from 11am.

Details of the AGM and a call for nominations for the Wildcare Management Committee will be emailed to all members in April. This year, we will not be sending correspondence and notices by Australia Post so please keep an eye out for these important notifications via email. More details will be emailed to members closer to the date but we hope to see many of you there.

## Membership and Permit Renewals

This year we will be forwarding membership and permit renewals to all members via email rather than post. With over 780 memberships and the recent increase in Australia Post charges to \$1, we need to minimize our postage costs as much as possible.

A reminder to renew your membership will be forwarded by the 30th April 2016 so please keep an eye out for this notification to ensure that your membership stays current. Wildcare relies heavily on membership subscriptions, so your continued support in this regard is much appreciated.

We are now offering one, two and five year memberships in a bid to further reduce our administrative workload. Members are encouraged to take advantage of longer membership subscriptions if they are able to.

This year we will be asking members to renew their membership online through the Wildcare website and with payment through PayPal. This will reduce the administrative burden on our volunteers, without compromising the efficient running of the organization.

A reminder also that Wildcare Permit Endorsements expire on the 30th June 2016. We will email all members with a current Permit a reminder that their Permit is due for renewal and we will provide details on how this can be done.



## Plantation for Wildlife Carers

After liaising with the City of Gold Coast for several years regarding potential sites for a plantation (fodder farm) for wildlife carers, the Council have delivered on their promise to support this initiative by allocating an area at Elanora.

The City of Gold Coast is very kindly covering the setup of the plantation, including preparation of the site, supply of the tube-stock and the planting.

This is a great result for our wildlife carers who rely on fresh browse (native vegetation) for wildlife in their care. It will of course take several years for the plantation to be ready to utilize, but this will be very much welcomed by our volunteers.

## Car Door Magnets

At the request of several members, we have arranged for artwork to be created so members can organize the printing of car door magnets for their vehicles.

For anyone who missed this notification via email, please contact Wildcare at [enquiries@wildcare.org.au](mailto:enquiries@wildcare.org.au) if you would like the artwork.

## Wildcare Assets

A reminder to all members who hold equipment on loan from Wildcare.

Please remember that you are not permitted to transfer this equipment to another member without notifying the Committee. This ensures that the item is "signed back in" by you and then re-allocated to someone else.

If an item needs to be repaired, please remember to contact the Committee, so that we can consider repairing it.

## Grill'd Robina



Thank you to the team at Grill'd Robina for accepting Wildcare's nomination in their Local Matters program in December. Wildcare came in first place through their program which resulted in a \$300 donation from Grill'd! Many thanks to the Grill'd Team as well as everyone who voted for us in the Robina store throughout December.

## Venomous Snakes

Wildcare has successfully extended our specialised permit to include venomous snakes and have now successfully rehabilitated our first official venomous snake under Wildcare's Permit.

Venomous snakes are considered a specialised species, and therefore do not appear on the general Permit Endorsement Application form. If you would like further information about the requirements for caring for venomous snakes, please email [enquiries@wildcare.org.au](mailto:enquiries@wildcare.org.au) for a copy of the Venomous Snake Policy and the Specialised Permit Policy.

Many thanks to those who made this possible, as it involved developing new policies on the rescue and rehabilitation of venomous snakes, as well as an update to our Safety Management Manual.

## One Million Pets



Wildcare was recently invited to partner with One Million Pets for their initiative to raise \$1 million for Australian animals.

If you haven't already checked out the One Million Pets website, please visit [www.onemillionpets.com.au](http://www.onemillionpets.com.au). For every photo uploaded, \$1 of the cost is allocated to your nominated charity!

## Wildcare Shop Changes

**We have recently reviewed the way in which the "Wildcare Shop" operates and the extent to which members rely on the service offered.**

Thank you to those members who recently completed the short Survey that we posted on the closed Wildcare Facebook pages; the information you provided was very helpful. It does appear that most members are purchasing their food and supplements from pet shops, online sources and local suppliers with only a relatively small number of members relying solely on the service provided by Wildcare. The costs associated with operating the Shop continue to increase (e.g. delivery fees and bank charges) and these charges are absorbing any small profit that Wildcare may otherwise make.

In addition to this, processing mail and pick-up orders is becoming very time consuming, as is the reconciliation of shop payments. Whilst some of our members are very reliable, paying invoices promptly and collecting orders, many are not and we are finding ourselves continually following up payments and adjusting orders. As you would be aware, the Shop is operated entirely by our own volunteers, many of whom already have an excessive workload within Wildcare in other areas, as Species Coordinators and Committee members.

It is for these reasons that the decision has been made to wind down the Wildcare Shop and limit the items available for purchase. We will continue to stock some items that are difficult for carers to source (such as possum boxes and Snugglesafe disks) however most consumables will not be stocked in future.

able to purchase milk replacers, bird foods and other supplements.

### **Currumbin Wildlife Hospital**

The Hospital stocks most items and at the same price as the Wildcare Shop Price List. As many of our carers are frequently at the Hospital to deliver or collect animals, this is a good opportunity to collect items. The Hospital can also order bulk items for you and is currently looking at extending the range of items available to carers.

### **Australian Wildlife Supplies**

AWS offer both a pickup and mail order service and are located in Brisbane. You can contact Serena through her website at [www.wildlifesupplies.com.au](http://www.wildlifesupplies.com.au). A copy of AWS's current price list for wildlife carers is available for download below. [Australian Wildlife Supplies - Wildlife Rehab Price List](#)

Many of our members are already purchasing items through Serena and she has a very extensive range of items for wildlife as well as for pet birds and reptiles.

### **Biolac**

Biolac do offer a mail order service directly to wildlife carers. You can contact Christine via the Biolac website at [www.biolac.com.au](http://www.biolac.com.au).

If you have any questions, regarding the change of process for the Wildcare Shop, please contact Karen at [Karen@wildcare.org.au](mailto:Karen@wildcare.org.au)

There are several alternatives listed below where you are

# Coordinator Reports

## KOALAS

By Karen Scott

**The past few months have been relatively quiet compared with previous years. Although this might seem like a good thing, it concerns me that it isn't because there are fewer koalas getting into trouble, but rather that there are simply fewer koalas.**

We have seen an increase in the number of calls from the Coomera and East Pimpama area as a result of the land clearing which has increased significantly in the past eight months or so. Those of you who have recently travelled through the Foxwell Road and Yawalpah Road regions, will understand the gravity of our concerns for all wildlife in those areas.

Unfortunately we continue to see a significant number of koalas coming into care as a result of disease. Many of these koalas are coming into care in an emaciated state, having obviously strug-

gled for some time.

There have also been fewer reports of female koalas with joeys, which is very concerning. This is no doubt associated with the increase in reproductive disease in the female koala population.

We have though still had a few wins, with some koalas being successfully treated by the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital and happily returned to the wild. We have also had quite a few orphaned joeys in care. These have progressed well and are getting close to being ready to tackle the big wide world on their own.

Many thanks to our small team of koala carers and rescuers for doing such a great job in difficult circumstances.

## SMALL MAMMALS

By Karen Scott

**Where have all the small mammals gone? Over the past two years or so, we have seen a decrease in the number of small mammals such as bandicoots, antechinus and native rodents coming into care, particularly on the Gold Coast.**

In the past, we usually had a steady flow of bandicoots coming through, whether they be orphans as a result of road trauma, or juveniles who fell prey to domestic cats. Bandicoots make great little patients and with good veterinary care, are fairly hardy little critters. Is this decline in numbers indicative of a problem - fewer bandicoots surviving in suburban areas? Fingers crossed, they are all doing well!

## BIRDS - Stone the Crows – they're not just birdbrains.

By Ailsa Watson

**Crows and parrots have sophisticated thinking skills on a par with those of apes, such as chimpanzees, the researchers say.**

The birds' brains are about one-tenth the size of the mammals' and their structures are different, but scientists believe they developed equal cognitive abilities through facing the same challenges in the wild over 300 million years of evolution.

The new assessment of research gathered in recent decades suggests that bird cognition includes abilities such as reasoning and delaying gratification, for example, by hoarding food.

"The mental abilities of corvids and parrots are as sophisticated and diverse as those of apes," the study says. "Among other things, they are capable of thinking logically, of recognising themselves in the mirror and of empathy."

Professor Onur Gunturkun, of the University of Vienna in Austria, postulates a common ancestor of apes and birds may have passed on a brain module that is similar in both. The study was

published in the journal of Trends in Cognitive Sciences.

It should, therefore, come as no surprise to carers of these birds, that after release, crows come home each evening to sleep in their own cage and that parrots figure out quickly how to open cage doors.

A rather unexpected behaviour though was that of a hand-reared ibis who maintained territorial claims to my home. He used to sit on the fence near the front gate and fly at anyone who opened the gate. Friends thought it funny when they had to ring up in advance so I could control him. He had an absolute hatred of the postman, who eventually refused to deliver the mail and I had to go two doors up to collect it each day, after making arrangements with the neighbour. Fortunately he eventually found a mate and no longer comes to visit regularly, although I see an ibis pair in the park on occasions and am pretty sure one of them is my "Junior", as he occasionally lands in my yard to chase the Chihuahua. His favourite game when he lived here.

# My Most Rewarding Moment

By Natalie Rasmussen

**She came into care in October due to habitat destruction in Foxwell Road – a Squirrel Glider. We called her Ruby. She was taken to the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital (CWH).**

A lactating mum, all her babies died and she had a serious head trauma, with a bulging eye due to the fall. With a lot of great work from the team at CWH her eye was stitched and slowly eased back into the socket, but there was still a fair bit of trauma and they were unsure if they would be able to save the eye. She required medication and drops for three weeks before being returned to CWH for a re-check.

At each re-check she showed an improvement, but still needed more treatment. This went on and on; different veterinarians, different ideas as to the best treatment to heal the eye, and after each re-check more improvement. Finally, we were to do three more days of a particular treatment and it was fingers crossed, for if it failed the outcome was bleak for Ruby.

On her last day of treatment I was given seven juvenile Squirrel Gliders and with very good guidance we decided to try to get her to join the youngsters, as she would need to be soft released at my place and it was not ideal for her to go alone. This sweet little glider accepted her adopted family with no fuss and even appeared to be feeding one of the younger males every so often. All seemed to be going well until one night when I went down to check on them, her eye seemed a little cloudy. My heart sank. I captured her and put her in a separate aviary so I could get her to CWH as early as possible the next day. They checked her and said she couldn't see much from the left eye but was in no pain, so perhaps could be accepted by the Queensland Species Management Plan (QSMP) and be a captive animal at a zoo. It was a bitter sweet moment, as I was pleased she wasn't euthanised but devastated that she would not be released.

I went home and put her back with her group, as I wanted her to be with family until they were ready to go.

Time went by and some incredible people from a habitat tree company came to my property and put three glider boxes up high in the trees, ready for the release. I separated Ruby from

the group again, and soft released her family. They went straight to the boxes and coped beautifully out in the wild. It was so exciting to watch, but when I went to Ruby in the aviary she was pacing and obviously distressed, as she could see and hear the others out there where she use to be, wild and free. I was so sad for her, so I spent some time watching her from a distance and worrying about her future.

My observations were encouraging. I saw her jumping and landing perfectly and she caught a few moths along the way. She seemed extremely agile and capable. My fight for her wasn't over yet though.

The next day I made an appointment at CWH for her last re-check, either to be signed off as a QSMP animal or as releasable. I showed the veterinarian some footage I had filmed of her climbing and jumping and he looked at her eye. I said, "I think she's capable" and he agreed. It was all worth it!

So that night I waited to see her little family pop their heads out of their box and I put her as high as I could reach up the same tree. She looked back at me and then climbed straight up to them with no problem at all. To top it off she decided to show me how good at gliding she was and landed perfectly in a branch two metres away!

This has been my most rewarding moment in Wildcare. Ruby is where she is meant to be, in the wild. She looked so alive again!



# Given a Second Chance

By Robyn Cox

**A road trauma female brushtail with 20 gram joey on board came into care. Mum's prognosis was not looking good, but as mother and baby were in such beautiful condition it was decided to give them a chance.**

So with the best of veterinary care and a very experienced possum carer, Mother Possum started on her long journey to recovery. Mum was provided with her native diet, including lots and lots of leaf, as well as good supplementary food. Considering her injuries, especially those to the mouth, her progress was amazing and she proved herself a wonderful mother.

Preparations for her release were made. These included putting up three possum boxes connected with ropes on a Land for Wildlife property close to the scene of her accident.

Once the veterinarian gave her a final check and the "all clear", it was time for her and her joey to return to the wild where they belong.

*Bub is still on a totally milk diet, but is learning about its natural diet.*



*Bub ventures off Mum's back to see what a possum diet feels like, smells like and tastes like.*



# First Aid in Wildlife – Assessing a New Patient

By Robyn Stenner (Bvsc, MANZCVS Wildlife Medicine)

## “More is missed by not looking than by not knowing”

As a wildlife veterinarian, I deal daily with a variety of wildlife species, injuries, and diseases. There are two key points on assessing a new patient, which I think are critically important for carers to bear in mind.

The first is to become familiar with what is “normal” for the species that you care for. Always be observant of animals that you see in the wild, or that are in your care - be they orphans that you are raising, or adults which are nearing release. It is only through understanding normal that you will be able to pick up subtle abnormalities. Wildlife have a strong natural instinct to mask any “disability” to avoid predation, so even quite severe injuries or disease can be easily missed if you are not comfortable with the species.

Secondly, ALWAYS have a systematic, thorough approach to each case. I suggest first a distant examination and then a more “hands on” assessment, from head to tail. Of course the steps to these may need to be adjusted at times, as the situation or the species requires. Always ensure that your safety is a priority and then that of the animal.

The first step is to get as much information as possible from the person who has called you. EXACT location is important for obvious reasons, and for certain species the lack of an accurate location is as good as a death sentence, due to a high chance of conspecific attack on release. Take a bit of time to question people closely regarding how and where the animal was found/how long ago/how long before calling you had they noticed it. This will aid you in what to look for on your assessment (e.g. cat attack, entrapment, vehicle hit).

The distant examination will build on this information. Distant assessment is often overlooked as being irrelevant in the face of a hands on examination. However, it is critical to help you focus in on where the injury or illness seems to be. It is also often the point of assessment where you make a decision whether the animal needs to be rescued or not. It should NOT result in a hands on assessment which ONLY focusses on the area of suspicion, but it will help you formulate a picture regarding the main area of concern.

You want to be able to concurrently, and rapidly assess the following parameters on the animal: symmetry of body; overall body condition; demeanour and mentation; mobility and posture; respiratory effort and rate; and presence of any obvious blood. This should all be completed in under two minutes, to minimise stress for the animals.

However it will take lots of practice for you to be comfortable achieving this. Practice looking at these parameters on your orphans in care, or on the adult animals you have in aviaries when you are feeding/cleaning them.



Lack of facial symmetry - bony tumour around right eye.

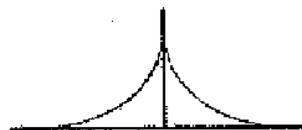


Abnormal posturing- leaning back, not gripping with hindlegs, abnormal angle of left hind leg (fractured femur). Photo Jan Nilsson.

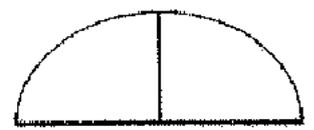
The body condition score (BCS) is one of the most important parameters to become comfortable assessing. The BCS is assessed using the pectoral muscles over the keel in birds, the muscles of the head, upper thigh, and over the shoulder blade in marsupials, and the musculing of the tail and down the spine/over pelvis in reptiles. An animal in poor condition has a poor prognosis due to chronic injury or disease. It obviously has not been coping in the wild. These animals often need a veterinary assessment to determine whether they are able to be successfully rehabilitated, or whether euthanasia is the kindest option for them. Most injured wildlife which are rescued within a day or so of the traumatic event, will be in good condition. They will have a strong active immune system, and plenty of reserves to put into healing. These animals on the whole will do well and recover rapidly with the correct care.

The “hands on” part of the examination is very important to confirm the BCS you gave on distant examination, especially in birds, where the main indicator is pectoral muscle mass, and feathering often obscures this until you palpate it.

BCS 1- 2



BCS 7-8



Taken from “Medicine of Australian Mammals” Eds: Vogelnest and Woods

Continued next page

# First Aid in Wildlife – Assessing a New Patient

*Continued*

Generally BCS can rapidly be assessed when the animal is first restrained. Hydration can also be gauged by the elasticity of the skin at this time. Ideally the skin should be relatively mobile over the underlying muscle, as opposed to “sticking” to it. If you can pull the skin up and it “tents” and is slow to return to the normal position, then the animal is very dehydrated and requires fluids. There are many other measures of hydration beyond the scope of today’s article, but it is worth becoming familiar with the parameters recommended for the species which you care for.



*Note the folds of skin along the abdomen, and creases where knee joins body. Skin tenting due to dehydration. Also note the poor condition of this joey- prominent bones of the skull, ribs, and pelvis. Especially note the lack of musculing either side of the shoulder blade.*

Once BCS and hydration have been assessed, you will have a good idea as to how long the rescued animal has been compromised. This information can sometimes be enough to allow you to decide whether to seek veterinary attention immediately, or to consider euthanasia. If not, then a full assessment is the next step.

Assessing the “Vital Signs” of the patient can be very tricky without sedation, and often can be overlooked outside of the hospital setting. Temperature, heart rate, and pulse assessment can all be challenging in a possum trying to scratch your face off. Respiratory rate can be gauged by counting the breaths and is best done before handling the animal due to increases associated with stress of handling. In patients which are collapsed it is easier to assess all vitals, and the “normals” for each species are available through Wildcare. Just recognising, for example, that the animal feels cold, or its heart rate seems too slow is usually what is important, you don’t necessarily need to jump in to trying to get the temperature.

Finally, you want to try and palpate, and to look at the entire animal. ALWAYS COMPARE THE LEFT TO THE RIGHT the whole way down, as this will help you pick up subtle changes, as well as confirm if what you are seeing is abnormal or not.

Start with the head. The head is the location of many vital and complex structures, and it is very easy to miss subtle traumatic injuries to the head. Check down the ears as far as you can see - often with head trauma the ear drum will rupture, there will be blood in the ear canal. Are the ears

both positioned equally, or is one dropped? Look at the eyes - compare the left and the right. Are the pupils equal, do the eyes seem bright and responsive? Is there any blood or swelling around the eyes? Is the nose nice and pink, and clear of discharges? The nostrils should be open and clear/clean. Finally the mouth: Firstly, assess the position of the mouth/jaw. Often with jaw fractures there will be a subtle drop of the jaw, resulting in slightly parted lips. If it is safe for you, have a look inside the mouth. Is there any blood? Do the teeth look normal? Any cuts or lacerations in the mouth will usually bleed a lot but may not be obvious without sedation, so if blood is noted then a veterinary assessment is the next step.



*Note: Left ear slightly dropped back, swelling around right eye with third eyelid protrusion, slight drop of jaw with parting of lips, and visible abnormal space between lower incisors. Blood around nostril/ mouth.*

Check the neck thoroughly dorsally and ventrally, as this is a common area for cat bites. Punctures can be challenging to see and are often missed here.

Palpation of the trunk and limbs follows. Again, remember your findings from the distant examination here, as it will often have given you clues as to where to really focus. Was there lameness in a limb? A dropped wing? Start at the shoulder, and work your way down each arm. Is there any increased movement, or swelling to the joints or bones when compared with the other limb? This is probably the most important point of the assessment - comparing left and right, as it is otherwise easy to miss subtle changes.

Run your hands along both sides of the chest to feel for any swelling or lumps to the ribs, or free air under the skin that can come with lung trauma. Always run your hand the whole way down the spine from neck to tail, feeling for any lumps - especially in animals where leg function is reduced on both sides, as this can indicate spinal trauma.

Finally, repeat your palpation of the hindlegs, as for the front legs, starting at the hips and working down to the toes.

*Continued next page*

# First Aid in Wildlife – Assessing a New Patient

## Continued

Always remember to check the pads of the feet on all limbs, as these are easily missed, but can commonly show injury (burns, entanglement, old fractures) or disease (pox lesions, bumblefoot, scaly mite).



*Burns to feet- heal well with appropriate treatment if picked up early.*

Don't forget to use your eyes during the whole process too. As equally important as finding wounds or fractures by palpation, is looking for blood, assessing fur/feather quality, looking for parasites, and of course watching the animals behaviour to ensure you are not causing them pain, and they are not about to bite you!

Finally, never be tempted to stop your assessment once you find one problem. Always complete the full process of assessment, as often there will be more than one injury or

disease process present. The proviso to this is, of course, ensuring that you are not causing further harm or injury to the patient. If you find a fractured limb, then seeking veterinary help as soon as possible negates the need to completely work up the patient yourself.

The next step really depends on what you have found. As long as you have been thorough, systematic, compared left to right, and completed all the steps as best and safely as you can, you will have a fairly good idea of the main problem(s) that the patient is facing. You can then talk to your experienced wildcare mentors or veterinary support staff to aid in treatment decisions, be that seeking veterinary assessment as the next step, euthanasia, or supportive care at home and monitoring for the initial few days.

ANY fractures or wounds really need veterinary assessment for opioid pain relief, possible antibiotics (life saving and essential in domestic animal attacks) and to accurately gain a sense of the prognosis for recovery and release.

## Not all as it seems!

*By Vanessa Trudgian*

After the oppressive summer heat that has been upon us, the rain finally started to fall, what a welcome relief! The rain fell for several days and my garden's thirst was finally quenched. The air was crisp and fresh, life was returning to the garden, as the little wrens danced and bathed in the glory of the early morning light. We put off our aviary clean until the rain had eased, and our visitors had left. The aviary had now been unoccupied for a couple of weeks when we began to notice leaf litter accumulating in the roof of the aviary, between the roof sheeting and mesh. Andrew and I began thinking to ourselves that some small furry rodent was making himself right at home.

The day came to start on repairs. We made a closer inspection of the fine work our furry friend had made, standing on top of a ladder to get a closer look. To our surprise and great delight our furry friend turned out to be a small colony of Feathertail gliders deciding to call this perfectly good and rather roomy, unused space home, after all it was dry and out of the weather! From what we could see without disturbing the leaf litter, we counted nine.

We abandoned the idea of a clean for a few more days, using any excuse we could find not to disturb the Hilton's visitors, while making the most of the privilege, quietly poking our heads in to check out our sleeping beauties.

When the weather finally cleared and the heat returned, the Hilton was once again vacant.

Our furry friends had moved on, just as quietly as when they had arrived.





## Bowra Sanctuary

*By Allison Roberts*

**Nine hundred kilometres west and a little south of Brisbane, just fifteen kilometres out of the town of Cunnamulla, lies a fourteen thousand hectare property known as Bowra Sanctuary.**

For many years it has been a favourite inland site for bird watchers. It captured my heart in 2011 when I volunteered for one of the caretaker roles for the month of May. Since then I have spent a month each year as the caretaker as well as taking part in the Easter Bird Banding Project that is now in its fourth year.

The property has a bird list of over 200 with a good selection of dry country parrots including blue bonnets, mulga parrots, and Major Mitchell's. There are regular sightings of interesting raptors, including the black-breasted buzzard, Australian hobby, and the elusive grey falcon. There are also mulga specialist species including Hall's babbler, white-browed treecreeper, and chestnut-breasted quail thrush. When rain descends on the islands, a large number of birds pass through the property. Depending on the rain, there is almost always a new species to see when you visit.

The property was a sheep and cattle station, owned by the McLaren family from the late 1800's until 2010 when it was purchased by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC). Ian McLaren was a bird lover and wanted the property to continue to be a refuge for the birds which he loved. The AWC owns over 20 conservation properties across Australia, but most of them are not open to the public. However, as the McLarens had set up a campground and lodging in the shearer's quarters and a cottage for bird watchers, it was their wish that visitors be able to continue to visit at reasonable prices. Thus a partnership between the AWC and Bird's Queensland (BQ) was developed where BQ would provide caretakers who would manage the guest services, which is how I got involved. BQ volunteers go out for a month between March and October and take bookings, orient guests, maintain the facili-

ties, and run a citizen science project of a nightly "birdcall" where species seen on the property each day are recorded.

Bowra Sanctuary is a magical place. It fascinates me that the property is quite different every year depending on the rainfall. In a wet year there may be plum-headed finches everywhere and a spotted crane in the Homestead Lagoon. If the next year is dry, the reliable dry country zebra finches can be hard to find and there isn't a plum-headed finch or crane on the property. It is fun to be free to explore fourteen thousand hectares for a month at a time. After spending over five months on the property, I know the main tracks quite well, but each visit I find some new little habitat or watering hole where I observe new bird behavior.

While most of the visitors and volunteers are slightly bird obsessed, it is also a beautiful property for other wildlife. Eastern and western grey kangaroos, red kangaroos, wallaroos, and swamp wallabies are all viewable as well as a good diversity of reptiles, butterflies, and flora. The facilities are not fancy, but there is a beautiful unpowered camping site around a lagoon designed for wading birds like stilts, a few powered campsites with 10 amp power, rooms in the old shearer's quarters, and a self-contained cottage. The campground and quarters share hot showers, toilets, and a hand wash laundry facility.

If you are looking for a nice outback get away with some fabulous birds and would like to support a conservation organization doing good work across Australia, I would highly recommend considering a trip out to Bowra Sanctuary. Do book ahead though to find out current conditions and availability as the property can get booked out during the popular spring months. This year I will be caretaking in August, and I would love to see you out there.

[www.australianwildlife.org/bowra-visitor-program.aspx](http://www.australianwildlife.org/bowra-visitor-program.aspx)

*Photos: Australian Wildlife Conservancy website*

## Providing Animals in Care with a Nutritious Native Diet

Before proceeding may I suggest that you consider the species that you usually care for, the type of habitat that they occupy, what strata in that habitat they occupy and the variety of food that makes up their diet at different times of year. From this information you can ascertain what you are going to need in order to provide a nutritious native diet.

For example, if you care for sugar gliders you would know that they are arboreal, so they are not going to be looking for food on the ground. The major components of their diet are nectar and other plant exudates, such as saps, gums and manna, also pollen and insects. The proportion of, for example, insects or nectar in the diet will vary according to availability, which will be influenced by many factors including season, weather conditions, and temperature. You are going to need access to native flowers and a large variety of other native vegetation from which insects can be gleaned. Providing this diet each day is a challenge.

Perhaps you care for seed-eating birds, so where do they usually feed? Do you have ground feeders or arboreal feeders? Ground feeders will need access to a large range of native grasses, as well as other plants, which will provide a good variety of seeds over a long period. Similarly arboreal feeders will need a constant supply of seeds from trees and shrubs. To achieve this you need to know the flowering times and subsequent seeding times of a large range of plants.

One problem for wildlife carers is the time factor, so our suggestion is to find a buddy. It could be a family member, a friend or a neighbour. It could be a member of a gardening group, someone who volunteers in a community garden. It could be a school, a scout group, a retirement village or Senior Citizen's Club. It could be a tree-lopper or bush regenerator. The possibilities are endless, but it does require the initial contact, creating sufficient enthusiasm that they want to help and then working out a plan to achieve what is needed. .

### How can the buddy help?

If it is a school, retirement village, or community garden they could perhaps look at converting a garden or two to growing grasses and herbaceous plants for leaves and seeds, as well as leafy green vegetables with which to supplement the native diet, for example, silver beet, spinach, lettuce and Chinese green vegetables. Another advantage of a vegetable garden is that it attracts insects, such as moths and grasshoppers – a food source for our insectivores. Depending on the area available there may be room to plant some more permanent food sources, such as shrubs and

small trees to provide for more species of animal.

Similarly a friend, family member or neighbour may enjoy helping out with the above in their own garden

It is amazing how much can be grown in a small space, even a small suburban yard and in Wildcare we have plant lists and members with expertise, who can help you with plant choice for your area and the animals in your care. It is essential that you choose plants that are endemic to your area to minimize problems developing in the future, such as exotic species becoming environmental weeds, multiplying and choking or smothering native species.

If someone has a large property they may be willing to plant, what is commonly referred to by wildlife carers as a fodder farm. This usually comprises a variety of Eucalyptus species for koalas and possums as well as a number of other tree, shrub and vine species, which provide food, not only for mammals, but also for bird and insects.

Purchasing plants in large numbers can be costly and the work involved in planting and maintaining large areas is labour intensive. However most Councils have programs to assist landholders in revegetation or controlling weed species to allow natural regeneration, and in some instances there is funding available for these projects.

Many people, who are unable to rehabilitate animals but would love to help in some way, may be delighted to assist wildlife carers by either growing or collecting food.

Here are a couple of ideas for growing food for supplementing the natural diet, where necessary. These appeared in Wildnews some years ago.

Take a polystyrene box or two or more.

Punch some holes in the bottom for drainage.

Take:

- One bag of Potting Mix,
- One bag of Cow Manure
- One cup of Dynamic Lifter or Blood and Bone

Mix well and put into polystyrene box. This is a good all round mix which will grow greens, such as silver beet, spinach, lettuce and Chinese green vegetables.

Plant seedlings and watch them grow. When the plants are ready, remove the outer leaves for your animals. '*Cut and come again*'. The plants will keep growing and you will have a lovely supply of fresh greens.

Continued next page

OR

Sew seeds in shallow furrows and cover with a thin layer of fine soil. Water and keep moist. A week or two later when the seeds sprout, mulch around the seedlings to retain moisture in the soil and watch them grow.

Alternately, sprinkle grass seeds (native grasses preferably), bird seed mix or seeds of crops suitable for the animals you have in care, such as wheat or any grain (obtain these from your local produce store) on the soil. The sprouts can be used or you may prefer to wait until the crop has gone to seed.

A sunny position and adequate water will ensure a quick crop. Fertilizer, such as sea weed liquid, will encourage growth. Liquid fertilizer from your worm farm is excellent, use one part worm liquid to ten parts water.

Many vegetables, such as cabbage and other leafy greens, attract insects, such as moths and grasshoppers. These will help provide the insect component of the diet and if the moths lay eggs on your vegetables, you may get a supply of caterpillars too.

One idea is to throw a handful of seeds in your aviary, if it is ever empty, water them and watch them grow ready for the next occupants.

**Danger: Never leave wet or mouldy seeds where birds or other animals can get them.**

Another suggestion is to plant grasses and/or shrubs in pots, which can be used in the aviary and removed to allow re-growth as necessary. Choose native grasses and shrubs, if you can.

Remember, if you want fruit or seeds you need bees and other insects to pollinate your flowers and don't forget the very hungry caterpillars that make a wonderful meal for our insectivores, as do many of the other insects you will find there. To encourage these wonderful creatures to visit your garden, allow some of your herbs, such as parley, coriander and basil to flower. You can also allow patches

of clover and flatweed in your lawn to flower. The lovely sea of white and yellow not only looks beautiful but will be humming with happy bees.

Below are some websites and other references which you may find useful.

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary program which assists landholders to protect and enhance the environmental values of their properties. Most Councils have at least one Land for Wildlife Extension Officer [www.lfwseq.org.au](http://www.lfwseq.org.au)

A number of Land for Wildlife landholders have offered their properties as release sites for rehabilitated wildlife. Email [news@wildcare.org.au](mailto:news@wildcare.org.au) for more information.

Bush care groups exist in most Council regions [www.bush-care.org.au](http://www.bush-care.org.au)

Many local Councils produce free booklets with illustrations and information on the native plants species in their region, as well as on environmental weeds.

Books that are readily available:

*Mangroves to Mountains: a Field Guide to the Native Plants of South-east Queensland.* Logan River Branch, SGAP.

McDonald, Graham (2004) *Grow Natives on the Gold Coast: A practical guide for gardeners.* Australian Plants Society, Gold Coast.

*Wild Plants of Greater Brisbane.* Queensland Museum, (2003)

Some editions of the Wildcare newsletter have articles with useful information on local plants, what are flowering and what animals are finding in the way of food. See Michelle Benson's articles "Loving our Local Native Plants" and the "Observations of an Amateur Naturalist", which documents what plants are fruiting or flowering and what birds are using them as a food source.



## A Book Review

By Allison Roberts

### *The Fastest Thing on Wings: Rescuing Hummingbirds in Hollywood* by Terry Masear

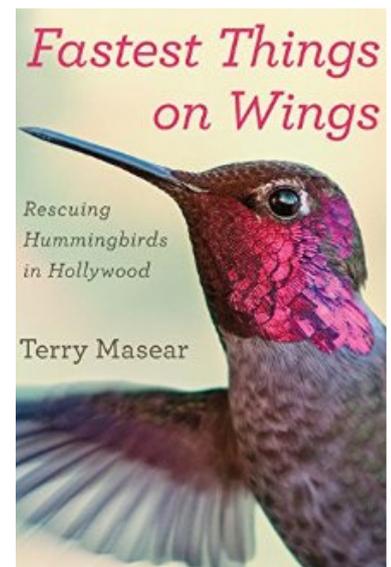
I saw this book on my last trip through Los Angeles and could not resist picking up the e-book, as hummingbirds are one of my favourite bird families. Plus, it is always interesting to read about how rescue and rehabilitation of native animals is done in other organizations. As I specialize in small Australian honeyeaters and insectivores, I find the thought of working with even smaller and more delicate hummingbirds both daunting and exciting. The smallest birds that I work with have an adult weight close to 10 g, but the adult Anna's hummingbirds in California can have an adult weight as low as 3 g – 6 g. How can you keep babies that weigh only a gram alive? Apparently, with the right training and experience the success rate of these orphans in care is quite high, which is amazing.

Terry Masear does not disappoint with this book as it is packed full of interesting hummingbird facts that I did not know. Plus, it accurately describes the stresses, joys, and heart break of rehabbing wildlife. Hummingbirds generally have two eggs and the first to hatch is almost always female with the second egg generally being male. I had never heard of birds controlling offspring gender previously, so I found this fascinating. With the explosion of hummingbird feeders and hummingbird gardens, the number and diversity of species of hummingbirds is actually increasing in the Los Angeles area. This was a complete surprise to me as I spend quite a bit of time in LA, and from my perspective most of LA seems to be a barren concrete jungle not fit for any bird life, much less these delicate jewels.

I would recommend this book to anyone who loves animals and reading about them, but I think it is particularly relevant to people involved in rehabilitation because we can closely identify with Terry's frustrations with the public

cutting down nests, "rescuing" birds that don't need rescue, not understanding our limited time, and not understanding that not every animal can be saved. These are situations that I often encounter, but Terry is able to articulate them in a way that makes you say "Yes! That is what I feel when..." It is somehow comforting and therapeutic knowing that someone on the other side of the world is facing and overcoming many of the same challenges I face. The book is well balanced between the hardships of rehabilitation and the rewards. I think that only other rehabbers can fully appreciate the joy of discovering that one of your animals has survived in the wild for years after release. I know one of the fears that plague me is if I am adequately preparing my birds to cope successfully in the harsh conditions of nature.

I would also recommend this book to my friends and family who don't quite understand what I do, why I do it, or why I am often so stressed doing volunteer work. Once again Terry accurately describes the long exhausting days of a rehabber juggling feeding, cleaning, answering phones, transporting, and still trying to maintain a life work balance with a family and friends. Her writing style is funny and very readable, so I highly recommend this book.



I work at a local school on the Gold Coast and it amazes me what little knowledge the children have of our wildlife. Oh, they know what a snake is (always bad, brown and ALWAYS out to get them). They have heard the kookaburras and seen the lorikeets (the dead ones on the road).

So, when a koala dropped by the school last week, the drama it caused was unbelievable.

Unfortunately, even though I am a Wildcare member, I was not allowed to talk to the children and the adults about this big fella and why he was stopping in for a visit.

It had me thinking. Why, why did it cause such a drama for what should be just an everyday occurrence? After all this is Australia; the land of the koala and kangaroo. I knew the answer, even before I had to think about it - our native wildlife is becoming so scarce, due to the over-development of the Gold Coast and Hinterland, that for locals to see a koala in a tree naturally and not at a theme park, or a sanctuary, was like going to Ripley's Believe It or Not!

Adults and children alike were amused and excited, photos were taken and many were drawn to standing at the base of the tree and gazing upwards at this "rare" creature. The koala on the other hand found it very noisy, not only were the local birds not happy, but try having your escape route blocked by over 120 small two-legged creatures and some big ones as well, that only know one volume and that is LOUD!

Some of the children were learning about the world around them and I was lucky enough to have a child write a story; her version of seeing a koala up a tree.

Editor's Note: What a perfect opportunity to educate – an opportunity missed, it would appear!



## *Opportunistic Invaders*

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By Linda Furlong

### **Possum Boxes - When did you last check yours?**

The European honey bees had been active at this possum box for about a month, after which they moved. This could have been as a result of the box becoming too hot, but for whatever reason, we got some honey. When I cleaned the box out I found a well-established glider nest at the base. What a surprise the gliders would have received to find one of their nesting sites invaded by bees! Will they return at some time in the future to use this box now that it has been cleaned out and re-installed?

Possum boxes, like everything else, need to be checked regularly, cleaned out and repaired or replaced as needed.



# Grants

As a non-profit organization, we rely heavily on the generous support of the community as well as the funding opportunities provided by local councils, private businesses and corporations. Wildcare kindly acknowledges the following councils, businesses and individuals who have provided essential support for our volunteer work. .



**QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION** - Thank you to the EHP for funding through their 2014-2015 Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation Grant program which has enabled the purchase of specialised rescue equipment including telescopic poles and nets and range-finders.



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*

**BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL** - Wildcare successfully obtained a grant for \$3,400 from the Brisbane Council under The Lord Mayor's Community Sustainability and Environmental Grants Program 2015-2016 – Native Wildlife Carers Grant. These funds are being used to deliver three specialised training workshops in Brisbane and to offset some the costs associated with the printing of training manuals.



Gambling  
**Community Benefit Fund**  
Queensland Government

**COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND – Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation** - Our thanks to the Queensland Government's grant for \$14,780 which is being used to purchase nine new intensive care units and ten aviaries.



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Our sincerest thanks to Greenleaf Images for the use of several of their beautiful photographs in our promotional material. The quality of the material would not be what it is, without the use of these professional images.



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Note: UQ Small Animal Clinic St. Lucia has now moved to the UQ Gatton Campus.