

Wild News

ISSUE 66 - AUTUMN 2013

Easy Reference Sheets

**Breeding Mealworms
& Harvesting Browse**



Rescue Story

A Mother's Love

+ Learn How to Make a Basket Liner



President's Report



By Karen Scott

Finally, over the past month or so, things have started to quieten down, so I hope that many of our hard-working carers are getting a small reprieve after the busy spring/summer period.

It does seem, however, that the reprieves are becoming shorter as our wildlife's breeding cycles get out of kilter.

Many thanks to those new members who have taken the plunge and have become actively involved in wildlife rescues and in doing shifts on the telephone hotline.

Considering the large membership base we have, it is disappointing that we still have so few members who are able to assist with manning the telephone hotline.

Sadly this situation has left the phone largely unattended during the day. We are finding that this is now having an impact on the public's perception of Wildcare. We are receiving more comments from the public, that they don't bother trying to telephone us anymore, simply

because they haven't been able to get through to anyone after several attempts. On a more positive note, we have been successful in obtaining several new grants to assist in the purchase of more rescue equipment, which will be put to good use.

A reminder that the Wildcare Annual General Meeting is to be held on the 23rd June 2013 at the RSCPA Animal Care Campus at Wacol. I hope that we will see many of you there.

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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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MAIN COMMITTEE

President Karen Scott
Vice-President Gail Gipp
Secretary Lewis McKillop
Treasurer Tracy Paroz
Committee Members Natasha
Lewis-Millar, Rachel Lyons

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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

A Warm Welcome to our New Members

Wildcare Australia welcomed the following new members in January, February & March:

Amanda Burston; Jodie Alabaster & Paul Maddick; Lyn Cameron; Matthew Tolchard & Samantha Bamberry; Santina & Patrick McCarthy; Shane Krieger & Seabastion Toast; Wayne & Trudie Martin; Kristy Lewis; Michael MacKinlay; Eric & Trudi Allgood; Jolene & Jessica Stedman; Sophia Leighton; Beck Osmolowski; Rachel Mebberson; Nicole Rake; Bridget & Moira MacKenzie ; Kate Rose; Jennifer Watson & Rhys Parsons; Jess Berryman; Kathryn Bruce; Sandra Stewart; Julie Scheuber; Helle Bielefeldt-Ohmann; Jasmine Vink & Aleesha Turner; Michael Boersen; Kim Fletcher; Valeria & Warren Schmitt; Reece Barker; Susanne Kessens & Ian Henderson; Joanne Slattery; Delena & Jason Amsters; Janenne Jenkins; Kerri Sargaison; Tahlea Devine; Jan Marie Brooks; Desley Cook; Caitlin Wollaston; Matti Wilks; Harley Strachan & Danielle MacKenzie; Trisha Rogers & Peter King; Vivien Macbeth; Keshia Corrigan; Cassie Groves; Sarah Mowat; Nicole Leech; Simone Ludlow; Dan De Angelis; Stephanie Davies; Elizabeth Kelbie; Simon Black & Kaori Kurisaki; Kate & Janine Nicklin; Anita Thompson; Lesley Glennon; Michelle Meier; Paul Mills; Lucy Hibbert-Foy; Deanna Horton; Catlin Wells; Susan Matthews; Sophia Levy; Lisa Willcox; Nicolas Rakotopare; James Binkhorst; Karen Black; Canella Bettridge; Tessa Bobir; Nanette Kempel; Susan & Ian Wallace; Felicia Runting; Ruby & Karen Black; Rhonda Barrett; Terina & Tess Falconer; Connie & Matthew Clune.

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.

Can you manage just one three-hour shift a month? *By Christine Johnes*

Unfortunately the ongoing issues with manning the emergency hotline are now having a noticeable impact. There has been a noticeable drop in the number of animals coming into Wildcare, and our incoming calls have dropped from an average of 900 calls a month to 600 calls a month. Over this past quarter, we've had an average of 19 x 3 hours shifts unmanned each week, which equates to the phones being on message bank one third of the time.

Sadly until the hotline is fully manned, it is expected that this problem will be exacerbated, as members of the public will most likely stop trying to call Wildcare after they get a message bank for the second, third and fourth time. This will mean fewer animals available to carers, more pressure on the RSPCA, and a longer time before wildlife gets the help it needs.

A huge thank you to the twenty champions who helped with the phones over the past three months: Anika Lehmann, Bren Dalby, Brenda Nilsson, Charlotte Matthews, Christine Johnes, Deb Flack, Diana Kolb, Joseph Finn, Joy Mars, Judy Swanton, Karen Scott, Lewis McKillop, Lindy Meath, Megan Benham, Patricia van der Berkt, Penelope Hacker, Sam Longman, Sharon Hutchison, Sheena Parfitt, Tammy Allison.

As always, if you can assist with the phones at all, **even one three-hour shift a month**, please contact Christine on **hotline@wildcare.org.au** or **0401 786 677**.

Note from our Secretary

By Lewis McKillop

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM for 2013 will take place on Sunday 23 June 2013 at the RSPCA Animal Care Campus, Wacol Station Road, Wacol, commencing at 11.30am.

We encourage all Wildcare members to attend. This is your chance to vote for the 2013-2014 Management Committee. It also gives the Management Committee the opportunity to thank key volunteers for their invaluable contribution and to let you know what has been happening in your organization in the past year.

Membership Renewals

Membership renewals and information regarding Wildcare's AGM will be sent out by post in mid-April. If your postal address has changed recently, please let us know, to ensure you receive your renewal paperwork.

Family Memberships

Those members with Family Memberships may have noticed that both family members have started receiving emails from Wildcare. Previously this was not possible, but changes to our database now mean that both members of the household can stay up to date with all the latest news and information from Wildcare.

Why upgrade to a Family Membership?

If you currently have a Single Membership with Wildcare, and others in your household assist you on occasions, you should consider upgrading to a Family Membership. For just \$11 more, additional members of the household are covered under Wildcare's insurance policies. Members listed as part of a Family Membership are covered by Public Liability Insurance, which protects members against litigation for personal injury claims arising from the public. Members are also covered by our Voluntary Workers Insurance Policy, which provides financial benefits to members who sustain serious permanent injury whilst undertaking their volunteer duties. It's a small amount to pay for some very important insurance protection.

Education Report

By Karen Scott

It has been encouraging to see so many of our workshops being filled to capacity and some even having a waiting list. If you want to ensure a place at a workshop, please remember to book early.

Due to the high demand for workshops and limited room at most venues, we have had to be fairly strict with imposing the pre-requisites, to enable those members who will gain the most from attending, the opportunity to register. We are trying to find larger venues to hold workshops however the cost involved with hiring these is prohibitive. If any members know of venues that may be able to offer free hire, please let me know.

Our specialised workshops such as Wildlife Anatomy & Physiology and Reptile Handling still continue to receive great interest. These are both excellent workshops and if you haven't attended, you might like to consider extending your knowledge. The cost of these workshops has been kept to a minimum and they offer great value.

We also encourage members to attend specialty workshops being conducted by other care groups. This is a great way of gaining access to further knowledge, as many groups also engage guest speakers to conduct workshops. Information regarding these workshops is emailed to all members and other care groups are always happy for non-members to attend.

We do need the assistance of experienced rescuers and rehabilitators to assist with teaching some of the Wildcare training workshops, so that we can continue to offer the workshops at various locations. If anyone is interested in getting involved in this area, please contact Karen Scott.

Record Keeping Rap

By Kiersten Jones

Thank you to those endorsed members who submitted their 2012 rescue and carer records. Detailed tables and figures will be provided in the next AGM report, but here is a summary:

2012 Wildcare Records Data – By Animal Groups

Animal Group	Qty*	%	Further Breakdown
Birds	2078	39%	Greatest bird species numbers were lorikeets (n = 531) and native ducks (n = 425).
Possums and Gliders	1232	23%	Figure includes 1145 possums (594 common brushtails, 483 common ringtails, and 54 short-eared brushtails) and 87 gliders (39 squirrel gliders, 20 sugar gliders, 27 feathertail gliders and 1 greater glider).
Macropods	670	12%	Figure includes 352 wallabies, 213 kangaroos, 95 pademelons, 2 wallaroos, 2 brush-tailed rock-wallabies, 2 potoroos, and 1 bettong.
Reptiles	611	11%	Figure includes 216 snakes, 199 dragons, 116 skinks, 49 turtles, 18 monitors, 2 frill-necked lizards and 1 thorny devil (QSMP case).
Koalas	379	7.1%	Figure includes 9 NSW koalas (transfers for FoK or joeys entering care).
Bats and Flying-foxes	184	3.4%	Figure includes 86 black flying-foxes, 22 grey-headed flying-foxes, 5 little red flying-foxes, 63 microbats, and 2 myotis.
Small/Other Mammals	146	2.7%	Figure includes 88 bandicoots, 17 antechinus, 2 dunnarts, 1 phascogale, and 2 native rats.
Monotremes	55	1.0%	Figure includes 54 echidnas and 1 platypus rescue.
Frogs	15	0.3%	Figure includes 11 green tree frogs and 3 giant barred frogs (all 3 were Springbrook road kill reports).
TOTAL	5370	100%	

*Please note these figures will change slightly to those reported in the AGM report, as I am still receiving late records.

Comparison between 2011 and 2012 records

Animal Group	2011		2012		Change
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	
Birds	2206	47%	2078	39%	-6%
Possums and Gliders	1074	23%	1232	23%	+15%
Macropods	452	9.6%	670	12%	+48%
Reptiles	392	8.4%	611	11%	+56%
Koalas	216	4.6%	379	7.1%	+75%
Bats and Flying-foxes	160	3.4%	184	3.4%	+15%
Small/Other Mammals	120	2.6%	146	2.7%	+22%
Monotremes	69	1.5%	55	1.0%	-20%
Frogs	8	0.2%	15	0.3%	+88%
TOTAL	4697	100%	5370	100%	+14%

2013 Records Forms and Changes

Most members with permit endorsement under Wildcare have now submitted their 2012 records and in doing so have also received their new 2013 records form, if they submit their records on the Excel form. There were some major changes to the Excel records form this year. Please contact me if you are having trouble with the new form. A couple of members with older versions of Excel have reported not being able to access some of the drop-down pick-lists, so I've modified their files to enable the lists to appear. Please email me if you are having the same problem.

We are always exploring ways to make record keeping easier for very busy carers/rescuers, and some of the changes to the Excel form this year were to make it easier for members to report as well as making it easier for me to collate and summarise the data. Karen and Lewis have also recently designed a new rescue sheet that can be easily converted into a record, and are currently trialing this with some of our busier carers/trauma rescuers.

As always, if you need any help with your records, then please contact me. The best way to do this is by email, but you can phone me too (my mobile is on the committee contact list). The next records are due at the end of June 2013 (or were due at the end of March 2013 for those claiming the Carer's Subsidy).

New Partnership

Partnership with Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, Caboolture – Q51



We have been very fortunate recently to enter into a partnership with the Caboolture branch of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (S.S.A.A.).

Over the past year, Wildcare has been investigating ways in which we could enable more of our Trauma Carers to become proficient and licensed to use of a dart gun for the sedation of large macropods. Currently we have only two trained/licensed members that are able to dart injured macropods. We are fortunate that we have been able to utilise the services of staff from other animal organisations, but this is not always possible due to time and distance constraints. We have recognised for quite some time the urgent need to have more Trauma Carers proficient and licenced to use a dart gun. I am pleased to advise that through the kind support of Q51 Caboolture Pistol Club we have recently been able to put arrangements in

place that will enable us to provide the necessary training and guidance required to achieve and meet the requirements of Weapons Licencing.

This partnership has enabled several Wildcare Trauma Carers to commence training with qualified range officers/ instructors from Q51 at their facility at Caboolture. We recently held our first training day which proved very successful and has resulted in several Trauma Carers now undertaking regular training to obtain a Weapons License.

Q51 are allowing us the use of their Club facilities including their Club firearms for training purposes and are kindly giving up their free time to provide expert training at no cost. They have also provided us substantial assistance with regards to license requirements and the purchase of equipment.

We are very grateful for their assistance to date and hope to continue this mutually beneficial partnership well into the future.



A Mother's Love

By Jane Koltoft

I received a call to pick up a juvenile brushtail possum, the size of a mango, from the Green Cross Vet at Helensvale.

It had fallen from its Mum's back as she scampered up a large, smooth trunked gum tree on her way 'home' that morning. A gorgeous, bright eyed, perfectly healthy little boy peeped out of the wrapping at the vet.

As I hadn't reunited a possum with its mother before and wasn't sure whether it was possible after a day away from her, I rang Natalie for advice. It was re-assuring to hear that reunions had been successful even days after separation.

The following evening I slipped into something comfortable and at about 6.30pm arrived at the house where the possum and his mother had become separated. I arranged with the lady to sit in her front garden for what would hopefully be a successful reunion, and then made myself comfortable.

'Mango' was not happy to be trapped in a basket in the dark and whistled his little head off. 'Good boy' I muttered to myself, 'call out to your Mumma. If she's around she'll come and get you.'

Over half an hour went by, as I sat tucked up into the shrubbery. I'd finished my flask of tea and snack and wondered how long I had to wait before admitting defeat. I texted Natalie, who said give it another ten minutes and she'd be his new "Mumma" if need be.

I had no longer read her message when a small shape appeared at the side of the lawn. I shone my headlamp briefly in the direction and saw a possum. Oh, my goodness! I scurried quietly and quickly from my hiding place over to 'Mango's' basket picked him out and sat him on a low

branch, saying 'Stay there, mate. Your mum's on her way'. Maybe. It could have been any possum!

Anyway, back at my spot I watched with bated breath as the 'shape' ran across the lawn, followed by a much larger shape. Oh no! A cat! A dog!

But from the sounds emanating from the general direction of the tree it was a large male possum. Within seconds the small shape bounded back across the lawn with a smaller shape on top. My torchlight just picked up Mumma Possum with her little 'Mango' clinging tightly to her back. She stopped briefly, looked my way, and then took off to the safety of more trees away from the house, no doubt to give her son a stern talking to, then a big cuddle and a feed.

The grin on my face would have lit up the front yard and I sat there giggling to myself re-living what had just happened.

I went to the house and reported the successful reunion of mother and son, which delighted the owner, Paula-Louise. She very kindly let me have a photo of 'Mango' that she took before leaving him at the vet.

I rang Natalie to share the wonderful experience and thank her for her lovely encouragement and support. She said, "yes, it is possible to reunite a mother with her young as she will be watching the spot where she lost it". Amazingly, it was a 'text book' release and I hope with all my heart that I can do it again if the opportunity presents itself. I can't fully explain the feeling of joy at knowing that the young animal will now grow up with his own mum instead of a second best human mum. Perfect!

Removing a Joey from a Pouch

By Karen Scott

When you first arrive at the rescue site, stand back and assess the situation. Make sure that the mother and/or joey is in a safe position, well off the road. Never endanger yourself or members of the public when attending any rescue.

Check whether the mother is dead, if not, leave the joey in the pouch and make arrangements to get the mother to a vet immediately. For macropods, contact the nearest Trauma Carer immediately. In this instance, the first priority is dealing with the mother's injuries.

If the mother is dead, check her body temperature. If her body is cold, you will need to remove the orphan from the pouch immediately. If her body is warm, you may opt to leave the joey in the pouch and transport both mother and baby home before removing from the pouch. In this instance, place the hot water bottle that you have taken with you underneath the mother's body (not directly on the pouch) to try to maintain the mother's body temperature. If you live more than 5-10 minutes from the rescue site, remove the joey at the scene. Leaving the joey in a dead mother's pouch for too long can expose the joey to bacteria that may impact on the joey's survival.

Before attempting to remove the orphan from the pouch, check whether the teat is still in the orphan's mouth. For orphans that have a fine covering of fur, you can use your thumb and forefinger to gently apply pressure to the sides of the mouth and the orphan should release its grip on the teat. If this is unsuccessful and the mother is definitely dead, remove the joey by cutting the teat (see guidelines below) For finely furred or furred joeys, remove them from the mother's pouch by gently scooping them into your hands and removing from the pouch. Place them into a pre-prepared pouch. Never pick up a macropod joey by grasping around the ribs as you would a dog or cat

as you can do enormous damage to their fragile rib cages. Larger macropod joeys can be removed from the pouch by grasping the base of the tail as close to their body as possible with one hand. Cup your other hand between their arms and place them head first into the pouch.

If the mother's pouch is very tight and you aren't able to get your hands into the pouch, you may be able to gently maneuver the joey out of the pouch by manipulating the joey gently from the outside. If this is unsuccessful you will need to cut the mother's pouch taking care to keep your fingers between the scissors and the joey.

For small unfurred orphans that have the teat firmly in their mouth, leave the teat in the mouth. Get your scissors and safety pin from your rescue kit. Stretch the teat out and cut it as close to the mother's body as you can. Depending on the position and size of the joey you may be able to insert the pin while the joey is in the pouch, otherwise make sure that you hold onto the teat while you gently remove the joey from the mother's pouch and place it immediately into the warmed pouch liner. Put the safety pin through the teat and pin it to the pouch liner. This will ensure that the joey does not swallow the teat. Never attempt to pull the teat out of the joey's mouth as you can cause irreparable damage to the joey's mouth.

Put the joey into your outer pouch. For smaller mammals (possums, gliders, bandicoots, bush rats etc) secure the inner pouch liners with an elastic band to prevent the joey from climbing out and escaping and/or getting cold.

Notes taken from Wildcare Australia's *Introduction to Caring for Orphaned Mammals*
Photographs: Lewis McKillop





Coordinator Reports

ECHIDNAS

By Karen Scott

Echidna 'season' has certainly started with a rush, with many rescue calls received for echidnas that have been injured by vehicles or attacked by dogs.

Over the past year we have expanded our echidna rescue and carer database which has resulted in Wildcare now having licensed echidna rehabilitators in most regions. Many of these carers have now had the opportunity to care for these animals.

We have recently seen the arrival into care of a few newly emerged burrow young. There are various reasons for this, including dog attack and one youngster that was found dehydrated and very emaciated.

A special thank you to the veterinary staff at Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital and the RSPCA who provide exceptional veterinary care for our prickly little friends.

BANDICOOTS & SMALL CRITTERS

By Karen Scott

Recent months have been a little quieter for bandicoots and other small native critters, thankfully. We have received a number of juvenile bandicoots needing care after being caught by the family cat or finding themselves unable to climb out of a swimming pool or pond. Most have fared well and have been successfully rehabilitated and released.

KOALAS

By Karen Scott

I am not quite sure what has happened to the koalas, particularly around the Gold Coast. I expected the recent wet weather to keep them from straying too far, but it has been remarkably quiet. We will keep our fingers crossed that they continue to stay out of trouble.

We have recently been advised that we received funding from the Environment and Heritage Protection Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation Program Grant Funding to enable the purchase of more specialised koala rescue and rehabilitation equipment. This has been a great initiative of the Queensland Government and around twelve wildlife facilities and groups are benefitting from the first round of this funding.

Coordinator Reports

MACROPODS

By Karen Scott

Thankfully we have had a quieter few months with reduced numbers of adult macropods being hit by cars. Sadly though this period is usually the precursor of the busy 'trauma season' that will inevitably start now that the days are getting shorter.

Unfortunately, with the Wildcare hotline not being manned 24 hours a day, some of the emergency calls are not being responded to in a timely manner, due to the inability of the public to contact someone quickly. Often these calls are routed through the RSPCA, which can cause delays.

We have recently made good progress with obtaining a Group Weapons License which enables more of our trauma carers to proceed with training to be licensed to use a dart gun. This will help us immensely when dealing with large and mobile injured macropods.

POSSUMS

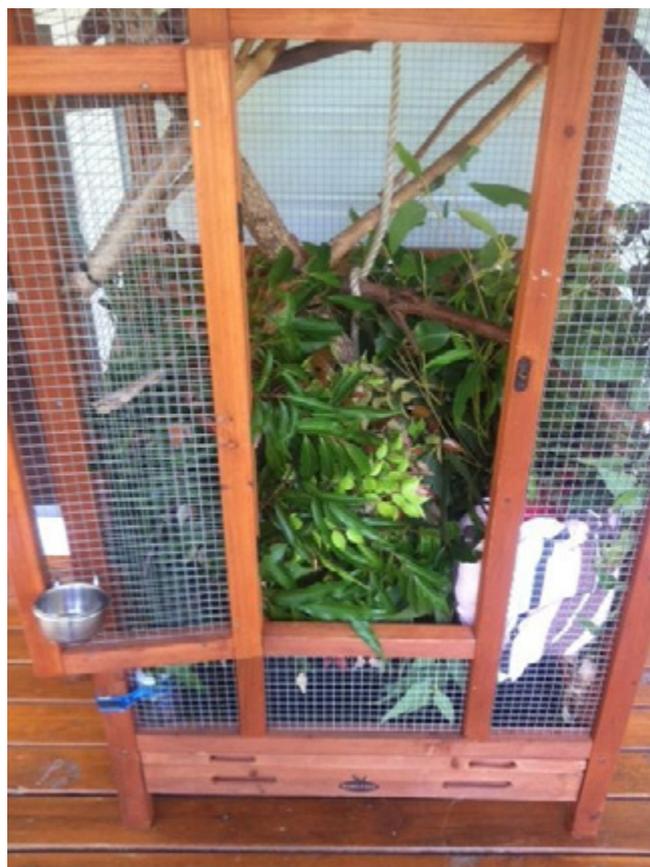
Gold Coast By Natalie Rasmussen

With fewer little possums coming into care recently we have a small window of opportunity to attend to other activities. This is a perfect time for carers to refresh their aviaries, study up on their notes and get ready for the season ahead.

It is so important to change logs, branches and nesting material regularly, just so our animals have the best and most hygienic surroundings for healthier outcomes. As the heavy rain and beautiful sunshine refresh our earth, so too we need to keep our animals enclosures as clean as we can, to prevent the spread of disease, and basically to keep our animals happier and healthier.

I continue to be impressed with the level of care people are demonstrating in Wildcare. Both more experienced and newer carers are showing how dedicated and compassionate the human race can be. Without each and every one of you, wildlife would be in a more desperate state than they are already. I feel privileged to be in contact with people who are truly making a difference in this wonderful world we live in.

So enjoy the quiet time and take a deep breath before the madness begins.



Clean and refreshed aviary
Photo: Natalie Rasmussen

Coordinator Reports



BIRDS

By Ailsa Watson

I am beginning to wonder if our weather is ever going back to what I would call 'normal'. These last few days of warmer weather have prompted my butcher birds to start refurbishing their nest.

You may recall my experiences with the baby kookaburra and the baby currawongs - they shared a cage, snuggled up together and were fed through the bars by a local kookaburra. Well, all went along splendidly for six days, then on the seventh I heard a commotion and the kookaburra was doing his best to strangle one of the currawongs. It was obviously time for new housing arrangements.

The resident birds continued to feed the kookaburra baby, but from that day on ignored the two currawongs, even

though their cages were side by side. I could not see why the locals changed their behaviour, but I guess they had their reasons.

With the windy weather up this way I had a Red-tailed Tropic bird come in. There did not appear to be any problem with it, other than exhaustion, but I took him down to the Zoo for a check. They then took over the task, in conjunction with National Parks, to see that he was returned to his native soil.

Cages are now in the process of being thoroughly cleaned and aviaries cleaned and restored to normal, so that hopefully we can all look forward to a quiet winter season before spring descends on us again.

BIRDS

Gold Coast By Simone Smith

We hope everyone is enjoying the quiet season, although we still have ducklings, the odd Lorikeet and a few other species coming into care. We have been working really hard to get our bird network up and running.

We are currently advertising for cages/aviaries and of course, for carers. Please call me on **0400100638** or email **simonesmith_82@hotmail.com** if there is anything you can do to help with birds. No matter how little or great, any help is so greatly appreciated. Maybe you have a friend or colleague who may like to join Wildcare. There are so many species of birds from which to choose. I'm sure you have a favourite that you might like to help. Most of our carers work, but trust me, I can find the right bird for you.

In the coming baby season the majority of our birds will come in due to loss of habitat and land clearing here in South-east Queensland. Please be aware that it is illegal to cut down any tree which has native wildlife nesting in it. In special circumstances an application for a permit can be made to the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EPH).

Thank you for your help and support.



Baby lorikeet just after bath after swimming in his nectar mix

Photo: Simone Smith



Photo: Clare Boyd

WOOD DUCKLINGS

At only three days old these little ducklings are showing an interest in the seeds of grass and of other soft herbaceous plants.

Rehabilitation Easy Reference Sheets

A new initiative of the Wildcare Committee is the preparation of a series of Easy Reference Charts for our rehabilitators. These charts, which will cover a range of topics, will be of great benefit not only to new carers, but also to those who may be looking for ideas to cost save, to increase efficiency or to improve their techniques. The first two charts “Breeding Mealworms” and “Harvesting Browse” are available for downloading using the links provided in the newsletter.

Any suggestions for charts or ideas that would be of assistance to carers would be gratefully received, either by contacting one of the committee members or emailing news@wildcare.org.au.

We are indebted to Helen Bradley for her detailed instructions for basket liners and doona pouches, which are also available for downloading. Please see page 20.

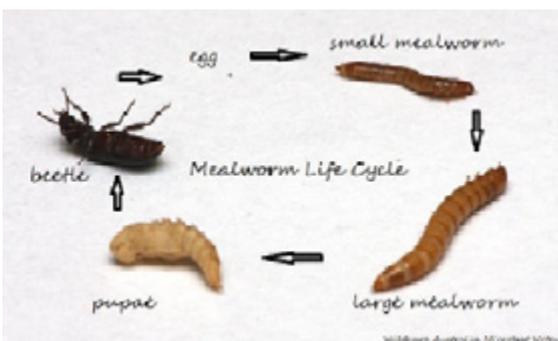


BROWSE HARVESTING FOR WILDLIFE CARERS

The collection of foliage (also commonly referred to as ‘browse’ or ‘leaf’) plays an essential part in the rehabilitation of many of our native wildlife.

In order for the animals in your care to gain the most nutritional value from what you collect, here are a few guidelines.

[Download Reference Sheet](#)



BREEDING MEALWORMS

The following is a guide to one method of farming and preparing mealworms prior to coating and feeding to wildlife. Mealworms are extraordinarily expensive to buy and are often difficult to source, so establishing your own mealworm farm is a very good idea.

[Download Reference Sheet](#)



Don't be Tempted!

By Deb Turnbull

Little Poppet is over 300g and has been outside in a small aviary with three ringtail friends for several weeks. If I am a bit late putting their leaf out, they might come out to greet me but I no longer have any physical contact with them (except for the one that tries to escape all the time!). One day when I was late, again, Poppet came to the door to greet me and I nearly died, 'What is wrong with her eye?'

I brought her inside and gave her some special leaf tip to compensate for being kept in a basket for the night. The white colour over the eye looked like either a corneal ulcer or corneal oedema. I had seen both before and was thinking oedema because of the even spread over the eye – wrong! The next day the vet stained the eye and determined it was a corneal ulcer. It was not typical though. Normally a corneal ulcer might be caused by a scratch or grit in the eye and it would present as a solid white spot, isolated to just the area of the scratch. This was diffuse – a much shallower ulcer and spread evenly over the surface of the eye.

What I like about this particular vet is that she doesn't just say, "I don't know what would have caused that." She goes back to what she knows – cats and dogs.

This type of corneal ulcer is more like a chemical burn than from trauma, and something she might see on a dog that has been playing with a toad and been squirted in the eye with toad toxin. The best guess we could come up with was a burn from caustic ant excretion. This is quite possible because a few days earlier there were tree ants on some leaf I had cut. I thought I had removed all the ants, but that can be difficult.

I guess the lesson from this is not to try and guess these things. The only way to tell the difference between corneal ulcer and oedema is to stain the eye. An ulcer will take up the stain, oedema will not. The treatment for these two conditions could not be more different, and using the wrong one can cause more severe problems than the original condition. Many of us have various tubes of left-over eye ointments in our fridge but the message here is, don't be tempted to use them without getting a vet check first.

Back to Poppet. It was an ulcer, but not severe. She was treated with Tricin (an antibiotic) for five days and is now back in the aviary with her friends.

Pandas and other stuff like Little Penguins

By Robyn Cox

You never know what is around the corner do you! December and January were incredibly busy for me as a Wildlife Carer and Rescuer, throw in fulltime work and Christmas. Greg and I usually have between Xmas and New Year off, so what did we do?

We joined an independent international (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Belgium, Canada) volunteer group to do Little Penguin surveys for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service on Montague Island off southern NSW (a short two days drive away). It sounds like a lovely, restful, peaceful time lazing around on an island. Wrong! It was wonderful, don't get me wrong. It was sometimes restful, but never peaceful. Birds, terns in fact, were hatching. Every chick was screaming for food. The adults were screeching for their chicks. Throw in the swarming seagulls, gliding then crashing shearwaters and howling winds - this equals no peace. But what a simply phenomenal, breathtakingly beautiful place to live and work, for the rangers stationed there.

We were a small group of twelve, meeting up for the first time on a little boat that took us out to the island in gale force winds, and bobbed around like a little cork. This caused churning stomachs and we became completely drenched. We were told we only made the departure deadline by ten minutes, it was so close to being cancelled that morning.

On the island we were given our luggage plus plastic bags of food. We were shown our accommodation and left to fend for ourselves, until the ranger returned to give us our job schedule. After a little stunned silence we introduced ourselves, claimed our rooms, packed food away, made our morning tea and waited – it was an interesting start.

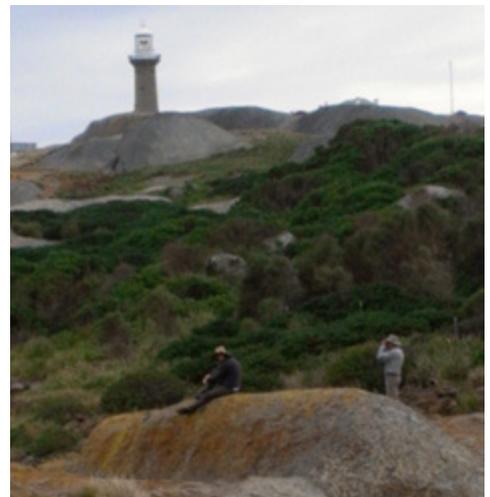
Our accommodation was the stunning, 130 year old head lighthouse keeper's house. It was hand built along with the magnificent lighthouse beside it, from the one massive boulder less than 50 feet from the site.

Our jobs were to trim and cut paths as we pushed through overgrown bush to get to penguin nest boxes, which we had to check and make a record of what was inside. We also had to weed and plant in regenerating areas, and watch penguins coming in each night. It was a fabulous experience.

I want to thank Trish, Robyn, Jane, Ann and Alex for looking after all my babies therefore allowing us to take the time off. We thank you for your kindness and dedication.



We found nest boxes with two, three and four week old chicks



Montague Island lighthouse

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January came and went. February arrived and after a quick decision I was on my way to the Province of Sichuan in China to volunteer with the giant pandas. I met up with other independent international volunteers in Chengdu. From there we were bussed (three hours) to the panda base just outside Ya'an situated at the edge of the Bifengxia Gorge on the end of the Tibetan Plateau.

The Bifengxia Panda Research Centre was established as a safeguard for the captive giant panda population at the Wolong Centre. The threat of an outbreak of disease or infection was of great concern. If an epidemic was to occur among the captive giant pandas at the Wolong Centre near Chengdu, it could destroy the entire population. Bifengxia was planned to house mostly sub-adults not yet in the breeding program, and senior pandas, too old for breeding. However, a small breeding area was constructed in addition to the hospital. Bifengxia has more land than Wolong so the giant pandas are spread over several different areas. The enclosures are large with indoor and outdoor areas. After the earthquake of May 2008 in Wolong, planning for a second centre proved to be an excellent decision. Forty giant pandas were evacuated to the Bifengxia base from Wolong following the earthquake. Wolong hopes to re-open to the public by the end of this year.

On arrival in Chengdu I shared my first two nights with a New Zealand girl, Nikita, whom I had just met. On arrival at Bifengxia I shared with a lovely American girl, Lindsey, for the remainder of the volunteer experience. My accommodation was a stone's throw from the park entrance. Volunteers were housed in all available accommodation. It's the just luck of the draw where you end up as volunteers arrive and depart daily. Typically you don't meet volunteers in accommodation other than your own as there is nowhere to go in the evening (we were isolated in the countryside) and everyone does their volunteer jobs at about the same time. When you are allotted a panda and keeper you generally stay with them for the duration of your stay. Accommodation was up there, as I was expecting much, much less. It was all Asian, including food, chopsticks and toilet arrangements. I don't think I need to say more, except that I survived. The Panda experience is what I went for and everything was fantastic, a truly warm and fuzzy amazing experience.

Pandas are incredibly strong wild animals, but look into their eyes and they melt your heart. I was seconded to a young keeper Mr Chun and two pandas, Yan Yan a twelve year old wild born male and Su Lin, a female born in August 2, 2005 at the San Diego Zoo. She was returned to Bifengxia in 2010. All pandas belong to China regardless of where they are born. Zoos can lease pandas for \$1,000,000 per year for ten years, usually taking two for

breeding purposes, which equals \$20,000,000 per lease. As pandas are very popular worldwide, they attract visitors to zoos. We have two in Australia at the Adelaide zoo, Wang Wang and Fu Ni.

We had three cooked local- produce meals a day. We started our days at 8 am with breakfast and started work in the park by 8.30am. We changed into our overalls, cut panda cake (a special recipe to maintain the giant panda's bamboo diet in captivity, made of bamboo, eggs, grain, with vitamins and minerals) then hand fed our pandas. After the cake we dragged bamboo into their concrete enclosures and as they were chewing on the large stalks, we shut the grate and went into the huge open enclosure to clean up poo (Panda poo is almost corn cob like, nothing dirty or smelly about it-that was a great surprise), old bamboo, sweep and rake then replenish the bamboo. When this was finished the pandas were allowed outside, so we could sweep, scrub and wash down the floors and walls. All the hard work was completed in the morning. They are fed four times a day and in between we had free time to walk around and watch all the other pandas including the babies. At other feed times panda cake is topped up with bamboo shoots, apples and carrots.

Half way through the first week Su Li came on heat, she wouldn't come in to feed. She paced and started frothing at the mouth. By the end of the week she was transported to the breeding centre. I guess her 'roomy' Yan Yan wasn't her type.

Overnight I had a new panda, five year old Feng Yi, a female born on August 23, 2006 at the Wolong Center in Chengdu and she was a 2008 Olympic panda. It was an amazing time to be there because I was now looking after a very special panda. Apart from being an Olympic panda Feng Yi was now being prepared to become the main attraction, with male panda Fu Wa, at a Malaysian Zoo before the end of the year. I was unaware of this as Mr Chun and I scrubbed, swept, disinfected and cleaned all the areas. Two days later the whole Malaysian team arrived with some Malaysian grown bamboo and lots of worry lines. It is a huge responsibility to take healthy Pandas from China to another country with everyone in the world watching. The Malaysian visitors were very interested in me and my role, as I was helping to care for one of their soon-to-be star attractions. Also, because they could speak English but not Chinese, they got more information from me than from my keeper Mr Chun. There was not a lot of English spoken, where we were situated, though most of the volunteers spoke good English, so I had conversations at meal times but rarely at any other time.

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The Malaysian team comprised not only people from the zoo, but also from the Forestry Department, who would be responsible for growing all the bamboo that would be needed to feed the pandas when they arrived in Malaysia. They were going to ship over two container loads to begin with, but I am not sure how well it travels. I felt very privileged to be involved in this special project. I hope to visit the Malaysian Zoo when Feng Li has settled in. The zoo has already contacted me and will keep in touch.

As I was there in breeding season with lots of 'huff and puff' going on, it was all hands on deck in the breeding centre. Volunteers were working in there and although I was working in the park proper, volunteers were allowed to wander just about everywhere, which was fantastic. We could watch lots of private moments. The kindergarten was the only off-limits area, but we had very good viewing areas. There were only six babies in the kindergarten - all born last August. They were so very cute and I spent lots of my spare time watching them play, eat, drink and enjoying other magical moments.

Pandas take their time in breeding and this is why the captive breeding program is a high priority worldwide.

It was a memorable experience that will stay with me forever. All wild animals around the world are in danger of becoming extinct. Volunteering helps these animals. Volunteering is vital. Wildcare members, carers and rescuers should be so proud of what they do here in their own back yard. Sometimes it can be so overwhelming. It is for me. I cannot watch documentaries anymore. I tend to stick my head in the sand, but by belonging to such a wonderful group of people I feel that something good is being achieved every day. It may be just a matter of saving one little life at a time, but that keeps me going. You hang in there too.

Again without a wonderful support crew my Panda experience would not have been possible. I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to Natalie for taking my three musketeers (mountain brushtails) and to my better half Greg for holding the fort and looking after the rest of the menagerie.





Conservation

By Terry Wimberley

There are roughly 6,000 languages and cultures in the world- yet now 3,000 of these are not learnt or spoken fluently by the children to whose culture they belong.

Perhaps as we grow closer we move further away. More and more there is a disconnection with culture and at the same time an acceptance of what we now loosely call 'conservation'.

Conservation to an indigenous person is perhaps not over-hunting an area, before moving to another. For the western world, conservation may be preserving green space and two of each animal in a zoo.

To define conservation we now use words like 'sustainable'. Sustainable for whom? Humanity? Government? In my opinion we hide behind these words with multiple meanings so that we can achieve an outcome that is politically convenient.

I stand in a place and see the absurdity of government regulation, where I cannot rescue a bat from New South Wales and take it to a hospital in Queensland. I ask, 'When did we teach the animals to stay in one state or another?'

I puzzle at how the population riles up in indignation at how livestock exports are treated in other countries, yet ignores the slaughter of important native species in our

own communities. Perhaps this could be expected, when it took us until 1967 to determine that aboriginal people were indeed human.

I know that when I spit on the ground, I spit on all the ancestors, when I save an animal, I add life to our society.

There was a time when our animals covered the land and were diverse – one by one they have been devalued and marginalized to fit within a convenient definition. We have imported many of our problems with the fox, cane toad and rabbit. We have turned loose our domestic animals to prey upon our native fauna.

Yet still the most dangerous threat to our environment is our belief that we have the right to do to our lands whatever is convenient for us.

Unless we can embrace and respect our natural world we are condemned forever. The loss of the forest and the animals in it will herald the end of living and the beginning of survival itself.

We cannot be exempt from this common destiny. We may be kindred spirits after all. We shall see. The mystery and the paradox is that all are my brothers and sisters, all are my teachers, all are my students and we all share a common fate.

So part of the mystery is how do we empower future generations with the integrity and accountability to deal with these questions. For me this is not about global warming or carbon trading. It is about respect for our earth and indeed ourselves. It is about awareness of the intended and unintended consequences of our actions and importantly, it is about loving ourselves enough to do what is needed to be done.

Ego and agenda must be put aside and we must be called to account when integrity starts to become convenient. Our actions will light us down, in honour or dishonour, to future generations. Perhaps a passage from a book says it best – “What will it profit a society if it gains the whole world, yet loses its soul in the process”.

Wobbly Possum Syndrome

By Deb Turnbull

Wobbly possum syndrome is a fatal neurological disease of the common brushtail possum. It was first identified in New Zealand in captive research possums in 1995, and later in free-living possums in New Zealand. Researchers in New Zealand have identified a unique and previously undescribed virus that is the cause of wobbly possum syndrome. The disease is easily transferred between possums through close physical contact. Severe disease is apparent after an incubation time of about two weeks. There have not been any confirmed cases in Australia.

Early symptoms are behavioural and include daytime feeding and extreme timidity or aggression. They have an unusual head carriage, head bobbing or fine head tremor and progressive ataxia. They may appear to be blind or have an unusual stance to maintain balance. As the disease progresses the possum loses body condition, may have scouring, is wobbly or unsteady on its feet, is unable to judge distances and is slow to react.

There are unique histological features that distinguish this viral wobbly possum disease from other causes that may result in ‘wobbly’ behaviour. Spe-

cifically, there are lesions on the kidney, liver, spleen and brain of possums with wobbly possum syndrome. There is a statistically significant link between these lesions and the presence of the unique virus. There is a similar disease in Australia that is also sometimes referred to as wobbly possum disease but it is associated with blindness and lesions on the optic nerve. It is similar, but different. I have not, as yet, been able to find out any more about the Australian disease. Also on my research list is the occurrence of ‘wobbly’ behaviour in association with what may be a form of capture myopathy in possums. Hopefully I will be able to offer some more insight into these Australian problems in future newsletters.

Significant to wildlife carers in Australia is the potential for rapid spread if this disease ever reached our shores. Research in New Zealand has focussed on captive research possums and there are many questions about the virus in wild possums that remain unanswered. These include the viability of the virus, the rate of spread, mortality rates and the time interval between natural infection and death.

Let’s hope this virus never reaches our shores.

References:

Dunowska, M; Biggs, P. J.; Zheng, T. & Perrott, M. R. (2012). Identification of a novel nidovirus associated with neurological disease of the Australian brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecular*). *Veterinary Microbiology*, 156, 418-424.

McCleod, B.J. (2007). Wobbly Possum Disease in the Wilkin and Young Valleys, Mount Aspiring National Park. Department of Conservation: Wellington, New Zealand.

Helen Bradley's Creations, Basket Liners

By Helen Bradley



Here are some instructions for the basket liners that I make.

For the liner that is pictured here I use three layers, two made from material and one from wadding. They are all made the same way, sandwiched together and then over locked at the top...

[Download full instructions here](#)

Observations of an Enthusiastic Amateur Naturalist

By E. M. Hanger



The magnificent Quandong (*Elaeocarpus grandis*) has flowered later than usual this year. As always it has attracted flocks of Rainbow lorikeets, as well as a variety of honeyeaters, including Scarlet, Lewins, Yellow-faced, White-throated and of course the Noisy Friarbird.

A pair of Currawongs found the delicious, ripe fruit on the Pipturus too good to share, so drove the Satin Bowerbird away quite aggressively. Earlier the Pipturus had played host to a much more social gathering; a Little Wattlebird, a Yellow-faced honeyeater an Eastern Yellow Robin and a Grey Shrike-thrush.

My first sighting of an Azure Kingfisher on the property was very exciting, though probably it is frequently here, as the creek has never stopped flowing, even during the worst droughts, I am told.

It was quite devastating to find two cormorants dead on the creek bank. Judging by the state they were in, the deaths had occurred some one to two weeks apart.

Flocks of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are quite common in the valley, but March brought a flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, a flock of Topknot Pigeons and a flock of Figbirds. Usually there are fewer than six of each species at any one time.

Climbing and foraging on the Quandong trunk this morning was a White-throated Treecreeper. Generally these birds are on the Eucalypt or Acacia trunks, but then observation time is limited. I only wish I had more time to observe the comings and goings of our feathered friends.

Observing wild animals, their food choices and behaviours, can give us ideas for providing enrichment in housing and a greatly improved diet for our wildlife in care.

Planting for Wildlife

The Quandong (*Elaeocarpus grandis*) is an enormous tree, which is not suitable for a small garden; however the Native Mulberry (*Pipturus argenteus*) is a shrub or small tree which is most suitable. Its delicious, soft fruits are highly sought after by many birds and the possums love them too.

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.



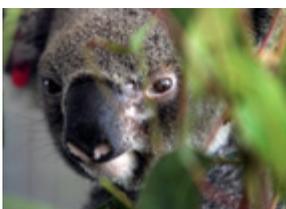
CITY OF IPSWICH

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.



QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION

Funding of \$6,900 has been received under the Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation Program Grant to enable the purchase of more specialised koala rescue and rehabilitation equipment, such as rescue cages, poles, intensive care unit and binoculars.

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