

WILDNEWS

Autumn 2011 Issue 59

*"Loving our Local
Native Plants"*

*"Meet the Stoner
Chicks"*

COVER PHOTO// SHANE HO



President's Report.

Karen Scott

THE EVENTS THAT OCCURRED DURING JANUARY DEVASTATED thousands of Queensland residents and our prayers and thoughts went out to them during that time. We hope that those affected are well on their way to rebuilding their lives.

Recent events have certainly highlighted the fact that the Australian volunteer spirit is alive and well. As members of Wildcare we have seen this volunteer spirit in action for many years. It was very touching to receive emails from people from all different walks of life, offering to help our volunteers with their rescue and rehabilitation efforts for wildlife affected by the extreme weather conditions over the Summer months. I hope that we will see many of these people join Wildcare and take the first steps towards becoming a volunteer wildlife rescuer/carer. Certainly the plight of our wildlife has received considerable media coverage.

I sincerely hope that the better weather holds, for the sake of our tireless volunteers who have been caring for the wildlife affected by those weather events, and for the benefit of the animals so that they can be successfully

rehabilitated, and those animals that had been held back during the bad weather, I hope that many of them have now been finally returned to their natural habitat.

I know that it has been an extremely busy season for those caring for all species, but particularly for bats and birds. The wildlife that relies on foliage has fared somewhat better thankfully.

You should all be very proud of your contribution towards helping our wildlife, no matter what the contribution is; whether it is rescuing or transporting wildlife to vets or carers, manning the emergency telephone service, assisting with administrative tasks or fundraising events. I am very proud to be involved with an organisation which has such a strong volunteer base and spirit.

Keep your head up – the busy season is hopefully coming to an end soon.

Walk for Wildlife



Help our wildlife carers

Don't miss this exciting event. Wildcare's Inaugural 'WALK FOR WILDLIFE' is scheduled for the 12th June 2011 at the Broadwater Parklands at Southport on the Gold Coast.

All funds raised from this event will go directly towards helping with the financial costs incurred by our volunteers in the rehabilitation of our local wildlife.

Please support this exciting event by registering to walk - bring your family, friends and colleagues.

www.walkforwildlife.com.au



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.

Wildcare Australia, Inc.
62 Teemangum Street, Currumbin, Qld 4223
PO Box 2379 Nerang Mail Centre, Qld 4211

Cover photo: Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo

• 24 X 7 Emergency Phone Service (07) 5527 2444

• Wildcare Australia Office (07) 5527 2444

(Tuesday - Friday, 8am - 4pm)

www.wildcare.org.au

Email

enquiries@wildcare.org.au
shop@wildcare.org.au
education@wildcare.org.au
news@wildcare.org.au

The Main Committee

President - Karen Scott
Vice-President - Tonya Howard
Secretary Tracy Paroz
Treasurer - Amy Whitham
Gail Gipp, Roy Webster, Natalie Rasmussen,
Natasha Lewis-Millar, Shawn Senior

Newsletter Team - Eleanor Hanger, Renée Rivard
Newsletter submissions can be sent to news@wildcare.org.au



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PHOTO // EM HANGER

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A Warm Welcome to Our New Members

Wildcare Australia welcomes the following new members:

Stacey Erbackher; Carla Archibald; Carmen Spelta & Grant Smithers; Kimberley Tozer; Jacqui Vial & Alex Fitzsimmons; Jade Saddler; Heidi Wheatley; Lynne-Maree & Stephen Jung; Suzanne Wegner; Monique Dobell; Toni Wilshire; Crystal Hay; Sandy Bobbermeier; Diane & Brian Stretton; Talei Simpson; Sharon & Jordan Phoenix; Ann Fitz-Gerald; Linda Furlong; Tracey Gordon; Martina Franke & Andrew Goodall; Sue & Matthew Cobb; Barbara Jackson-Calais; Colin & Jane Crispy; Lyn Robertson; Niki Evans; Trish Newton; Jillian Broomhead; Susan Ash; Helen & Steve Bisset; Bronwyn Harmer; Trish Chadwick; Amanda & Stewart Hope; Julie & Erwin Miles; Sharon Wragg; William Kelly; Rhyll & Lorette Davis; Sian McDuffie; Lesley Howarth & Stephen Marnock; Ginny & Barbara Haynes; Marilyn Harrison; Adele Horsley; Rochelle Knezovich; Terena & Phillip Coleman; Maria & Brooke Perkins; Ebonnie & Megan Cameron; Philip Michael & Dannielle McLaughlin; Judy Sutton; Rachael Brumley; Kirsty Rose; Tricia Kent; Nathan & Shanna Bignell; Dean & Sharon Thomson; Emma Birt; Rita Mary Perrier; Janet & Herbert Begg; Gay Averkoff; Jacinta McArthur; Tracey-Lee Brooke; Claire Jardine; Cath-

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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, call our office and I'm sure we will be able to help you.

We hope you have a long and happy association with Wildcare Australia.

Sponsorship Pack

Wildcare has now finalised a new "sponsorship pack" which we can send to potential sponsors. We have already put this new pack to good use with the Flood Appeal.

If you know of a business that may be open to sponsoring Wildcare, please forward the details through to enquiries@wildcare.org.au so that we can send them a letter and the sponsorship pack. Alternatively, if you would rather that a pack is sent to you so that you can approach them directly – even better! Please let us know so that we can get the pack to you.

Remember, sponsorship doesn't have to be by providing cash donations as we appreciate that there are many businesses that cannot afford to do this in these tough times. The donation of in-kind support/services is also very much appreciated by our volunteers.

Annual General Meeting

19th June 2011

Please join us to recognise the achievements of Wildcare throughout the past year and to catch up with each another.

To be held at the
Pimpama School of Arts
Clark Way, Pimpama

Notice will be forwarded to all current members by post shortly.

Flood & Extreme Weather Appeal

What a fury Mother Nature has inflicted on her wildlife these past couple of months, with the climax being the flooding that occurred in January.

We have some very opportunistic people on the Wildcare Committee whom actively marketed Wildcare in requests for donations in order to assist our wildlife carers. They utilised various free media services and the response was phenomenal. Not only was I floored by the response of our own members but also the generosity of the public. I also do not doubt that many of you mentioned our cause to your friends and family whom donated as well. I'm very pleased to announce that over \$19,000 was raised and even at the time of writing this article I am still receiving donations. I sincerely thank those who have donated or helped in the process.

A common quotation used when sending their donation was "I wish I could give more". This is nothing short of how I feel too, but I hope everyone realises that every little bit does help; from the \$2 donations through to the hundreds, it all counts.

In the whole time I have been involved with Wildcare I have never seen so many people dig deep and it was a proud Treasurer moment.

So the next announcement would be how the money was allocated. I am very pleased to announce the Committee has established a Carers Subsidy so that those licensed

Wildcare carers have the chance to get access to these funds. To start the subsidy off we have so far allocated \$10,000.

The remaining \$9,000 received in donations went directly to those Wildcare carers who were caring for those wildlife affected by the floods to help cover the food, travelling and veterinary expenses associated with such wildlife. Part of that funding was also allocated towards some Species Coordinators and Trauma Carers that have had considerable expenses of late with fuel and telephone expenses.

Part of these funds (\$1,800) has also been put aside to purchase food items for when the busy season hits to allow Coordinators to distribute to their carers.

The Carers Subsidy information will be distributed shortly which will outline how Wildcare Carers can access that funding. Unfortunately we do not receive many regular donations in order to indefinitely sustain this subsidy; however it is hoped that with establishing the Carers Subsidy it may offer an incentive for members to seek further funding opportunities to keep the Subsidy operating.

Again I would like to thank everyone because without these funds coming in we would not have had the ability to directly help our Carers.

Amy Whitham
Treasurer

Treasurers Report

Welcome to all existing and new members.

I've only been the Treasurer for a short while. The one thing I found was people have been keen to fundraise for Wildcare but perhaps didn't realise that certain information needed to be recorded (for legislative reasons). I have formulated a fundraising procedure document to give a step by step guide to what is needed, by doing this I feel a more standardised approach will be achieved.

In particular when raffles are involved it's not as simple as collecting goods, selling a few tickets and drawing a prize winner. As I have discovered there is a lot more to it. In this procedure document I have included forms to make life easier and to help standardise the process. As this is a new document I am open to questions and suggestions as this will only strengthen the document. Anyone currently fundraising under Wildcare's name should get in contact with me either by email: treasurer@wildcare.org.au or my mobile 0421 119 884. This document is also available on the website. My aim was to inform and provide support to those that are fundraising for Wildcare.

I'm coming into a busy season for financial matters. I'm in the process of compiling the information for our accounts to be audited so that the reports can be available at the AGM (annual general meeting). Then there is the Walk for Wildlife fundraising event on the 12/6/11 quickly followed by the AGM on the 18/6/11. We will also see the membership renewal documentation being issued shortly.

On a side note this will most probably be my last report to you as I have unfortunately had to step down from my role as Wildcare's Treasurer. I will continue my services until a replacement can be found or when I officially step down at the AGM. I have found it difficult trying to juggle all of my commitments. I have found the time needed to fulfil the treasurer's role to be too demanding for what I can offer at this point in time.

Thankyou very much to all the members that come together to form this wonderful organisation.

Regards,
Amy Whitham

Record Keeper's Rap.

2010 RESCUE AND REHAB WILDCARE RECORDS NOW DUE:

It's now time to get those remaining 2010 Wildcare records submitted, so they can be collated for reports. These were due on the 15th January 2011. So if you have a Wildcare-endorsed permit, then you will need to send in your records of all rescues and rehabilitated animals as soon as possible. The records cannot be collated until everyone has sent these in, and we have a few reports to do based on these 2010 records already. Please submit these records by email to records@wildcare.org.au

Handwritten records can be posted to the usual address:

Record Keeper, Wildcare Australia

PO Box 2379, Nerang Mail Centre

Nerang Qld 4211

If you need the Excel or Word form, then please download it from the Wildcare website www.wildcare.org.au – they are under 'Carer Resources'. Please contact me (Kiersten) by the above email or mobile 0409130000 if you need it emailed, or posted if you have no computer access.

If you are having difficulty getting your records in right now, or need assistance with doing your records, particularly if you're a busy carer who has been inundated over the busy summer season, then please contact me as above, as there are a few things I can do to help you through this. There are also guidelines within the attached Excel records file, and on the Wildcare website to help you.

Thank you in anticipation, and thanks too to those of you who have already submitted all of your 2010 records!

OUTCOMES REQUIRED FOR CURRUMBIN WILDLIFE HOSPITAL AND AUSTRALIA ZOO WILDLIFE HOSPITAL:

For those of you who take animals from the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital or the Australian Wildlife Hospital for hand-raising or rehabilitation, they would like to know their outcomes. Every six months, after our Wildcare records are collated, we now send both hospitals a list of all records received of animals fostered from their hospital. However, it is preferable if you can notify them directly once the animal's outcome is known, so

that they can get these outcomes sooner.

If this applies to you, could you please email the relevant staff?

For CWH animals, email Deb Kennelly at dkennelly@cws.org.au

For AWH animals, email Megan Aitken at megana@wildlifewarriors.org.au

You'll just need to provide the following details for each animal:

- CWH/AWH code
- Species
- Outcome (e.g. 'Released', 'Died')
- Outcome date.

For these people, Deb/Megan would also like your email address, so they can contact you every couple of months to inquire about any animals with unknown outcomes. To arrange this, a quick email from you to either Deb or Megan (or both if you spread yourself far), advising of your agreement to this, would be most appreciated. Wildcare still need these records, so please include them on your Wildcare records too! Thank you!

Kiersten Jones
Email: records@wildcare.org.au

Litoria fallax



PHOTO // EM HANGER

Ruby...one lucky koala

Ruby was found by residents at Tamborine in the early hours one morning after their Blue Heeler puppy found her and was "playing" with her. Roy rushed to collect her and met me at 4.30am. She was barely responsive but beautiful and warm (thanks to Roy).

I rushed her to GCARE (a 24 hour veterinary clinic at Varsity Lakes) where Dr Justin was able to place an intra venous (i/v) line into her arm and she was given strong pain relief and antibiotics. She was covered in saliva from head to toe and her prognosis was not looking good. Adult koalas that have been attacked by dogs do not generally have a good prognosis, let alone a tiny 540 gram joey.

I took Ruby home, placed her into a humidicrib and onto i/v fluids. She slept peacefully over the following few hours, thanks to the pain medication. I didn't think that she would survive long enough to get her to Currumbin Wildlife Hospital at 8am, but at least I knew that she was not in pain and was resting comfortably. At 8am she was still alive and slightly more responsive.

Dr Erina at Currumbin Wildlife Hospital gave Ruby a general anaesthetic and went to work with a full veterinary assessment including blood tests, x rays and aspiration of abdominal fluid. Ruby was found to be already suffering from septicaemia and was bleeding into the abdomen. Thankfully she had no fractured bones. She was placed onto an aggressive course of i/v antibiotics and oxygen therapy to treat the septicemia and give more pain medication. Ruby spent the day under the watchful eye of Dr Erina. She came home with me that night with a concoction of pain relief, antibiotics and an extensive treatment plan. Her prognosis was not good, but she had already displayed a will to live, so who were we to argue?

The following morning, Ruby had another veterinary check at CWS with Dr Erina. Her tests indicated that she wasn't getting any worse, so we decided to persevere although there was considerable concern about her caecum (intestine) as she was not passing any faeces.

On the third day she was looking much brighter. She was able to go without the constant supply of oxygen. She started taking milk feeds well and showed some interest in gum tips. She remained in the humidicrib as she wasn't maintaining her body temperature but she had her two favourite teddies for company. She was still on i/v fluids which meant that I couldn't leave her unattended and she spent every night only a few inches away from my bed.

On the fourth day Ruby was transferred from the humidicrib to a basket where she started to venture from her pouch and climb onto her teddies. Following another veterinary check with Dr Camille at Currumbin Hospital, she was able to come off the i/v antibiotics and fluids.

The next day she was as bright as a button, had started pelleting and was spending more time playing on her teddies.

A final veterinary checkup the sixth day and all was looking good. Her blood tests were normal.

A big effort from everyone concerned, Roy who rescued her, the emergency veterinary staff at GCARE and all of the vets and nursing staff at CWS has meant that Ruby has a good chance of getting through this ordeal.

We have very little success with dog attack koalas. Ruby is one very lucky little girl.

Karen Scott

"Ruby"



PHOTO // K SCOTT

Telephone Coordinator's Report

THANK YOU TO THE MANY WILDCARE VOLUNTEERS WHO RESPONDED TO THE RECENT URGENT CALL FOR HELP. We had over 50 members complete the emergency telephone training recently and many of them have already offered to take on at least one shift each month. This has made a tremendous difference to the roster; it has never looked so 'healthy'.



Our sincerest thanks go to our existing telephone volunteers who worked tirelessly over the busy Spring and Summer months taking thousands of incoming calls. This was one of the busiest seasons we have had in many years. Your dedication and commitment is second to none and our wildlife is so much better off because of your contribution.

We hope that our new telephone operators enjoy the experience; it is extremely rewarding and often very amusing.

Baby Steps Bob

It was a warm spring day in November: Remembrance Day. It will also be a day I will never forget. My first possum to take care of. I was very nervous. I felt like a new mum.

I picked up Bob from Australia Zoo. He was 213 g, not too small for a newbie but very shy. Mum was killed by a dog attack.

I had been preparing for this day for many months. I had all the pouches, all the linen and a whole bedroom just for Bob. I even had a night light for me during the four hourly feeds.



Bob the Brushtail Possum

He was so good. He just did everything by the book (Caring for Orphaned Possums - Wildcare). I read to him every night, to let him know where he should be up to during his time with me. We learnt a lot together, Bob and I. I read as much as I could about what food possums should eat, and he learnt to be very independent.

I was able to house him, during the day, in a bush area out the back of where I worked. This would be his release site: no cats, no dogs, no cars. The food was not perfect, mostly Casuarina, Wattle and some grasses, but there was lots of it.

Its now the end of January and he is due to be fully released at the end of February. I bought an aviary from Bunning's and assembled it on site. He will spend two weeks in the aviary, where I will check on him everyday and make sure he has enough leaf from the area. Then in two weeks I'll open the door and he will be able to make his own way out in the big wide world. In the mean time he will spend his nights out in his new aviary getting to know the sounds of night.

He seems so excited to be out here now and has no interest in being with me. Perfect. He does, however, like to watch me while I change his leaf and water, then he settles back into the aviary for a long sleep during the day.

I have no doubt Bob will be fine. Fingers crossed. This was such a great experience for me and my family. I could not have done it without the help of Rachel Lyons and the Wildcare manual.

Lindy Meath

Meet the Stoner Chicks

Stoner Chicks is the hilarious name that Natasha Lewis-Millar's girls call bush stone curlews. The two resident curlews at Broadwater Tourist Park in Southport have recently hatched these beautiful chicks. They were tiny when born - about the size of plover chicks - but five weeks in and they've grown to half the size of their parents. Good thing too - beginning life on the ground when you're that small and can't fly is hazardous.

The parent curlews have been at the Broadwater Park for at least five years that I know of. They are very tolerant of people. They probably chose this place because it's free of cats, dogs and foxes, their main predators in residential areas.

Curlews are night feeders. If you've ever wondered about the wailing bird cries that can sometimes be heard in the middle of the night, it's these guys talking to each other.

They sit or stand very still during the day then become active as soon as the sun begins to set. Curlews forage all night eating crickets, lizards, grasshoppers, cockroaches and small crustaceans. Clearly it's a diet that working for these chicks and it just shows how much food can be found in residential environments when you know where to look.

Although excellent fliers curlews prefer to use their long legs to sprint around their feeding grounds catching bugs. They run, then stand dead still and observe - then they're off again. These birds are masters of stealth and camouflage and use both to great advantage.

Stone curlews are now listed as endangered in NSW and Victoria and rare in SA. Fortunately they're doing better in northern QLD where there are still reasonable numbers of this unique bird. I know one caravan park in Airlie Beach where fifty curlews happily live among the tourists. Their blood curling screams in the middle of the night scares the bejezus out of unsuspecting Euro backpackers.

I'm happy to report that our Gold Coast curlews seem to be having a very good year. Maybe it's the rain but I know of four breeding pairs with a total of six new chicks within a two kilometre radius of Southport. There's also a small colony near Runaway Bay Marina and quite a healthy population of about twenty in the bush opposite SeaWorld. There must have been some sort of curlew convention going on the other day because I found nine of them slothing around in SeaWorld's southern car park at lunchtime! Most unusual.

Rowley Goonan



PHOTO // R GOONAN

Loving our Local Native Plants...

I feel myself a very lucky girl. I've lived in some beautiful places in the bush since leaving my suburban childhood. My craving for getting closer to nature has probably made me a little obsessive about the delicate balance of nature and my place in it. (My husband agrees; there's not a blade of grass he can snip without his beloved eco-Nazi's approval.)

Since moving to a gorgeous retreat in Tallebudgera twelve years ago I've taken time to observe and learn from the abundance of wildlife that surrounds me. So when I see the new neighbours clearing every bit of their block and bringing in their huge dogs, cats and feral plants (PLEASE, no more durantas!!!), it drives me nuts!

Certainly I worry about what kind of weedy, local bushland is going to be left, let alone if any is going to be left at all, so I've decided to direct my energies into the plants and habitats that our wildlife need to survive.

For the past six years I've been working at a local wholesale native plant nursery. As the nursery only sells in bulk quantities to revegetation projects I've started my own small native plant business to sell at local markets, hoping to inspire and change the mind set of some of those 'too tidy gardeners'. What a task!. My father's reassuring words ring in my ears, "Nobody likes native plants!" I love it when people come up to me at the markets and say, 'Those things grow like weeds around my place', to which I reply, "lucky you!"

So I am lucky, I'm in the bush where nature goes a lot wilder, but wouldn't it be great if more people generally let their gardens go a little wilder. It would help protect the more timid and vulnerable species. Why do so many people want perfect hedges and lawns? Those manicured things take a lot of time, money and effort to maintain and

the noise of those hedge trimmers and whipper snippers slashing everything in sight can drive you insane.

I have a lot of respect for Tim Flannery and would like to quote a few lines from his Australia Day speech in 2002: "Australia is home to 25,000 species of plants. Surely amongst that lot we can find suitable species that will provide for our birds and animals? Are we still, at heart, uncomfortable in our own land. If we can see no beauty in Australian natives, but instead need to be cosseted in pockets of imported greenery can we really count ourselves as having a truly sustainable future adapted to Australian conditions?"

Michelle Benson

MICHELLES NATIVE PLANTS

Beautiful Local Species

Rainforest to Dryland - Grasses to Trees

50mm tubestock

\$2.50 for up to 20 or \$2.00 for 20 and more

NO MINIMUM ORDER

See me at Elanora High School Market

1st Sunday of each month
6:00am – 9:30am

PH; 55338479
Mobile; 0415661850

Email me for a descriptive species list

michellesnativeplants@bigpond.com



Gum tree (*Eucalyptus* sp.)

Fast Food for birds and animals in care....

When feeding the birds and other native animals that come into care, there are so many challenges when trying to find the right kind of native foods to prepare them for release. There are some great local plants that carers could grow in a small garden for seed, flowers, nectar or leaves.

Most of the following plants should grow and fruit in one year after planting:

Trema tomentosa (Poison peach) Shrub to 4M. Small shiny black berries. Ripe February to June. Feeds Currawongs, Figbirds, Cuckoo Doves, King parrots.

Callicarpa pedunculata (velvet leaf) Shrub to 3M. Small purple berry. Ripe February-March. Feeds Lewins honeyeaters, Figbirds, Silvereyes.

Pipturas argenteus (native mulberry) Shrub to 5M. Small whitish berries. Ripe July to Jan.. Feeds Lorikeets, Figbirds, Olive-backed Orioles.

Dianella spp. (blue flax lily) Tufted small plants to 1M. Purplish flowers on stalks. Deep blue berries. Ripe Sept. to Feb. Feeds Wallabies, Pademelons, Possums, Brush Turkeys, Fig birds, Orioles, Bower birds.

Macaranga tanarius (Macaranga) Small tree to 5M. Greenish flowers, fruit is a yellow capsule with soft prickles. Ripe Jan-March. Feeds Lorikeets, Possums, Currawongs, Figbirds.

Banksia spinulosa (Hairpin Banksia) Shrub to 2M. Stiff brush like yellow flower spikes. Woody seed cone. Ripe April-August. Feeds Gliders, Honeyeaters, Cockatoos.

Breynia oblongifolia (Coffee bush) Shrub to 2M. Black berry. Ripe Sept-Jan. Feeds Doves, Currawongs, King Parrots

Acacia spp (wattles) Large shrubs. Creamy yellow flowers, woody pods. Different species flower at different times. Feeds King Parrots, Rosellas, Pidgeons, Possums, Gliders.

Dodonaea triquetra (Forest hop bush). Shrub to 2M. Flowers in thread like style. Papery seed capsule. Feeds Rosellas, Possums.

Cordyline congesta (Palm lily) Narrow like palm to 2M. Purplish flowers, red fruit. Ripe Nov. to Feb. Feeds small mammals, possums, brush turkeys.

I am happy to offer leaf and blossom etc. to carers who need access to a bit more wild food.

Yours enviroMENTALLY
Michelle Benson

Banksia sp.



PHOTO // JM HANGER



Callicarpa pedunculata



Blueberry Ash (Elaeocarpus reticulatus)

PHOTO // EM HANGER

The Fishing Line MENACE

Rowley Goonan

Part One

I get really peeved off whenever I walk at a popular fishing spot and find long lengths of discarded fishing line all over the ground. Then I wonder ... did I do that when I fished? Probably, embarrassing as it is to admit. I'm sure there were times when I dropped offcuts of line without thinking. If I'd known about the damage fishing line does when it gets caught around a bird's feet I would never have dropped an inch of the rotten stuff.

Light weight line is the worst because it tangles so easily. Discarded fishing line typically gets tangled around a bird's feet when it's walking and foraging for food. The bird will try to kick the line off. If it's lucky it will free itself. If not the fishing line will wrap around its leg and tangle even more. The longer the line stays on the tighter it gets, causing swelling. A tight band of fishing line won't expand with swelling and it cuts into the birds flesh. So begins a long period of intense suffering that will often leave the bird maimed or dead. I regularly catch wild birds with fishing line cutting off their toes or cutting through one of their legs. Many lose toes and some lose a whole foot.

Recently I had to catch a 6 month old cygnet (young swan). It was one of four cygnets that were part of a much loved family of swans living on a Gold Coast canal. At some point a long length of fine fishing line had become wrapped around the cygnet's wing but was hidden under its feathers. The line had tightened and slowly cut off circulation to its wing. By the time people noticed that something was wrong the bird's wing was crippled and gangrene had set in. The cygnet couldn't be saved.

The weeks or months it takes for fishing line to amputate a body part is a time of slow and excruciating torture for a bird.

Line tangles occur mostly in coastal areas where fishing is popular. Birds with blunt beaks suffer the most - pelicans, swans, ducks, oyster catchers, gulls and of course the poor old ibis. Their beaks don't allow them to bite through fishing line and free themselves. Cormorants, kites and ospreys do a bit better because they have sharp hooked beaks that can sometimes bite the line off. Of course biting is no use at all if a fish hook is also involved, as is often the case.

Helping these injured creatures is often very difficult because nearly all line tangled birds can still fly. Fishing line might be causing a crippling injury to its leg but that won't prevent a bird from taking to the air the moment someone tries to catch it. In fact, the pain of injury causes most birds to be more wary and skittish, making them even harder to catch.



The very nasty wrap of fine fishing line and rusty trace around this pelican's leg would have crippled the bird had it not been discovered in time

PHOTO // R GOONAN

The Fishing Line MENACE...continued

Of all the line tangled and fish hooked birds that I rescue more than half can be treated and released immediately. Once a bird is caught the first job is to cut the line off the affected leg or toes. Open wounds are doused with diluted betadine (iodine), then the bird is released straight back into the air. It's quick and easy and there's minimal trauma for the bird and no cost to anyone. As long as there's no infection a wound will usually heal quickly, especially when the creature is back in its natural environment. I know they recover because I often see the same bird the next day. Sometimes I'll come across a creature that was barely able to walk when I'd caught it a few days earlier. Now it's strutting around as happy as Larry or as happy as Tweety as the case may be.

Deeper wounds and deeply embedded fish hooks require veterinary treatment and sometimes weeks in hospital. Most birds survive and get to have a life albeit without a toe or two and sometimes without a leg.

Some are not so lucky. This lovely tern was too traumatised and its tongue too badly damaged to be saved.



PHOTO // R GOONAN

I could tell you so many stories about fishing line injured birds, but this next one illustrates, quite graphically, how horrible and dangerous discarded hooks and line can be. I find that a little humour helps a lot with these stories.

I got a call from a chap who was staying at the Broadwater Tourist Park in Southport on the Gold Coast. I happened to be camped there myself and had already snared two ibis and one pelican in my first two weeks at the park, all with fishing line and hook injuries.

The caller said he was feeding some ibis by his caravan and noticed that one of the birds had fishing line wrapped around its beak. The bird's beak was lashed firmly shut and it couldn't eat. Ibis that can't eat typically last about 3 days before they starve to death. I asked for his location and was delighted to find that he was only 30 meters up the road. Yahoo! - I dream of getting calls like this. Normally it's 50 k's up the M1.

I was there in a jiffy. The bird had already started to walk off – there was no reason for it to hang around because it couldn't share in the food. I knew this might be a tough capture because 95% of flighted birds are caught using a snare. With that capture method we use food to manoeuvre the bird into position until the snare can be tripped around its leg. If the bird won't come for food it's very difficult to catch.

I decided to set up a snare quite a long way from the bird. Then I convinced some poor unsuspecting passer-by to help me. Little did he know just how bad ibis smell up close and of course there was no time to tell him. We were on a mission and the pressure was on! I was prepared to deal with a hostile and smelly assistant later.

We fanned out and managed to slowly and carefully drive the unsuspecting creature towards the snare. For once luck was with us and it walked right where I wanted. At the last second I threw food and the bird stepped forward in a vain attempt to eat. I tripped the snare and we had him.

The Fishing Line MENACE...continued

My new assistant dived in fearlessly and helped grab the bird. Clearly this man was made of steel and wasn't even slightly put off by stinky feathers, rusty fish hooks or ibis spit. I sometimes wonder why I do this job because all of those things put me right off!

It was immediately evident that the bird had several wraps of braid around its beak. To add insult to injury the poor creature had a ball sinker dangling off the end of the braid. Braid is the worst of the worst. It's a thin, light weight line favoured by lure fishermen because it has no stretch at all. It's almost unbreakable and readily cuts into flesh.

My trusty assistant held the bird down while I went to work with the scissors. We quickly cut the wraps of braid from its beak. Then the question dawned on me - where was the other end of the line? I hadn't even stopped to think about that. You've probably guessed – it was down the bird's throat.

This was not good. If the ibis had swallowed a hook, which was very likely, it was going to be a hospital job. No other way to get swallowed hooks out. We needed to check. I held the bird's beak wide open and peered down its throat. Did I mention ibis breath? No, I didn't think so.

We were in luck although it's doubtful the ibis viewed it that way. I could see the hook. It was small and buried deep in the back of the bird's tongue. Ouch! There were two choices. Put the bird through the trauma and us through the time and expense of a 70k round trip to Currumbin Animal Hospital, or attempt to force the point of the hook through the last millimetre of tongue and expose the barb. Sounds gruesome but if teenage girls are willing to pay for tongue studs I was willing to provide a similar service to this ibis - for free.

My assistant - now a veteran - agreed it was the best way to go and definitely the least traumatic option for the bird. The pain would be over in a split second and the creature would be just minutes away from snatching its first hot snagger from the nearest barbie ... possibly its first meal in days.

In an extraordinary display of athleticism my trusty assistant managed to hold the bird still while each of us took one side of its beak and prised its mouth open. I manoeuvred my needle nosed pliers down its throat and onto the shank of the hook. A quick flick and the barb cleared the flesh. The bird didn't even flinch – no doubt dreaming of hot snaggers to come. A quick change to side cutters and the barb was nipped off the hook. This allowed the shank to be backed out of its tongue. It was all over in seconds. I released the bird immediately. Then my assistant and I dutifully inspected each other for lice. I don't think I mentioned lice? Oh well.

Rather than fly off immediately like most birds, this ibis walked casually down to the water's edge and dipped its beak in several times. Then it threw its head back and I swear it was gargling with the salt water. Who said ibis were silly?

I'm delighted to say that I saw the bird next day strutting around the park looking happy and healthy. I could recognise it by its size and distinctive, draggy left wing. In fact I saw it nearly every day for a month after that.

It's a good feeling to know you've saved a wild bird from a slow and awful death – a by-product of fishing - a sport that's heavily promoted as a family activity, yet we're never told about the terrible consequences it has for so many other creatures.

The message to fishers is clear - never drop offcuts of line, especially if there's a hook on the end! This shouldn't need to be said but unfortunately it does.

In Part 2 of this story, to be published in the next newsletter, I'll talk more about the menace that fishing line has become and how it affects both our terrestrial and underwater environments. I'll also offer suggestions about how you can help fix the problem.

Rowley Goonan

Coordinator Reports

Birds

You feel very happy, and think how well you have done, to send two galahs on their merry way after a good four weeks of recovery. That leaves you with only six now!

Just as we take that breath, remove those two feeding stations, and work out how much less we will be spending on food, the phone rings. It's the hospital with another three... and it's back to square one; but then that is what we do.

Our severe weather system has taken its toll as we have all seen. This season has been absolutely atrocious, with large numbers of birds coming into care. As if baby bird season wasn't keeping us busy enough, we then had to deal with the severe weather that brought so many more into care. Most of them required general R & R, some had to be on medication, and several birds came in covered in mud, looking wet and pretty sad. I have never seen so many parrots come into care specifically for this reason

Cage space was becoming tight, but luckily these birds are very social and love each other's company. This really helps their recovery with the, at times, 'silly' stimulation they provide to entertain each other. That's when you know it's almost time for them to go back to the wild.

If any of you think a parrot is just a parrot – no, no, no! Due to the large number this season it was very apparent that they all have their own little personalities, their likes and dislikes in the food department, and also the fact that they stay babies for so long.

Some adults actually reverted back to baby behavior, especially when it came to feeding time. 'Mother Bird' was kept extremely busy in the kitchen! Then late afternoon grasses had to be collected to keep them more amused and make them realize what they need to be feeding on out there.

It is all very time consuming, however the more time you spend with a certain species the more you learn. If you have the time it is interesting to just simply observe. With the parrots this is important, particularly the Sulphur Crested Cockatoos, as they do have a 'structure'. You will find that some of the more bossy characters need to be kept separate from others. Also it is important to raise more than one baby at a time. This can create havoc at feed times, however the transition to juvenile, when they have a mate, is so much easier.

If you would like to become an active carer for birds then you must attend the Basic Bird Workshop. Please check the education calendar for the next course and register as soon as possible. There are plenty of mentors to help you get started. We hope to see you there.

More from our feathered friend's diary next time.

Liz Meffan

Orphaned Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Corella.



PHOTO // L. MEFFAN

Coordinator Reports continued...

Echidnas and Small Mammals

THE RECENT FLOODS SURPRISINGLY RESULTED IN FIVE ECHINDAS BEING "WASHED UP"; these included four adults and one puggle (baby echidna). It was apparent that one of the adults had a puggle somewhere, but, without knowing from where she came, it was impossible to return her to her place of origin and attempt a reunion and sadly, her puggle most likely wouldn't have survived the floods.

Most of the echidnas were found to be suffering from bloat from swallowing a lot of air.

Most of them made a recovery and have been released.

It has been a reasonably busy season with puggles but all are doing well and will be released in the coming months.

Karen Scott



PHOTO // D TURNBULL

Echidna wedged in between rocks after being washed-up during the floods. It took a team of fire fighters, a vet and a dedicated Wildcare volunteer to extract him.



Echidna puggle "Ackles" who came into care after his mother was hit by a car. He was only 56 grams when he arrived and is now over 400 grams.

PHOTO // K SCOTT

Koalas

SURPRISINGLY, THE PAST FEW MONTHS HAVE BEEN FAIRLY QUIET WITH FEWER KOALA RESCUES ON THE GOLD COAST. We have still seen a number of diseased koalas coming into care but fewer trauma cases thankfully.

We were certainly thankful that 2010 was kind to our orphans on the Gold Coast with only a small handful coming into care. We have, though, seen an influx in older young (2 to 2.5kg) coming into care after being found on their own, or suffering from disease.

Karen Scott

The release of Joy-Rosemary and baby Fleay back to Burleigh Heads conservation area. Sadly, both have been re-admitted to care.



PHOTO // K SCOTT

Coordinator Reports continued...

Macropods

THE PAST FEW MONTHS HAVE BEEN A LITTLE QUIETER THAN EXPECTED. One advantage of the recent rain is that there is certainly a lot of grass about and our kangaroos and wallabies do not have to come to the roadside to feed.

A huge thank you to our dedicated trauma carers who continue to make themselves available to deal with critically injured wildlife. Many of them have to travel considerable distances to perform this service, the cost of which is borne entirely by themselves.

Our updated macropod notes are still a "work in progress", but will hopefully be finished shortly. Thanks to everyone for your patience while we update these.

Karen Scott

Golden Swamp Wallaby "Little Curly" - came into care after near-drowning in a swimming pool with no sign of his mother. He is nearly ready for release.



PHOTO // K SCOTT

Small Mammals

OUR USUAL INFLUX OF BANDICOOT YOUNG STARTED EARLY THIS YEAR with a few individual animals coming into care and several small litters.

November and December brought a large influx in Antechinus, particularly in the Moreton Bay / Sunshine Coast area. Thankfully the Gold Coast was spared this year.

Vicky was certainly kept very busy with as many as 23 orphans in care at one point.

Congratulations to Bev, who raised her first small litter of antechinus very successfully. Well done.

Karen Scott



One of the many Brown Antechinus that arrived into care over the Summer months. Most were successfully handreared and released back to the wild.

This little fellow is one of nine that Natasha raised.

PHOTO // NATASHA LEWIS-MILLAR

Coordinator Reports continued...

Possums

POSSUMS ARE FOREVER GETTING THEMSELVES INTO TROUBLE, as an ever increasing human population and extreme weather events create havoc with their two basic needs; food and shelter.

In going about their nightly affairs, they find themselves in the jaws of dogs and cats, bowled over by cars, caught on barbed wire, poisoned, stuck in chimneys, even transported to entertainment venues - one brushtail mother with joey found their tarpaulin home being unfolded at the site of "The Big Day Out". The frightened mother took off and headed for the nearest tree abandoning her pouch young. However the story had a happy ending when they were able to be reunited later in the evening.

Which brings me to an important point. A healthy, abandoned possum joey can be reunited with its mother, if the mother's whereabouts is known, and if a possum carer is able to spend the time supervising the reunion. This may take a number of nights, but in the long run is well worth the trouble, as it is better for the joey and saves a carer many, many hours of work. Some research suggests that it is more likely to be a young, inexperienced mother that loses her young one, and monitoring of reunited animals indicates that it is generally successful.

50% of rescues of both brushtails and ringtails were from dog attacks

In recent months over 50% of rescues of both brushtails and ringtails were from dog attacks and the survival rate has been poor. Dogs shake their victims which does enormous damage to their internal organs. Herein lies a message. Possums are very vulnerable to domestic animal attack. The survival rate is poor. So I would ask carers to take seriously our advice to keep domestic animals well away from the wildlife you are rearing. If possums become habituated to the presence of your friendly domestic pets, their death on release is almost guaranteed.

Eleanor Hanger

DIETS AND TREATS

When you are planning the evening meal for your brushtail possum, think about where a possum lives. Hopefully its home is a forest or woodland, or an urban environment which has a reasonable number of native trees and shrubs; therefore most of its food should be coming from the native vegetation. Seek out branches with young and older foliage, buds, flowers, seeds, fruits, fungi, bark and insects, not the supermarket or corner store. And if you want to give your possum a special treat, a fat juicy moth or grasshopper and a huntsman spider will send it into paroxysms of joy. Possums really love their insects and I think it is sometimes a forgotten component of their diet.

...give your possum a special treat, a fat juicy moth, a grasshopper or a huntsman spider...

For ringtails possums, being the specialized folivores that they are, the emphasis is on providing large numbers of branches with both young and older foliage, and a good variety of species including Eucalypts. Over the years there have been many older juvenile possums rescued that are very malnourished and very humanized, and one can't help but assume that they have been reared and released without the necessary skills to find food. Let none of us be guilty of such cruelty!

Thank you sincerely to all the possum carers for your passion and commitment to providing the best quality care for the possums in this region, and a special thank you to Natalie Rasmussen for the wonderful work she does coordinating, rescuing and caring.

Eleanor Hanger

Huntsman Spider



PHOTO // NATASHA LEWIS-MILLAR

A Beautiful Story...

Jasmine did her first little rescue on the phone the other night. I was doing a massage and someone phoned and said a baby bird had fallen from its nest. Jas said, "my mum is with a client but maybe I could be of some help". She then described exactly what to do, even down to the details of making sure the holes for drainage were in the bottom of the bucket.

The lady phoned back later to say it was a huge success and the mummy bird had come back to feed her little one. She asked me to thank my teenage daughter for her wonderful advice. I had to laugh, my teenage daughter all of nine years of age!



PHOTO // SHANE HO

Thank you to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic College and Jasmine Rasmussen...

Jasmine, a student at St Francis of Assisi Catholic College, is not only a competent public speaker and advisor on wildlife matters, but has actively engaged her school in wildlife awareness, and related activities to assist carers. The last projects, in which the children were involved before the 2010 school year ended, were the knitting of pouches and construction of possum boxes.

We would like to thank Jasmine for her initiative and her school, St Francis of Assisi Catholic College for their wonderful contribution, which is greatly appreciated by our volunteer wildlife carers.

Biosecurity Alert...

It has been brought to our attention that there has been an outbreak of Myrtle Rust, a type of fungus affecting eucalypts, lilly pillies, melaleucas and other species in the Myrtaceae family. This fungus has previously been restricted to NSW but there has now been confirmed reports in the Gold Coast area. Biosecurity Queensland has asked that all cases be reported. We strongly recommend you follow the below links to assist with identification. If you suspect an outbreak, follow the protocols listed in the below links to avoid further spread and contact Biosecurity immediately on the number provided.

http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/documents/Biosecurity_GeneralPlantHealthPestsDiseaseAndWeeds/Myrtle_rust_fact_sheet.pdf

http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/documents/Biosecurity_GeneralPlantHealthPestsDiseaseAndWeeds/Myrtle_rust_ID.pdf

Thanks for your co-operation. Please direct all enquiries regarding Myrtle Rust to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or 1800 084 881.

Conservation Partnerships Program Team
Gold Coast City Council
Ph: 5582 8344 Mob: 0414 180 716 Fax: 5582 8878
Southport Nerang Road Nerang
PO Box 5042 Gold Coast Mail Centre Qld 9729
<http://www.goldcoastcity.qld.gov.au>



PHOTO // BIOSECURITY QUEENSLAND

Observations of a Naturalist

IT IS NOT ONLY THE SPECTACULAR THAT CATCHES THE ATTENTION. A loud bell-like call with clear penetrating notes drew my eye to the wattle tree (*Acacia* sp.), where a white-throated tree creeper moved quickly up the trunk, gleaning tiny invertebrates as it progressed. Ever upwards it moved as it searched for food. When an extremity was reached it would fly to the base of a branch or trunk and repeat the exercise.

Chatters and trills announced the arrival of some thornbills. With speed and dexterity they inspected leaves and branches for tasty morsels hidden in curled leaves, basking in webs, tunnelling through cells or just waiting... for what? Their last breath before they became food for those busy little birds.



PHOTO // EM HANGER

Mixophyes fasciolatus

Recent floods will have devastated populations of animals directly, as the speed and extent of some events would have precluded escape, or indirectly by destroying food and shelter. However nature has an amazing capacity to recover, given the chance, and it will be a fascinating exercise to note the progression of the recovery, like a desert island slowly coming to life as species arrive to colonize and in their turn provide food and shelter for other species.

Eleanor Hanger

Wildcare Office...*On the Move*

OUR WILDCARE OFFICE AT CURRUMBIN IS SHORTLY TO MAKE A MOVE. As you will be aware, Wildcare has operated its small administration office from a building in Teemangum Street, Currumbin which is owned by the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. The Sanctuary has kindly allowed us to use these facilities for nearly 3 years at no cost. This has been a tremendous support to Wildcare and one that we are extremely thankful for.

The Sanctuary is looking to sell the property and so the Wildcare Office is going to be temporarily located in a demountable building near the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital in Millers Drive. Hopefully this will be a temporary solution until a more permanent Office can be found.

We are so grateful for the support that the Sanctuary has provided Wildcare over recent years. We have formed a mutually beneficial relationship over the years and we hope to continue this for many years to come.

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Education Report

WORKSHOPS FOR THE JANUARY TO APRIL 2011 CALENDAR were well attended. The calendar for May to August 2011 has now been posted on the website and emailed to all current members. If you haven't downloaded a copy, I would encourage you to do so, to check the Calendar for workshops that you may wish to attend. Some workshops have been filling fast, so make sure that you book in early.

We have just completed re-vamping the Basic First Aid Workshop, so even if you have attended a previous one you may consider attending again, to gain a little more confidence in assessing and managing rescued animals.

Please note that the Calendar contains pre-requisites for most of the training workshops. While some of these need to be strictly adhered to, we do try to be as flexible as we can. If you are finding it hard to do the workshops in the correct order to meet these pre-requisites, please contact me to discuss the matter.

We are hoping that in the coming months we will be able to make a lot of our training material more accessible to members by including it on the Wildcare website for downloading. We are still fine-tuning this.

Another initiative we are considering is the establishment of training workshops specifically for children. However the biggest hindrance to this is finding members who would be prepared to invest the time to get these up and running. If anyone is interested in helping with this, please contact me by email on education@wildcare.org.au

Karen Scott



Other Wildlife Education News...

DR ANNE FOWLER WORKSHOP

A two day Bird Workshop with Dr Anne Fowler will be held on 7th and 8th May, 2011 on the Gold Coast.

Day One

Husbandry and Rehabilitation of Injured Native Birds

Day Two

Husbandry of Orphaned Birds

Dr Fowler is an expert in the field and is an inspirational lecturer. This is an opportunity not to be missed.

AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE

REHABILITATION CONFERENCE

The next Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference will be held in Townsville from the 16th to 20th July 2012. Keep an eye on the website for updates.

www.nwrc.com.au

Papers from past conferences can also be viewed on the website.



PHOTO // SHANE HO

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.



The Logan City Council has kindly supported the Wildcare Education Program over the past year and has helped fund expenses associated with our extensive training program, fuel expenses and general administration expenses.



**Gambling
Community Benefit Fund**
Queensland Government

The Gambling Community Benefit Fund has enabled Wildcare to upgrade the two computers at the Wildcare Office and to purchase a new laser printer and a card printer for membership cards. Funding was also received to cover the printing costs of our Volunteer Manual.

Many of our volunteer wildlife carers from the Brisbane region have been fortunate enough to apply and receive funding from the Brisbane City Council under their Native Wildlife Carer Funding Program. This has been a fantastic initiative of Council and has provided a wonderful opportunity for our volunteers and one that we are sure they are extremely grateful for.



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