

# **WILDCARE AUSTRALIA**

**EDUCATION   WILDLIFE REHABILITATION   RESEARCH**

January 2007, Issue 43

P.O. BOX 2379, NERANG MAIL CENTRE Q. 4211

# ***WILDNEWS***

*The Newsletter of the Australian Koala Hospital Association Inc. - WILDCARE AUSTRALIA*



K & W Johnston

**This newsletter is proudly sponsored by  
KAY ELSON MP FEDERAL MEMBER FOR FORDE**



**Veterinarian - Dr. Jon Hanger 0429 933 761**  
**Wildlife Emergency - Volunteer Carers 07 5527 2444 (24 hrs)**  
**Wildcare Education and Training 07 5527 2444**  
**Website: [www.wildcare.org.au](http://www.wildcare.org.au) Email: [wildcare@bigpond.com](mailto:wildcare@bigpond.com)**

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K. & W. Johnston  
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**DEADLINE**

**for articles for the next newsletter**

**28 March, 2007**

**The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of WILDCARE AUSTRALIA or of the editor.**

**J**anuary 2007 will soon be history - would you believe it? We hope you had a wonderful Christmas

The coming of a New Year is usually filled with excitement and high expectations, hopes and plans. Wildcare's plans not only involve achieving better outcomes for the animals in need, through their rescue, rehabilitation and release programmes, through the 24 hour emergency and information service and through their ongoing education programmes, but also continuing to be proactive in addressing some of the major issues that impact so negatively on our wildlife, such as destruction of habitat, cars, unrestrained domestic animals and barbed wire.

Many of our members are working either alone, in conjunction with others or with government bodies, such as Land for Wildlife, to restore damaged or degraded habitat on their own properties and in public areas. There are those who write letters, organize petitions, arrange for signage on rural roads, remove litter and support financially and in other ways organizations working for the welfare of animals and their habitats. Then there are those who are continually endeavouring to improve their own knowledge and skills by further study and volunteering in wildlife hospitals, so that their expertise can benefit not only the animals in their own care, but also others whom they teach or mentor.

Wildcare recognizes that as an organization it doesn't exist without its members and supporters, who work tirelessly and give generously so that the aims and plans of the organization can be fulfilled.

In this issue we would like to give a special thanks to Trish and Terry Wimberley whose support and generosity in every way is overwhelming.

We would also like to give a special thanks to our veterinarians who give so generously of their time and expertise to treat the seemingly endless procession of animals needing help.

There is always so much to be done and so little time but by keeping focused and by working together we can make enormous strides towards achieving our goals.

Ed.

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and New Year. It's hard to believe another year has gone by and so quickly! The Wildcare Christmas party was a great day and a big thank you to all the people involved in putting it together. The food was wonderful, as was the company.

I had the whole of December off, give or take a few days, and it was wonderful. I managed to do a lot of reading, sleeping and eating! Absolute bliss.....and badly needed after a few very tough months toward the end of 2006.

I want to thank everyone for their kind words and all the support that was given to me and my fellow workmates after Steve's death in September. It was very much appreciated.

Here at the hospital we are more determined than ever to keep his dream going and to achieve all of the things that he had on his to-do list, to make them bigger and better than even he dreamed. I was extremely lucky to have known him, both as a boss, friend and workmate he was never one to suppress his feelings and we were constantly told by him what he thought of us (he used to say I looked like a koala) I used to thump him!



I know I am not the only one who deeply feels his loss. He was an amazing man, passionate and with a huge heart and an enormous capacity for giving. He inspired people and taught them how beautiful and precious the animals on this planet are. Our new hospital is well on its way with all the plans finally finished. The colours have been chosen and we have started the clearing of the grounds. It is all very exciting and we can't wait to move in to the new building. Those of you who have been here will have seen we are a little short of space!

For those of you who didn't know, the hospital was created by Steve and Terri in memory of Steve's mum, Lyn Irwin, who was a passionate wildlife carer, with a particular interest in koalas. It was Lyn's dream to have a hospital, and when she died her family made it a reality. The new hospital will be for Lyn and Steve and I know they would both be so proud of what has been achieved.

We currently see about four hundred animals a month, and

while those numbers make it very busy, it is wonderful to be able to help so many animals and wildlife carers, and to see both wildlife groups and individual carers working together to achieve the best possible outcome for the animals.

We also get to see some amazing species; some you would normally never get the chance to see. So, if you are ever up this way or need an animal seen to, please feel free to visit. Everyone is welcome.

Wildlife Warriors have recently sent a whole container of hospital supplies and equipment to Cambodia. We have been gathering it the past 12 months, for a wildlife hospital we support in conjunction with Flora and Fauna International (they are the oldest conservation group around). They are doing some wonderful work over there, particularly with animals from the illegal pet trade, caught in snare traps and used for exploitation. Some of the many species saved include tigers, orang-utans, gibbons, wild dogs and elephants.

They had around 1000 animals in their sanctuary but had no hospital so FFI built the building and Wildlife Warriors supplied the equipment. A joint effort has helped and will continue to help preserve some of the wonderful animals we have in this world.



Above is some of the team in Cambodia unloading the container that was sent; Matt, one of the key members of FFI, is pictured above in the white shirt with green pants. He sent the following message along with lots of photos of very excited staff.

"Just wanted to send you a BIG thank-you as the hospital equipment finally arrived today! I was beginning to think that it was destined to remain in Cambodian customs or arrive in about 20 years, but, after two years, it is finally here and we have a proper wildlife hospital! On behalf of all of us at Phnom Tamao we cannot thank you enough for the amazing efforts that everyone has put into this. Matt"

I wish you kind regards and all the best for 2007,  
Gail Gipp





### **Leighton Constructions Donation**

Staff at Leighton Constructions have raised just over \$3,000 to help our volunteers care for sick and injured wildlife.

Trish Wimberley and Tonya Howard went along to Leighton's Christmas party in December to receive the donation and to share with the staff some of the work that our volunteers do.

On behalf of everyone at Wildcare, thank you Andrea and staff for your generous support!

### **Education Calendar**

The new Education Calendar for January to June 2007 has now been posted on the Wildcare website. Please remember that you need to register for each workshop by contacting the Wildcare office.

### **Trainer Training**

We are again conducting a training course for people who are interested in improving their teaching skills. Most of our species coordinators have completed this training and have found it very beneficial.

Training is being offered over the weekend of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> February at Advancetown.

If you are in a position where you are or may be wishing to teach at schools, community groups or to other Wildcare members either in a group or on a one-on-one basis, then you are welcome to attend the training.

There is no cost to attend but you **MUST** register by contacting Karen Scott on 07 5533 8125.

### **Blue Cards**

Just a reminder for anyone who is currently, or may in the future, be working as a volunteer for Wildcare where children are involved, that you must have a Blue Card. This is a government requirement. Application forms can be downloaded from the website for Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

[www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au)

These applications **MUST** be signed by either Karen Scott or Kathryn Biber as the Education Coordinators for Wildcare and it is a requirement that the signatories sight suitable identification, such as your driver's licence and Medicare card before the application can be submitted.

### **Paws and Claws**

Paws and Claws is a new pet and wildlife journal that is distributed free of charge through pet and produce stores and veterinary surgeries.

Some of you may have already seen the articles submitted by Wildcare on baby birds and koalas.

The publication is a great resource for everything pet and wildlife related. You can access the journal from the Paws and Claws website at:

[www.pawsandclawsjournal.com.au](http://www.pawsandclawsjournal.com.au)

### **Safety Vests**

A limited number of safety vests are available for purchase from the Wildcare Office. If you are interested in having one please contact the office between 8.00am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday.

### **Queensland Ambulance First Aid Course**

Recently the Queensland Ambulance Service conducted a First Aid Course for Wildcare trauma carers and their other halves, who in the event of an accident may be called on to render assistance.

The course was excellent and it was felt that other members of Wildcare may like to do it. So if you would like the opportunity to do a Queensland Ambulance First Aid Course through Wildcare please register your interest with the office on 07 5527 2444.

*Cont. on page 5*



Christmas has come and gone once again. It is now time to catch our breaths, take stock and plan the year ahead.

Firstly, it was good to catch up with members at our Christmas party. Nice to put faces to the voices I speak to regularly over the phone. It is not easy to find the time to

get together at such functions, but well worth it. The lunch was superb, with many of you contributing generously to a lovely spread.

Santa couldn't make it but a rather overweight, aged Christmas Angel made a brief appearance. Fun was had with the raw egg catching competition, a smashing success!

We hope to have a bigger and more exciting party next year.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how impressed I am with our members who work so tirelessly for Wildcare. Many of them not only have animals in care and help with rescues, but also man the rescue phones from home.

Wildcare is desperately short of rescue telephone operators and office volunteers. Come on members let's not leave it to the few. Remember many hands make light work. If you can help please contact me in the Wildcare Office.

## All Things Gross.....

*Cont. from page 4*

Do you know that koala carers harvest the raw caecum contents from freshly deceased koalas? This is generally referred to as "pap" and is sometimes fed to adult koalas when they are on antibiotics to help maintain or restore their natural gut flora. It is also fed to baby koalas to help establish their gut flora. Without this baby koalas often do not survive.

This has been quite the usual thing to do for many years, but recently carers have started using the same practice to harvest caecum contents from ringtail possums as well. This is used to feed to ringtail possum joeys to help establish their gut flora.

If you collect a freshly deceased ringtail possum or koala, please place it in several plastic bags and place the animal in the bottom of your fridge and then telephone your coordinator. Gross, I know....but it often saves animals lives



Billy, the koala, lapping up some "pap".  
Baby koalas LOVE it and get it absolutely everywhere!

# A Short Note on the Use of Antibiotics in Ringtail Possums

By Dr Jon Hanger  
B.V.Sc. (Hons) B.V.Biol. PhD

Ringtail possum joeys are prone to a condition, commonly referred to as bloat, which results in distension of some sections of the gastro-intestinal tract with gas, fluid and/or ingesta. It is often fatal. While the precise mechanisms that cause bloat are unknown, understanding some basic principles will help carers to prevent and manage bloat.

Normal gastro-intestinal function in ringtail possums (and most other species) requires:

- ☐ Appropriate diet
- ☐ Normal gastro-intestinal flora
- ☐ Normal gastro-intestinal motility
- ☐ Normal digestion and absorption of nutrients

Because ringtail possums have a specialised diet consisting predominantly of foliage, they must develop and maintain a special blend of gastro-intestinal microbes. Establishment of this microflora occurs during the rearing of the joey by the mother in a process similar to papping in koalas. Coprophagia (eating of faeces) is also a normal phenomenon in ringtail possums, and probably serves both to maintain normal flora, and recycle nutrients.

Failure to establish normal gastro-intestinal flora at the appropriate stage of development, plus any condition, physiological insult or medication that interferes with the factors listed above may result in gastro-intestinal disturbance and bloat. Some examples:

- (a) A diet that is high in soluble carbohydrates or sugars, such as nectar, can cause an overgrowth of certain types of bacteria that thrive on the availability of a simple energy substrate. These bacteria can produce gas, toxins and suppress good microflora leading to distension of the gut, abnormal gastro-intestinal motility and sometimes stagnant loops or pockets in the bowel. If not resolved quickly, this can lead to fatal bloat or toxæmia.

**Recommendation: Feed a primarily leaf diet**

- (b) A ringtail possum, that is the presumed victim of a cat attack, is placed on a prophylactic course of Clavulox drops. The antibiotic causes death of many of the good bacteria in the gut, leading to overgrowth of other bacteria, and a similar cascade of events as in example (a) above occurs.

**Recommendation: Only use antibiotics (by injection not oral) when there is a clear indication**

- (c) A severely dehydrated joey ringtail possum is started on milk formula before adequate rehydration. The joey is unable to secrete sufficient fluid and enzymes into the gut to digest the food, resulting in bacterial overgrowth. It develops bloat and dies.

**Recommendation: Rehydrate with balanced electrolyte solution first, and follow up with a weak glucose solution, 1 teaspoon to 250ml water.**

Ringtail possum joeys are often the victims of cat and bird attacks, and sometimes sustain penetrating injuries. The injuries need close and careful examination, because only some will require antibiotics.

Adhering to the following rules will help to prevent bloat:

1. Do NOT use antibiotics in ringtail possums unless there is a clear indication to do so. For example, a vet has confirmed that a bacterial infection is occurring or is highly likely to occur if antibiotics are not used.
2. Use only injectable antibiotics - avoid oral antibiotics, especially in joeys.
3. Avoid broad spectrum antibiotics, such as Clavulox, unless indicated by culture and sensitivity results. Use amoxicillin (Moxylan) injection for cat and bird attack injuries.
4. Use as short a course as possible: three days will often be enough.
5. Topically treat wounds appropriately to minimize or avoid the need for antibiotics.
6. Maintain possums on a "minimalist" diet (leaf and weaker strength formula for joeys, leaf only for older ringtails) during antibiotic use, to minimize the risk of bacterial overgrowth.
7. Maintain good hydration (with water) during antibiotic courses to ensure normal digestive processes.
8. Re-establish normal flora after antibiotic courses by feeding faeces or pap from healthy ringtail possums (such as recently deceased car victims).

As wildlife carers, you should not assume that every veterinarian knows these things. Ensure that you have made the treating veterinarian aware of the special risks of antibiotic use in ringtail possums, particularly joeys.

**Note: Antibiotics must not be used unless prescribed by a veterinarian.**



J Hanger



Hello fellow carers,

This is just a friendly note to confirm your details regarding bird care for Wildcare. I have a copy of your rehabilitation permit endorsements. I would like to make sure that all of your information is correct.

Could you please provide me with the following information:

Name:

Address:

Home Phone:

Work Phone:

Mobile:

Species able to be cared for:

Baby/Juvenile:

Adult:

How many, of each, are you able to care for at any one time:

Are you willing to pick up any other species for transport to vets or any

other carers:

Rescue availability:

Facilities you have:

Also, it is now a condition of having your permit endorsed for birds that you complete the Basic Bird workshop and then complete one of the other bird workshops that is relevant to the species listed on your permit each year. This means that your permit is conditional upon doing this. Otherwise you are really only covered to keep an animal for up to 48 hours because you have completed your orientation training.

We are releasing the workshop dates for February-June. They are as follows:

### BIRD WORKSHOPS

11th February 2007 - Basic Bird (Gold Coast) 9-3

25th February 2007 - Diseases and Injuries (Gold Coast) 9-4

25th March 2007 - Diseases and Injuries (Brisbane) 9-4

22nd April 2007 - Diseases and Injuries (Eumundi) 9-4

13th May 2007 - Basic Bird Workshop (Gold Coast) 9-3

3rd June 2007 - Basic Bird Workshop (Brisbane) 9-3

Please try to complete the basic bird workshop before the diseases and injuries workshop. The benefits of the diseases and injuries workshop will be much greater if you do.



Karen Barney has also offered to provide another workshop at her home in Jimboomba for anyone who cannot make any of the dates listed above. She is also more than willing for anyone who may want some hands on experience and training to visit her at home.

For further information please contact Karen at any time on Tuesday, Sunday, or after 7:30pm any other night on (07) 5548 6614.

So, if you do not meet the requirements for your rehab permit (i.e. haven't completed a bird workshop in over 12 months), please clear your schedule for at least one of these dates and come to a workshop on birds. We promise, we'll try to make it as interesting as possible.

P.S. Please make sure that you confirm the times, dates and venues before the day.

Sincerely,  
Cheryl Barney

# Gympie Coordinators Report

With Christmas and New Year a distant memory, we are back in the swing of things already – no rest for the wicked!!!

First of all congratulations to Karen Scott, the lucky winner of the beautiful quilt raffled up this way to raise funds for Wildcare. More fundraising activities are in the pipeline including a stall at the Gympie Show. If you can help fill a shift or two please give us a call.

We have had an unusual run of interesting and rare critters coming into care in this region of late, including a Herbert's Rock Wallaby, a true Topknot Pigeon, a juvenile Platypus, the elusive Ground Parrot and a Black-Breasted Buttonquail. While it is sad to see such rare species coming into care, it is nice to know that they are still out there and, in a couple of cases, in places we wouldn't have expected them to use as habitat.

Some of this season's juvenile flying foxes are getting themselves into trouble in the area around the Widgee Crossing roost site. Fortunately caring members of the public are taking an interest and letting us know when the little guys are in strife (eg barbed wire) and we are getting to them as quickly as we can, before they further damage themselves. The flying foxes coming in are very thin which is indicative of a poor flowering and fruiting season.

Recently a few carers have had instances of Eastern Grey joeys falling sick and dying within a short period of time (ie 4 hours). We are currently awaiting the results of blood and tissue tests to help us determine what is going on.

An Advanced Macropod Course is scheduled for Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February at Eumundi. All macropod carers should set this day aside and attend. Please book in early by calling the Wildcare Office between 8am and 4pm Monday to Friday. .

Rachel, who is based at Pomona, has recently completed her training and has sedative, anaesthesia and euthanasia medications on hand for wildlife treatment. If there are instances where these medications are needed after hours or on weekends please contact her. Similarly Wildcare shop items are also available through Rachel.

We encourage all members in the Sunshine Coast and Gympie areas to keep in regular contact with us and also to attend as many scheduled training workshops as possible.

Regards

Paula Rowlands & Rachel Lyons



## Ringtail Possums and Caecal Stasis

Rachel Lyons

Ringtail possums are my favourite species of the three larger possum species we have coming into care in South East Queensland. They are my favourite not only for their generally quiet nature and willingness to socialise with others of their species, but also because they have some really unusual habits and characteristics which make them unique.

I like to think of the Ringtail possum as more like a Koala or a Greater Glider than the Common and Mountain Brush-tail possum. This is primarily due to the similarity of their diet and digestive system.

Ringtail Possums are primarily folivores (ie leaf eaters) and in the wild only eat small amounts of flowers and fruits. This diet is made possible by the existence of a large caecum and sensitive microbial activity within it. A caecum can be described as a large digestive chamber off the large bowel which selectively retains parts of their food for further digestion. While both the Common and Mountain Brushtails also have caecums, they are not nearly as large or as important as that of the ringtails. An adult ringtail's caecum is almost as long as its body and usually about 2-3cms thick.

Ringtail possums are coprophagic which means that they feed on their own and their mother's faeces. Research shows that Ringtails produce two different types of faeces. During the day they produce a soft, moist faeces that is high in nutrients which they ingest and at night they produce a hard fibrous pellet which is what we see in the bottom of the cage in the morning. Ringtails recycle their food to ensure they get the most nutrients and energy from the hard-to-break down leaves.

Fundamental to the process of eating and digesting leaf is the existence of specific bacteria in the caecum to deal with it. During a young ringtail's life, particularly when

*(continued on page 20)*



## Excerpt from a Letter of Appreciation

Dear Sir / Madam / Human Earth Angels of Wildcare Australia

I would like to sincerely thank Wildcare Australia and your dedicated volunteers for the assistance I, and an injured wallaby, were provided tonight.

The wallaby had been hit by a car and had an injured rear leg. As I do not have the skills to deal with such an injury I and my children were quite panicked, as we knew the wallaby was in distress and needed urgent treatment. As the accident occurred at night I was unsure if I could get assistance at this time.

However, **within half an hour from making my phone call for help, a Wildcare Australia volunteer arrived, complete with medication and knowledge** to not only help the wallaby and immediately ease its distress, but also to educate me and my family as to what we could/should do if such a situation arose in the future. His gentle touch and concern also eased my and my children's distress.

**The professional, caring manner of the Wildcare Australia volunteer (Mark Alexander) was exceptional**, as was the response time.

The Wildcare Australia volunteer also was able to advise my daughter, who owns two blue tongue lizards (and holds a license for the same), on better ways to feed and care for them.

Thank you so much for being there. Thank you so much for caring. Thank you for having access to medication for our injured Australian wildlife. Thank you for educating the public. Thank you so very, very much for **all** that you do!

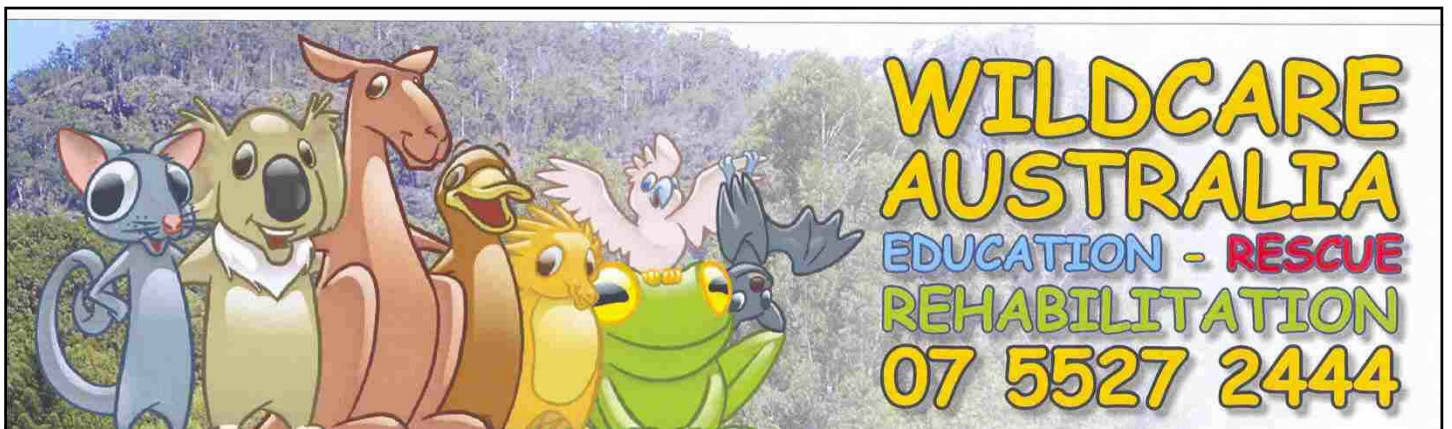
Kindest regards

Ms Toni Burcher  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
InterRe Insurance Brokers Pty Ltd  
Website: [www.interre.com.au](http://www.interre.com.au)

## STICKERS AND BUSINESS CARDS

Remember to purchase your supplies of these eye-catching stickers and business cards from the Wildcare office, when you are next there.

The cards have a space on the back for carers to leave messages or their personal contact details





## A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Wildcare Australia welcomes the following new members:

*Shannon Plummer, New Farm; Rahnne & Gerard Tranter, Toowong;  
Melissa & Jeff Nickson, Mundubbera; Tracy & Mark Clements, Gympie;  
Michael De Groot & Kathy Myhill, Goodna; Carol Stevens, Chermside;  
Andrew Jaquet & Angela Rixon, Logan Central; Rebecca Wild, Deception Bay;  
Alison Downes Youl & Dean Youl, Arundel Hills; Helen & Guy McCrindle,  
Nanango; Karen Abdy & Sue Kafoa, Crystal Creek; Peggy & Peter Hayes,  
Surfers Paradise; Jaymee & Michelle Lorenz, Elimbah;  
Robyn McDonald, Tewantin; Helen Lavery, Ashmore; Melissa Singleton,  
Mango Hill; Tracy Parox, Waterford; Natalie Anne Rasmussen, Willow Vale;  
John Inglis, The Gap; Jeff Rabbidge, Sinnamon Park; Mellisa Minogue,  
Aratula; Marissa Palmer & Matthew Dyba, Thornlands,  
Liz Meffan, Eagle Heights; Shane Smith, Ashmore; Belinda & Steven Cooper,  
Warner; Shannon de Silva Gray, Regents Park; Robyn Caridi,  
Currumbin Valley; Allison Needham, Highvale; Greg & Leila Turnbull,  
Burpengary; Gabrielle & Brent Anthony, Tallai; Alison O'Sullivan, Cornubia;  
Leisa Shanks-Baker, Ashmore; Karla Slade, Burleigh Waters;  
Maree-Alana Mills, Gilston; Toni Newcombe, Carrara; Arja Gullvik,  
Pullenvale; Sandi & Bruce Henry, Cornubia; Angelique Thorrold, Red Hill;  
Melinda & Pamela McMullen, Palm Beach; Kellie Pearse, Maudsland;  
Jane Sutcliffe, Palmwoods; Isabel Romero Holst, Coolangatta;  
Sandra Gallegos, Coolangatta; Kathy Prior, Ipswich;  
Katrina Prior, New Farm; Phil Ware, Ashmore; Georgina Whaley,  
Dorroughby; Cherie Richards, Lamington National Park via Canungra;*

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 Trish Hales, our secretary, and I'm sure she will be able to help you. Trish is in the office from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm on Monday and Friday.

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

## National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference 2007

The NWRC 2007 will be held in Perth, Western Australia from the 6th to the 9th August.

"The four-day conference programme will schedule sessions to allow delegates the opportunity to attend all presentations. Topics will cover a broad range of wildlife related issues presented by veterinarians, specialist rehabilitators, zoologists, researchers and professionals working in various wildlife fields."

If you have attended any of the previous conferences you will know that they are not to be missed.

For more information visit the website [www.nrwc.com.au](http://www.nrwc.com.au)



## HELP OUR WILDLIFE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME



- WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?
- CAN YOU SPARE 3 HOURS A MONTH?
- DO YOU LIKE TO CHAT?



Wildcare operates a 24 hour telephone service to provide help and information to the general public. Volunteers can help with as little as 3 hours a month by manning these phones from home. We all understand how busy life can be, but sparing so little time can be such a great help to our native wildlife. Free training is available to all our members.



Please contact Cerri-Lee Van Buuren,  
our friendly Telephone Co-ordinator on 0403 265575  
or you can call 07 55272444 during office hours.

## CAGES.....AVIARIES.....FISH TANKS

Thanks to the continuing help of Jazz Radio, 94.1 FM, we have received quite a few donations of cages, aviaries, and fish tanks. The aviaries always go pretty quickly, but there are still some cages and fish tanks available. If you are interested in any of these let me know.

Aviaries do come up quite frequently, so if you are in need let it be known, so if one comes up I will keep you in mind.

Remember these are on a loan basis and if you decide to discontinue working with Wildcare, they must be returned to Wildcare. Also keep in mind that most of the aviaries are erected on people's property, and they are donated with the understanding that we will remove them. If you have trouble there, we might be able to work something out - like the loan of a trailer.

Dianna Smith  
55307340  
0409223062  
dianna@milroy.com





## BIRD BUSINESS

### Pelican Workshop

On November 26, five Wildcare members made the big trek down to Ballina to attend a workshop at the Seabird Rescue Centre. It was presented by Lance Ferris and Marny Bonner. What a wonderful experience. They are such dedicated people and are so passionate about their cause. Their mission statement is "Living together – reducing the human impact on marine wildlife".

They cover many different sea birds, but their main focus is pelicans. There are so many injured and entangled through active fishing practices, and the Gold Coast has a high incidence of these unfortunate accidents. We had lots of 'hands on' work with these beautiful birds and we learned that they aren't as fearsome as first thought. Sea turtles were also covered and there were quite a few in care for us to observe.

We are now very enthusiastic about setting up a team of people to help the pelicans on the Gold Coast. If anyone is interested, we would love to share our knowledge. We would like to establish a network up and down the coast to work together to alleviate the suffering of these poor birds. We already have a few

willing helpers in the southern areas, but not many up north. Tweed Bait has been kind enough to donate a large quantity of pilchards to help in our rescue work.

We have learned quite a few capture techniques that we would love to share. A visitor to the Gold Coast, and soon to be a member of Wildcare (I hope), was instrumental in providing some of us with equipment and training in these techniques. He has helped in numerous captures of birds – the ones that were injured or entangled and could still fly -

those that we used to think were unable to be captured. We are also in the process of constructing some traps useful with these types of birds. If you are interested in learning the techniques and/or obtaining some of the equipment please contact me. We will have some of the equipment available for loan as well.

Dianna Smith  
[dianna@milroy.com](mailto:dianna@milroy.com)  
55307340  
0409223062



Amber Cameron at the Seabird Rescue Centre

### Pelican Profile

Pelicans are magnificent, large, black and white birds. Their most distinctive feature is the enormous bill with pouch. Colour variations in the bill are found in breeding, non breeding and immature birds. Juveniles are a dull brown on the wings, back and tail, rather than black. Females are somewhat smaller than males.

They are gregarious birds, although sometimes you will find a solitary one. They form pairs for breeding. The nest may be in low vegetation or a scrape in the ground lined with a variety of vegetation, such as grass, leaves, twigs, water weeds. Usually two or three chalky dull white eggs are laid. Both parents tend the nest and feed the young by re-

gurgitation. The young leave the nest at 25 days and form crèches. They fledge at 70-80 days and reach maturity between three and four years. There is a high mortality rate in arid regions if falling water levels lead to depleted fish supplies or better access for predators.

They are nomadic and often fly in V shaped formations. Thermals are used to gain height and then they travel in long glides with occasional slow flapping.

Pelicans use both marine and fresh water habitats, the latter where there is a large body of water, such as dams, lakes and rivers, and providing there are sufficient food resources.

They often feed co-operatively by herding fish into the shallows or surrounding them. Their food includes fish, crusta-

ceans, insects, reptiles, gulls, and ducks. They feed mainly during the day but have been observed feeding at night.

Reference: Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds Vol. 1 Ratites to Ducks Part B. Marchant, S. & Higgins, P.J. (Co-ordinators) Melbourne OUP 1990.

The name 'pelican' probably derives from the Portuguese 'alcatraz' the scoop or bucket of a water wheel, which originates from the Arabic water lifting device 'al quadas'. Alcatraz, the prison in San Francisco Bay, was named by a Spanish lieutenant *Isla de los Ascatrazes* after the large pelican population there.

From *Word Watching* by Julian Burnside. Melbourne, Scribe, 2004.

Eleanor Hanger



On the 18<sup>th</sup> February, baby Cecilia, brushtail possum, came into care as a 37 gram (approx 70 days old) pinkie after her mother was mauled by a dog. Our “guidelines” for raising a viable brushtail suggest a minimum weight of 50 grams..... but I am known for stretching the “guidelines” just a little bit, once in awhile.

With the blessing of having a 1977 Humidi-crib and the ability to be able to survive for weeks with very little sleep, and that constantly interrupted, I began the joy of feeding Cecilia every two hours around the clock with a very tiny syringe and teat. She prospered and blossomed beautifully until she became 300 grams (approx 135 days old) when she started having diarrhoea. We made three trips up to the Australian Wildlife Hospital (1.5 hours north of home) but the Vets could not find anything wrong. Cultures were sent to pathology and still nothing. Then early one morning (2:30 am) Cecilia's stomach appeared distended and swollen, about the size of a grapefruit full of gas. Fearing the worst, I pictured Gail having to talk me through placing a needle in her abdomen and sucking out the air. We waited until 6:30 am then headed north (well low flying really) and arrived at the hospital at 7:30 am

Dr Che saw Cecilia and diagnosed a possible twist in mesentery and enteritis, especially in caecum (similar to an appendicitis in humans with twists in the bowel). Then she broke the good news..... “We have not had a very good success rate with surgery to treat this problem”.

Through numerous tears (my nick name is ‘Niagara Falls’ .....the tears gush) I said, “Lets go ahead and op-

erate”. So Dr Che, Nurse Kia and I prepared for the surgery. It was my job to monitor her heart and breathing. Well, finally we were all masked up and ready to go. Surgery seemed to take for ever. Kia kept telling me to stop sniffing, and my paper mask started to fall apart, but we all made it through to the recovery stage. Dr Che said it would still be touchy for the next ten days. Cecilia had two layers of internal stitches and then staples. Dr Che also commented that Cecilia was very plump and that suturing her was like sewing up a fat little puppy.



Cecilia has since been soft released. She hasn't left home completely as she sometimes sleeps in the roof cavity.

It is only a matter of time before she has a little bulge at the base of her scar. If her pouch was ‘damaged’ during surgery I have told Dr Che that she will have to do plastic surgery to repair it.

I can't thank the Australia Wildlife Hospital enough for the great care and compassion they offer to our wonderful and unique wildlife. I love driving all the way up there to have the staff be cheeky to me, but would prefer if I didn't have to make as many trips as I do (for the wildlife's sake).



# I'm Going on a Rescue...

Written by Sarah Whitehouse

"I'm going on a rescue....."

How many times did I expect to say that in the past year? Not as often as I did! Who'd have thought so many birds could get into mischief so easily? From flying into windows, falling out of nests, colliding with cars, swimming in pools... like a box of chocolates – you never know what you're going to get, or for that matter whom you are going to meet. Like the member of the public who frantically called asking that I rescue a baby kookaburra. "How do you know it is a baby kookaburra?" I ask, before heading out on the rescue.

"Well, its beak is really long and pointy, it looks like a kookaburra"

"What does it do when you put your hand in front of its beak – does it open its mouth and make noise?"

"Yes". So having established that we could risk feeding it a LITTLE bit of meat to tide it over until I arrived, I head out on the rescue at 8.30pm. Driving out to Regents Park from Daisy Hill (about 25min), I think to myself, "how cool, my first baby kookaburra". I think about which housing cage I will put him/her in, how I will assess the injuries, perhaps I will need a light to help keep him warm...

I arrive at the house, and the excitable woman greets me at the door – "Here he is, he gobbled down the meat, and went straight to sleep, you can keep the little towel and everything in the box, I don't want to disturb him".

I peek inside, and do a double take. That is not a kookaburra. I reach in and pick up the bird. It sits in my hand easily, and I pull it out of the box – "Um, this is not a kookaburra; it is a spotted turtle dove. These birds don't eat meat; they eat seed and are considered a feral species." I take the bird to my car, and wonder "HOW on



Vs:



EARTH did she get it to eat mince?!!"

Then there was the 11.30pm call out for a tawny frogmouth with a suspected badly broken wing. The member of the public tells me the bird's eyes are rolling in its head, and that she thinks it is in a really bad way. So thinking I will have a trip to Animal Emergency for a quick euthanasia, I rush to the house. Greeted by the woman, her husband, and their teenage daughter, the woman tells me she stripped off her shirt to pick the Tawny off the road, and cuddled it all the way home. They proceed to call me into their garage, under the blaring six neon lights, to look at the Tawny's condition. I explain I would prefer to take the bird outside to the bonnet of my car, and look at him in the



reduced light. What do you know – the

"Elvis" the Tawny

Tawny's eyes are beautiful, even and aligned, his wings feel ok, but he is not gripping with his feet. I take him home, and start recuperation.

That little guy ended up staying with me for eight weeks. He had a fractured pelvis and I named him (yep) "Elvis". I considered having him humanely destroyed, when he couldn't perch for weeks on end, then just when I was ready to take the drive, he sat on the lowest perch, just five centimeters from the ground, and from there never looked back - He was successfully released back to his home habitat.

These are just two of the hundreds of bird rescues I completed this year – and believe me I could rattle on about another fifty or so...like the Rainbow lorikeet which took on a spoilt house trained yippy Chihuahua - and won. I arrived to find the owner most concerned the bird is

bleeding. I captured the lorikeet, no injuries. I advised her to check her dog's snout for bite wounds – the look on her face: priceless! Or the Dollarbird I rescued which passed a rusty metal washer and a five cent size piece of rectangular metal in its bowel motions. Imagine my surprise. Needless to say, he didn't survive.

(Continued on page 15)



(Continued from page 14)

I know a lot of carers are reluctant to care for birds – preferring the furry varieties. But, think of it, there are many, many more varieties of birds, crazy personalities, and while often the death rate is higher, the success, release rate is fast. I have rescued a menagerie this past year, and am gonna try sticking to Lorikeets and Tawny Frogmouths in 2007. Who'd have thought that when I first rescued a Tawny, I was terrified it was going to bite me, and I drove all the way to Jimboomba so Karen Barney could inspect it for me. What a laugh!!

This year I have hand raised numerous species of birds. The most

memorable for me, the Rainbow Lorikeet babies who continue to fly by the house, spot me in the yard and circle as if to say, "HI, Mum!" Or my three Tawny babes successfully released. The brown female is still visiting three weeks later. It feels so good to see them successfully doing it all out there. I am just waiting on "Bruck" now, my last Tawny baby for this year to finish learning to fly.

I never even considered myself a bird person, and now I couldn't imagine my home without them. Why not consider becoming a bird carer too? It will, without a doubt, change your life!



S. Whitehouse

**Handraised  
Rainbow Lorikeet**

## Junior's Story

**Helen Bradley**



H. Bradley

As carers we have all got the call. "Can you come and get this animal some kids have been hurting it?" It makes us angry, upset and wondering about the future of our society. If an individual can do this to a defenceless animal when they are young, what are they going to do when they are adults? When you are

feeling like this, remember the following story.

It was in the second last week of school and for this science teacher things are starting to wind down. A colleague (Andrew) and I were just having our first coffee of the day (essential for any teacher) when we saw a large group of boys walking very fast along the path. Now this could mean a fight or something else was up. Andrew observed that one boy was carrying something. Oh, it's an animal emergency; the kids at school are always bringing me baby birds and lizards that they find. Only this time the animal appeared quite big. It's a wallaby; .....but wait, no, it's an Eastern Grey joey (about 3kg). I thought what in the world is an Eastern Grey doing in Slacks Creek. The student carrying this bundle of joy was Junior. He told me he scooped it off the road. Now this road is four lanes and very busy, especially in the morning. Junior had been walking to school with some of his mates when he saw a kangaroo

jumping down the road. I found out later that he ran across the road, and with a football tackling manoeuvre, brought her to the safety of the footpath. He then brought her straight to me.

Junior saw an animal in danger and just reacted. That came straight from his heart.

The kids today are not all bad, even the "bad" ones can be caring and valiant. Junior is very proud of the fact that he saved a life; the joey was named "Junior" in his honour. He refers to her as his daughter. She is in care and doing well. Roy, you have a special girl who is lucky she had her guardian angel, a 14 year old boy looking out for her on that day.

So when you have to care for, or God forbid have euthanased, an animal that has been hurt by a person, think of Junior and the hundreds of others who act on a very good instinct to protect and nurture the animals that find their way into our hands.

It is for me!

I'm Maggie. A few months ago I became a Wildcare Rehabilitator and I'd like to share my story with you as to how that came about!

One Sunday night in August, my husband and I were travelling along Mt Nathan Rd at approximately 6:30 pm. I was in the passenger seat nursing my new puppy, and had my eyes on him, not the road or the surroundings, when my husband, Peter, quite casually said that the car in front of us had just hit a koala.

I immediately looked up and panicked, telling Peter to turn around!

Peter exclaimed, "There is nowhere to turn around!"

This just horrified me. I kept saying, "You can't leave him there, you have to turn around!"

We managed to find a spot where we could turn around and the person who hit the koala turned around as well. We travelled back to where the koala was but there was no way we could stop. I was horrified to see and hear it in pain. Then another car travelling behind us, hit the koala. By now I was hysterical!

Finally we turned around again and were first back at the scene. I literally flew out of the car, as soon as my husband slowed down. Of course, I waited and made sure I could cross the road safely. There was an unusual amount of traffic, or it seemed that way.

I had my puppy wrapped in a beach towel, so I took that with me as I ran to the middle of the road. The other bystanders assisted in stopping the traffic.

All I really remember was the horrific sound that was coming from the middle of the road. It is a sound I will never forget, nor be able to describe.

Suddenly a car was approaching around the corner and I couldn't reach the koala in time, so I stood there screaming for the car to slow down. I think I gave the poor guy a heart attack, as he just managed to miss the koala by inches.

My reflexes took over and I had that koala scooped up and safely removed

from the road. Immediately it stopped shrieking.

Unfortunately I not only had to deal with the injured koala, but a series of bystanders, and especially the two hysterical people who had both run over the koala. I couldn't do both.

Thankfully my husband took care of the humans, while I checked the koala over as best I could, or knew how.

The poor thing was severely injured. Its left arm was stretched out and had a gash that ran from its shoulder half way down its arm; I could actually see the bone. Its nose and teeth were all smashed.

The worst part of this scene was that I had no idea who to call. I didn't have a vet yet for my 6-week old puppy, so I asked the others, who did not seem to know what to do either, if anyone knew a vet, and if so to call one!

I could feel the koala slipping away. I bent down under the headlights of the car to see if it was still alive, and was concerned because its eyes were rolling back. I have done first aid, and I knew that couldn't be good. I just held him tight to me and at one stage he tried to reach out to me with his good arm, and grab me, as if pulling me closer to him for security.

Still no one had called a vet.

By this stage the second driver had left because she had a baby crying in the car. I had told her to go. I still didn't know what to do.

Someone drove past and gave my husband Wildcare's number. Finally someone was taking control of the situation.

But then I made the worst decision I was to make. The first woman who hit the koala insisted that she should take him, since it was her responsibility. I was unsure that I should do it, but at the same time, felt that if the shoe was on the other foot, I would probably want to do the same. So, I bundled the koala up and placed him with the woman's son, instructing him as best I could with no real knowledge myself! She promised to call me and let me know what happened.

She did call once and said she had called

Wildcare and would call me when they came. She never called me back.

For two days I waited. Stupid! I had not thought to take her number! Finally I decided to ring Wildcare myself. I explained what happened but unfortunately the koala had probably died, as Wildcare had not been called out to the rescue.

This was the moment that made me blurt out, "Maybe I should become involved in Wildcare"

By the end of the week I had received my paperwork. A month later I spent a weekend doing two of their workshops, and a few weeks later I had my first baby possum in care. I named him Dracula, because he bites me a lot!

In just a few months I have gone from being completely inexperienced with wildlife, to having a better understanding of what to do at the scene of an accident and I am slowly learning to care for our native animals. Oh, and I now know there is a 24 hour vet at Robina.

It has made me feel as if I was born to do this, and although I have a zillion, well, maybe just a few, scratches from Dracula, I'm handling it all very well. I have had unbelievable support from my co-coordinator, Leanne Burgess. The team at Wildcare is just brilliant, very professional, and well, really lovely caring people.

I feel as if I'm making a small difference to our environment. I can now help to teach others some simple things. My kids have become more aware, and they share that knowledge with their friends.

So, I ask you, "Is It For YOU?"

I think it is! There are many ways you can help, and many different species you can care for. We especially need bird carers in the area, and it is a great way to start. Even if you just want to know some basic information on birds, you can do a workshop, at a very low cost, or why not become a member and do it for free?

We all have a right to live, even our native animals. Make a difference by learning to keep them alive!

If you want further information please call Wildcare 5527 2444.



# Photo Gallery



Laura Reeder

Gabi enjoying her leaf



Kerry Johnson

Breakfast at Kerry's place



Kerry Johnson

What am I?



J Hanger

What am I?



J Hanger

You all know what I am, but do you know what I have in common with pythons?



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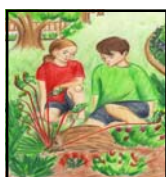
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# Have You Ever Heard a Frog Scream? □

LAURA REEDER

The phone rang again, with yet another call for help; this time from a woman who could see a large common green tree frog pinned between a rafter and the brick wall on her verandah.

Over the phone, between the screams of her new born (human) infant, and the less than dulcet voice of the caller, I could hear the frog's cry.

Armed with an ice cream bucket, some pure water and a crowbar, Pippa and I jumped into the car and sped off. What else should we take? We were not experienced in frog rescues!

On arrival, sure enough, we could see the dangling head and upper torso of a large green tree frog. Its front legs dangled between the brick wall and one of the smaller beams and the

hind quarters were out of sight, presumably in the roof cavity. And it was screaming as only a frog in distress can do.

I climbed a ladder and Pippa stood ready below with the bucket of water. As I gently prized the beam a few millimetres away from the wall the frog started to wiggle. "Aha," I thought, "another few seconds and you'll be free".

But no! Suddenly the frog started to slide backwards, up the wall, slowly at first and then quickly disappearing from sight. The poor thing was scrabbling for grip on the wall as we watched helplessly.

It must have been trying to escape a predator, probably a snake and I served it up on a platter! Frog's legs all around!

*(continued from page 8)*

less than 150g, the caecum is growing rapidly and the bacterial relationships within are extremely sensitive. The contents of the caecum, the digesting matter, is called 'pap'.

Unfortunately when in care we often see juvenile to sub-adult ringtails coming down with what is now known as Caecal Stasis or otherwise loosely termed as "bloat". This essentially occurs when the delicate balance of specific bacteria in the developing caecum is disrupted. A symptom of caecal stasis is, in the first instance, a distended abdomen. The possum looks bloated, is often uncomfortable, but usually acts fairly normally and can even continue to pass faeces. The condition however is very serious and over time (a few weeks), if the possum has survived the initial bloat impact, it will become thin and lethargic and will eventually die. Malabsorption is taking place as the caecum fails to develop and function properly. Necropsies show that the bloat is not gaseous but is of liquid nature.

So what causes caecal stasis or 'bloat'? Of the several cases I have seen, one of the following has been implicated. The animal has had a course of antibiotics, or has been fed a diet that is high in sugar, eg. fruit, flowers, honey in milk

In most instances once symptoms are present it is too late to do much about caecal stasis. If, by chance, you happen to get to it really early in the case of a high sugar diet, I have had some success with using 'pap' from a deceased ringtail over several days combined with a high fibre diet.

Dr Terri Bellami has had some success using a combination of high soluble fibre supplement with gastrointestinal motility drugs in early stages.

Everyone I have spoken to agrees however, that once the disease has advanced there is little that can be done and the best option is euthanasia so as to avoid a slow and inevitably painful death.

## SO PREVENTION IS THE GO!!!

**To prevent this sad occurrence the following points should be embraced:**

- avoid all fruit and flowers with ringtails under 150g,**
- give milk formula and native leaf only**
- avoid adding any sugary supplements (including honey) to milk**
- provide only natural diet when possum is over 150g – lots of native leaf with only small amounts of native flowers and fruits every now and again**
- avoid the use of oral antibiotics in ringtail possums of all ages**
- take care when using injectable antibiotics with ring-tails. I have had some problems with a couple of them.**

There are a few people around the country investigating this disease and hopefully we will know more about it with time. Until then prevention is our only real option.

With this exception, ringtail possums are a delight to have and are usually fairly easy to rear and release successfully when fed the correct diet and milk formula (yes.....many experienced ringtail carers have distinct preferences here too – but that's a whole article in itself!!).



Reference:

Dr Teri Bellami B.V Sc., Dip W M & H., M. Env. Sc.  
'Caecal Stasis in Ringtailed Possums' Conference Proceedings National Conference on Wildlife Rehabilitation, 2003

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