

WILDNEWS

Winter 2010 Issue 57



*Raptor Rescue:
"The End of the
Line"*

*Vet Check:
Psittacine Beak
and Feather
Disease*



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COVER PHOTO// R. GOONAN



President's Report.

Karen Scott

WELL, ANOTHER WILDCARE YEAR HAS COME AND GONE with our Annual General Meeting (AGM) being held in late June. Many thanks to the members who took the time to attend and to those who submitted their Proxy votes but couldn't attend. It was nice to catch up with everyone and see some familiar faces.

I would like to say a huge thank you to the Wildcare Management Committee for all of their hard work in the past year. It has been a difficult year with juggling family, work, study, rescues and rehabilitating; I know that everyone has worked very hard to keep Wildcare operational.

This year the Management Committee has been extended to include six committee

member positions so hopefully this will help the work load of the existing committee members.

I would also like to say a special thank you to our wonderful secretary Tracy who, whilst juggling long hours at work, still managed to organise the AGM and all of the necessary mail-outs that needed to be sent. Thank you, Tracy.

I hope that everyone is enjoying the "quieter season" – enjoy it while it lasts! I am sure that spring will be here before we know it.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members

Wildcare Australia welcomes the following new members:

Coral Johnson, *Advancetown*; Christine Johnes & Wayne Bassett, *Albany Creek*; Marcela & Ruben Castro, *Albion*; Jemma Darlington, *Aroona*; Leisa Shanks-Baker, *Paige Hood, Ashmore*; Shari English, *Balmoral*; Tracey & Robert Haw, *Biggera Waters*; Jacqueline Reeder, *Buderim*; Deanna & Greg Reaburn, *Cooloola Cove*; Laura Armistead, *Currumbin*; Shina & Sachiko Aubrey, *Currumbin Waters*; Vanessa Croft, *Deception Bay*; Melissa Stephens, *Eatons Hill*; Junko Nakane, *Elanora*; June Ryan, *Emerald*; Lisa Carter, *Greenbank*; Rebecca Buckler, *Helensvale*; Annette Bird & Chris Peters, *Donald Potter, Jimboomba*; Julie Rodger, *Keperra*; Rachel Whitehead, *Kippa-Ring*; Katrina Martin, *Sally Peters, Labrador*; Emma-Lee Harper, *Leichhardt*; Sonya Plant,

Linthorpe; Diana Kolb, *Logan Village*; Alexander Millman, *Mudgeeraba*; Jo McKellar, *Ocean View*; Ottilia Titman, *Palmwoods*; Kim Stuart, *Paradise Point*; Emma & Steven Venz, *Regents Park*; Amanda Harris, *Roma*; Wendy Nelson, *Sanctuary Cove*; Michael Statham & Caroline Garritty, *Silkstone*; Matthew Boon, *Slacks Creek*; Natalie Ryan, *South Brisbane*; Lesley Cains, *Springbrook*; Renee Piccolo, *Springfield Lakes*; Mary Delaney & Ryan Harricks, *Strathpine*; Elly Prendergast, *Surfers Paradise*; Jackie & Ashley Heron, *Tallebudgera*; Clinton Hurst, *Taringa*; Rebekah Francisco, *Upper Coomera*; Crystal Spencer, *Nyree Curran, Kingscliff NSW*; Emma Yaxley, *Anula NT*.

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.

Our Mission

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

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Cover photo: Percy the Pelican

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The Main Committee

President - Karen Scott
Vice-President - Tonya Howard
Secretary Tracy Paroz
Treasurer - Amy Whitham
Gail Gipp, Liz Meffan, 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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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Wildcare Australia or the editors.

Record Keeper's Rap.

2010 Records now due!

Could all members with rehabilitation endorsement permits under Wildcare Australia Inc. please submit all of their 2010 rescue & rehab records from Jan 2010 to June 2010, inclusive. They are being collated now.

Remember that submitting these records is one of Wildcare's permit endorsement requirements. Thank you to those volunteers who have already done this.

Records Forms

The latest versions of the Excel and Word Records forms are available on the Wildcare website, www.wildcare.org.au, under 'Carer Resources' (Excel is the preferred form).

Records Help

Records Guidelines were recently sent out as part of the latest membership package distributed to all new and renewing members. However, if you are having difficulty using either of the forms (Excel or Word) to submit your records, then please contact me on 0409 130000 or email me at records@wildcare.org.au for assistance.

Also, if you would like a workshop conducted on record keeping, then please also contact me or Karen Scott at education@wildcare.org.au. We will run a workshop if the numbers indicate

a need. If not, I'll be in touch with each person who has requested a workshop to offer individual assistance.

2009 Records Reports

Hopefully you'll have time to look through this year's AGM Annual Report that was placed on our website, as I have put some summary tables and figures from the 2009 records in there, as well as listed the records data reports that were requested and distributed over the past financial year.

If you wish to use any of the summary data in the Annual Report, then please let me know as we like to keep information on how our records data are useful to both our members and the wider community.

It is with thanks to our record keeping volunteers of the past and present that we now have rescue and rehab records that go right back to 2000. Therefore, more specific records reports can be put together according to the information you need and over a longer timeframe if you require this. Please get in touch if you need a specific report assembled. In the past year, records data were put into several successful council grant applications that gave members funding for equipment for rehabilitating various species, so this is just one example of how Wildcare records may be of help.

Kiersten Jones

Email: records@wildcare.org.au

Volunteer Recognition

There are many volunteer groups in Australia and all do wonderful work in many different fields. I often think this great country of ours would almost come to a stop if it wasn't for the great work of volunteers. I belong to an exceptional volunteer group, "Wildcare Australia." Not only for their work in saving our sick, injured and orphaned Native Wildlife without any financial assistance from our Governments, but because over my years with Wildcare I personally know how very special they are.

Let me tell you a little story about a few of these very special Wildcare members.

A few weeks ago, Rowley Goonan came to my house to leave his trailer with me for awhile. I showed him around my overgrown acre explaining things were out of hand and had become a little overwhelming for me to handle. Rowley offered to lend a hand for which I thanked him and said he was a busy man and not to worry.

A few days later, I received a phone call from Rowley asking what day would suit me as he had rallied the troops to come and give me a hand. And so they did. On the following Friday morning bright and early, there was Toni Brown, Dianna Smith and Rowley already to start work.

We chopped, raked, whipper-snipped and shovelled all morning and removed two large trailer loads of rubbish and laughed a lot. Oh boy, did we laugh!

Exhausted, we stopped for lunch and Liz Meffan arrived with a beautiful cake she had baked for us. I was so grateful and so moved by these beautiful, generous friends I have made through Wildcare Australia. Thank you my Dear Friends.

Trish Hales

Management Committee Meeting Summary *April/May/June*

2010 Annual General Meeting

The AGM was coordinated, all necessary mail-outs forwarded, the Annual Report was completed and loaded onto the Wildcare website. Certificates of Recognition were presented to many members who have contributed to the organization in the past year.

Advertising

The Committee has been considering various advertising options in both the Gold Coast and Brisbane areas to promote Wildcare and to try to get more wildlife carers. Quotes are currently being obtained from various sources and free options are being sourced.

Financial Reports

The audited financial reports for 2009-2010 have been completed. These reports were included in the Annual Report that is available to be downloaded from the Wildcare website. Hard copies of the reports can be requested by members.

Grants

Wildcare has been successful in obtaining a number of grants including:

- Gambling Community Benefit Fund – for new computers and laser printer for the Wildcare office, a card printer (for membership cards) and printing costs for our Volunteer Manual.
- Brisbane City Council – for rescue cages for possum carers.

- Wildlife Preservation Society of Qld – for the purchase of herpariums for rehabilitating microbats.
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council – to construct a large flight aviary for microbats.
- Logan City Council – for a new laptop for education workshops, printing costs and administrative expenses.

Policies

The Committee has updated a number of Policies including the Confidentiality Agreement, Job Descriptions for various positions and has also developed an Anti-Gossiping Policy.

Promotional Material

The Committee has obtained quotes to obtain 'flags' for events and a new banner. These should be finalized shortly for upcoming events.

Queensland Health

Wildcare has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in relation to the management of C3 bats.

QWRC Meeting

Members from the Committee attended the QWRC meeting held in May 2010 at Hamilton, Brisbane.

Karen Scott
President

Brisbane City Council Grant *Possum Boxes*

Late last year, we received funding from the Brisbane City Council to purchase timber possum boxes. This enabled possums that were being hand-reared or rehabilitated to be released with their own possum box.

This funding was a tremendous benefit to our wildlife carers as this can often be a costly expense, particularly for many of our possum carers who are raising a number of possums at any one time.

Pictured here are two of our lucky possums that had the privilege of having a Brisbane City Council possum box...which they enjoyed!

Many thanks to the Brisbane City Council for providing a wonderful opportunity to wildlife carers through the Wildlife Carers Funding.



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Wildcare Rescues in the News!

MEDIA AND PUBLICITY REPORT JUNE 2009 TO JUNE 2010

June 2009

- The Gold Coast Sun – photo and story on Whitlam the koala who fell out of a tree.

July 2009

- Channel 9 - filming began with 'The Shak', Gliders and Possums Segment.

August 2009

- Channel 9 Gold Coast News - filmed the release of Whitlam the koala.

September 2009

- Channel 9 'The Shak' - filmed twin Eastern Grey Kangaroos.

October 2009

- Channel 9 'The Shak' - filmed a segment on Baby Birds.
- ABC Gold Coast FM Radio - Karen Scott was a guest speaker about koalas.

November 2009

- The Gold Coast Sun – article and photo on Baby Bird rescues.
- Channel 7 News and Sunday Mail - story on Koala rescue involving fire crews at Currumbin Waters.
- Sunday Mail – story and photo on Baby Tawny Frogmouths.
- Courier Mail and The Australian – story on Koala joeys.

January 2010

- 94.9 River FM Brisbane – advertisement for Wildcare.
- Channel 9 Gold Coast News – followed Rowley Goonan at Pacific Pines in relation to poisoning of the lake and birds being rescued with botulism.

February 2010

- ABC Gold Coast FM Radio - Rowley Goonan was a guest speaker about rescuing water birds and their plight in relation to fishing line, fish hooks, etc.
- ABC Radio Brisbane - Liz Meffan was a guest speaker about rescuing birds.
- Channel 9 Gold Coast News – Rowley Goonan and Dianna Smith filmed conducting a rescue of a Brahminy Kite dangling in the middle of Pimpama River.

April 2010

- ABC Gold Coast FM Radio - Karen Scott was a guest speaker on what wildlife carers do and the need for an Ambulance service.

March 2010

- ABC Gold Coast FM Radio - Rowley Goonan spoke about a duck rescue he attended on the 18th floor of Jupiters Casino which took 4 hours.

April 2010

- ABC - Gardening Show Exhibition in Brisbane.
- Bird Society at Mt Tamborine - Liz Meffan did a talk on Wildcare.
- Gold Coast Mail – photo and story on duck release at Currumbin Valley.

May 2010

- Nationwide Volunteer Week, 10 to 15 May - Interviews took place during the week with River 94.9FM radio station, ABC Gold Coast FM Radio 91.7FM, who now wish to hold regular monthly segments.
- The Courier Mail, Sunday Mail, Channel 9 Brisbane, Channel 10 Brisbane and ABC Radio Brisbane - were invited to take part in a story on 'Betty' the carpet python who was in for a check up at the vet after a severe injury due to a whipper snipper. Thanks To Deb Turnbull and 'Betty' for their cooperation on this one. The Courier Mail ran the story in the weekend paper of 15 May and put the video clip on their website. In 3 days, the clip had over 1,000 hits.
- ABC FM Gold Coast Radio - visited Tonya and Sam Howard. They completed an interview about a bat, snake and lizard and took photos for their website. Several wildlife photos were supplied previously, also.

Liz Meffan
Media Coordinator

Telephone Coordinator's Report

I CANNOT SAY THANK YOU ENOUGH TO OUR DEDICATED SMALL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS WHO KEEP OUR 24-HOUR EMERGENCY PHONE LINE OPEN. Whether you do a 3-hourly shift a month or fill in the hour slots during the week, it is appreciated. If we could all do one, 3-hour shift a month, life would be so much easier for those few holding the fort at present. I am so grateful to this dedicated bunch.



I hope when you read this you also will be astounded as to how few of you actually are prepared to give up 3 hours a week to help this very much needed cause. I put out an urgent plea to those of you who do not care for animals to come on board and provide some relief to our current operators who are really feeling the pressure and deserve a break!!! Most of these people work and care for wildlife as well. Like you, I also do not know how some of these people fit everything in.

At the writing of this report, we are down to 17 operators from 40. We have 124 shifts to cover!! **People are just exhausted and NEED YOUR HELP.** It's just 3 hours a month! So c'mon and help our fellow carers and stop leaving it to the same people all the time. We are getting tired!!!

If you really care about helping our native wildlife, then get to where the core of things happen and help out on the phones. Ask any of us how rewarding it can be and how much you really learn.

Our two busiest and dedicated members are Trish Hales and Roy Webster. These people man our office and telephones are based at Currumbin from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm Tuesday to Friday.

The main areas where we need help are the weekends, which are 3-hour time slots, and 4:00 to 7:00 pm during the week. Also, because the office is not open on Mondays, we do need help then also. Even if you cannot give 3 hours, let me know and we will slot you in somewhere.

Please note that while you are on the phones for Wildcare, you are reimbursed so all we ask for is your time - 3 hours a month!

Every single one of you on the phones at present deserves a medal for your dedication.

For the rest of you, I am still extremely frustrated how once again so few carry so many!

Please call me on 0419 684461 and we will find a time slot that suits your lifestyle.

Liz Meffan
Telephone Coordinator

Call of the Week

Patricia got a call from a man on the Gold Coast late one evening about a snake in his bed. He asked what to do and, of course, was told "don't get in". Then after some talking, he stated there was also one on his chair in his bedroom. He indicated he had not been drinking!! Patricia gave him the number of a snake rescuer and thought that was the end of it.

He called back several times to confirm the snake rescuer but then proceeded to state that there was a third snake present! When asked where..... wait for it..... it was apparently behind his neck as he could feel it breathing down his neck!!! He was freaking out by now and kept calling to say it was still breathing down his neck. Not sure what the outcome was but let's hope the drugs wore off and he came to his senses before the snake rescuer got there!!!

Raptor Rescue: *"The End of the Line"*

Fishing line is one of the greatest threats to all coastal birds. They can easily become entangled and lose toes, legs and even wings. Sometimes birds that are caught in line get tangled up in trees and power lines. That's what happened to a lovely Brahminy Kite in Pimpama recently.

Wildcare received a call about a large bird hanging upside down from a power cable that traversed a creek. When the report got to me, I thought *'this is going to be a beauty'*. Power lines and creeks are not a healthy combination!

I arrived at the creek late Friday afternoon to find the kite lashed to what looked like a telecommunications cable. At times it would fall and hang upside down. The cable had a span of about 80 meters between poles and 40 meters of that was directly over the creek. The bird was about a third of the way along, hanging 5 meters above the water.



The obvious solution was a cherry picker but the distance from the shore was too great; nor was there any hope of using a knife attached to a long pole to cut the bird down because it was lashed tightly to the cable by fishing line. To add to our concerns, we had no way of knowing whether the cable was live.

I consulted with Mimi at Currumbin Wildlife Hospital. She believed the bird would make it through the night if it could spend at least part of that time upright on the cable. Making it through the night would be its first challenge.

I wracked my brains trying to come up with a solution for accessing the bird. The best idea

seemed to be to hire two large extension ladders and construct an 'A' frame in the creek that could be climbed to reach the bird. It was dodgy but doable. A conversation with a concerned local provided a better solution. He was a rigger and had enough gear at home to build scaffolding that we could set up in the creek and climb the 5 meters up to the bird.

First thing next morning I phoned Telstra to try and get permission to work near the cable. What a frustrating experience that was! I spent 40 minutes on the phone to India trying to explain that we had a precious bird of prey lashed to one of their cables and could they get us some help. I was transferred through several different operators and was finally told to call the local Council. Yeah right, on a Saturday morning!

Next, I called Energex and got a completely different response. They said they could have a team there with a cherry picker within the hour. What a relief. Finally, we were getting somewhere.

Dianna Smith and I arrived at the bridge alongside the cable at 7 am the next morning. Our rigger was busy at home putting together the base for the structure. Energex arrived and confirmed that the cable was telecommunications, not power. They gave us permission to work up against it. That was great but I had visions of us cutting the bird free and at the same time slicing the wire and cutting off telephone, internet and cable TV to the whole of Pimpama. **That would have spiced up the morning.**

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PHOTOS // R GOONAN

We started by checking the depth of the creek and the composition of the bottom to make sure our scaffolding had support. The only way to do this was to wade out up to our necks in the creek and feel the bottom with our feet. Someone said there were bull sharks in the creek. Thank you to that person for sharing.

At some point the idea of dropping the cable came to mind. I mentioned this to the Energex guys who were already thinking the same thing. The cable was extremely heavy but if they could unhitch it from one of the poles and lower it into the creek we could be there in the water up to our necks ready to receive the bird.

What legends those guys were. About 40 minutes later, they had the cable off the pole and were lowering it, and the bird, slowly into our waiting arms.

When we finally got our hands on the kite we were amazed at how securely it was attached to the cable. How it hadn't broken its leg is anyone's guess. The creature had a lure and hook attached to one leg and a treble (a triple hook) had pierced right through the fleshy part of its foot. This was bad news because raptors must have full use of their feet in order to catch prey. The bird was tied to the cable by several different varieties of line and in the end I had to use side cutters to get it free.



We waded ashore with the kite, boxed it comfortably in the car and rushed it to Currumbin Wildlife Hospital where head vet, Mic Pyne, went to work on it immediately.

They did a great job at the hospital and, after several weeks of rehab, I was able to release the bird back at Pimpama. One very lucky raptor!

Rowley Goonan
WILDCARE Seabird Coordinator



PHOTOS // R GOONAN

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VetCheck *Psittacine Beak & Feather Disease*

Dr. Michael Pyne
Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary

Important Information for Wildlife Rehabilitators

Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD) is caused by a circovirus and is endemic to Australia and parts of Indonesia. The disease has been identified in a wide range of wild and captive parrot species in Australia. This circovirus is likely to have existed for a long period of time as there are descriptions of the typical Beak and Feather lesions in wild parrots dating back to the 1800's.

Although all parrots are potentially susceptible to this disease, some species such as lorikeets and cockatoos are at a far greater risk and develop more severe symptoms.

Clinical Features

The appearance of birds infected with PBFD will vary greatly across the range of bird species and the age at which these birds are infected by the virus.

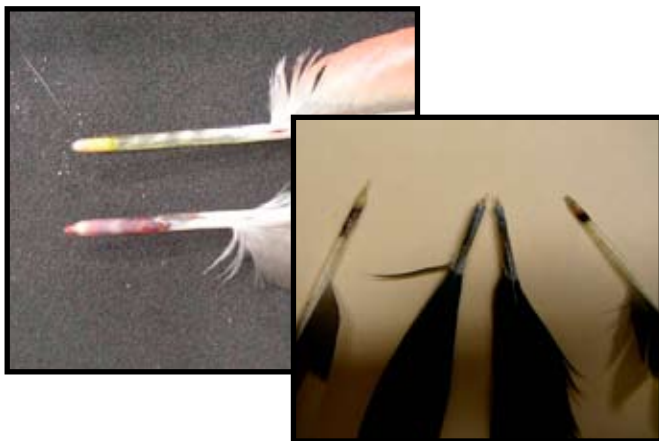
The virus has two main clinical features:

1. Feather abnormalities, and in some cases beak abnormalities
2. Immunosuppression

Feathering Abnormalities

This circovirus will attack growing feathers causing feather abnormalities which can present in a variety of ways:

- Feather loss
- Abnormal feather colouring
- Deformed feathers
- Weak feather attachment
- Feather calamus abnormalities (e.g., pinching/necrosis)



PHOTOS // M PYNE

Haemorrhage in feather calamus (left); pinching of feather calamus (right).

Because the virus attacks the feathers when they are growing, the clinical presentation of these birds will depend on the stage of moult of that bird when it became infected with PBFD. Young chicks with all feathers growing can present with 100% feather dystrophy, however in older birds the feather changes will be gradual, as it will only be the new growing feathers that are affected as the bird moults.

The classic featherless bird generally only presents for chronic cases of PBFD in cockatoos. In most cases, the changes are not so obvious; there is a wide range of far more subtle feathering abnormalities that can suggest that a bird is suffering from PBFD.

Birds that develop beak abnormalities typically develop a longer beak that is brittle and often develops fractures – advanced cases will also have necrosis of the hard palate – this is a very painful condition and these birds will find eating difficult. Typically only cockatoos develop beak abnormalities with PBFD.

Immunosuppression

Circovirus will also selectively attack the immune system. As birds develop their antibody diversity in the first 3 to 6 weeks of life, those infected before they have developed any immune function will never establish an adequate immune system.

The younger the bird is when it is infected, the more severe is the immunosuppression. These birds with a suppressed immune system due to PBFD will commonly suffer from a range of secondary infections; recognising an unusual infection may be the only symptom that prompts a vet to test for PBFD.

Disease Progression

The course of the disease can vary greatly, this will again depend of the species of bird and the age when the bird is infected. **It is very rare for any bird over 2 years of age to become infected with PBFD**, most birds are infected at a young age.

As with most viral infections, the course of the disease can vary from acute to chronic; birds infected at a very young age tend to have an acute course and can die within weeks of first showing symptoms.

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VetCheck continued...

Birds infected after they have developed a functional immune system tend to follow a more chronic disease course that will present with feather abnormalities and possibly some level of immune suppression. Some of these birds can live a long life yet be constantly shedding PBFD virus.

Diagnosis

Classical feathering abnormalities can be diagnostic for an experienced vet or wildlife carer. There is a range of pathology tests available to confirm a diagnosis, although the costs are too high to consider in most cases.

- HA/HI – Heamagglutination (HA) test can be used to determine the level of virus in a bird, and Heamagglutination-inhibition (HI) will assess the immune response of a bird to the PBFD virus. The combined results give an accurate picture of the likely outcome of the disease. For example, a bird with a high level of virus and no immune response is likely to die however, a bird with a low level of virus and a good immune response may well live a long life but be shedding the virus.
- PCR – This is a very sensitive technique that will detect very low levels of virus. When using PCR, it is best to send a blood quill feather and blood on filter paper for PCR. It is possible, however, to get false positive results with this technique.
- Histopathology – inflammatory cells typically accumulate in the feather pulp and Bursa of Frabiscus. PBFD virus produces basophilic intracytoplasmic or intranuclear inclusion bodies in the feather pulp, feather follicle skin or the Bursa of Frabiscus. The absence of these inclusion bodies on histopathology does not rule out PBFD. Histopathology of a blood quill feather is often the simplest and most cost effective way of confirming a case of PBFD, however it is possible to get false negative results with this technique.

Differential Diagnosis

Unfortunately many other disease processes can look similar to a subtle case of PBFD. Generally a detailed history and close clinical examination will differentiate them from PBFD, however if there is any doubt and pathology tests are an option, it will be best to confirm your suspicions.

- Liver Disease – liver disease can cause narrow feathers and feather colour

changes, occasionally these could be mistaken for PBFD.

- Poor Nutrition – Wild birds fed supplementary feed (e.g., seed) - These birds on a poor diet can have feathering abnormalities and colour changes.
- General Health – chronically sick birds will have poor feathering – it is easy to confuse a chronically ill bird for a bird with PBFD (e.g., chronically unwell Cockatoos will start to loose their powder down and have very stunted down feathers – this can be mistaken for PBFD).
- Feather picking – Some birds with PBFD will feather pick – it can be difficult to assess feather picking birds for PBFD and pathology testing may be necessary.
- Feather trauma – a flightless bird or one housed incorrectly could have feather damage that possibly could be mistaken for PBFD.

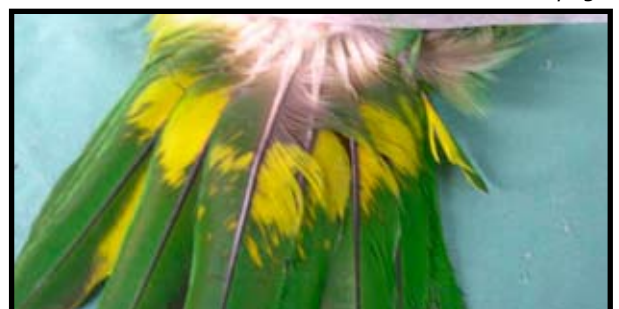
Treatment

There is no effective treatment for PBFD. Although some birds will survive the initial infection, these birds will become chronic shedders of the virus, if these birds are released into the wild, they will spread the virus their entire life.

Species Presentations

- Lorikeets – Rainbow Lorikeets and Scaley-breasted Lorikeets are by far the most common wild birds in South East Queensland that present with PBFD. These birds are typically young (still have dark beaks) and present with their tail feathers and outside primary wing feathers missing and are often called 'runners' because of their inability to fly. Remaining flight feathers will often pluck out very easily and have the classical calamus abnormalities of PBFD (i.e., pinching/necrosis). Some Lorikeets will present with weak flight and just have abnormal colouring on the feathers – generally this will be incorrect areas of

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Tail feather discolouration in Rainbow Lorikeet.

PHOTO // M PYNE

VetCheck continued...

yellow on the primary feathers – more commonly on the tail feathers. Being familiar with what is normal colouring will help greatly when assessing these more subtle feathering abnormalities. Older Loriekeets that have been carrying the PBFD virus for some time may develop feathering colour changes of the contour feathers (body feathers), this can present as yellow contour feathers or patches of yellow within the green contour feather. These birds generally present as weak and are suffering from a secondary infection associated with their weak immune system due to the PBFD virus.

- Cockatoos – Cockatoos have the more classical presentation of PBFD. Depending on the age when they become infected, these birds progressively lose their feathers and may have dystrophic feathers grow in their place. The loss of powder down and powder-down feathers is the first and most reliable method of assessing Cockatoos for PBFD. As the powder-down feathers are constantly moulting, this will be the first place to notice PBFD in Cockatoos. Cockatoos can also develop beak lesions in chronic cases.
- The Rest – Although the virus will principally cause similar lesions in all infected birds, there is variability to



PHOTO // M PYNE

Colour changes of the contour (body) feathers.

which feathers are affected most and what colouring abnormalities are most common. King Parrots and Rosellas typically present with untidy and “moth eaten” appearance to their body feathers with some abnormal colouring.

- Cockateils – Interestingly, Cockateils don't seem to be affected by PBFD virus despite being a member of the Cockatoo family.

Disease Spread/Transmission

PBFD virus can be shed in faeces, feather dust, blood and crop contents. Shedding of the virus into the environment is a significant risk and contamination of clothing, feet and hands can easily transfer the virus. There is evidence that the virus can be spread vertically (i.e., through the egg) such that a chick will be infected with the virus before it hatches.

Control/Prevention

The PBFD virus is very stable under a range of environmental conditions and is likely to persist for some time. All efforts should be made to prevent the virus entering an aviary/collection of birds as it can be very difficult to eliminate. No testing has been possible to accurately assess the effectiveness of any disinfectant, however Virkon – S® is likely to be best. Due to the highly infective nature of the virus, any bird with PBFD should not be housed on the same property as other susceptible birds. After handling a bird suspected of having PBFD, it would be best to change clothing and shower before getting in close proximity to other susceptible birds.

Most of you know I have a 79kg Irish Wolfhound. Yesterday a guy came doorknocking to talk about solar energy. He freaked when he realised there were dogs on the property. We saw him out walking about 10 minutes later as we were walking the dogs and he stopped on the opposite side of the road.

He asked what sort of animal Harley was. David said he is a dog, an Irish Wolfhound. The man stated that he thought it was a lion.... seriously!!!!

Imagine him in Wildcare... scary stuff!!! Watch out he could be coming to a house near you!

Liz Meffan

Coordinator Reports

Bats

Well, we are still experiencing a massive increase in injured and dead bats. Their weights are consistently 100 to 200 gm under normal weight for this time of year, which confirms that there is a major problem with food resources for our native animals. Is this a result of environmental effects or do we have something to answer for as a population?

Our bats are congregating in smaller camps closer to human habitat and that, in itself, is starting to cause concern. We have pregnant mums already coming in, quite a few abortions, which is abnormal for the bat clinic but not unexpected considering their condition.

Baby bat season is nearly upon us and I worry what will happen to this next generation and just how many bubs we will get this year. It is either going to be very light or we will have another influx, so baby bat carers be ready either way! Greer leaves for her new life on 21 August, again we'll miss her from the Gold Coast so we need more bat rescuers around the Helensvale to Brisbane area. If vaccinations are a problem, give me a call and we will see what we can do. The good news is that we are seeing more collaboration with other groups, DERM and Council regarding the bat situation across most states.

Trish Wimberley

Birds

PARROTS AND FRUGIVORES

This season, I took on the role of coordinating the Parrots and Frugivores. One of the most disturbing things I have seen in a while was the number of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos coming into care due to gunshot wounds. Only one had to be euthanased by Currumbin Wildlife Hospital after coming into care, as his recovery was not progressing at all and the chances of him living a free life in the wild was going to be nonexistent.

I must admit, one does question the length of time these birds need to be in care and whether they will adapt to their natural habitat and be accepted. However with strict correct care and providing everything possible to make this happen, these birds were released very successfully. I think sometimes we need to realise what 'toughnuts' some of our wildlife species are and, of course, the high level of intelligence of parrots in general.

Then, there was the odd baby Galah as well as injured adults, some Rosellas that all recovered well and were successfully released, some Corellas with wing issues and a few King Parrots.

The busiest species by far was the Figbirds that kept getting into trouble, with an

enormous amount of orphans coming into care. Many of these could not be reunited with their families and came in with injuries to their wings which also required them to be on medication.

Being a strong social kind of bird, they thrive only in numbers...of which there was no shortage! I would like to thank Dianna Smith, Patricia van de Bert, Jim and Greer McNeil and Heather Frankcom for helping out with these guys. Also, to our busy new carer, Vicky Raynor, who took on the season's end of our figgies. I hope next season is not as busy with these guys! We would like to think that next season we could have someone just caring for the Figbirds.

I also would like to thank Currumbin Wildlife Hospital for their assistance with the hundreds of birds coming into care. They pack us off with medications and instructions so that the bird has the best chance of recovery and the right to a life of freedom again, and we all know they are just a phone call away should we require assistance.

We anticipate a busy season ahead again and therefore, we are in need of coordinators for the following bird groups: Carnivores, Pigeons, Nectivores, Insectivores, and Frugivores.

If we can get these groups covered, it will make the whole bird network run very smoothly without placing too much strain on those already covering these species as well as others. Please let me know where you can help.

Liz Meffan

PHOTOS // R RIVARD



Adult male Figbird



Adult female Figbird eating a lilypilly

Coordinator Reports continued...

SEABIRDS

We've had a steady year of seabird rescues. Happily, the number of pelicans needing assistance dropped off dramatically in 2010 with only 2 captures recorded for the first 4 months of the year. That followed a brisk, 17 pelican rescues in a row for the latter part of 2009. The number was inflated by Percy (cover photo), a very sweet but recalcitrant bird from the Broadbeach canals who had to be caught and carted off to hospital 3 times in 3 months, all for different reasons.

The lunchtime pelican feed at Charris Seafoods continues to be an excellent place to monitor the health of up to 80 of the Broadwater pelicans on a daily basis. We have a very good working relationship with Charris and this year we helped provide them with a pelican holding cage so that rescued birds could be housed safely until collected.

Fish hooks and fishing line remain the primary enemies of all seabirds and many terrestrial birds especially ibis, Brush-turkeys, swans and ducks. Others that suffered greatly because of this scourge were gulls, cormorants, Great Egrets and White-faced Herons.

I'm pleased to say we were able to help nearly all the birds reported to Wildcare plus many that were reported directly to our rescuers by Currumbin Wildlife Hospital (CWH). I join all other Coordinators who've

expressed their gratitude to the great team of vets and nurses at CWH. The care they provide and the onsite facilities for seabirds are the best in Queensland.

Our Wildcare seabird team is still very small but our effectiveness has been boosted this year by some valuable new equipment. I also want to welcome Jo-Ellen who has had experience with raptors at CWH and is now in training with us for seabird rescues. We continue to expand our group of spotters who live on or near the water and call us directly if they see any creatures in trouble.

Rowley Goonan



PHOTO // R GOONAN

Crested Tern with set of gang hooks embedded in beak.

Echidnas and Small Mammals

ALL OF THE LITTLE CRITTERS MUST BE BUNKING DOWN FOR THE COLDER MONTHS as we have had very few bandicoots and native rodents in care. Natasha did a great job raising a litter of Bush Rats which were successfully released back to the wild.

We have had a small number of echidnas coming into care, mostly from road trauma. Unfortunately, a large portion of these echidnas were not able to be saved. We have however had several successes. Many thanks to Kiersten Jones who has taken several of these short-term echidnas and for helping with rescues and releases.

Karen Scott

Koalas

THE PAST 3 MONTHS HAVE CONTINUED TO BE FAIRLY QUIET with only a small handful of trauma koalas requiring rescuing. Unfortunately though, we have had a number of adults coming into care suffering from chlamydia and poor body condition.

We have successfully released several more koalas that have been in care for a lengthy period of time. Two young girls, Lucy and Kerry, were both hit by cars in the Parkwood and Arundel areas in late 2009 and both sustained extensive injuries, including a fractured pelvis. Both were rehabilitated and have recently been released into the Nerang State Forest. Hopefully, both girls will live a long and happy life back in the wild.

Coordinator Reports continued...

We also saw the release of Simonee who sustained a fractured femur when she walked through the wrong back yard at Elanora and was bitten by a dog. After undergoing orthopaedic surgery and many months of rehabilitation at the Australian Wildlife Hospital, she was successfully released back to Elanora.

We have received a number of small pouch-young joeys into care from sick mothers but otherwise things have been relatively quiet. Fingers crossed that this year will be kind to our local koalas and they will stay out of trouble.

Karen Scott

Macropods

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ORPHANED JOEYS coming into care recently. The shorter days bring with it an increase in the number of adults being hit on the roads.

I cannot praise our trauma carers enough at this time of the year – it is never an easy job but they go about their duty silently. Thank you to all of you for your commitment. I must also thank the work of the tireless volunteer phone operators without whom we would not be able to receive the calls for these emergencies. It makes a tremendous difference in an emergency situation to have a professional and confident telephone operator, thank you!

Karen Scott

Sunshine Coast

WHEN THE REQUEST CAME THROUGH FOR A REPORT FOR THE NEWSLETTER, I WAS CAMPING out at a weir, 60 km North East of Taroom, so my first thought was, "I really have nothing to report on."

I then thought you might like a description of the countryside after all this rain. I have been coming to this place for over 20 years and saw it go from lush to drought. For a few years, the weir was more empty than full.

They had a good season here last year and, going by the debris on the fences, an even better one this year; rumour has it that over 4 m of water was going over the weir at the peak of the flooding.

The wildlife last year was the most I had ever seen out this way for years, echidnas, emus, one pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles, wallabies and birds of every shape and size, even a small flock of Pale-headed Rosellas.

Intriguing is the lagoon on the way in, there has been no water in it for years, but this year not only is it full of water, it has numerous water lilies. "Can water lily seeds survive for over 10 years without continuous water?"

A couple, who are true blue twitchers, turned up here on the weekend. According to their figures, there are over 2,000 Galahs in the flock, 500 Corellas, Emus galore, Bustards and there are even two pairs of Wedge-tailed Eagles, including a young one.

When the Galahs take off, it sounds like a wind going through the trees and if you look up the trees are all moving and shaking, just like a whirly is passing.

The wallabies are thick and if you travel faster than about 50 you could easily be a casualty of one, however it is so nice to see the wildlife after years of drought, and the countryside itself is a mass of green.

The local station owners are busy restocking and it's nice to drive along and see all the livestock wandering along the fences in good condition, instead of miserable-looking cattle with their ribs showing.

Two things I have learnt this year, wallabies and roos whom I assumed went over the fences... don't. I have seen them going down on their stomachs (don't know how a mother and joey would manage) and wriggle under the bottom stretch of wire. The Emus, and I have to admit I thought they had to go through a break or low section of fence, actually go through the middle of the wires, if you take particular notice you can figure out where they go through on a regular basis...the wires are quite stretched.

Hope you have found these comments of interest and it proves one thing...Australia, along with the wildlife, can certainly come back even after a severe drought.

Ailsa Watson

Pacific Pines *A Toxic Lake*

Some months ago, I received a call from a concerned local saying that a male swan in the lake at Pacific Pines was looking listless. The bird had separated from its mate that was sitting on a clutch of eggs. He also told me there were several dead ducks floating in the water. Apparently, ducks had been dying at the lake for several weeks.

An hour later, we met up and stood on the bank looking out at the swan. It did look lethargic, but it was offshore and wouldn't come in for food, so I asked him to monitor the situation and update me in the morning. That was probably a mistake. Botulism was the likely cause especially as there were already dead birds in the lake and they may have died from that illness. When an animal contracts botulism, time is of the essence if it is to have any hope of recovery.

Botulism is an organism that can breed quickly in the mud of warm, shallow waterways if they are not being flushed by regular rains. Birds are particularly susceptible; it enters via their gastrointestinal tract. Botulism is quite rare in humans and is usually contracted after eating contaminated food. Apparently, the risk is very low of contracting it by handling affected birds, as long as sensible precautions are observed.

We'd had a particularly long dry spell before Christmas and Pacific Pines Lake was choked with mud, weeds and rubbish. In fact, it was in disgraceful condition; a perfect breeding ground for botulism.

Later that day, I got a call from two Gold Coast Council Officers. They were out checking the lake after receiving complaints that dead birds were not being removed from the water. The Officers had found the male swan on the shore unable to move. Botulism causes a paralysis that begins in a bird's legs, moves to the wings and finally up into the neck muscles. This progression can occur in a matter of hours. When the neck muscles are affected, the neck drops into the water and the bird drowns. It's the same organism, botulinum toxin, that is used by the cosmetic industry to paralyze facial muscles and reduce wrinkling (i.e., Botox®).

Shovel-feeders like ducks and swans are more likely to get it because they forage directly in mud where botulism can thrive. We also get about half a dozen



PHOTO // R GOONAN

pelicans each year with the illness.

Currumbin Animal Hospital has been very successful saving ducks that have contracted botulism but less successful with the bigger species. Only about one in three swans and pelicans survive. The standard treatment is warmth, oral charcoal, intravenous hydration and antibiotics. After that, it really depends on the strength of the bird.

I rushed the male swan to hospital but sadly it didn't make it through the night. Head vet, Mic Pyne, confirmed that the likely cause of death was botulism.

That left us with a difficult situation. The lake was obviously toxic and the female swan was sitting on a clutch of 3 eggs that were about to hatch. She'd just lost her mate. The last thing we wanted was 3 newly hatched cygnets beginning their life with a dip in a diseased lake. Four more swans were on the lake, all young adult birds from a previous hatching by the dominant pair. All could fly. Clearing the lake of 5 adult swans was going to be challenging enough. Clearing it of the hundreds of other water birds was out of the question. We couldn't possibly catch them all and even if we had they couldn't be relocated without a health clearance.

We decided to focus on rescuing the big birds. The rest would have to take their chances and be caught and hospitalized if and when needed.

Two days later, the cygnets hatched. We swung into action. Tracie Corcoran, Dianna Smith and I attempted to net the mum. Cygnets are easy to catch but if we could also catch mum the whole family could be taken into care. I paddled furiously around the lake trying to drive the mother swan to shore where the girls were waiting with nets, but it wasn't to be. Eventually she flew to the other side of the

continued on next page

Pacific Pines continued...

lake abandoning the cygnets. Feeling very disappointed we collected the 3 exhausted babies. Mum stayed well away. She didn't want to know us.

Someone suggested that if the cygnets were left caged beside the lake the mother might return. We were very worried about them because they were cold and exhausted but they appeared to be reviving quickly in the warmth of the sunshine. It was worth a shot, so I placed them in a transport cage a meter from the lake's edge. Then I set a ground snare on the meter of grass between the cage and the water and wound out the trip line to a full 25 meters. This was going to be one of the longest attempted snarings in history!

It took nearly half an hour but eventually the mother overcame her fear and responded to the baby's calls. Slowly she swam across the lake to our side. She eyed the cage nervously. I stood there in a cold sweat willing her to step out of the water. Eventually she did but a meter to the left of the snare. We waited. She paced around for what felt like an eternity then took a few steps closer to the snare. She was inches from stepping in it when a photographer from the Bulletin stumbled onto the scene and walked straight down the bank towards the mother bird. I shouted at her to get the hell away. In shock, she moved back just as the mother took that fatal step into the snare and I wrenched on the trip line. We had her. The snare tightened around the leg as Dianna ran down the bank and grabbed her. What a relief that was.

Now we had mum and the kids and they all went immediately into care with Tracie.



PHOTO // R GOONAN

The next few weeks were very stressful. The press had been alerted that a toxin was killing birds on the

lake. The Council was in damage control and getting hammered by the press. This was a good thing because the Council had been very tardy in their efforts to remove rubbish and rectify the putrefying condition of the lake.

Over the next few days, Dianna and I were able to capture the other 4 swans. One succumbed to the illness but the other 3 made it and were relocated to safer waters after a period of quarantine.

A week later, the Council engaged a contractor to begin harvesting the tons of weed that was choking the lake.

Ducks were still falling ill but we remained on top of the situation and most of the sick birds were caught immediately and rushed to hospital. My greatest asset during that time was four young local girls who were relentless in their efforts to help the birds and would phone me immediately when they saw a duck in trouble. *One day they phoned to tell me that a duck was yawning.* I said that probably wasn't a problem, *but thank you for calling!*

Nearly all the ducks survived. It was interesting to note that no other species of water birds fell ill.

Eventually about 50 cubic meters of weed were cleared from the lake and the Council finally sent people in to collect the piles of rubbish and empty plastic bags and bottles that covered the shoreline. The rate of sickness amongst the birds dropped and things began to stabilize.

This is not the end of the problem at Pacific Pines. The lake has silted up because of poor design and years of neglect. It needs to be dredged and would benefit greatly from the installation of a fountain to help aerate the water. Council is aware that any toxic water at Pacific Pines poses a real threat because the lake is a feeder for the Coombabah Wetlands immediately below. Council said they are developing a management plan to rectify the problems at Pacific Pines Lake but who knows how long that will take. In the meantime, WILDCARE won't be releasing any birds there until we are satisfied that the lake is free from botulism.

Rowley Goonan
Seabird Coordinator

Education Report

THINGS HAVE BEEN MOVING A LITTLE SLOWER the past two months or so with fewer registrations at workshops than we usually have this time of year.

Everyone who has recently joined or renewed their membership should now have a copy of our new Volunteer Manual. We hope that this will provide members with the information that they need to be effective in their role as a wildlife carer.

Unfortunately, over the past few months we haven't been able to schedule any workshops for the northern Wildcare members but we hope to offer most of the workshops on the Sunshine Coast in the next Education calendar. Thank you to everyone for your patience but unfortunately it is often difficult

for the trainers to schedule so many training days while they are juggling so many other obligations.

We are being kept busy though processing the Permit requests from carers and these should be out to everyone by the end of the month. There are many carers who will be issued with conditional permits because they have not kept their training up to date. Please make sure that you get in early with ensuring that you complete your required annual training so that it isn't left to the last minute, when your renewal is due. If you have any questions with regards to your Permit renewals, please contact us by email at education@wildcare.org.au.

Karen Scott

Mudgeeraba Show 26 & 27 June 2010

ONCE AGAIN INTO THE FRAY. I said I wouldn't, couldn't, shouldn't and can't but ended up doing it anyway. I'm glad I did or I would have missed the most amazing spectacle of the dancing, prancing largest kangaroo ever seen.

Wildcare Members never cease to amaze me with their generosity of time and effort. They were there to help erect, set up and man the exhibit from Friday to Sunday and then take it all down again.

Thank you one and all.

We were very fortunate with better weather and therefore bigger crowds this year. We sold out of lucky dips on Saturday, but the money kept coming in thanks to donations and Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary who donated a prize of a family pass for our jelly bean guessing competition.

Our biggest draw card was our performing kangaroo (Toni Brown). Toni is a new member and office volunteer and was just brilliant. Thank you to Clare and John Boyd who took a turn in the kangaroo costume as well. Next year, I hope to have several other costumes, so come along and take your choice of koala, kangaroo, lorikeet or who knows what.

We had many enquires at the booth and, as a result, now have several new members.

If you have never taken part in one of these events, I encourage you to do so. You will have so much fun and meet other Wildcare members.

The Mudgeeraba Agricultural Show is a delightful family show and thank you to their Committee who always make us very welcome.

Trish Hales

Results of 2010 AGM

Many thanks to everyone who took time to attend the AGM on Saturday. Unfortunately, there were only 32 people in attendance and only a handful of proxy votes forwarded in.

The final Committee for 2010-2011 is as follows:

Core Management Committee
President – Karen Scott
Vice-President – Tonya Howard
Secretary – Tracy Paroz
Treasurer – Amy Whitham

Committee Members
Roy Webster

Natasha Lewis-Millar
Natalie Rasmussen
Shawn Senior
Gail Gipp
Liz Meffan

Shawn, Gail and Liz were all tied in 4th place on the Committee so we have elected to extend the Committee Members from 4 to 6 additional members to accommodate the results.

Congratulations to everyone and we look forward to a productive forthcoming year.

Karen Scott

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