

WILDCARE AUSTRALIA

EDUCATION WILDLIFE REHABILITATION RESEARCH

October 2006, Issue 42

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

WILDNEWS

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



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



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 S. Singleton

Wildcare Australia would like to express its deepest sympathy to the family of Steve Irwin on their tragic loss. Steve was a man who was true to himself. His energy and passion captured the hearts of millions and improved the outcomes for thousands of animals. He will be sadly missed.

With three quarters of the year gone we find ourselves contemplating Christmas. Wildcare Australia will be celebrating with Christmas parties both on the Gold Coast and on the North Coast at Pomona. Read on for detailed information on these events.

Wildcare Australia is contributing significantly to a better future for the wildlife that unfortunately finds itself in human care, with its programme, in conjunction with the Queensland University, of education for veterinary students. The response has been overwhelming and it is very encouraging to see such interest. Sharon Griffiths has written a report for us.

The problem of bird identification is an ongoing one and in this edition we draw your attention to two excellent sources of information for bird carers. We also invite members to assist us with donations of photos.

Have you seen Al Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth" ? If you haven't make it a priority and encourage as many of your family and friends as possible to see it. Hopefully with greater understanding of the enormous problems we are creating for this planet, and the potential for disaster if we do not act swiftly and decisively, the power of the people will force governments to implement legislation to protect our land, sea and air and ultimately the survival of future generations. It is up to each one of us to make a difference. Ed.

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Two quotes for your consideration:

One by an early Australian poet written sometime before 1915:

*"He swings his axe in the golden morn
 The blade bites clean and free
 The trees must fall ere the land be ploughed
 And an axeman strong is he"*

The other by Jared Diamond from *Collapse* written in 2005:

"the values to which people cling most stubbornly under inappropriate conditions are those values that were previously the source of their greatest triumphs over adversity"

VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT



As I write this report our President, Gail Gipp, is about to step onto a plane destined for the United States to represent Wildlife Warriors Worldwide. On behalf of Gail, I would like to convey her apologies for not preparing a President's Report. Those of you who know Gail will realize that this past month has been extremely busy.

Like most of you I am sure, I am still coming to the realisation that the world has lost a true conservationist with the passing of Steve Irwin. Our thoughts and prayers have been with the Irwin family and also with our friends, colleagues and fellow volunteers who have worked closely with Steve and with the Wildlife Warriors team at the Australian Wildlife Hospital. Knowing some of the WWW team, I know that they will fulfil each and every one of Steve's dreams for our wildlife.

The busiest time of the year is upon us again – baby bird and baby bat season not to mention all the other wildlife which comes into care during Spring and Summer as a result of problems encountered in their search for food and shelter. I know that many of you will stretch yourselves to the limit over the coming months. Please know that everything that each of you do, whether it is working in the office, assisting with fundraising, rescuing and delivering animals to other carers or vets, helping other busy carers with chores, or helping just a few hours a month with the emergency telephone service. Everything that you do is appreciated by our wildlife.

A special “thank you” to those new members of the Management Committee who have settled well into their new roles. Your contribution is hugely appreciated. In particular, thank you to:

Laura Reeder – for trying to make sense of our jibberish at Management Committee meetings so that minutes can be taken;

Dianna Smith – for jumping straight into the role of Assistant Secretary and helping with so many tasks;

Daneile Holmes – the new coordinator of the new Community Awareness Committee and Grants Coordinator;

Cerri-Lee Van Buuren – Public Liaison Coordinator, Telephone Coordinator and “koala flagger” extraordinaire;

Jodie Alderton – Public Liaison Coordinator with whom Cerri-Lee has taken the schools by storm;

Kathryn Biber – for helping me with the role of Education Coordinator;

Vicki Collins – our new Treasurer – what a relief for me to pass on this job!

And of course a huge “thank you” to Trish and Terry Wimberley, to Trish Hales, Kiersten Jones and Kerry Chadwick for their continuing commitment. We would all be lost without each and every one of you.

WILDCARE SHOP NEWS

Unfortunately there has been a slight price increase in the Wombaroo products. A new price list is available through the Wildcare office.

We now have in stock some new bird books including several by Norma Henderson and a “Field Guide to Australian Birds” by Michael Morcombe.

We also have in stock wrist bands and T-shirts from Wildlife Warriors. All proceeds from the sale of these items goes towards the Australian Wildlife Hospital at Australia Zoo which quite a number of our volunteer wildlife rehabilitators rely upon for specialised veterinary assistance with sick, injured and orphaned wildlife.

GRANT APPLICATION FOR RESCUE EQUIPMENT

We have JUST received word that we have been successful in obtaining a grant from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund for \$12,000 to purchase specialised rescue equipment such as 10m telescopic poles, pole syringes, bird nets and snake equipment. Who wants to come shopping???

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PROJECT

The eight week course provided to Veterinary students through the University of Queensland came to an end in mid-September. Overall the course was a huge success and I think that the students gained an insight into the specialised requirements of our native wildlife.

I would like to thank all those who assisted with getting the course together:-

Sharon Griffiths and Mike Champkin – for organising the course and liaising with UQ faculty and students;

Gail Gipp – for teaching the koala and introduction to wildlife sessions;

Vicky Carlsson – for teaching the bird and echidna sessions;

Dr Tania Bishop – for teaching the reptile session;

Kathryn Biber – for teaching the possum session;

Greer McNeill and Trish Wimberley – for teaching the bat session;

Dr Jon Hanger – for his assistance with vet-checking notes;

The feedback has been extremely positive and we are hopeful that we will be invited back next year to run the course again.

EDUCATION CALENDAR

The new calendar for the first semester of 2007 should be available by early December. If you have any suggestions of workshops or topics that you would like to see covered please feel free to contact either Karen Scott or Kathryn Biber by email at education@wildcare.org.au

EMAIL PROBLEMS

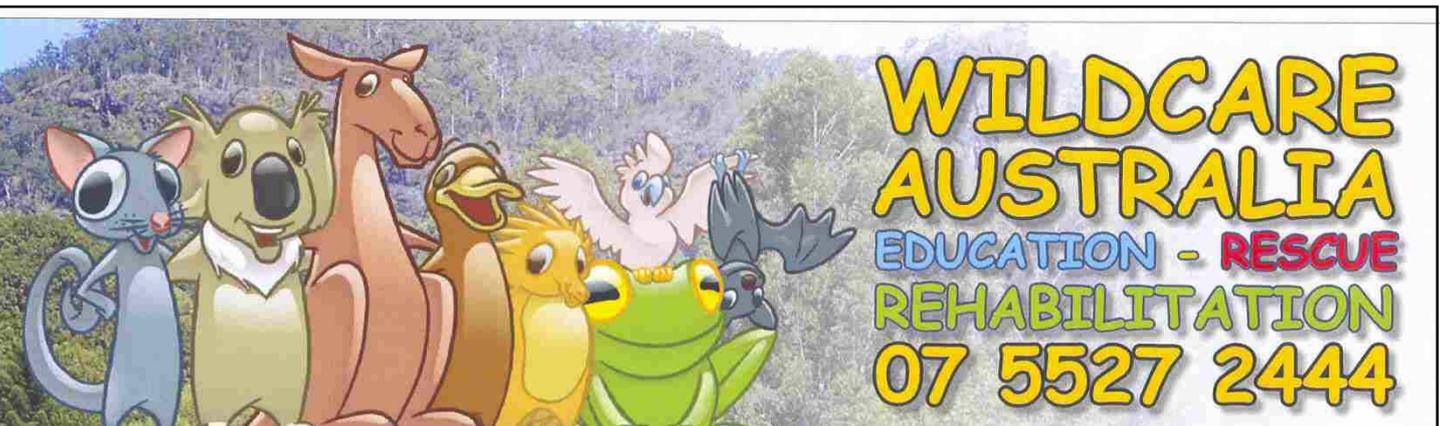
Please note that the Wildcare email address wildcare@goldlink.aunz.com is defunct. The ISP has gone out of business it seems so if you have forwarded any emails that have not been answered this would be the reason. Please note that our email address is enquiries@wildcare.org.au

Karen Scott

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



NWRC 2006 A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

The National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference 2006 in Darwin was an enormous success and a credit to the small group of people who brought it to fruition. Delegates came from all over the country and Wildcare Australia was very well represented. Once again the conference gave people the opportunity to increase their knowledge base and liaise with others, which will ultimately result in improving standards in wildlife rehabilitation and a greater awareness of the challenges that we face as carers and conservationists.

The papers were mostly presented by professionals in their field and covered a range of topics from Mammal Diversity in the Top End to Conservation, Conflict and Rehabilitation—Perspectives from India, from Commonly Seen Diseases in Wild Birds in Darwin to Internal Parasites and Quarantine, from Recognition of Pain in Wildlife to The Impact of Cane Toads on Native Wildlife.

There was a good balance of work and pleasure, with conferencing interspersed with visits to the Northern Territory Wildlife Park and Crocodylus Park

The food was fit for a king. Magnificent selections of fresh fruit and sweet morsels were provided for morning and afternoon tea and superb lunches were served by Tim at his restaurant not far from the conference venue.

Congratulations to all of those involved in making the conference such a resounding success. We look forward to our next destination, Western Australia, in 2007.



TRIVIA NIGHT

SATURDAY 21ST OCTOBER 2006

After the Dr Anne Fowler Intensive Possum Workshop

When: 6:30pm for 7pm start

Where: Narrowleaf- Top Cabin

Cost: \$10 per person

Includes: Pizza, Tea and Coffee and if you come along you will see what else we have to offer!

**50 Questions 5 categories
Plus a bonus round**

Lucky door prizes

Prizes for first and last place.

A great opportunity to get to know your fellow carers and have some fun!



We know it is short notice However we really want you to come.



CHRISTMAS PARTY

All members, carers and their families are invited to join the festivities for Christmas

at Narrowleaf on the Gold Coast

on Sunday, 10 December

from 12 noon

Secret Santa to the value of \$10.00 if you wish to participate

Please bring a plate (select type when you RSVP)
and your choice of drinks

RSVP to the Wildcare Office between 8.00am and 4.00pm
on week days 07 5527 2444



Coordinators report

Over the last couple of months we have received a large number of birds, roos and possums, and we have yet to get into the main baby bird and flying fox time!! Because of this, we request all carers to keep in contact with us so that we know where 'vacancies' exist, so that we are not overloading certain carers.

Three workshops are planned for the area for the rest of this year:

- **Introduction to Orphaned Mammals**
in Gympie on 22nd October
- **Advanced Macropods**
at Eumundi on 4th November
- **Wildlife Habitat and Native Plant ID**
at Pomona on 19th November.

All three workshops contain information that is critical to successful rescue, rearing and release of native wildlife and all carers should try to get along to them. All macropod carers (particularly experienced ones) need to attend the Advanced Macropod course as new research and procedures will be discussed.

The Wildlife Habitat and Native Plant Identification workshop is a 'must see' as presenters go through the ins and outs of sourcing native food for a wide variety of

species including but not limited to roos, possums, and birds. Selecting appropriate release sites and identifying ecosystems is also covered. This is fundamental to successfully releasing animals.

For all workshops, please register your ability to attend with the Wildcare Office between 8am and 4pm. A lunch spread will be provided at all three workshops for a few dollars. Alternately you can bring your own lunch.

Special thanks to the Wildcare Committee for purchasing a Digital Projector for the Sunshine Coast / Gympie area to use at workshops. It makes life a lot easier.

Currently we are running a Quilt Raffle to raise funds for the group. If you can help sell tickets please contact Paula.

We wish all Wildcare members a safe and happy silly season.....With the number of animals we have in at present, we have already gone a bit 'silly' so it will probably get even sillier from here!!

Hoping to see you all at the Sunshine Coast / Gympie Wildcare Christmas Party on 9th December at Pomona.

Regards
Paula Rowlands and Rachel Lyons



*Sunshine Coast / Gympie
Wildcare*

CHRISTMAS PARTY

All carers, members and their families are invited to join in the festivities at our Christmas BBQ luncheon. Games, prizes and talks planned.

Date: 9th December 2006

Time: 11.30am kick-off

Place: 8 Bushman Court, Pomona (just off Bruce Highway)

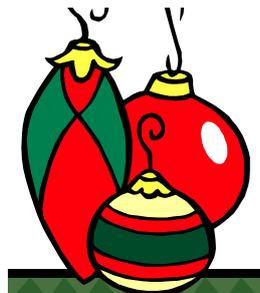
Please Bring:

Food to share (select type when you RSVP)

Secret Santa Lucky Dip Present to the value of \$5 max.

Hat, chair and drinks.

RSVP: 3rd December – Rachel on 0417 078 432



NEWS UPDATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND'S VET SCHOOL

Hi everyone, it's us again, giving you the latest on our sometimes torturous journey to become veterinarians.

It was great to catch up with several of you at the AGM back in June. Wildcare Australia as a whole appears to be growing from strength to strength, through the efforts of many dedicated volunteer rehabilitators and committee members; you are to be congratulated.

It's hard to believe we are nearing the end of our first year at vet school; it has been an extremely busy semester. Not only have we crammed our grey matter full of locomotory anatomy, digestive physiology, animal handling techniques and cellular biology, we have also assisted in motivating over 200 students to care for wildlife in their future veterinary practises.

How did we achieve this fantastic feat? Well, it was through the wealth of knowledge stored in the hearts and brains of your very own species coordinators.

Karen Scott managed the inaugural 8 week UQ veterinary school wildlife course, in her role as education coordinator, with the aid of Kathryn Biber. Excellent talks were given by the latter committee members, as well as your President Gail Gipp, and bat coordinators Greer Mc Neil and Trish Wimberley. We also had speakers from Australia Zoo's Wildlife Hospital – Vicky Carlsson and Dr. Tania Bishop. The information CD which accompanied the course was greatly appreciated, especially by those students in 5th year who are about to face the real world as graduate veterinarians.

Here are a few shots of Karen, Gail and the students during the course.



Gail teaching students about koalas



Karen teaching students about macropods



Two hundred students
in one of the largest lecture theatres on campus

The feedback on the course has been fantastic, with very few improvements needing to be made for when we run the course next year. The students are extremely keen to learn more about wildlife in general; which as the newly appointed wildlife society organisers, means we have a big job on hands to keep the momentum going and the interest factor high for the next few years.

However, the students shift in thinking towards wildlife, really hit home this week. As part of our assessment for locomotory studies, we had to give small group presentations on an animal of our own choice. In previous years, the animals chosen have mostly been from a domestic background, but this year all but two presentations were on either Australian wildlife or exotic species. We secretly had a little chuckle to ourselves when the lecturer could not understand the reason for such a huge change!!

Cont. on p. 10

Cont. from p.9

We are also in the process of arranging Lyssavirus injections for a large group of students who particularly want to undertake some practical work with Trish and Terry as part of their pre-clinical work experience, so you may meet some of these students next time you visit the Wildcare office.

On a final note, there are many research projects occurring throughout the university involving PhD and honours students, and they are often looking for like minded people to help out with tracking and general research duties. Having helped out on several projects ourselves as carers in the past, we know how valuable this fieldwork is for gaining further knowledge on species behaviour and basic biology. The glider

project detailed below was distributed recently throughout the school, and as many carers are involved in glider rehabilitation we asked Grant if carers could also get involved in helping out with the research project. The answer was a resounding "yes please". So for those interested in learning more about these wonderful creatures, you can contact Grant directly as per the advertisement.

On that note we will say bye for now, as exams are looming. Here's wishing you all good luck and plenty of energy for the 'silly season'.

Sharon Griffiths and Mike Champkin

Volunteers required **for Marsupial field research**

Target Species: Squirrel Glider



Location:

South Brisbane near Browns Plains
(Karawatha Forest – Greenbank Military Res.)

Activities:

Spotlighting (nightly from 6:00pm)
Radio-tracking (nightly from 6:00pm)
Setting up traps (daily from 9:00am)
Trap clearing (daily from 7:00am)

Please email Grant Brearley on the following email with your preferred times, days and activities.

g.brearley@uq.edu.au

***** Must have own transport to Springwood*****

JUST A QUICK REMINDER FOR EVERYONE

Since the job of record keeping has become a two person job, I would like to remind EVERYONE if you email your records using **Excel** then email them to Kiersten Jones: kierstenj@bigpond.com

If you hand write your records, please continue to post them to the office. If you choose to use the Word format for your records you can email them to me: kerrychadwick@optusnet.com.au

Please do not email your phone records and carers records to Kiersten. Phone records Excel and hand written are handled by Daneile Holmes: daneile_holmes@yahoo.com.au

Now just to bring you up to date, I have recently begun a full time job, thankfully. If you have ANY record queries please phone me in the mornings or after 8pm and I will get back to you or of course you can email me at the above address.

I am going to add little record keeping reminders in this and following newsletters on common problems I see most months.

One common problem I see are records submitted without a code. The original code should come from the Wildcare phone operator along with all the relevant information for the animal/bird. If you receive no code please check with the phone operator. This can be difficult I know, particularly after office hours. Please do your best to see if a code has been issued for that animal/bird. If not then please give your own code. **PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR RECORDS WITHOUT CODES.** Neither Kiersten nor I have the time to chase up codes.



NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!

I recently purchased a great CD-Rom featuring pictures of native and feral baby birds. It's called "A Bird in the Hand" by Lynda Hyde. It's a great presentation and I think it will be of enormous value to all bird carers. For details see page 16.

INTERESTING WEBSITES

Now this could become an additional interesting part of our newsletter.

It would be great if our readers would submit various interesting websites that are relevant to our interests. Please feel free to contact Eleanor if you would like to contribute. One interesting site I have found:

www.earthbasics.com.au This Canberra based company specializes in manufacturing bio-degradable bags in order to do away with those terrible supermarket plastic bags. All products are Aussie made and will break down in compost. There is quite a range of products available.



A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Wildcare Australia welcomes the following new members:

Colleen Origliasso, Albany Creek; Carolyn Hahn, Amity Point; Marion Carrick, Cashmere; Vanda Grabowski; Shirley McRae; Caroline Orli, Mermaid Beach; Tai Graham, Mermaid Beach; Claire Milliken, Point Lookout; Tasha Daniell, Cornubia; May & Ludwig Gross, Cooran; Jan Wedgwood Beachmere; Rick Bamford, Morayfield; Anne Tocknell, Morayfield; Daryll & Betty Hagen, Caboolture; Ann Bright, Morayfield; Suzanne Johnson, Morayfield; Charlene Johnson Morayfield; Myra Williams, Currimundi; Beverley Milner, Mt Coolum; Gillian Moore, Morayfield; Sue Smith, Landsborough; Paula Kelly, Buderim; Trish Rand Kristie Jenkins, Byford W.A.; Lyn Rickhuss, Tallai; Susannah McGinnes, Eagle Farm; Vicki Collins, Mudgeeraba; Sandra Peake, Mt Berryman; Linda Daley, Bonogin; Donna Dean, Upper Coomera; Kelly Withers, Wynnum West; Leisa Melcer, Narangba; Nicole Krug, Merrimac; Alison Hislop, Robina; Natasha Fewson, Sheldon; Gordon & Valia Blackmore, Tamborine; Clare Pollitt, Churwar; Bridgette Bale, Biggenden; Michelle Bale, Biggenden; Paul Smith, Dunwich; Sarah Henderson, Dunwich; Jane Holland, Dunwich; Emma Lewis, Dunwich; Lesley Dodshon, Reedy Creek; Sonia Douglas, Dunwich; Ursula Biber, Forestdale; Kenny Knight, Tallebudgera; Monique Mullen, Jimboomba; Richard Genet, Jimboomba; Margaret Turner, North Tamborine; Tracy Breen, Burleigh Heads; Jaime Magnussen, Alexandra Hills; Annette Ferguson, Runcorn; Christine Valentine, The Gap; Alex Sugden, Burleigh Heads; Aunta Sutton, Burleigh Heads; Rhonda & Len Hay, Burpengary; Carole Bradley, Slacks Creek; Judith Hinckley, Wynnum West; Karen Douglas, Stradbroke Island; Lisa & Tony McKeown, Cashmere; Nikki O'Donoghue, Redland Bay; Kim Gear & Joel Morris, Wellington Point; Rocio Noriega, Kirra; Neil Lazarou, Kirra; Roberta & Clayton Lean, Nanango; Trish Baber, Worongary; Scott Shirreffs Palm Beach; Kris Cawther, Palm Beach.

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.



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 three 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. The 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.

GLOWDER GLIDER A SUCCESS STORY



I received a call from the Wildcare Office advising me that Fleay's had a Sugar Glider with a head injury. It needed a carer for a week or so. So off I went to pick up the glider hoping it really would only require short-term care as I am in the middle of renovations which are taking all my time at the moment.

When I arrived, I found it was a Sugar Glider, as she had a white tip on the

end of her tail, but she came with two pinkies (approx. 5gms each) in pouch. As those of you who have cared for gliders know, when a female comes into care with pinkies in pouch, it usually aborts them through stress. However as these were not a viable weight, taking and raising them was not an option.

So my main concern was to get mum well as quick as possible and get her back to where she came from before she aborted the joeys. Glowder, as she was named at Fleay's, had a wound above the right eye and some form of head trauma. She was on a course of antibiotics, so she was going to be in for about a week at the least.

After a week in care she was still very slow on her feet and not finding her way back to her pot where she slept in the mornings, but she still had the babies and seemed to be really healthy.

She took longer than I had imagined to get back on her feet again. In the mean time she learnt to trust me and knew I was her food source. By the time I considered her to be ready for release she had two big babies crammed into her pouch. I felt it would be too hard for her out there, trying to find her territory again with two lumps weighing her down. So I have kept her back until the babies are ready to follow. I have watched them grow from tiny little pinkies into bright young gliders. At the moment they are 35gms each (a boy and a girl).

At night Mum leaves them in the nest while she is foraging for food but returns to feed them several times throughout the night.

I have also introduced to them a juvenile female Sugar Glider, 70 gms, that came into care in September and Mum has adopted her as one of her own.

Sharon Singleton



THE SEARCH IS ON... ..

FOR WHAT?

PHOTOS OF BABY BIRDS

We are hoping to make up a chart to complement the other baby bird identification material.

If you can have suitable photos of baby birds, nestlings or fledglings, and would like to be part of this project, please let us know by emailing either

Kerry Chadwick kerrychadwick@optusnet.com.au

or myself, emhanger@ozemail.com.au

Similarly if you have any questions about the project please do not hesitate to contact us.

BABY BAT SEASON

The 10th of October has officially heralded the beginning of Baby Bat Season for 2006 and already we have flying fox and microbat (insectivorous) orphans in care, not to mention the mums with bubs and the mums - in - waiting.

Members of the public and of Wildcare need to be aware that only a vaccinated person is able to rescue bats (i.e. both flying foxes and insectivorous bats). If we want these bubs to survive, timing is critical. The faster the babies are rescued and receive appropriate care, the better their chances of survival. Some of these babies will be premmies and survival really does depend on speed of appropriate treatment.

Mums, heavily pregnant, come in low to feed on flowering trees, many of which are found growing under powerlines. These mums are electrocuted but in most cases bubs will survive. Barbwire and incorrect netting of fruit trees is another threat.

Tick season is with us as well, just an added threat to these wonderful creatures. Wildcare has already had one pregnant mum in suffering tick paralysis. Tick Tock has survived only because of fast, correct diagnosis and treatment. An ultrasound has determined that bubby still has a strong heartbeat and we are anxiously awaiting delivery.

For those wonderful baby bat carers these babies are a delight, but just remember for every baby we have the chance to rear a mother has to die. In a perfect world this wouldn't happen. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we didn't have any babies to care for this year?

Enjoy your babies this season and give a thought to their mums.

Trish Wimberley & Greer McNeill



BOOKS for your Christmas Wish List

There are some fantastic wildlife books available now and many of the ones listed below are available through the Wildcare Office.

A Field Guide to Reptiles of Queensland by Steve Wilson. This book includes all species of geckos, legless lizards, skinks, goannas, snakes, crocodiles and freshwater and marine turtles found in Queensland. It includes fantastic photos and is a great identification book.

Australian Magpie; Biology and Behaviour of an Unusual Songbird by Gisela Kaplan.

If you love magpies you will love this book. It delves into the behaviour of one of Australia's best-loved icons.

Wedge-Tailed Eagle by Penny Olsen.

This book provides a comprehensive overview of Australia's largest eagle.

Australian Mammals: Biology and Captive Management by Stephen Jackson.

This is a very in depth book and provides a comprehensive guide to the husbandry of Australian marsupials and mammals including bandicoots, koalas, macropods, possums and gliders and bats.

Bats in Question: The Smithsonian Answer Book by DE Wilson.

A fantastic book that deals with the superstitions and myths surrounding bats.

Echidna: Extraordinary Egg-Laying Mammal by Michael Augee et al.

This book describes the echidna's lifestyle and covers subjects such as anatomy, senses, reproduction, behaviour and feeding habits.

Fauna of Australia Volume 1B: Mammalia edited by DW Walton

An oldie but a goodie. Covers 34 mammal species and includes information on morphology and physiology, natural history, care and conservation.

Life of Marsupials by Hugh Tyndale-Biscoe.

Explores the biology and evolution of marsupials.

Tracks, Scats and Other Traces by Barbara Triggs.

Provides information on identifying mammals by their tracks and the other signs they leave behind.

Australian Birds their Nests and Eggs by Gordon Beruldsen (2003) A guide to the nests and eggs of those Australian birds that are known to breed in Australia and on the offshore islands. A excellent source of information for those interested in birds. Good descriptions and colour plates

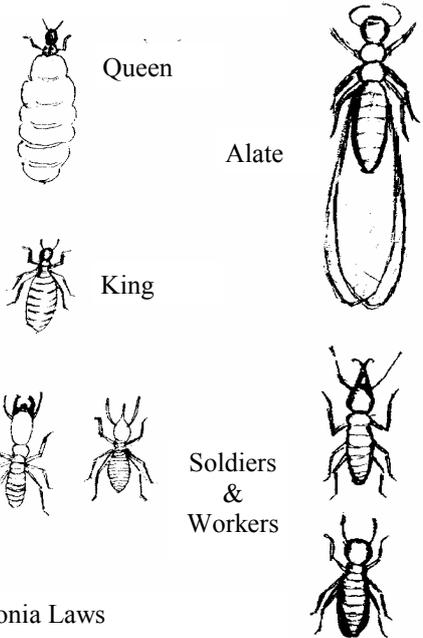
TERMITES

When travelling in the northern parts of Australia one of the most noticeable features of the landscape is the termite mound. The mounds are earthen structures made by small creatures that shun the light of day. They stand like sentinels, some quite small others rising to six metres or more. Their colour varies from beige to reds to browns, according to the substrate from which they are built. Their shapes vary according to the species, from fluted to buttressed to slim towers and most remarkable of all are the magnetic termite mounds which are oriented on a north-south axis. These are built on seasonally flooded plains. It is believed that orientation is a means of controlling the temperature in areas where the termite cannot retreat below ground level during the hottest part of the day due to the flooding.

The insects responsible for these amazing structures are termites, the mention of which usually elicits a horrified response. However of the 350 recognized species in Australia only a few cause problems for humans. These are the termites that excavate galleries and chambers in wood. In Northern Australia ecologists believe the mound building termites are the life blood of the tropical savanna ecosystems, as their foraging, feeding and burrowing behaviours increase the soils ability to store water, as well as redistributing nutrients, thus promoting biodiversity. The mounds are important to other species, including insects, birds, reptiles and mammals, as nesting sites or sites to shelter from predators, extremes of temperature and fire.

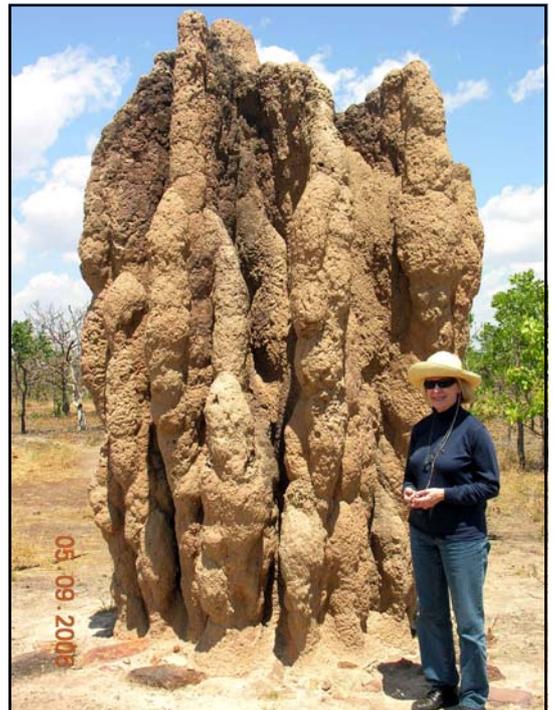
Termites, although often referred to as “white ants” are not ants, they are related to cockroaches and feed on cellulose which they obtain from dead grass, wood and other plant material. They are highly social insects and a colony of mound building termites comprise a king, queen, nymphs of the non reproductive castes, which become workers or soldiers as adults, and nymphs of the reproductive castes which when they mature develop wings and fly out to start new colonies. At this stage they are called alates and become an important food source for mammals, reptiles and birds.

Aboriginals used the ‘carton’ or inner galleries of the termite mound for medicinal purposes and cooking and of course, didgeridoos were made from healthy eucalypts which had had their stems and branches hollowed out by termites.



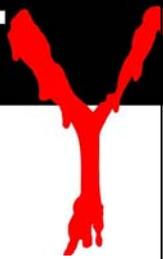
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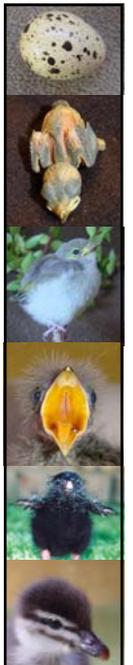


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28 December, 2006

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