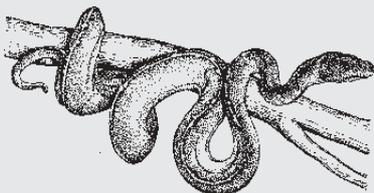
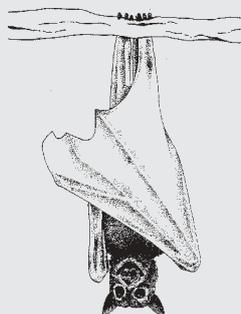
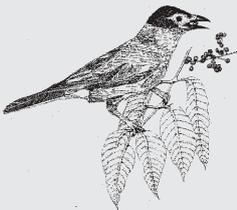


R'n'R

A newsletter for
wildlife carers

Issue 1, January 2002

Rehabilitation and Release



Wildlife care partnership

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is encouraging carers to help it develop a wildlife care education strategy.

The Service sees *Rehabilitation and Release (R'n'R)* as an important component of the future strategy as it will be the main communications link between the Service as a whole, carer groups and individual carers.

R'n'R will be published twice yearly and mailed to carers and other concerned individuals as well as being published on the internet.

Manager of the Service's Wildlife and Community Nature Conservation Unit, Leslie Shirreffs, said there was a need for a strategy so Service staff could have a greater understanding of the role carers played in wildlife conservation. As well, she said, carers needed to share information concerning wildlife conservation and care on an ongoing basis.

"Because we are all working to conserve wildlife we need to have a reliable two-way communications system operating," Leslie said.

"It's all too easy to work in a vacuum, particularly with so many constraints on most people's time. We need to develop a more effective way of providing information to carers and of receiving information from them.

"Those actually working on the ground caring for and rehabilitating sick and injured wildlife gain an insight into wildlife care that is not readily available to Service staff.

"Similarly, staff working on broader wildlife conservation matters can provide carers with a state-wide perspective on species recovery and conservation issues.

"It's a valuable partnership with all parties sharing the well-being of wildlife at its core."

A series of meetings between Service staff and carers has already been held in Brisbane, on the Gold Coast, and in Cairns, and Leslie said further meetings were scheduled for other parts of the state.

"There's nothing like meeting people face to face to exchange ideas and information," Leslie said.

"*R'n'R* will service a much-needed purpose, but personal contact between carers and Service staff will be a feature of our wildlife care education strategy. Wildlife will be the main beneficiary of the strategy.

"Both carers and the Service are working to conserve wildlife in Queensland. We all want to see our endangered and other native animals provided with the best possible future, and a key component of that is the rehabilitation and release into the wild of sick and injured animals," Leslie said.

Ipswich carer Ruth Lewis, who attended one of the meetings, sees the need for an education strategy.

"A lot of the hard work falls back onto volunteers, who make themselves available to pick up and tend injured and sick wildlife regardless of the time, day or night," Ruth said.

"I'm lucky because I work closely with wildlife officers at Moggill and Daisy Hill, but sometimes carers can feel as if they're working in isolation, rather than as part of a wildlife care network."

Ruth said the strategy, and the newsletter in particular, would help address this problem and also be an avenue for raising issues important to carers, such as the euthanasia of injured animals.

The wildlife education strategy will also address a range of other issues including problem wildlife, balancing production with nature and rare and threatened wildlife.

Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of *Rehabilitation and Release*. This newsletter will be produced twice yearly and I look forward to your comments on this first edition and your input into those that will follow.

As its title suggests, this newsletter is all about providing information on the rehabilitation and release of native animals.

With Queensland's 28 care groups boasting a combined membership of more than 1200, and individual wildlife carers numbering around 600, it is clear that most sick, injured and orphaned native animals are rehabilitated in private homes and back yards.

The magnitude of this commitment becomes clear when you consider that there are presently 8825 native animals in care.

When I consider the huge number of animals nursed back to health by carers each year, I begin to appreciate the significant role played by carers in the conservation of our native wildlife. And when I consider the individual animals rescued from the wild who are treated, fed, bathed and comforted by carers, I begin to gain a sense of the deep commitment carers bring to their vocation.

Release into the wild is the primary goal of a carer. And as with most things in life, there are a few exceptions. Some animals, for example bridled naitail wallabies, may be better off placed in a captive breeding program where we can be more assured they will add to the gene pool and increase the population of their species.

The mahogany glider is another example of an animal that, if unable to be released into the wild because of injury, can still find a role in a captive breeding program, such as the one operating at the QPWS David Fleay Wildlife Park on the Gold Coast.

Zoos and other wildlife parks involved in the Queensland Species Management Program can provide a viable future for some injured animals whose species is listed as endangered or threatened. Such an animal can make a valuable contribution to the expansion of their species' gene pool, study of breeding biology and release of offspring as part of a recovery program.

But on the whole, rehabilitation, followed by release, is what we're all working towards. And the carers of Queensland are doing an outstanding job at just that!

We hope that by sharing information and moving towards post-release monitoring activities, we can together continue to increase the chances of survival for hand-reared fauna returned to the wild.

Leslie Shirreffs
Manager, Wildlife and Community
Nature Conservation

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Contributions

Please forward all correspondence and contributions to Debra Hotchkis, Wildlife Ranger, QPWS, PO Box 3454, Burleigh Town LPO, Burleigh Heads QLD 4220 or e-mail:

debra.hotchkis@env.qld.gov.au

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Minister for Environment, the Environmental Protection Agency or the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Who are we?



We're not seen around that often but as the year moves on we get pretty noisy.

There can be up to four of us keeping both parents really busy.

Normally you'd never find our nest even if you tripped over it. We do prefer the eastern rainforests.

Please send entries to: Debra Hotchkis, Wildlife Ranger, QPWS, PO Box 3454, Burleigh Town LPO, Burleigh Heads, QLD 4220.
debra.hotchkis@env.qld.gov.au

All correct entries will go into a draw, the winner will receive a prize from the Naturally Queensland Information Centre. The winner will be announced in the next issue of *Rehabilitation and Release*. 2

Talking on the wild side

Rosemary Booth, wildlife veterinarian

Have you ever wanted an answer to a wildlife rehabilitation question and haven't known who to ask?

Well I've been caring professionally for wildlife since 1986 and I've seen and heard a lot, read a lot, travelled a lot, searched the internet for hours, talked to and listened to hundreds of wildlife carers, attended dozens of conferences and workshops, found out a lot the hard way and a few things the easy way and maybe I can help.

Please feel free to write to me with your wildlife care and health questions and I will do my best to answer them.

To get the ball rolling, I will tell you an interesting story.

In 1995 I was in Nepal to lecture on wildlife to Government veterinarians in a programme funded by AusAID and the Australian Veterinary Association Conservation Biologists.

While we were there a wild black leopard was rescued from villagers who had trapped and stoned it because it was a threat to their children and livestock. A local ranger drove the unconscious animal to the Kathmandu central zoo. Due to limited resources the zoo management had recently changed its policy on wildlife rehabilitation and refused to take it. The outraged ranger contacted a local radio station for help and a young private vet came to his aid and offered to treat the leopard.

The Prince of Nepal heard about it and instructed the zoo director to take the leopard. The recently appointed zoo veterinarian asked us to help him assess the leopard and transfer it to the zoo if it could be saved.

By now the leopard, which had received fluids and antibiotics, had regained consciousness in a small wooden cage in a one-room clinic in down-town Kathmandu. It was challenging to safely examine and transport the leopard to the zoo. For the next week we gathered sufficient catheters, tubing, I/V fluids, antibiotics and anaesthetics from local hospitals, pharmacies and corner stores.

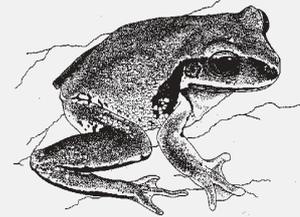
Unfortunately the leopard's skull had been cracked and infection was not adequately controlled with the antibiotics which were available to us, and she died after more than a week of care. Prior to her death we had discussed her options for the future, and the difficulties of releasing a large territorial carnivore became apparent.

Our issues in this country are, by comparison, much simpler. On the days when wildlife rehabilitation seems frustrating and difficult, spare a thought for wildlife workers in countries where wildlife can be killers, and resources are even more limited than ours.



If you have a question for Rosemary Booth, send it to:

Debra Hotchkis
Wildlife Ranger -QPWS,
PO Box 3454,
Burleigh Town LPO,
Burleigh Heads QLD 4220.
e-mail:
debra.hotchkis@env.qld.gov.au



While cleaning the wounds of the anaesthetised leopard we required volunteers to swat flies, and distract the nearby elephant which kept throwing stones at us to get our attention.

Photo: Larry Vogelnest

Wildlife care and rehabilitation – what can we learn?

Andrew Tribe School of Animal Studies
University of Queensland

The rescue, care and rehabilitation of Australian fauna represents probably the most intimate, intensive and expensive interaction that the majority of people can have with wildlife. The motivation behind it undoubtedly stems from good intentions, but the practice has also become the focus of much discussion.

Throughout Australia, literally thousands of people are involved in the rehabilitation and relocation of wild animals. These wildlife carers come from all sections of the community; most are tireless workers who are committed to helping wildlife, and often they sacrifice enormous amounts of time and money in the process.

Why do they do it?

Surveys of both the United States and Australia have shown that carers have a strong “humanistic need” to help wildlife and to try to redress some of the damage that the 21st century is causing. Their motivations include:

- Feelings of moral responsibility
- Personal satisfaction and development
- Interest in environmental conservation
- An appreciation of nature

What about the wildlife?

Over the past few years, I have been collecting data from around Australia about the animals coming into care, the reasons for this, and what eventually happens to them. While the information is by no means complete, the following trends have become apparent:

- (1) The majority of wildlife are from common and widespread species. This is to be expected – common things occur commonly and so

most of the animals we find around our homes and cities are not going to be endangered.

- (2) They usually require care and rehabilitation because of some previous interaction with humans. The most common reasons included vehicle accidents, attacks by dogs and cats (introduced predators), collisions with human-made objects, poisoning, and contamination, trapping and shooting.
- (3) A significant proportion of these animals are not surviving the rehabilitation process. In fact the results show that almost 60 percent are either euthanased or are dying after some period of care.
- (4) While a large number are eventually being released, little information is available about their ultimate survival. For instance it is usually not known for how long they survived nor if they were able to eventually contribute to the free-range populations of these species.

Such conclusions have led some people to question the value of wildlife rehabilitation. They argue that there is little conservation benefit in returning common animals to habitats which may already be overcrowded and in which they may not survive. There is also the potential risk of introducing diseases from the captive to the wild population.

So, why rehabilitate?

While it is true that there are problems associated with wildlife care and rehabilitation, there are nevertheless some important benefits which can be gained. These include:



- Replenishment of local populations - in certain situations, there may be opportunities to release small numbers of animals, for instance, after a bushfire, or in reclaimed and protected fragments of local habitat.
- Development of rehabilitation techniques - there is a great deal of knowledge and experience amongst wildlife carers about the handraising and care of Australian wildlife. Although developed with common wildlife, these skills may be transferable to the care of more endangered species when required.
- Educational message - the greatest benefit from wildlife rehabilitation is likely to come from the educational message it inspires. This may be directly, through community involvement in the care of wild animals, local habitat protection and conservation, and indirectly through promotion and coverage of wildlife problems and the efforts of wildlife carers to combat them. This is a real benefit of wildlife care that is frequently overlooked.

How can we improve wildlife rehabilitation?

In spite of problems, both perceived and real, the care and rehabilitation of wildlife is going to continue: there is likely to be an ongoing supply of injured, orphaned, and displaced animals, and people with the desire to help them.

Consequently, rather than trying to restrict this work, a better approach may be to assist wildlife carers to become more effective. To begin with, this means viewing wildlife care and release as a developing science that can and should be encouraged and improved, and there are four ways in which I believe this can happen. These are:

1. More research into the fate of released animals, the impact on resident populations and the effectiveness of different prerelease strategies.
2. Development of guidelines for wildlife release, by a team comprising experienced wildlife carers, wildlife biologists and veterinarians.
3. Promotion of continuing education for wildlife carers on the best methods of rehabilitation and release for different species. This would include an explanation of the guidelines for wildlife release.
4. Raising the profile and status of wildlife care groups particularly within government conservation agencies. This would involve a greater recognition of the experience and potential contribution of these groups to wildlife conservation and a greater allocation of resources to monitor and assist these groups.

Making wildlife care and rehabilitation a desirable and effective part of wildlife conservation will not be easy, but it is up to all of us – ecologists, zoologists, wildlife carers and veterinarians – to play our part. To me, it is a practical example of that old conservation saying:

**“Think globally,
act locally”!**



Planting trees for wildlife

Even after six years as a wildlife carer and with many success stories behind her, Pippa De Palo wonders about the long-term survival of the many animals she has rehabilitated to the wild.

“There is very little research available on what happens to animals once they are released back in the wild,” she said.

“It’s hard not knowing whether they are still alive, whether they’ve had young or how well they have adapted to their native habitat.”

The carer from Bellbowrie in Brisbane’s south-west describes herself as “very committed” to nature conservation and says her work with wildlife is making a difference to the way many people in her area value the environment.

“For instance, one of my neighbours has become a carer and three others have joined the Land for Wildlife program since we became members,” she said.

“We have planted over 200 trees on our two-and-a-half acre property which is benefiting local wildlife such as tawny frogmouths, possums and gliders.”

Pippa is a registered carer with QPWS and is often asked by the Service to help rescue sick, injured or orphaned animals. She also receives direct calls through the QPWS emergency hotline.

“I think that to be a carer you have to have something within you which requires almost selfless devotion.

“Having said this I never see my work as a burden on my life or time. All carers love what they do. We share similar traits which includes a sense of humour, the ability to live without sleep and being able to accept loss tempered with joy when an animal or bird is successfully returned to its native habitat.

“This is the reality of your work as a carer. Native animals are not pets and they need to go back to their natural environment.”

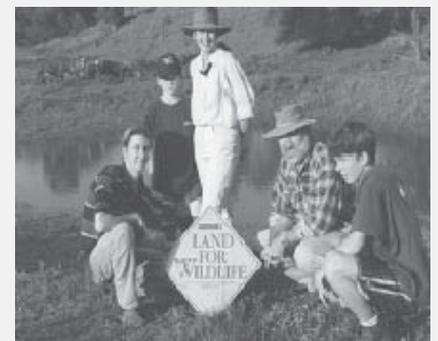
Pippa’s commitment to conserving her local environment is the main reason why she joined the Pullen Pullen Catchment Group and became its Wildlife Committee Chairperson.

With the assistance of GreenCorps, the group has planted almost 8000 trees which are helping to conserve and enhance the natural surrounds and encourage more native wildlife and vegetation into the area.

Land for Wildlife

The QPWS encourages landholders with areas of bushland for wildlife habitat to register their properties under the Land for Wildlife (Lfw) program.

Lfw is sponsored by the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and administered by local councils across the State.



**For more information, contact:
Martin O’Malley - State
Co-ordinator, Ph. 3006 4622
e-mail: martin.omalley@env.qld.gov.au**

Gail Gipp — carer and educator

Gail Gipp's commitment to native animals and the environment becomes stronger with each passing year.

From her Tamborine Village property in the Gold Coast hinterland, Gail is responsible for overseeing Wildcare, a volunteer organisation which has a network of 300 members in south-east Queensland and runs an accredited training course for carers.

"Last year alone members on the Gold Coast and in Brisbane and Toowoomba handled 10,000 telephone calls and cared for 3000 native animals," she said.

"That's a good sign of the public's growing awareness of animal welfare issues but also a sad indictment of the increasing number of urban-related accidents and the effects of loss of habitat."

As Wildcare president, Gail is very passionate about her role as a wildlife protector and also sees it as a great opportunity to continually educate the wider community about native animals.

"If we don't think about what we're doing now in terms of urbanisation and environmental pollution then we're all in for a very rude shock in the next 20 years," she said.

To help put theory into practice, Wildcare runs the accredited course *Caring for Wildlife* in conjunction with TAFE Queensland and Currumbin Sanctuary on the Gold Coast.

"It's crucial for new carers to be educated and for them to belong to a group so they can help each other and share information," Gail said.



Wildcare president Gail Gipp believes it's crucial for carers to be educated.

"Individuals who want to take care of wildlife always mean well but it's like starting anything new — you make mistakes. In cases of sick and injured wildlife, mistakes can lead to unnecessary loss of life which is something nobody wants to happen."

Other courses in the pipeline include *Wildlife Ecosystems*, *Native Animal Anatomy and Physiology Level 1* and *Care & Treatment of Native Birds*.

Gail said Wildcare planned to run more education classes and several carers were working on course content.

"Being a carer is a huge responsibility — you have to be prepared to work around the clock, to deal with the loss of an animal and to accept it must be returned to the wild once it has been rehabilitated.

"When they first join Wildcare we recommend carers undertake the *Caring for Wildlife* course, then we match them up with a more experienced member who provides them with advice and assistance," Gail said.

Interesting sites on the internet

The following websites provide information on animals and may be of interest to wildlife carers.

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Information Directory (USA) –

<http://www.umn.edu/~devo0028>

Everything you want to know about rearing and releasing. Simply the best site!

Australian Wildlife -

<http://www.australianwildlife.com.au>

A great site which features articles on wildlife care and rescue, comments and opinions, debatable issues and much more.

Environment Australia -

<http://www.anca.gov.au>

For information from the federal body that governs Australian wildlife including import and export.

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland -

<http://www.wildlife.org.au>

Current Queensland wildlife and environmental issues.

World Wildlife Fund -

<http://www.wwf.org.au>

See what's happening all over the world on wildlife related matters.

Australian Museum -

<http://www.austmus.gov.au>

The A to Z of Australian wildlife.



Dedicated to wildlife

Judy Netterfield believes it takes a special person to become a wildlife carer and after 25 years of dedicated volunteer work she still finds it upsetting when animals are strong enough to be returned to their natural habitats.

“I know they are going back to where they belong but you do become attached to them,” she said.

“It is always important for people who are thinking about becoming carers to remember that wildlife should never be treated as domestic pets. Their survival back in the wild depends on this.”

The miniature horse breeder lives on a property near Cardwell in north Queensland. “Living in the bush makes me feel even more connected with wildlife and their environment,” Judy said.

The lifelong animal lover said being a carer could be time-consuming, especially when it involves around-the-clock feeding sessions with young animals.

Her most recent success story involved assisting a ringtail possum rarely seen in the area.

“Tania was on her own and we think she may have been brought here unintentionally, perhaps by hopping into someone’s caravan,” Judy said.

After three months of care, Tania was relocated to Wild World, a wildlife park in Cairns.

“When we are not sure where an animal has come from we can not return it to its natural habitat,” Judy said.

“And putting an animal into another animal’s territory can put them both at risk.”

She recommends people who find an injured or orphaned animal should keep it warm and immediately contact a QPWS wildlife officer or a veterinarian.

“People generally try to do the right thing but they don’t realise that most



North Queensland carer Judy Netterfield and friend rescue a python.

deaths are caused by the animals, particularly the younger ones, getting cold,” she said.

Judy, who is a strong believer in educating people about the care and protection of native wildlife, has been a regular visitor at local schools in recent years.

“I take whatever wildlife I may be looking after and explain to the children how important these animals are,” she said.

“They are very special and can not be replaced.”

Carer known as Mrs Skippy

Locals in the Willowbank area, near Ipswich, know exactly where to take sick, injured or orphaned wildlife — they come knocking on Ruth Lewis’s door.

“I’m so well known around here they call me Mrs Skippy or The Kangaroo Lady,” Ruth said. “Sometimes I get called out between three and four times a week to help rescue an animal which has been hit by a car, is stuck in a fence or may have fallen out of a tree.

“I don’t mind because I am very glad to have people around who are so concerned about wildlife. While I mainly look after kangaroos and koalas, people also bring me birds which I hand on to specialised carers.”

Ruth, who has been a registered carer with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) for the past 10 years, is currently looking after six kangaroos and a koala with the help of her husband, two sons and future daughter-in-law. “It’s definitely a combined effort — everyone gets in and feeds babies and wipes bottoms,” Ruth said.

Ruth became a carer after answering a call for volunteers to help flying foxes who had been orphaned by bushfires. “I got two the same day which I guess was a bit of a surprise but I managed and then went on to care for possums, wallabies, kangaroos and koalas,” she said.

“What started out as a hobby 10 years ago is now a full-time job.



Ruth Lewis cares for a koala.

I’ve had a pretty good success rate with 60 kangaroos and wallabies released back into the wild and 20 koalas, six of whom were hand-reared from babies.”

Ruth is a member of the Ipswich Koala Protection Society and Orphaned Native Animals Rear and Release Program. She also volunteers one day a week at the QPWS Koala Hospital at Moggill.

Carers help endangered wallaby

Carers are helping in the recovery of Queensland's endangered bridled nailtail wallaby.

Senior Conservation Officer, Janelle Lowry, who's involved in the recovery program for the bridled nailtail wallaby, says this macropod is one of Australia's most endangered mammals and it needs all the help it can get if it is to survive in the long term.

Bridled nailtail wallabies are small wallabies standing to a height of 50cm with a maximum weight of 5 to 9kg. The wallaby is distinctively marked with a white "bridle" line running from the centre of the neck, along the shoulders to behind the forearm on each side of the body. The bridled nailtail wallaby also has a nail-like spur at the tip of its tail.

Janelle said bridled nailtail wallabies once lived in areas west of the Great Dividing Range from Charters Towers in Queensland, through central New South Wales and south to the Murray region of Western Victoria. She said competition from sheep, habitat alteration and predation by foxes and feral cats had been suggested as reasons for the wallabies' decline.

"Once thought to be extinct, the species was rediscovered by a fencing contractor in 1973 near the town of Dingo, central Queensland.

"The rediscovery of the bridled nailtail wallaby eventually led to the acquisition of two neighbouring properties near Dingo which later became Taunton National Park (Scientific).

"Today there are only about 500 bridled nailtails living in the wild at Taunton.



The bridled nailtail wallaby, Onychogalea fraenata, once thought to be extinct, is an endangered species which is being bred and reintroduced to areas it previously inhabited.

Janelle said there were a few populations of bridled nailtail wallabies on properties near Taunton National Park (Scientific) and it was important the Service worked with landholders to help conserve this endangered animal.

"It's great that these populations are surviving in the wild, and it certainly gives us hope for the future.

"To minimise the risk of losing the entire population from events such as drought, bushfires or disease, bridled nailtail wallabies were released at Idalia National Park near Blackall and have bred well," Janelle said.

"It was decided to breed and release these wallabies at Idalia National Park because the park has suitable habitat.

"Predators such as foxes and feral cats were one of the main problems impeding the mammal's survival.

"Since 1995, the recovery team has conducted an effective baiting program at Idalia National Park to reduce the number of foxes and feral cats.

"Baits are distributed more intensively within a 5km radius of the wallaby release sites and less intensively throughout the rest of the 146,000ha park and some neighbouring properties," Janelle said.

"The meat baits, which are covered with a low dosage of diluted 1080 solution, are very effective at reducing predator numbers while having no detrimental impact on native wildlife populations.

"Since 1995, about 170 bridled nailtails have been released at Idalia National Park and there are now about 700 bridled nailtails in the wild at the park.

"Most of the released bridled nailtails were bred in captivity at Idalia National Park and the QPWS Pallarenda Station, while only nine bridled nailtails were relocated from the wild at Taunton National Park (Scientific). There is also a captive breeding program at the BHP Gregory Mine, near Emerald.

"Prior to release into the wild at Idalia National Park, the bridled nailtails were initially kept in a temporary holding yard until they

were familiar with the site. They're provided with food and water until they are able to forage for themselves."

Janelle said radio collars, fitted to the wallabies, enabled rangers to find the animals in order to check their health and determine the existence of any young.

Care of sick and injured bridled nailtail wallabies is an important part of the program.

"Wildlife carers, such as Yvonne Thompson, are doing a tremendous job as sick or injured nailtail wallabies are far too valuable to be allowed to die without attempts being made to save them. The present distribution of this species is so restricted that every individual is important," Janelle said.

Yvonne is presently caring for a female bridled nailtail and her joey.

Yvonne works voluntarily at the captive breeding program established at the Gregory Mine. Sponsored by BHP, the program is co-ordinated by Carl Rudd of the Centre for Conservation Biology, University of Queensland.

Carl said apart from releasing wallabies onto Idalia National Park, the program had sent nailtails to the David Fleay Wildlife Park on the Gold Coast and the Rockhampton Zoo to maintain populations as an insurance.

"As well, Emerald Shire Council is sponsoring a project to establish another population of nailtails at a new location, Avocet Nature Refuge, near Emerald.

"In early December, 12 bridled nailtails will be transferred from the captive breeding enclosure at BHP Gregory mine to Avocet," Carl said.

At present there are 85 wallabies in the captive breeding program and about 40 semi-wild wallies at the Gregory Mine site. Yvonne takes home any that are sick or injured and need some extra care.

"The idea is to nurse sick or injured wallabies back to health so they can take their place in the breeding program," Yvonne said.

Yvonne said back in the 1800s wallabies were harvested for their skins, and since then their habitat had been dramatically reduced chiefly through expansion of agriculture. She said the mammals had also fallen victim to predation by foxes, feral cats and dogs.

"Bridled nailtail wallabies only live for seven years and they are endangered. They are quite small so predators and habitat destruction are particularly detrimental to this species."

Most days Yvonne drives one-and-a-half hours to and from the Gregory Mine captive breeding program to care for the bridled nailtail wallabies, and then cares for other native animals, mainly macropods, when she's at home.

"We volunteers love these animals so much that many of us would do anything for them," Yvonne said.

"This is one of Australia's most endangered species and it's critical that we take action now to safeguard its future."



A grey kangaroo and swamp wallaby find care with Yvonne Thompson.

Public donations will be gratefully accepted to buy equipment to monitor the released wallabies' progress.

**Cheques can be made out to the Bringing Back the Bridled Nailtail Appeal, and forwarded to QPWS,
PO Box 3130,
Rockhampton Shopping Fair, QLD 4710.**

Wildlife ways

Deb Hotchkis - wildlife officer

Thousands of people throughout Australia are involved in caring for Australian native wildlife.

Correct identification of an animal is of the utmost importance, particularly in the case of birds. Incorrect identification of a bird can result in the animal being placed on an incorrect diet that, after months of care, will still result in its euthanasia. As carers know not all animals are vegetarian and great care must be taken to give all young animals a balanced diet regardless of their eating habits as adults. A veterinary prognosis should be sought early as this can help in identification.

The primary aims in caring for wildlife are treatment, rehabilitation and release. As the survival of animals released after a period in care is largely unknown, it makes sense for their time in care to be as short as possible, so the animal has the best chance of fitting back into its niche.

Disease is an extremely important issue both for animal and carers. Animals in care may be exposed to a range of pathogens not normally found in the wild and, once released, they may act as carriers to wild populations. Critical too, is the transmission of disease to the carer.



The Australian bat lyssavirus is only one of many zoonotic diseases to be careful of.

QPWS would like to become your partners in caring for the injured, displaced or orphaned wildlife that need help at some stage in their lives. As you all know we cannot and do not want to do it without you.

Deb Hotchkiss
Wildlife Officer
Ph: (07) 5520 9600

Deb's wildlife diary

January

The noisiest in the wetlands of the far north are the magpie geese *Anseranas semipalmate* whose high-pitched honks can make for a deafening chorus.

Flocks of plumed whistling-ducks *Dendrocygna eytoni* are preparing to breed, as are wandering whistling-ducks *Dendrocygna cygna*, Radjah shelducks *Tadorna radjah* and green pygmy-geese *Nettapus pulchellus*.



A Radjah shelduck

Comb-crested jacanas or lotus bird *Irediparra gallinacea* can be seen walking over lily pads.

Brolgas *Grus rubicundus* start pairing off, and the black-necked stork or jabiru *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* occasionally surprises with a paired dancing display.

Young platypuses emerge from their burrows, and eastern grey kangaroos give birth.



A Musky rat-kangaroo or hypsi

February

The dugong or sea cow *Dugong dugon*, one of the world's last vegetarian marine mammals, can be seen moving south along the coast.

Musky rat-kangaroos *Hypsignathos monstrosus* living in the sodden rainforests of far northern Queensland are starting to breed.

White cockatoos and corellas strip feeding sites of seeds, fruits, bulbs and buds and tropical finches are at the height of their breeding season.

Funnelweb spider *Atrax robustus* males, take their chances with the girls.

March

Now is the time for the solitary greater glider *Petauroides volans* to find a mate along with the social yellow-bellied glider *Petaurus australis* with young due in winter.

Migratory birds are leaving for their breeding grounds in Asia.

Red-tailed black cockatoos *Calyptorhynchus banksii* and glossy black cockatoos *Calyptorhynchus lathami* are autumn breeders along with bar-shouldered and peaceful doves.



A flock of Red-tailed black cockatoos



A Golden-shouldered parrot

April

For three of the four flying fox species — grey-headed *Pteropus poliocephalus*, black *Pteropus alecto* and spectacled *Pteropus conspicillatus* - mating activities peak around April and most births occur in October. Only the little red flying fox *Pteropus scapulatus* females are giving birth now.

With the wet over in the north, golden-shouldered parrots *Psephotus chrysopterygius* prepare nesting holes in rain-soaked termite mounds.

Also nesting are brown *Sula leucogaster*, masked *Sula dactylatra* and red-footed boobies *Sula sula*, logrunners and brahminy kites *Haliastur indus*.

May

Pink cockatoos *Cacatua leadbeateri* and red-winged parrots *Aprosmictus erythropterus* are now starting to breed.

Species like the spotted pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus* are forced to find kinder climates for the coming winter, many from the south-east migrate as far as the central coast of Queensland.

Rainbow bee-eaters *Merops ornatus* start a second breeding season across mid-northern Australia.



Pink cockatoos



A Wedge-tailed eagle

June

The southern cassowary *Casuarius casuarius* and emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae* start to breed. In both species, males incubate the eggs and rear the young.

Wedge-tailed *Aquila audax* and the white-bellied sea-eagles *Haliaeetus leucogaster* usually have chicks about now.

NatureSearch is a volunteer-based program where volunteers can get training and accreditation and participate in flora and fauna surveys. Training and events are held regularly in different parts of the State.

Contact: Ric Natrass, State Co-ordinator for local events.

Ph: (07) 3227 7836



Carers' corner

With the tick paralysis season about to start, North Queensland carer Jenny Maclean reports on the Tolga Bat Hospital's preparations for the rescue and rehabilitation of spectacled flying foxes (SFF), *Pteropus conspicillatus*.

We're entering the tick paralysis season with an air of excitement! We have a \$10,000 regional Natural Heritage Trust grant from the Wet Tropics Natural Resource Management Board. Some of this will be used by our partner Dr Andrew Dennis of CSIRO for a project to determine if the SFFs are coming into contact with paralysis ticks in wild tobacco *Solanum mauritianum*.

We also will be extracting a canine tooth from every dead adult to determine the age demographics of a SFF colony. The grant also provides for the development of materials for raising public awareness of SFF issues.

Merial, a pharmaceutical veterinary company, has funded Dr Rick Atwell from the University of Queensland to conduct research on the effect and management of tick paralysis. Rick heads the team, which develops the protocols followed by veterinarians for the treatment of tick paralysis in dogs and cats. This is particularly exciting as it will help us offer best practice in the veterinary management of the condition.

We were successful in applying for an International Year of the Volunteer grant. All volunteers (rescue, fostering, census etc) will receive especially designed SFF



Jenny Maclean (left) and Carolien Tiepel, a vet from Holland who's volunteered her services to the Tolga Bat Hospital, take the temperature of a spectacled flying fox with tick paralysis.

t-shirt and car sticker and a box of laundry detergent donated by our sponsor Aware/Planet (it is a good quality detergent concentrate that is not tested on animals and is phosphate-free).

We usually need about two live-in volunteers for the three months of tick paralysis season. Anyone interested can go to our website for more information.

Our website at www.athertontablelands.com/bats includes a page for people wanting to sponsor a bat. There are no grants for our core business of rescue, rehabilitation and release of SFFs. We rely on our bed and breakfast Pteropus House, sponsorships, t-shirt sales etc.

Plans for the 10th Australasian Bat Conference in Cairns, Easter 2002, are full steam ahead. I hope you can all make it. (<http://batcall.csu.edu.au/abs>)

Jenny Maclean
Tel/fax (07) 4091 2683
Jenny.maclean@iig.com.au

Vaccinations for lyssavirus

Carers of bats from around the state have received free immunisations against the lyssavirus courtesy of Queensland Health.

All wildlife carers who come into contact with bats should be vaccinated against this potentially deadly virus.

After realising recently that it had around 230 vaccinations about to reach their expiry date, Queensland Health offered the batch to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service for advice.

The QPWS contacted registered carers of bats and as a result 176 people were vaccinated free, some receiving booster shots and others receiving the series of two or three recommended for new bat handlers.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service contacts:

Northern Region: Cairns
Ph: (07) 4046 6601
fax: (07) 4046 6604

Central Region: Rockhampton
Ph: (07) 4936 0511
fax: (07) 4936 2171

Southern Region: Moggill
Ph: (07) 3202 0200
fax: (07) 3202 6844

Website <http://www.env.qld.gov.au/>