

# R'n'R

A newsletter for  
wildlife carers

Issue 3, January 2003

## Rehabilitate and Release



Queensland Government  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

## Big bird's care a tall order

A jumble of legs, beak and wings, Big Bird the jabiru was an odd sight when he arrived on the doorstep of Townsville wildlife carers Peter and Glenda Harvey.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) Senior Wildlife Ranger Mike Pople asked the Harvey family to care for the juvenile bird after it was hit by a car in January last year.

After four months in their care, he was transferred to David Fleay Wildlife Park at the Gold Coast where he was re-named Bohle after the river near where he was found and paired with the park's female jabiru, Barcoo.

Peter said Big Bird was more than 1.5m tall and "all legs, beak and wings" when it arrived.

The bird's wing had dropped and he had a cut from his breastbone under the wing to the middle of his back. He seemed dopey and lifeless.

"The cut was an old wound and had gone septic, so being hit by the car and having someone stop and pick him up probably saved his life," Peter said.

After a visit to the vet for wing x-rays (no breaks) and antibiotics, Peter and Glenda had to find what to feed the bird.

"I had some fish bait in the freezer, so I thawed that out and took it over to the pen he was sharing with a couple of injured lorikeets and some brown quails," Peter said.

"When I got there, he had one quail in his mouth and was bashing it on the floor in preparation to eat it.

"We quickly got all the other birds out before they were next. We fed him the bait and his eating habits were solved."

Over the next four months, the jabiru became part of the family and popular with the neighbours.

"There was not a lazy tooth in his head. He ate anything – pilchards, mullet, prawn, squid, rats, mice, mince, steak, eggs, sparrows and, when he caught it, a metre long snake," Peter said.



Peter Harvey watches Big Bird.  
Photo courtesy of The Townsville Bulletin

"He also kept the small goannas, frillnecked lizards and frogs on their toes as he combed our half a hectare paddock for food."

Peter advised carers to beware of jabirus' strong beaks and toes when they are administering injections or feeding.

"Despite his size and strength, he was quite an easy bird to work with. We kept him in a 5mx2mx2m pen each night for his safety."

Though the jabiru's wing was taped to his body, it did not heal well enough to enable him to be released.

He was sent to Australia Zoo to determine his sex and on to David Fleay Wildlife Park, through the Queensland Species Management Program.

Peter said he hoped his patient fared well in the future.

"We would like to thank all of the people who advised us on his care and rehabilitation," Peter said.

### Profile:

Peter and Glenda generally care for sick, injured and discarded pet birds. They rehabilitate and release most of the injured black cockatoos handed in in the Townsville region (Innisfail to Mackay and out to Mt Isa). Peter has 45 years experience working with birds. Jabirus are classed as rare and occur in Queensland, Northern Territory, New South Wales and Western Australia

# Editorial

January is traditionally the time in which we examine the year that we have just left behind and look to the year ahead.

Last year saw the release of the *Wildlife Management Review Discussion Paper* and, not least of our achievements, the launch and distribution of the first two editions of R'n'R magazine, increasing communication between carers across the State.

The discussion paper was well received by the community. About 155 people submitted their comments during the consultation phase in November. A large number of comments related to wildlife rehabilitation permits, ranging from strong support of recommendations, to concerns about some aspects and some very good suggestions for changes now and in the future.

All of these comments will be considered as the new laws are drafted over the coming months.

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### Contributions

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### 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.

The second edition of R'n'R was another success. Some very positive feedback was received from readers about the articles, our puggle mystery and questions for vet Rosemary Booth.

This time around we are asking you to let us know what you want to read. We encourage you to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard!) and send in your ideas.

This edition has many good stories about wildlife rehabilitation in Queensland. Many readers will remember a dugong called "Pig", who was rehabilitated at Sea World on the Gold Coast and released in Moreton Bay. Unfortunately Pig encountered some difficulties leading to him once again being rescued. This edition has an update on his situation.

Mackay carer Judith Rowe shares her experiences in caring for barn owls and there's a feature article on an elusive carnivore. Turn to page 7 to find out what it is. Vet Rosie shares some information about macropod diarrhoea, and, of course, there's Deb's "Who am I?" wildlife quiz.

All in all, the road ahead looks very exciting for wildlife rehabilitation in Queensland.

Building on the comments received in the wildlife review, it is proposed that an overarching wildlife care organisation for Queensland be established, formed from the established wildlife care groups and the RSPCA.

This volunteer wildlife group will consider providing accredited training, a wildlife hotline and ongoing development of standards of care for sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. Most importantly, it will provide a coordinated voice for wildlife rehabilitations and a tool for raising standards and sharing information.

Legislative changes will ensure that new carers join an accredited group to receive support and develop expertise in wildlife care. Other carers will be required to prove they are competent before obtaining a wildlife rescue permit. This will be achieved by either becoming accredited or becoming a member of an accredited wildlife care group.

No doubt there are challenges ahead in establishing the new arrangements. Success can only be guaranteed with the participation of carers themselves in establishing a system that works for the best interests of the wildlife involved. Partnerships between carers, groups and government will be the building blocks of wildlife care into the future.

In fact, partnerships look like the key emphasis for wildlife in the year ahead, as communities and businesses take on a greater role in protecting the environment.

In December, the QPWS signed an historic agreement with Australia Zoo for a partnership approach in crocodile management, research and education. A key element of the partnership is Australia Zoo's commitment to build a koala rehabilitation and release facility, operate a wildlife care ambulance for areas on the north side of Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast and engage local koala carers in the rehab program. Australia Zoo's generosity fills a gap for koala care on the north side of Brisbane.

So, there's lots on the go with wildlife care and carers ... as always.

'til next time.

### Leslie Shirreffs

*Leslie Shirreffs is the Manager of Wildlife and Community Nature Conservation with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service*

## What do you want to read?

This is the third edition of R'n'R – how time flies when you are having fun!

We enjoy gathering stories that we believe will interest carers, but we want to make sure we are covering the issues and topics that are close to carers' hearts.

Please help by putting pen to paper and telling us of any topics that you would like to appear in this newsletter.

# Injured dugong returns to Sea World

After eight months in the wild, the dugong known as Pig has returned to Sea World on the Gold Coast.

Readers will remember Pig from a story in the July edition of R'n'R.

He was hand-raised by Sea World staff for more than three years before being released into Moreton Bay. Sea World was the first organisation in the world to have released their hand-raised dugong.

Unfortunately, Pig was found in shallow water near his release site in November last year. He was undernourished, lethargic and had a number of infected cuts and abrasions that were a concern because of his weight.

The QPWS and Sea World rescued him from mangroves after a tip off from locals at Koorinal, a village at the southern end of Moreton Island.

As at December 2002, Pig weighed about 148kg, 50kg less than his release weight.

At the time of press, Sea World staff said his long-term prognosis was unclear.

Pig had a gut infection, which staff were attempting to treat with wild dugong faeces from Moreton Bay. Faeces are used to inoculate Pig's gut with appropriate bacteria.

He was being monitored around the clock and fed every two hours.

While he was eating between 25kg and 30kg of lettuce each day, a staff member said he was not gaining weight.

She said Pig was being housed in the pool in which he was hand-reared. The water was being heated to day and night temperatures.

When Pig was picked up in November, Sea World Director of Marine Sciences Trevor Long said it appeared the dugong could not assimilate to conditions in the wild because of a lack of life skills.

"Although he may not be in optimum shape, Pig has undergone an incred-



*Above: Sea World and QPWS staff rescue Pig in November  
Right: Pig in healthier and happier times*



ible journey and has still managed to overcome major obstacles such as sharks, boats and the negotiation of tides and currents to stay alive," he said.

"These sorts of life skills could not be taught to him in a captive environment and have had to be learnt on his own, over time."

Pig arrived at Sea World on November 28, 1998. The 109cm long, 19.7kg male calf was found stranded at Forrest Beach near Ingham, in North Queensland.

Sea World veterinarian Wendy Blanshard and the curatorial team bottle-fed the dugong a mix of Di-Vetelact and acidophilus (supplemented with a canned coconut extract) every two hours for about 19 months.

After four months Pig had more than doubled his weight and was drinking an average of 265ml of milk per feed.

By the time he left the theme park in March, Pig was eating more than 30kg of vegetables each day.

## Carer spreads word

South-east Queensland wildlife carer Judy Elliot was recently interviewed about koala care for the television show *Totally Wild*.

The interview, done by QPWS Ranger Donna Walsh, will appear on Channel 10 early next year.

A regular guest on wildlife shows, Judy said television was a great way of spreading the conservation message.

"I am very much in favour of public awareness and education. It's very important," she said.

Judy has been caring for wildlife for 10 years and specialises in "furrries" (animals with fur), particularly red-necked wallabies.

Formerly based at Ocean View north of Brisbane, she is now working around Australia as part of the Willing Workers On Organic Farms program.

# Mixed bag causes macropod diarrhoea



Diarrhoea is probably the most common problem encountered with orphaned macropod joeys. Diagnosis must be made with the aid of veterinarians.

Non-infectious causes include diet, overfeeding, temperature stress, bad management, psychological distress and irritable bowel syndrome.

The infectious causes include bacteria, yeast, coccidia and worms.

Diet, temperature stress and psychological distress are the most common causes of diarrhoea. As the symptoms persist and the gut flora is altered, specific pathogens begin to play a bigger role.

Joeys often experience diarrhoea as they adjust to artificial formulae. To help them, dilute their formulae (half strength on day one,  $\frac{2}{3}$  on day two,  $\frac{3}{4}$  on day three and full strength on day four).

Marsupials do not tolerate high lactose milks. Some concentrations of proteins, fats and carbohydrates will lead to inappropriate osmolality of the milk (which should be isosmotic with

plasma) and diarrhoea will result from water drawn into the gut. There are three readily available artificial milk formulae suitable for hand-raising joeys: Wombaroo, Biolac and Divetelac/Digestalac.

Wombaroo and Biolac have variable strength milks representing the various stages of macropod lactation. People wrongly believe that joeys know how much milk they need.

Wombaroo has calculated tables for the quantity of milk joeys require at different stages of development.

Each joey should be weighed and measured when it comes into care and compared to the Wombaroo chart for the closest related species (use growth data from actual animals that have been successfully raised if possible).

Regularity of feeding is also important.

A joey cannot thermoregulate until it fully emerges from the pouch, although this improves as it grows fur.

Furred joeys need to be kept at 28 deg and unfurred joeys at 32 deg. Temperature fluctuations or inadequate heating can produce profuse watery diarrhoea. Bad management also causes problems. This ranges from lack of routine, noisy environment, poor attention to hygiene, poor toileting technique (stimulating pouch

dependent joeys to urinate and defaecate), poor pouch design to poor feeding technique.

Joeys can get diarrhoea if they are frightened and cold. Anxiety caused by handling and feeding by numerous people, irregular feeding, hugging, carrying out of the pouch and "roughing up" by children or pets will also lead to diarrhoea.

An irritable bowel is the result of chronic, unresolved diarrhoea.

The decreased transit time of digesta through the gut does not allow adequate digestion, causing malnutrition and death.

Changes to the gut lining in this syndrome usually make treatment unsuccessful.

Bacteria are rarely to blame in the early stages of diarrhoea.

In some cases, faecal culture is advisable to determine appropriate antibiotic.

Suitable first line antibiotic therapy pending culture can be carried out with the broad spectrum sulpha/sulpha-trimethoprim drugs.

Penicillins (e.g. Amoxil) are mostly absorbed from the gut and therefore do not work on gut infections.

Yeasts such as candida and torulopsis can take control of the gut if bacteria have been depleted by antibiotics.

In an already inflamed gut, the results of a yeast infection can be rapidly fatal. The diarrhoea associated with yeast infection is typically creamy, white to yellow and sickly sweet smelling.

All joeys receiving antibiotic therapy should simultaneously receive a course of nystatin to control yeasts.

Coccidiosis in macropods is caused by macropod specific protozoans that live in the intestine and do not normally cause disease.

It is only a problem in joeys that have started grazing. It is transmitted to the joey when it eats oocysts in faeces.

## What to do

The first step is to eliminate the possible non-infectious causes of diarrhoea.

Day 1: As soon as diarrhoea is observed and an analysis of the joey's management completed, add a binding agent to the next feed.

Kaomagna and ADM (apple pectin) are useful, the latter being more palatable in fussy joeys.

Binding agents must be administered in sufficient volume to coat and sooth the inflamed gut lining and thicken the liquid gut contents thereby reducing the risk of dehydration.

Give small joeys 5ml of agent, medium-sized joeys 10ml and large joeys 20ml three times a day.

If the causes have been addressed, this will usually bring a response within three days.

The total volume of milk should not change or the joey will receive less total energy. An extra meal a day may be needed to make up the total daily energy intake.

Scourban is contraindicated as a first line treatment because it contains antibiotics which will alter the gut flora.

Day 3: Visit a vet if there has been an inadequate response. Faecal floatation and faecal culture are recommended.

Antibiotic therapy should be avoided unless indicated by culture.

If antibiotics are to be given, always give a course of nystatin (Mycostatin or Nilstat) to prevent yeast overgrowth.

# Letters to the Editor

One reader said:

I read an article in R'n'R on the Internet by Rosemary Booth about feeding birds.

My questions are:

- what should tawny frogmouths be fed?
- when should they be fed?
- how often should they be fed?
- how many grams of food and how often should magpies be fed in care?

QPWS Ranger Debra Hotchkis has answered the reader's questions on Rosemary's behalf.

*Magpie chicks will gape for food if you tap the "nest". They need to be fed every two to three hours during the day.*

*Young birds can be fed with tweezers, forceps or the blunt end of a toothpick (for the smaller types of insectivores). You should keep feeding until they stop gaping. It is a good idea to dip each piece of food in water. This helps the bird eat it and gives them extra water.*

*They should be fed 10 percent of their body weight. The following recipes may be helpful:*

*100g low fat, preservative free mince (if you have your own mincer, use heart).  
1 finely chopped hard-boiled egg (include finely ground shell)  
1 heaped teaspoon of Wombaroo Insectivore rearing mix*

*Mix to form a moist crumble.*



*Or*

*100 g low fat mince (minced heart is best)  
1 finely chopped hard-boiled egg (include the finely ground shell)  
1 heaped teaspoon of ground dog kibble  
1 heaped teaspoon of unprocessed bran  
1 pinch of calcium powder  
1 pinch of Ornithon (or other bird multivitamin)*

*Mix together to form a crumble. Meat mix should be kept in the fridge and made fresh daily. You can also freeze the mix in small portions, and take a portion from the freezer daily.*

### **Tawny frogmouths**

*These birds should gape for their food, which can be given to them with forceps or tweezers. They will need to be fed four to five times per day.*

*Small carnivorous birds can be fed the above diets as well as small pieces of heart rolled in Wombaroo insectivore rearing mix. It is also very important to include natural foods in the diet of small carnivorous birds. Insects, baby or adult mice, baby rats and day-old chickens should be included daily, as the fur, feathers and bones of these natural foods are an important source of nutrition and roughage.*

*Do not worry if the young bird regurgitates a pellet of fur or feathery material, as this is quite normal. Adult tawny frogmouths should be fed at night and have a high percentage of insects in their diet as this is their main food source in the wild.*

*If frozen food is being fed to carnivorous birds, sprinkle a pinch of multivitamin powder (e.g. Ornithon) over the food once a day.*

## Mixed bag causes macropod diarrhoea

*from previous page*

Warm wet weather enhances oocyst survival.

Animals stressed by transportation or weaning seem most susceptible, particularly eastern greys, *Macropus giganteus*, and pretty-face wallabies, *Macropus parryi*.

Hand-raised individuals seem most susceptible so milk transferred material immunity may play a role in protection; or it may be that these individuals

are immunosuppressed by the stress of hand-raising.

Recently weaned macropods are much more susceptible to the effects of anaemia and hypoproteinaemia in mid-winter when worm burdens peak with nutritional and cold stress. Worms will rarely be a problem in the captive, hand-raising situation. Animals should be treated if faecal flotation reveals large numbers of worm eggs. Suitable drugs include Panacur 10, Systemex, or Ivermectin.

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

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Queensland Parks and Wildlife  
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PO Box 3454,  
Burleigh Town LPO,  
Burleigh Heads QLD 4220.

E-mail:  
debra.hotchkis@epa.qld.gov.au

# Caring for these birds can be a real hoot

Mackay carer Judith Rowe rescued seven baby barn owls from a fallen tree in August last year.

The adventure began when a resident rang to say the birds were in a tree that had been knocked down to make way for a fence.

“I asked the gentleman on the other end of the line why he did not bring them in,” she said.

“I’m not touching those deadly snapping things’ he said. ‘You wanna get ‘em, you can have ‘em’.”

“We discovered that we had two nestings – four birds were fully feathered with very little down and the others were still very fluffy and quite small,” she said.

“Of course these little darlings required feeds throughout the night (thought when my children left home this sought of thing was over) but I too became a “night owl”.”

She also discovered that owl claws will pierce leather gloves and the birds were not above drawing blood.

“But I was very popular at feeding times!”

Unfortunately, she was not as popular with the neighbours, who could not locate the sound of the snoring (barn owls making grunting noises).

“My neighbour was just about to call the police after searching his carport and under the house and failing to find the fellow that was sleeping there,” she said.

While the birds had developed personalities “much like the seven dwarfs”, they were destined for the wild.

“We have a Bashful and Grumpy and there is one

very forward one like Doc,” Judith said.

“But I am afraid they don’t take to strangers and I am pleased to say they would not make a good pet.

“It is very much back to the wild for these blokes.”

The birds were initially housed in a cardboard box before moving to a nest made by a local high school. The box had a hinged lid for easy access for feeding and a hole in the front to represent a hollow log. As they grow, they will be moved into a hollowed-out log provided by two Dysart woodcutters.

Judith said the logs would be taken out to area in which the birds came from.

A month after rescuing them, the larger owls were feeding themselves by finding food Judith had planted. They also enjoyed playing in the water trough.

Judith said she still caught each and fed each of them once a day to ensure they had eaten.

“At this stage I would like to thank the ladies at Caneland Pet Care for their valued assistance with the supply of “frozen dinners”,” she said.

The birds are attracting the attention of adult barn owls. Recently, two came to the cage to examine the young ones.

“We do not have barn owls in town that I am aware of so this to me is great. Hopefully by the next newsletter I will be writing to tell you that they have gone back home into the wild successfully.”

## Profile:

Judith has been a carer for 26 years. She largely cares for birds.



## Cue to protect

Q Fever is caused by the micro-organism *Coxiella burnetii* which is carried by domestic livestock and macropods.

Infected animals show little apparent signs of illness.

Infection is transmitted by contact with animal faeces, urine, blood and pregnancy fluids, with the organism most plentiful in the uterus and mammary glands of pregnant animals.

Inhaling dust from infected premises may also lead to infection.

In humans, Q fever causes a sudden, severe illness with fever, chills and muscle pains similar to influenza.

Antibiotics are the treatment of choice and recovery is usually speedy.

If you develop flu-like symptoms, contact a doctor and let him or her know you may have had contact with the organism.

Illness usually develops within two to three weeks of exposure.

Strict hygiene is the key to preventing infection. If animals are kept confined, avoid inhaling dust.

Make good personal hygiene a habit – cover cuts and scratches and wash your hands after handling animals.

Regularly disinfect or dispose of bedding used by macropods. It’s easy to become complacent about the risks, as it is not obvious when an animal is carrying the organism.

# Quality data could rescue predator



Quolls are the largest marsupial predators on the Australian mainland and one of the country's least known animals.

They belong to a group of carnivorous marsupials (the dasyurids) that are largely unknown and unseen by most of us.

There are several species of quoll. This article is about one in south-east Queensland, the spotted-tailed or tiger quoll.

This animal is the largest of the group and is fractionally smaller than its cousin, the Tasmanian devil (perhaps if the spotted-tailed quoll had been popularised in a television cartoon series it may have enjoyed better recognition).

The spotted-tailed quoll is becoming rare, particularly in Queensland where the ranges of northern and southern sub-species have contracted.

Their scarcity has rung alarm bells with some people, resulting in a small group of concerned people forming the Quoll Seekers Network (QSN).

With support from NatureSearch and Threatened Species Network, QSN is raising "quoll awareness" in the community and attempting to determine the past and current status and distribution of the spotted-tailed quoll in south-east Queensland.

One of the most powerful awareness and educative tools in wildlife conservation is the animal. Using a live quoll in talks and displays allows people to see the animal – bringing it "to life" for many people.

As with so many Australian species, keeping quolls has its own set of peculiarities. More specifically, breeding quolls can be a tricky business.

Firstly, quolls do not live very long. Larger dasyurids such as quolls, phascogales and kowaris breed for two or three years before slowly "fading out". Most quolls live an average of four to five years.

Secondly, their short breeding life is further restricted by defined annual



Ranger Martin Fingland is very proud of the quolls he bred in captivity

breeding cycles. Spotted-tailed quolls breed in the cooler months and produce a litter of up to six young each year.

In captivity, breeding is further complicated by limited space. During mating, which can last between 12 and 24 hours, the male may get hungry or aggressive, overpowering, injuring or killing the female.

Males and females should be separated during the birthing and rearing process. Females become secretive, gathering large quantities of grassy nesting material and hiding away in a

number of dens. While there is potential for six young to suckle in the pouch, experience suggests that (in captivity at least litter sizes are normally three or four young.

A number of wildlife parks are breeding spotted-tailed quolls and many of the captive-breeding hurdles are being overcome through co-operation and enlightened management.

Brisbane Forest Park has a new quoll exhibit that is due to open early this year. For more information about quolls or QSN, check out their website at [www.quollseekers.com](http://www.quollseekers.com).

*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus* (southern sub-sp.) – vulnerable.

*Dasyurus maculatus gracilis* (northern sub-sp.) – endangered.

**Description:** mammal with gaping jaw and bouncing gait. *D. m. maculatus* are cat-sized and weigh up to 7kg. *D. m. gracilis* weighs up to 2.5kg.

**Colour:** rich rufous brown to dark brown with a pale underside. There are white spots on the top of the body and tail.

**Call:** similar to a blast from a circular saw.

**Lifestyle:** *D. m. maculatus* is normally nocturnal. It is an agile climber but spends most of its time on the ground. It shelters in nests in hollow trees, hollow logs, caves or rock crevices. Den sites are often in fig trees. *D. m. gracilis* is mainly nocturnal, partly arboreal and occurs at low densities.

**Food:** *D. m. maculatus* eats echidnas, possums, rabbits, small mammals, native birds, poultry,

reptiles and insects. *D. m. gracilis* is strictly carnivorous, eating small to medium terrestrial and arboreal mammals, insects, reptiles, birds and frogs.

**Breeding:** *D. m. maculatus* mates from April to July, producing an average of five per litter. The young are independent at 18 weeks. *D. m. gracilis* has up to six young each winter. Both sexes mature at 12 months and rarely breed after four years. Breeding females prefer ground level dens in hollow buttress roots and piles of cracked and exfoliated rocks.

**Habitat:** In Queensland, *D. m. maculatus* lives in dry and wet sclerophyll forest, riparian forest, rainforest and open pasture. Core populations of *D. m. gracilis* occur in rainforest goom or more above sea level.

**Distribution:** *D. m. gracilis* are found in eight isolated sub-populations between Mt Finnegan and the southern Atherton Tablelands.

Species Management Manual - profiles by Sustainable Forestry Sciences, Forestry and Wildlife Management, QPWS.

# Wildlife care is part of Jenny's charter

Jenny Parsons has been involved with animals (primarily wildlife) for more than ten years, as a volunteer, carer, rescuer, ranger and welfare officer.

She is currently employed as the Foster Care and Wildlife Co-ordinator for RSPCA Queensland.

"This a very challenging and demanding position which is made even more difficult by the constraints of working for a charity," Jenny said.

"RSPCA Queensland has had the perception for many years as only being concerned with domestic animals.

"I am hoping to change this perception and recognise the wonderful work done every day by RSPCA workers, veterinarians, ambulance officers and inspectors for wildlife welfare.

"In 2001-2002, RSPCA refuges throughout Queensland received a staggering 1760 native animals into care.

"This is nothing in comparison with the amount of domestic animals but is still a very significant proportion of wildlife that becomes orphaned, sick and injured throughout the state."

Jenny said the RSPCA was in an ideal position to promote responsible pet ownership to new and current domestic pet owners.

"We do this by re-housing all of our desexed domestic animals, educating new owners about wildlife-saving devices such as cat enclosures and promoting the keeping of pets inside at night," she said.



Jenny Parsons talks to one of the animals

"I see no sense in organisations and individuals involved with wildlife welfare not working together.

"This newsletter is a perfect example of good communications between government, other organisations and individual wildlife carers. Together we can all make a real difference!"

The RSPCA wildlife section has consulted closely with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) for the proposed changes in legislation affecting wildlife management.

"Together with many other individuals and organisations, we hope to ensure the best possible outcome for the animals concerned," she said.

Like all RSPCA members, Jenny said she strives to achieve five freedoms for

animals. They are:

- freedom from hunger and thirst;
- freedom from discomfort;
- freedom from pain, injury or disease;
- freedom to express normal behaviour; and
- freedom from fear and distress.

"I have been privileged enough in my lifetime to have raised and cared for some amazing creatures and I have been lucky enough to witness these unique animals being released back to the wild," Jenny said.

"I believe this is the ultimate reward for the work that we do. "

If you have any questions about RSPCA's role in wildlife welfare please e-mail Jenny at [jparsons@rspcaqld.org.au](mailto:jparsons@rspcaqld.org.au)



## Who am I?

Pull out the reference books to find the answer to this edition's wildlife quiz.

Here's the clue:

*Some say I'm regal,  
Resplendent in my handsome colours.  
I am a compulsive collector,  
Because I am a master builder.*

Last edition we featured a magpie goose and sacred kingfishers. We did not receive any correct entries.

Send your answer to [debra.hotchkis@epa.qld.gov.au](mailto:debra.hotchkis@epa.qld.gov.au) or write to Debra Hotchkis, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, PO Box 3454, LPO, Burleigh Heads, Qld, 4220.



# NatureSearchers batty about counting

About 130 NatureSearch volunteers braved the winter temperatures to count grey-headed flying-foxes in the inaugural BattySearch in south-east Queensland in July.

NatureSearch Co-ordinator Ric Natrass said the volunteers counted more than 100,000 "greys", although the figure would have to be verified with further counts.

Ric said everyone enjoyed the exercise, held at eight flying-fox camp sites in and around Brisbane on 27-28 July.

"At the camps I attended for the practice counts, it was a case of smiles all round as the happy counters trickled back to the mustering site to report their counts," he said.

Ric said 34 flying-fox camp sites from Hervey Bay to Tallebudgera were surveyed for three months before the count to determine which were occupied.

By mid-winter, ten were occupied and eight contained grey-headed flying-foxes.

These camps were surveyed on both days to determine species composition and the proportions used to estimate grey-head numbers.

Over the two nights and under the helpful light of a full moon, volunteers surrounded the camps and counted or estimated bat numbers as they streamed overhead to their nocturnal feeding areas.

Ric said BattySearch answered a number of important questions about the species.

"The exercise revealed that some camps that were considered permanent and occupied all year round were vacant by mid-winter," he said.

"The Woodend camp in suburban Ipswich was the largest camp, with about 150,000 flying-foxes of all three (including black flying-fox *Pteropus alecto*) local species.

"Woodend was the only south-east Queensland camp that contained little red flying-foxes, all of which appeared

to be males. Little red females generally fly north to begin birthing around April."

Other camps with substantial numbers of greys were at Burpengary Creek, Sandgate, Indooroopilly Island, Cleveland, Slacks Creek, Helensvale and Broadbeach Waters.

BattySearch was part of a national grey-headed flying-fox count that saw volunteers across the nation using the same exit counting method for the first time.

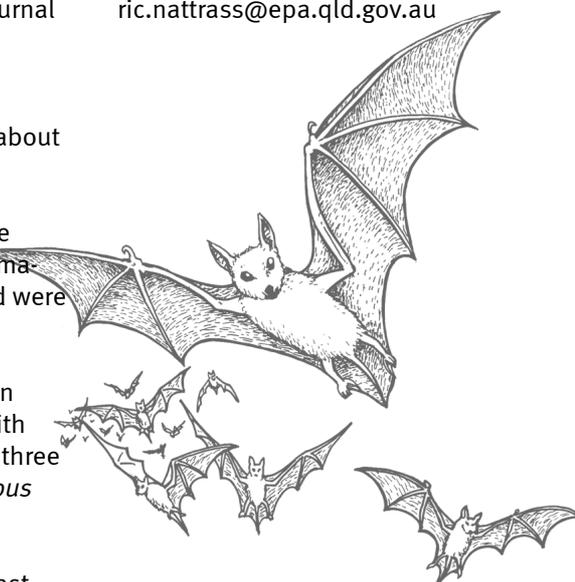
Flying-fox experts have warned of declining greys numbers for a number of years – concerns that have been supported by 13 years of systematic flyouts organised by flying-fox expert Dr Peggy Eby in New South Wales.

Greys, *Pteropus poliocephalus*, are found only in eastern Australia from about Bundaberg to Melbourne.

They were listed as a vulnerable species under the Commonwealth Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* on 4 December 2001, prompting intensified management efforts.

Ric said at least 250 volunteers were needed for the next greys count on the full moon weekend in April 2003.

Anyone interested in this breathtaking wildlife experience can register by contacting Ric on 3227 7836 or e-mail [ric.natrass@epa.qld.gov.au](mailto:ric.natrass@epa.qld.gov.au)



NatureSearch Co-ordinator Ric Natrass

## Websites

<http://www2.abc.net.au/science/birds/default.htm>

This is an excellent site for identifying birds in the backyard. Backyard Birdwatch contains information about the 48 most common birds in urban Australia. It also contains a link to a new environmental news site.

<http://sres.anu.edu.au/associated/myrna/index.html>

This is a must see. Learn about the habits of the arrogant common myna bird – a significant threat to Queensland natives.

<http://www-staff.it.uts.edu.au/~don/larvae/>

This amazing site links to images and descriptions of biology, behaviour and life histories of 1269 Australian Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) species including 455 with caterpillar pictures.

<http://www.elsevier.com/homepage/>

Elsevier Science is a world-leading publisher of science, technical and medical information.

[http://www.well.com/user/elliotts/smse\\_enrich.html](http://www.well.com/user/elliotts/smse_enrich.html)

Environmental Enrichment for captive animals – check it out.

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

The Queensland Conservation Council is an independent, non-government, not-for-profit environment organisation based in Brisbane, working for the protection and promotion of Australia's natural environment and biodiversity.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/faunaoz/>

You must join this group. It's for carers by carers. You can ask carers questions or simply converse with like-minded people.

# Right way to investigate

The QPWS has a responsibility to investigate matters that are raised by the community when breaches of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* occur.

In achieving the best results for conservation, community support is important and vital to any outcomes that are achieved as a result.

There are a number of ways to achieve positive outcomes, including in extreme cases, prosecution.

During the conduct of an investigation the evidence gathering process can often be vital in establishing the innocence or guilt of an offender.

Recently during investigations, some matters have exposed an issue where some members of the community have taken matters into their own hands and seized, or taken into possession, evidence that may have established the commission of an offence, e.g., birds or flying foxes.

While these are mostly good intentions, it is important to allow the investigators from QPWS, the privilege

of the use of this evidence by either leaving it where it is and reporting it, or taking it immediately to your nearest QPWS office for surrender.

Finally, our Public Affairs Unit of the EPA disseminates information to the media that is not likely to risk the success or otherwise of an investigation or prosecution, albeit, it is factual and addresses any media inquiries.

When groups or individuals contact the media directly, when not in possession of factual information, the risk of a failed and often expensive investigation is high.

Should you come into possession of accurate information that may assist in an investigation you should contact your local QPWS office.

Taking matters into your own hands may reduce the capacity to thoroughly investigate an offence and possibly place a person in a position of liability.

## Profile:

Craig Walker is the Manager (Wildlife) for QPWS (Southern Region)

**“Taking matters into your own hands may reduce the capacity to... investigate an offence”**

## Ranger solves nature conflicts

People and wildlife are increasingly coming into conflict as habitat is lost and suburbia offers animals a new environment.



To ease the occasionally rocky road of human/wildlife conflicts is Senior Conservation Officer Scott Sullivan (pictured with a Lumholtz tree kangaroo).

Scott is one of the QPWS officers who source solutions to human/wildlife interaction issues.

Scott has a strong background in herpetology and the management of captive and wild native fauna.

He has always had a strong interest in wildlife and was rehabilitating local birds while still in primary school.

Scott's father was an army officer, which led to the family living in Papua New Guinea, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. They settled in the western suburbs of Brisbane and Scott finished year 12 at Ipswich State High School in 1989.

After high school Scott moved to Townsville where he studied a Bachelor of Science Degree (Zoology) at James Cook University.

From 1993 to 1997, he worked as the Reptile Curator at Billabong Sanctuary in Townsville.

In 1997, he joined the QPWS as Senior Animal Attendant with the Macropod Research Facility at Pallarenda in Townsville before becoming a Wildlife Ranger in 2001.

# Get the community involved in rescue and rehab

How many times have you been called by someone with a wildlife problem where the conversation starts “I need you to pick up...”?

How often do you turn this around and ask the caller what they can do to help?

The public are often unsure of what to do when confronted with sick, injured or orphaned wildlife.

Their first reaction is to ask for help.

With a bit of encouragement and advice you may find that people are capable and willing to deal with the situation themselves.

This approach has a number of benefits if used in the appropriate circumstances.

Save your time and energy for those all too frequent occasions when you are really needed.

Public education about wildlife is very important and what better way to educate people than to involve them in the rescue and rehabilitation process. This involvement can be keeping the injured animal warm, in a quiet, dark place and taking it to a vet, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service office, wildlife park or the closest carer.

Hopefully, the benefits of this approach will flow on to the next generation. A child will remember the night mum and dad helped out with the possum and may be more inclined to follow their example.

They will equally remember the time mum and dad rang someone to come

and pick it up and be just as likely to expect this sort of “service”.

Another point to consider when being asked to be a delivery service is the stress placed on the animal.

Is it better for the animal to pass from the rescuer to you and then to its final destination, or for the rescuer to take it directly? Generally speaking, the less handling and disturbance the animal experiences, the better.

You are not always going to be able to engage people, but it should often be the first option you consider.

We should be working towards a better educated, more interested and willing public rather than taking the responsibility away from them. So try and give people a nudge in the right direction and see what happens!

# Coast problems clip wings

Birds at the Gold Coast have suffered over the past couple of breeding seasons from pox to botulism. Gold Coast Wildcare Bird Co-ordinator Karen Barney details some of the problems she has seen.

## Pox

A crow that was showing no outward symptoms of avian pox came into care last season and was put in an aviary with a number of others.

After 10 days, all started to cough, form thick mucus in their throats and develop a slight nasal discharge.

The vet suggested a regime of antibiotics for seven days. However, well-conditioned birds began to die.

This continued for about two weeks until I found a small lump on a bird's toe. The birds had not shown any of the usual signs of pox, such as lumps in the throat or on non-feathered areas.

They were cured with a boosted vitamin intake (Avian Missing Link) and a probiotic (Protexin).

Magpies, cuckoo shrikes, butcherbirds and magpie larks have come into care with pox. Recent experience suggests it does not affect any two species the same way.

## Poisoning

People like to have their houses sprayed for pests at this time of the year. The drought has reduced food supplies and birds are eating the poisoned insects. A number of magpies have been poisoned.

## Pscittacine beak and feather disease

Beak and feather disease is affecting large numbers of sulphur-crested cockatoos, particularly in the Tamborine/Canungra area.

They have severe feather loss and overgrown or brittle beaks, which have broken off.

## Can you help us with antechinus care?

We have had a request for information about raising antechinus (any species). If you have information about caring for antechinus (from birth to release), such as milk formula, frequency of feeding, correct weights and measurements, diet when weaned, release techniques and, most importantly, timeframes for these developments, write to me at PO Box 3454, Burleigh Town LPO, Burleigh Heads QLD 4220. Alternatively, e-mail the information to [debra.hotchkis@epq.qld.gov.au](mailto:debra.hotchkis@epq.qld.gov.au).

The seven caught and euthanased to date were males (I would like to hear from anyone who may have noticed this). Lorikeets have also been affected – they are coming into care when their beaks are changing colour from brown to orange.

These birds are very small, with the four short and unformed outside primary feathers on each wing. Their secondary feathers are different lengths; they have no tail feathers and are usually underweight.

## Botulism

Botulism will continue to be a problem with water birds until rain flushes the waterways.

## Ticks

A few birds have been brought in with tick paralysis.

An intramuscular injection of tick serum has achieved good results. Depending on their paralysis, the birds are generally on their feet within 24 hours.

## Worms

The throat worm commonly known as gapeworm is an increasing problem in some species this season.

Magpies have been the most affected, followed by butcherbirds, magpie larks, crows and young currawongs.

We treated the smaller species with Ivomec (it caused seizures) and are now trialling Lemaviso, which is painted on to the cysts.

If anyone has information to share, please call Karen on 5543 6279.

## Profile:

Karen has been a carer for five years and the Wildcare Bird Co-ordinator for two. Her favourite birds to care for are crows and channel billed cuckoos.



## Puggle origin still a mystery

We had a great response to our puggle puzzle, with a number of readers writing to tell us where they first heard the term “puggle” and whether it is the correct name for a young echidna.

Our contributing vet Rosemary Booth said she first heard the term in 1998 from the founder of Brisbane wildlife care group Orphaned Native Animal Rear and Release and one of the state's leading bat carers, Helen Luckoff.

While it is used in biological circles, Rosemary said she doubted it was an official term.

Independent carer Ruth Lewis also said she heard the term from Helen Luckoff.

Ruth said Helen named the first joey that she cared for Puggle.

She said Puggle was a character from the television show *The Wombles of Wimbledon*.

Gail Gipp from Wildcare said New South Wales carer Helen George coined the term.

Gail said Helen was the first person to successfully raise a young echidna. She called it Puggle.

The name was picked by a number of zoos and a university that had links with Ms George.

“Helen is now elderly and still finds this amusing,” she said.

Meghan Bullen said her father believed the name derived from “pudge” meaning a short, thick or fat animal and “puggish” meaning a short or snub nose.

Moreover, she said WIRES in the Blue Mountains and Dubbo call young echidnas puggles.

“It's been called a puggle at least since WIRES was established about 11 years ago, as my friend's second animal (that she cared for) was a puggle,” Meghan said.

If you have any further information about the term, please write to us.

# Zoos teach community to care for critters

Zoos play an important role in the care of sick, injured or orphaned wildlife.

This role has taken on greater importance in the last 20 years with an acceleration of habitat destruction and the consequent displacement of animals.

Smaller habitat zones equate to an increased surface area for interactions between wildlife and domestic animals, roads and other human activities.

These interactions usually result in wildlife coming off second best or being removed from their homes. Much of this sick, injured or orphaned wildlife finds its way to a zoo.

To put this into perspective, a 1996 survey of 18 Queensland zoos showed almost 6000 specimens were coming into care. In 2002, two south-east Queensland zoos exceeded this figure.

As any wildlife carer will testify, looking after sick, injured or orphaned wildlife is not cheap.

Most major zoos employ staff specifically to care for the animals coming in.

At least one zoo employs a veterinarian to deal solely with these animals. Others allocate time for their vet to treat these animals or take them to consultant vets.

All this is achieved at cost to the various zoological institutions, as there is no funding for such activities.

Zoos spend more than \$1,000,000 annually on this wildlife.

Some zoos have wildlife rescue units that capture, collect or move animals from situations that are causing animals grief. This is a public service and helps the QPWS and rescue organisations.

Sometimes these situations are in far flung places. Three Australia Zoo staff recently travelled to Texas, Queensland to relocate an emu that was a public health risk.

These animals are valuable as they are often used in demonstrations or displays that show the conflict between wildlife and humans and illustrate what we can do to reduce the threat to wildlife.

All too often the effects of human action or inaction are not apparent or "real" to people. Hearing is one thing but seeing brings the message home.

Australian zoos receive about 6,000,000 visitors each year. With such a captive audience, zoos have a responsibility to educate their visitors about behaviour that minimises the risk to wildlife and increases the conservation of species and ecosystems.

Injured wildlife can play an important role in this education process.

Zoos are also a goldmine of information on normal behaviours, growth rates and general animal husbandry.

This information is often useful to care groups. Conversely, wildlife carers often return valuable information on what they have done and its success.

As is the case with all wildlife care, accurate records are essential.

This information can be used to increase the success rate of rehabilitation of rescued animals as well as extrapolated to other animal populations, including endangered species recovery programs.

Perhaps the greatest role that zoos can play in the care of wildlife is in the education of the public.



*Paul O'Callaghan*

If this is achieved, then a human population with greater knowledge can act to reduce situations where our wildlife comes into conflict with human activities.

As the old saying goes, prevention is better than cure and we would all like to see less wildlife coming into care.

## **Profile:**

Paul O'Callaghan is the Life Sciences Manager at Australia Zoo.

## **Stop press**

As part of a new agreement with the QPWS, Australia Zoo will set up a koala hospital and ambulance for sick, injured and orphaned koalas in northern Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast.

The Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Environment Minister Dean Wells on December 14 that will see resources injected into crocodile management and research and koala care.

## **Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service regional offices:**

### **Northern Region: Cairns**

Russell Best

Ph: (07) 4046 6601

fax: (07) 4046 6604

### **Central Region: Rockhampton**

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### **Southern Region: Moggill**

Kate Kraschnefski

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**For local offices see our website [www.epa.qld.gov.au/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/)**