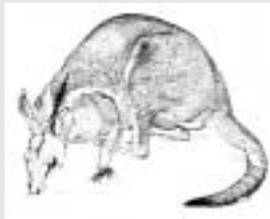


R'n'R

A newsletter for
wildlife carers

Issue 2, July 2002

Rehabilitate and Release



Mahogany gliders rescued

When wildlife carer Daryl Dickson-Moffat was asked to collect two animals from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) in Cardwell, north Queensland, little did she know they would be two endangered mahogany gliders.

"I received a call from the centre to say a carer was required for the young of a sugar glider, or possibly a mahogany glider," Daryl said.

"It is a rare event for injured or orphaned endangered mahogany gliders to come into care.

"Wildlife carers in the region have recorded the successful rearing of just two other mahogany gliders since they were rediscovered at Barratts Lagoon in 1990."

The twins were found by a QPWS ranger in the pouch of their dead mother at Meunga Creek, about 4km north of Cardwell, on July 9, 2000.

Just 10g each, they were still attached to their mother's teats, their limbs were still developing and their internal organs were visible through their skin.

Daryl learnt what and how to feed the animals, and how to maintain their body heat from reference material about other gliders, particularly sugar and squirrel gliders.

Other carers suggested feeding techniques, diets and tips on how to maintain temperature and humidity without a humidicrib.

Sadly, one animal died within a few weeks, possibly from overheating after feeding.

"Variation of only a couple of degrees can make the difference to such a tiny animal in a weakened condition," Daryl said.

The breakthrough came during a telephone conversation with Gympie wildlife carer Sonya Gourley.

"Sonya suggested that we see if our remaining glider would lap her formula from a bowl rather than us trying to feed her through improvised tubes, droppers or teats," Daryl said.



Daryl Dickson-Moffat and Milo

"I finished the call thinking it was highly unlikely that this tiny, blind little creature would have any idea how to lap, but how wrong I was. Milo, as she is now known, has thrived."

Milo's diet was varied to accommodate her protein needs during development and her body temperature remained a concern until she grew fur.

A decision was made in late 2000 to send Milo to the David Fleay Wildlife Park breeding program. In the end, she did not make the trip alone.

In November 2000, a school student rescued a juvenile female mahogany glider from a fence at Murray Upper in north Queensland. She was named Blossum mungarru, "mungarru" being the local Aboriginal word for flying possum.

Blossum mungarru could not be released because the barbed wire had damaged her patagium (flying membrane). In December 2000, she and Milo joined the breeding program.

Last year, both females produced two sets of twins. They are the first gliders born in captivity.

Profile:

Daryl was born in London, but grew up in Adelaide. She has traveled and worked overseas, returning to Australia in the early '80s. Daryl lives at Meunga Creek in the Kennedy Valley, north of Cardwell.

Review brings support and less red tape

It's hard to believe that it's already time for another R'n'R. Our inaugural issue was very well received and as a result, we've had some fantastic contributions from carers across Queensland. This edition not only reflects the great work of committed carers, but demonstrates some great results in the conservation of wildlife.

You'll love the article on rearing mahogany gliders and the seabird rescue story shows how research, education and caring can go hand in hand.

There's been a lot happening on the wildlife care front, generating a lot of discussion about where to take wildlife care into the future.

Of particular concern has been the issue of carer insurance and that those people permitted as individuals have little protection. We've included an article in this edition about insurance matters.

As many carers would be aware, there's been a review of the wildlife regulations underway. Many carers attended the public meetings held across the State, which provided valuable input into future management directions. The QPWS received more than 1100 submissions as a result. The good news is that there is a consistent view from all sectors of the community that wildlife was highly valued and must be conserved. However, there is a wide range of views about how to achieve this.

Considering the feedback, the regulation review was widened to encompass a review of the respective responsibilities of government and the community in regard to wildlife, and the role that the regulation plays in achieving the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) principle purpose of conservation.

Throughout April and May, the EPA entered into detailed discussions with key stakeholder groups including carers, farmers, aviculturalists, zoos, animal welfare organisations and pet shops. Together we've been exploring new directions to better reflect current community values and focus efforts on areas that pose a risk to conservation.

On the wildlife care front, there's been recognition that the "art of caring" has become much more professional over time, with the emergence of 2000 carers, the bulk of these belong to more than 20 incorporated groups in Queensland.

Discussion has led to a realisation that there is a need to, on one hand, improve the conservation benefits from the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife and, on the other, reduce the administrative burden for both the EPA and carers themselves.

The directions for change to caring will be a more coordinated, professional approach to caring, with support structures for training and mentoring that provide a stronger conservation outcome, protection for carers and the consideration of the best interests of the animals. The RSPCA and the Wildlife Preservation Society have undertaken to work with the EPA to effect these changes and examine the

formation of an "umbrella" wildlife care body for Queensland.

New directions may also include:

- removing the requirement to submit returns to QPWS, with direct data entry to the WildNet database to track trends in wildlife rehabilitation;
- a move towards incorporated groups for carers to provide for better insurance options, improved professional operation and mentoring and adequate training;
- permits to be issued to groups for a minimum three year period;
- "rescue permit" changed to "rehabilitation permit" to reflect the purpose of the activity; and
- adopt the Code of Practice for the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned fauna under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*.

There's also a commitment to work together with carers to develop a new code of practice that lifts the standards, but removes some of the unnecessary constraints.

Education, professionalism and successful care and release are becoming even more important as carers are increasingly playing a role in recovery programs, hand raising threatened species and restoring wildlife populations to bushland destroyed by fire. The current licensing regime needs reform to remove obstacles from a group of people so dedicated to the well being of wildlife and, at the same time, ensure that only those that meet specific competencies care for injured wildlife.

As you can see, there's been a lot happening on the wildlife care front, with a real focus on the best interests of the animals concerned and conservation taking the forefront. We welcome your participation in the discussions.

'til next time.

Leslie Shirreffs
Manager – Wildlife and Community Nature Conservation

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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.

Gliding to success

The reason Furbee came in to Ricky Johns' care is a mystery. But from the first moment the glider, who weighed almost 148g, proved he was going to be more than a handful.

"He was awful to feed!" Ricky said.

"He fought and spat, and I had a terrible job to get the milk formula Di-Vetelact down him.

"I fed him by dropper, five to 6mls every four hours, and it took over a week before he stopped complaining and took it well.

"I was also giving him various types of gum at night. He seemed to prefer Queensland blue gum *Eucalyptus tereticornis*."

Furbee, whose colouring resembled a toy of the same name, was found at the base of a eucalypt tree in Parkwood on the Gold Coast in September last year.

Ricky described teaching Furbee to lap as a "trial".

"Normally it takes just a few feeds. Not Furbee!" she said.

"It took me nearly a month of three feeds a day before I had him lapping well.

"By this time it was near the end of October and he weighed 300gm, his body was 22cm long and his tail was 35cm.

"He was nibbling Queensland blue gum, narrow-leafed red ironbark *E. crebra*, small-fruited grey gum *E. propinqua*, tallowwood *E. microcorys* and scribbly gum *E. racemosa*, which he favoured."

Greater gliders eat about a dozen of the hundreds of varieties of eucalypt in Australia.

The Redland Shire has a fodder farm where wildlife carers have planted more than 4000 gums.

The land was provided by the Redland Shire Council and is maintained by the



Ricky Johns tempts Furbee with a calliandra flower

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service at Daisy Hill.

In November, Furbee weighed 478g and performed his first jump.

By late December, he weighed 550g and was eating a variety of gums. His intake of Di-Vetelact was reduced and by the middle of January he was weaned.

In mid-January, Furbee weighed 589g, was 31cm long and had a 47cm tail. He was eating up to eight different gums each night and his appetite was increasing.

"He had Queensland blue gum, narrow-leafed red ironbark, spotted gum *E. maculata*, large-fruited grey gum *E. major*, Moreton Bay ash *E. tessellaris*, tallowood and scribbly gum every night, with Cadarghi *E. torelliana*, narrow-leafed red gum *E. seeana* or small-fruited grey gum as extras," Ricky said.

"I moved him to my largest aviary, and on January 20, he did his first proper glide with membrane spread."

Ricky and her husband Barry then built a 7m x 4m x 2.5m flight aviary of steel and fishing net for Furbee to glide in.

In March, Furbee weighed 710g and was 33cm long. His tail was 49cm.

His favourite gums were narrow-leafed red ironbark, scribbly gum, and Queensland blue gum.

"He grooms himself for hours," Ricky said.

"He makes me laugh when he pulls his tail up to groom it. It's so big and fluffy he nearly falls over trying to drag it up.

"He's gliding well and is a joy to watch. We are now waiting for him to grow so he can be released."

Furbee will be released in Nerang State Forest when he weighs more than 900g.

"I have learnt so much from Furbee that it will be very hard when he goes," Ricky said.

"But, there's also a great satisfaction that the wonderful creature will be free. I hope we stop destroying their habitat because once the old growth eucalypt forest is gone, so are these superb greater gliders."

Profile:

Ricky Johns is a member of Wildcare in southeast Queensland. She has been a wildlife carer for 20 years and specialises in caring for possums.

Vet sets new standards in wildlife care

Cairns veterinarian Annabelle Olsson is dedicated to caring for wildlife, founding the Far North Queensland Wildlife Rescue Association and working as a consultant vet for the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

Annabelle graduated in 1985 from Sydney University with a Bachelor of Veterinary Science and began work as a vet in a mixed practice in rural New South Wales.

She returned to Sydney six months later to manage a veterinary practice – a job she remained in for the next two years.

Annabelle arrived in Cairns in 1989 after 12 months cruising the eastern coast of Australia on her best friend's (and later husband) yacht.

In 1993, she set up the Boongary Veterinary Surgery in Cairns and founded the Far North Queensland (FNQ) Wildlife Rescue Association.

The practice, which is named after the local Aboriginal word for Lumholtz tree kangaroo, specialises in native Australian



Annabelle Olsson BVSc, MS

fauna, pet birds and reptiles. She recently bought a local companion animal practice from which she also runs her wildlife practice.

The FNQ Wildlife Rescue Association was the first wildlife care group to be formed in the region.

In April last year, Annabelle graduated from James Cook University with a Master of Science (Veterinary Science/Ecology) by research into flying-fox health.

She is currently the consultant vet to the QPWS and many of the region's wildlife parks.

She is also a member of the Cassowary Advisory Group for management of cassowary populations in the region, the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group, Batreach, Cairns Frog Hospital, the Wildlife Diseases Association (international) and other key conservation organisations.

Annabelle has received the following awards in recognition of her contributions to wildlife care and conservation in the region:

- Cairns City Council Australia Day Environmental Award 1998 (inaugural award) for contribution to wildlife,
- International Women's Year Certificate of High Achievement 1998,
- Who's Who in the Asia Pacific Rim 2000 (for outstanding achievements in her field); and
- Queensland Volunteer of the Year Award (2001).

R'n'R websites vol.2

Snake identification - www.qmuseum.qld.gov.au/features/snakes/

Australian Threatened Fauna List - www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/plants/threaten/anzec.htm

WIRES NSW (Wildlife Information and Rescue Service), the largest wildlife rescue organisation in Australia – <http://wires.com.au>

Everything you wanted to know about whales – www.whales.magna.com.au

Information sheets on rainforest species in the Atherton region – www.rainforestaustralia.com.au

Glossy black cockatoo website – www.glossyblack.org
All about the glossy black – its food, habitat and breeding.

Lyssavirus update from Queensland Health – www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/cdi/pubs/pdf/batsgen.pdf

Volunteers spy out shy platypus

A search of waterways across Queensland last year resulted in more than 430 reliable sightings of the elusive platypus.

The animals were sighted by hundreds of volunteers who scanned lakes, rivers, dams and creeks as part of the Great Queensland Platypus search in October.

Organisers received reports of animals in 101 waterways from the Annan River near Cooktown in the north to the Goondiwindi Weir in the south.

Kayaker and platypus enthusiast Gary Austin reported 110 sightings for the month.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service NatureSearch State Manager Ric Natrass said one of the most positive

outcomes of the search was the discovery of platypus living close to Brisbane's city heart.

"It would appear that the completion of sewerage in Brisbane in the early 1970s has resulted in a successful recovery of the species there," Ric said.

Ric said the large response by rural property owners was also encouraging.

He said Platypus Search was the first to map the animals' distribution since a 4¹/₂-year-exercise by Gordon Stone wrapped up in 1982.

The former project resulted in 365 reports. Of these, 30 percent were considered misidentifications.

To join NatureSearch, please contact Ric on 3227 7836.

Food regime gives birds fighting chance

Birds are the most common wild animal (80 percent) to end up in rehabilitation in Australia, and are often given less than a 50 percent chance of surviving.

Given the struggle they already face, it would be nice to improve the level of care for those with a fair to good prognosis for release back to the wild.

Birds have a higher metabolic rate than mammals, which manifests in a high body temperature (around 43 deg.) and faster heart rate (more than 400 beats a minute in small birds).

Disease and injury can increase a bird's already high energy levels, which in turn means it needs to feed more often.

While there are some basic principles that will improve your success with birds, there is no standard percentage of body weight to food that works for all species.

Factors to consider when deciding quantity and frequency of feeding include:

- size;
- age;
- sex;
- species;
- size of bird's crop (if present);
- size of bird's ventriculus (stomach or gizzard);
- reproductive status;
- disease or injury;
- energy content of diet;
- appetite;
- ease of force feeding;
- level of exercise during hospitalisation;
- level of anxiety produced by hospitalisation; and
- ambient temperature.

The keys to success involve:

- feeding adult small birds every two hours during daylight;
- feeding adult kookaburra and tawny frogmouth-sized birds once daily;
- feeding nocturnal birds at night;
- feeding as much live food as possible to enhance self feeding (e.g. mealworms wriggling in a



Rosemary Booth BVSc

bowl of insectivore mix crumble);

- providing water in a dish large enough to fit the bird's whole beak. Water should be provided even if you do not see the bird drink;
- spraying or drizzling water on to the corner of the beak each day; and
- covering the front of the cage of anxious birds.

As a guide, juvenile parrots have been successfully hand-raised on the following quantities:

- 30g parrot = 2g feed
- 300g parrot = 30g feed

Although this is about 10 percent of their body weight, it is not a rule to use in isolation from the other considerations listed above.

Overfeeding can lead to crop dysfunction, aspiration and death. Young birds are generally poor judges of how much they should eat.

Juvenile birds need to be fed every 90 minutes to 3 hours until they are weaned.

Diurnal birds feed their young from dawn to dusk. For those hand-raising such a bird, feeding can take place between 6:30am to 11:30pm.

Adult birds weighing less than 50g, particularly insectivorous birds accustomed to hunting, may need to be

hand-fed/force-fed every 2-3 hours until they feed themselves.

For a 50g bird, the actual quantity per feed would be about 0.2-0.5g (up to 1 percent of bodyweight). It is important to make sure the bird's airways do not become blocked by food after feeding.

Depending on its size, a fasted bird will die in a few hours (finches) or a few days (kookaburras).

To succeed in rehabilitation, it is essential to correctly identify the bird and its diet, and feed it regularly during its recovery.

A bird that passes little faeces is not getting enough to eat. It is always better to add the stress of force-feeding, rather than to let a bird starve to death in your care.

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

Debra Hotchkis,
QPWS Wildlife Ranger,
PO Box 3454,
Burleigh Town LPO,
Burleigh Heads QLD 4220.

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



Land for Wildlife

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service 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 and administered by local councils across the State.

For more information, contact:
Martin O'Malley - State
Co-ordinator, Ph. 3006 4622

Agency sends SOS to update database

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has invited wildlife carers to help update its files on Queensland's wildlife distribution patterns.

Work is under way to update Wildnet, a corporate information system about wildlife, to reflect the changing distribution patterns of native and naturalised wildlife.

Wildnet contains 2.6 million records of plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fresh and marine fish and plants and butterflies.

Wildnet co-ordinator Noleen Kunst said information had to be accurate if it was to be used.

"The value of Wildnet as a tool for the management and conservation of Queensland's wildlife and conservation reserves largely depends on the quality and comprehensiveness of the data it contains," Noleen said.

"A high degree of accuracy is required to identify the species and the geographic location."

The following is the minimum amount of information required for a good wildlife record:

- the full name of the person(s) that identified the species (additional contact information may be required if the record needs to be followed up at a later date);
- the date of the record (day/month/year) or a date range for historic records or records compiled over several days;



WildNet

- a plain language description of the record locality. Ideally the description should include a locality name, distance and direction from a feature that is named in the place name gazetteer, and a broad region name (e.g. Peach Creek, 19 km ENE of Mount Croll, Cape York Peninsula) or a street address (e.g. 31 Centurion Way, Nerang);
- the latitude and longitude or the zone, easting and northing of the record locality derived from a map or using a global positioning system (GPS);
- the datum for the location coordinates recorded. If the location coordinates were determined using a GPS, check the unit's set-up menu to derive the datum used. If the location was determined using a map, check the map legend for the datum. Wherever possible the GPS should be set to the datum GDA94 to conform to current data standards;

- an indication of the accuracy of the location co-ordinates provided in metres. This represents an estimate of the accuracy of the method for deriving location coordinates (i.e. a GPS reading will be more accurate than a large-scale map) and also accounts for the distance from the point provided to cover the position of the species recorded; and
- the full scientific name for the species if possible e.g. *Acacia concurrens* or the accepted common name for well documented animal groups such as birds, mammals and butterflies.

"Information such as the number of the species encountered, gender, age class (e.g. adult, sub-adult, fledgling etc), description, behaviour and condition can be provided as notes," Noleen said.

"It is important to remember not to make a wildlife recording if you are not sure about what species you have seen and cannot accurately describe it.

"It is much better to have fewer accurate records upon which to make management decisions rather than masses of poorer quality records."

Profile:

Noleen started work with the EPA in 1991. She has been involved in the coordination and implementation of research and monitoring, threatened species recovery planning and management and wildlife policy. Noleen started coordinating the WildNet project in 1997.

QPWS and police put the bite on animal traps

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and the Queensland Police Service are committed to protecting the State's flora and fauna.

As part of that commitment, the QPWS and police Wildlife Response Unit investigate complaints and information from the public about wildlife trapping.

The main objective of the QPWS is to

protect and conserve native wildlife and habitats, and ensure that any use of wildlife is ecologically sustainable.

All native mammals (except dingoes), birds, reptiles, amphibians, some fish and butterflies are protected in Queensland.

It is becoming more important to protect wildlife as threats to their

survival, such as habitat destruction, continue to mount. Trapping further compounds the threats to species populations.

If you have any information about the trapping of wildlife, contact your nearest QPWS office, or the Queensland Police Service.

Spirits soar with enclosure success

The Queensland branch of Australian Seabird Rescue (ASR) has built an open-air flight rehabilitation enclosure for rescues.

Founder Wendy Gillespie said the multi-use enclosure was 40m x 4m x 2.5m and had water facilities to help the birds recuperate.

“Watching the dynamics of four species enjoying the comforts of a home away from home, with pelicans and herons in full flight ready for release is the greatest reward apart from onsite treatment,” Wendy said.

The group also has a dedicated four-wheel-drive vehicle for seabird rescues.

Wendy said ASR has operated a proactive education program about seabirds in Noosa for 2½ years.

The program, Water for Wildlife Campaign for Noosa, is run with the help of Coastcare, a community environmental grants program jointly funded by the State Government and the Commonwealth’s Natural Heritage Trust.

The program includes waterbird rescues, teaching waterbird care in the schools, public awareness and education, cleaning up waterways and addressing marine strandings.

The group has dealt with more than 300 pelican injuries and treated about 50 waterbird species since it began four years ago.

Wendy said fishing tackle was one of the largest causes of injuries to waterbirds.

“I started ASR after repeatedly witnessing debilitated and maimed waterbirds while boating on the beautiful Noosa River,” Wendy said.

“Fishing tackle was often still attached to birds and it became obvious that most waterbird debilitations and amputations were due to untreated fishing tackle entanglement or inhumane fishing practices.

“An ASR workshop was held in Brisbane, attended by Lance Ferris, who co-founded the rescue group a decade ago in Ballina.

“We learnt a range of rescue, rehabilitation and release methods, which we have put into practice hundreds of times over.”

Wendy said the most frequent birds to be rescued after the pelican are white-faced herons, white ibis, crested terns, silver gulls and cormorants.

“Injury mechanisms and tackle location vary between species due to the various ways in which they forage and interact with anglers,” Wendy said.

“Most pelican injuries occur through casting and direct contact with fishing line, while birds such as terns and gulls take tackle on the wing.

“Diving cormorants commonly ingest fish and tackle when it is being reeled in, and waders risk becoming entangled in discarded tackle and being hit by people or watercraft.”



L to R Wendy Gillespie, Helma Maiwald and Joanne Brown

ASR conducts regular monitoring of waterbird meeting sites, which enables any injured or debilitated birds to be found and treated quickly.

If you are interested in the proactive waterbird care campaign or would like to establish a local rescue operation, contact ASR on (07) 5485 3543.

Profile:

Wendy is founder and president of Queensland’s Australian Seabird Rescue Group. Wendy has an environmental science degree from Griffith University and has worked as the Community Co-ordinator for the Recovery of the Mary River cod. Wendy is in her third year as a Coastcare project officer, which has included co-ordinating the Water for Wildlife campaign in Noosa.

She has a Masters in Tropical Environmental Management from the Northern Territory University, and was a tutor at Sunshine Coast University.

Who are we?

Thank you to everyone who guessed who the babies were in the last issue. The chicks were noisy pittas (*Pitta versicolor*).

The winner was Robyn Jackson of Mapleton. Robyn received a copy of latest edition of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service’s *National Park Bushwalks of the Great South East*.

E-mail your answer to this quiz to: debra.hotchkis@epa.qld.gov.au or write to Debra Hotchkis, Queensland Parks Wildlife Service, PO Box 3454 LPO, Burleigh Heads QLD 4220.



1) I look nothing like my adult parents, my feet should give you some clues, I have lots of siblings and a huge extended family.



2) We’re smaller than our better-known cousins, our nests are temperature controlled, members of my family cover all of Australia.

Animals keep Cairns ranger on the hop

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) Senior Wildlife Ranger Christiane Roetgers finds working in wildlife management in Cairns both demanding and rewarding.

“Working in the highly reactive environment of wildlife management in the QPWS is very challenging,” Christiane said.

“For example, one phone call about an injured cassowary lets even the best-planned workday go out the window. A normal regulated working life is rarely possible.”

Christiane, who has a Postgraduate Diploma in Protected Area Management, devotes her work and personal time to helping wildlife.

“On my way home recently I was called into Annabelle Olssons’ vet surgery to pick up a frilled lizard,” Christiane said.

“At the surgery the vet assistant advised me that Annabelle needed me to take a snake as well.



Senior Wildlife Ranger Christiane Roetgers

“The snake turned out to be a 4.5m, 10kg scrub python — luckily the guest room at home was empty!”

Christiane, who came from Germany in 1996, is responsible for all facets of wildlife management, including urban wildlife, zoo inspections, working with farmers on crop damage issues, public education, law enforcement and policy development, and managing potentially dangerous wildlife such as cassowaries and snakes.

She lists snakes, flying foxes and quolls among her favourite animals and is caring for a young wedge-tailed eagle, two scrub pythons and a black-headed python at home.

Christiane is a member of the Far North Queensland (FNQ) Wildlife Rescue Committee.

“I assist FNQ Wildlife Rescue with the necessary paperwork involved in their group permit, give advice on issues and other requirements of current legislation and advise on changes in legislation,” she said.

“This dedicated band of wildlife carers also help me by responding to many calls to pick up sick or injured animals.

“I am very impressed by the dedication and commitment of the association.

“The group has made a positive contribution to wildlife management in the Cairns, Daintree and Tablelands area and has made my job just a little easier — for which I am very grateful.”

Carer explores new horizons with NatureSearch

Wildlife carer Sarah Jacob decided to do some volunteer fieldwork with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and wound up leading her own NatureSearch fauna survey team.

Sarah’s participation with NatureSearch began when she and partner Siggy Lloyd signed up to learn more about the habitat of flying foxes, which they rescued and rehabilitated.

“For me, NatureSearch began with a flurry of learning,” Sarah said.

“I attended a number of NatureSearch workshops, where I learnt how to identify plants and animals, and had the opportunity to meet other NatureSearchers, many of who were also wildlife carers and rehabbers.”

Armed with her new-found knowledge, Sarah confidently joined the spotlighting nights for the Great Marsupial Nightstalk.

“One night we were treated to the spectacular sight of a sugar glider volplaning between trees,” she said.

“Later that night, as our group refuelled with coffee and biscuits, a juvenile brushtail possum appeared at very close quarters on the trunk of a tree. Evidently he hoped to partake in the feast!

“I was hooked.”

Keen to experience other methods of fauna survey, Sarah joined a Brisbane NatureSearch terrestrial fauna survey at the Sunshine Coast.

“As a group we set out a suite of Elliot and cage traps in each different habitat throughout the property,” she said.

“The next morning we were thrilled to find yellow-footed antechinus, fawn-footed melomys and bush rats in our traps.

“We also had a chance to help out with the survey of microbats using an ultrasonic bat detector and several harp traps. We found several species, including Gould’s long-eared bats and large-footed myotis.

The weekend sparked Sarah’s interest in the bushland reserve near her Karalee home.

“I discussed my ideas with the Brisbane co-ordinator, Anna Muscat, and before I knew it I was heading up a full fauna survey of the area,” she said.

“The reserve itself was small, but was home to a diverse range of wildlife, including more than 40 species of birds, northern brown bandicoots, swamp rats, water rats, koalas, eastern sedge frogs, carpet pythons, yellow-faced whip snakes and four species of microbat.

“The program has enhanced my knowledge of Australian native fauna, and the habitats in which they are found.

“As adorable as the animals are that we have in care, nothing compares to having the chance to see our native animals out in the wild where they belong.”

Dugong beats odds and returns to ocean

Sea World on the Gold Coast is one of only three organisations worldwide to have successfully hand-raised a dugong, and is the first to have released their animal.

Sea World staff took the emaciated neonate into care 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 said the calf, while never officially named, affectionately became known as “the pig”.

Wendy and the curatorial team (Rob, Kerrie, Natalie, Cath, Shannon and Kylie) began bottle-feeding him every two hours on the advice of vet Dr Greg Bossart, who is involved in manatee rehabilitation in America.

“This punishing schedule is used at Miami Seaquarium in Florida for raising manatees, where they believe it is important to feed at this frequency to raise a metabolically normal calf,” Wendy said.

The calf was fed a mix of Di-Vetelact and acidophilus, supplemented with a canned coconut extract to increase the fat content of the formula.

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

From one year of age the calf was gradually weaned from 11 bottles per day down to one 425ml bottle per day. At 19 months, milk ceased to be offered.

By this time he was also eating between 15-20kg of vegetation per day from a series of feeding plates especially designed to anchor food to the bottom of the pool.

“Our ability to feed this calf predominantly on non-seagrass plants may have been a function of his naivete, as he was eager to sample almost any vegetation that was introduced to the pool,” Wendy said.



“The pig” eats from a feeding tray at Sea World

“His staple foods were cos lettuce, hydroponic lettuce, pak choy, choy sum, English spinach and endive.

“By the time he left Sea World he was consuming more than 30kg of vegetables each day. Staff fed him in shifts from 8am-4pm and 5pm-11pm.”

Periodically the dugong was offered seagrass the Sea World staff had collected (under a special Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service permit) from Russell Island and Moreton Bay.

On two occasions, fresh faeces collected from the feeding grounds of wild dugongs in Moreton Bay were given to “the pig” to try to inoculate his gut with appropriate bacteria.

Wendy said the dugong was initially weighed daily using a set of digital bathroom scales.

As his weight increased, he was weighed weekly using a stretcher, block and tackle, and hanging digital scales. When he exceeded 100kg, he was weighed fortnightly with the stretcher raised by an electric winch arm. Eventually, monthly weights were obtained using a crane.

“The pig” was housed in three different locations during his stay at Sea World.

He was kept indoors until October 1999, when he moved to a large, outdoor, above-ground pool donated by Pat and Bob Lees, the Queensland franchisees of Clark Rubber.

In September 2000 he was transferred to a sand-bottomed pool that was on public display.

“The pig” was released into Moreton Bay on March 12, 2002. Three and a quarter years after arriving at Sea World, he had grown to be 219.7cm long and weighed 197.5kg.

The final release followed a four-month staging spell in a naturally formed salt-water lagoon at the south-eastern end of Moreton Island, where he could feed on seagrass beds.

While “the pig” was fitted with a satellite/VHF tracker for post-release monitoring, this dislodged within days of the release and Sea World has not been able to follow his movements.

Profile:

Wendy graduated from the University of Queensland in 1980 with a degree in veterinary science.

She has worked with domestic animals in private veterinary practice and at the university’s small animal clinic. Her veterinary experience with wildlife includes honorary work for the QPWS at Moggill, two years as consultant veterinarian for Bunya Park Wildlife Sanctuary, and 5½ years as veterinarian at Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary.

She started as Sea World’s veterinarian in April 1995, and changed direction to become the park’s Records/Special Projects Officer in May last year.

Deb's wildlife diary

July

The female echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus* is laying her single egg about now. In a week to ten days, the skin of the egg will break down and a hatchling up to 2cm long will be left tucked securely between the pouch walls.

Flocks of Torres Strait pigeons *Ducula spilorrhoa* will make the daily crossing from their winter quarters in New Guinea to the luxuriant lowland rainforests of northern Australia.



August

Humpback whales begin calving off the eastern and western coasts of Australia.

The breeding season for birds is in full production. The species involved range from migratory waders from Siberia, to falcons, robins and fairy-wrens.

September

After an inactive winter, most reptiles are busy selecting a mate. Be on the lookout for fighting displays by males vying for the attentions of females.

Pythons are the only snakes that display maternal care; other egg-layers hide their clutches before moving on. Live-bearing species abandon their young immediately — if they don't eat some first.



October

Dollarbirds *Eurystomus orientalis* are due to return this month from New Guinea to breed in woodlands and rainforest edges. Keep your ears and eyes open for the characteristic machine gun-like call and aerial display.

Magpies holding suburbs at bay because of their brood should be starting to relax now.

November

Now is the time to take holidays and visit the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Mon Repos Conservation Park at Bundaberg for the start of the annual marine turtle breeding season. This is the most southern range where breeding occurs. Volunteers assist rangers in weighing adult females and tagging adults and young animals.



December

Lookout if you're in far north Queensland as the local saltwater crocodiles *Crocodylus porosus* will be scratching up mounds of vegetation to lay their eggs in.

This is the peak of the breeding season for koalas *Phascolarctus cinereus*, with young emerging from May onwards.

Take time to assess your insurance risk

No doubt many wildlife care organisations have become painfully aware that insurance premiums have risen sharply over the last year or so.

A review of the premium notice normally shows the sharpest rise is in the public liability component of the insurance contract.

There have been many reasons put forward for the rises, ranging from increased costs of contesting litigation, numbers of claims (particularly public liability), and scope and extent of payouts awarded by courts, to the collapse and withdrawal from the market of some of the major national and international underwriters.

The good news is that the insurance issue is a high priority with all levels of government.

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie convened a task force early this year to consider the problem and options for addressing the difficulties faced by organisations. The findings are on website www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/groupinsurance.

One of the major recommendations of the task force was to investigate the arrangement of group insurance.

In group insurance, the risk and premiums are spread across a large area. It is a more attractive proposal for insurers and could mean cheaper premiums for policyholders.

I hope all organisations registered their interest in this arrangement. While the registration deadline was earlier this year, you can still call the taskforce for details on (07) 3224 4909.

It is important that carer organisations take an active interest in the review as changes will impact on both the organisation and the individual members.

Wildlife carers are not covered by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) volunteer insurance.

This cover is only extended to registered volunteers who are engaged in supervised QPWS activities or at QPWS facilities.

All incorporated bodies need to carry personal accident and public liability insurance.

Individual carers who are not part of a group may not be protected from the costs associated with a personal accident, and may have limited cover against public liability (through their home insurance policies). The best option may be to join an incorporated care group that carries insurance.

On the subject of home insurance, you may wish to contact your insurer about your current arrangements.

There is a fair degree of difference between the level of risk different insurers attach to activities such as wildlife care.

It is advisable to check if you are covered for:

- damage to your house and contents by wildlife;
- public liability for family members and invited guests; and
- burglary/theft by people delivering wildlife.

It may also pay to determine how your insurer defines negligence on your part and to clarify if your standard of containment for wildlife is satisfactory.

Take the time to do a stocktake on your insurance protection. Check what policies cover you and be familiar with the scope (items covered) and extent (level of cover) of each policy.

You can also reduce your exposure to misfortune by identifying any hazards in your work and changing your operations to reduce the risks associated with those hazards.

And lastly, given we can never completely safeguard ourselves from the rough and tumble of life, "good luck".

Profile:

Tom has worked for the QPWS for about five years. Tom has been a ranger at D'Aguilar Range, Green Mountains and Fraser Island and worked at the David Fleay Wildlife Park. He is the Volunteer Co-ordinator with the Wildlife and Community Nature Conservation section.

Puggle puzzle sparks name debate between staff



By Debra Hotchkis

I thought I would share this unusual sight with you. I am sure you can guess why she was called "Grip". I do not know how common it is to see a flying fox with so many digits.

We were having an interesting conversation in the office recently about the origin of the word "puggle". Is this an

appropriate term for young echidnas?

I need to know when you first heard the term, and from what source.

E-mail your comments to debra.hotchkis@epa.qld.gov.au or write to Debra Hotchkis, QPWS, PO Box 3454 LPO, Burleigh Heads Q 4220.

If you have any interesting pictures you would like to share, e-mail or send them to the above address.



Bilby offers rare treat for western carer

Charleville wildlife carer Lois Wilson received a call on December 20, 2001 that changed her life. She was asked to care for a young bilby.

It's 6.30am and wildlife carer Lois Wilson is trying to sleep.

On the edge of her hearing is a noise. It is Mellissa the bilby asking for snacks.

"She's saying Lois, are there any moths or grasshoppers before I go to sleep?" Lois said.

Lois, who has been a carer for 13 years, was "humbled and honoured" when Charleville's Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) Senior Conservation Officer Peter McRae asked her to care for Mellissa.

"I'd recently lost a puggle and gone through the self-examination that followed," Lois said.

"Mellissa was my chance to start afresh, but I was worried about losing her too."

Named after the university work experience student who found her, Mellissa weighed 70g and was about two months old when Lois took her in. She had completed about 75 percent of her pouch life. It is believed a snake killed her mother.

"The first week of hand-raising was difficult," Lois said.

"I was thinking 'How do I tell if she is just sleepy or actually sick?'"

Mellissa was initially fed between seven to 10mls of milk over 24 hours, which she lapped from the lid of a baby jar.

She was then introduced to mealworms with Wombaroo insectivore mix, but was not interested unless the worms were broken in half and the

"juice" squeezed out.

"The milks I used, depending on availability, were Biolac, Di-Vetelact and Wombaroo," Lois said.

"Over that initial week she indicated a preference for the Wombaroo so I stuck with that. She also preferred to lap, so I didn't bother with a bottle and a teat.

"At about 90 days she weaned off milk and was eating moths, mealworms and little grasshoppers whole.

"I also gave her birdseed and small dried dog biscuits soaked in water, and some raw sweet corn to chew."

Mellissa joined the QPWS captive breeding program at Charleville when she was 4¹/₂ months old. She weighed 370g and had already developed a distinct personality.

"Mellissa loved to be free and race all over our house of a morning," Lois said.

"Her favourite places were the floor of our bedroom cupboard among the shoes and among the rags on the floor of our pantry cupboard."

Lois, who has returned to caring for joeys and possums, says Mellissa changed her life.

"QPWS Ranger Frank Manthey has kidnapped my interest in bilbies and I enjoy helping him speak to groups of tourists about the Save the Bilby Fund and its projects," she said.

Peter said Lois had been a tremendous asset to the QPWS over the years,



Lois Wilson's (above) life changed when asked to care for a young bilby (top)

helping the staff deal with many injured and orphaned animals.

"She is married to a long-term local private GP in Charleville and has a hectic lifestyle, being involved in virtually every community activity going!" he said.

"She still finds time to devote her attention and loving care to (often many) injured and orphaned native companions.

"Lois' husband, Chester, is very supportive. Thanks to them both, they are real gems."

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