

RnR

A newsletter for
wildlife carers

Issue 5 • January 2004

Law catches up with critters

A joyriding echidna and a stowaway possum put the “wild” into “wildlife” when they took on the Gold Coast authorities in separate incidents last year.

An echidna from Tallebudgera Valley and Lulu the Western ringtail possum (*Pseudocheirus occidentalis*) tangled with the Gold Coast police and the Burleigh Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) staff respectively.

Police found the echidna hiding under their car when they pulled into the Gold Coast Hospital.

Judging from the dust on his body, police believe he hopped on board at their previous call-out in Tallebudgera Valley.

Because of the late hour he was taken to the lock-up (the police station shower cubicle), but busted out and set off the building’s alarms at 4am. Despite this, he was let off with a warning and handed over to QPWS, who gave him a health check and released him in the Tallebudgera Valley.

Meanwhile, Lulu the possum was discovered by removalists hiding in a shipping container loaded with personal belongings and furniture from Busselton, south of Perth in October.

The stowaway, who was believed to be about a year old, was a little stressed but otherwise in good condition after her week-long journey.



Ride’s over... Gold Coast Ranger Scott Hetherington releases the wayward echidna

Lulu was a special interstate visitor – her species is listed as vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* and is usually only found in coastal areas of peppermint woodland from Bunbury to Albany in southern Western Australia.

She stayed at Currumbin Sanctuary until she returned home. She is now at Perth Zoo.

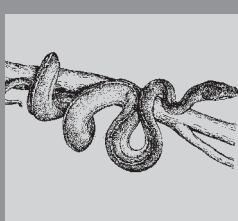
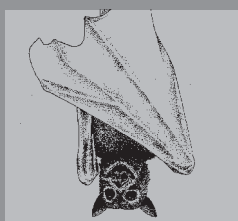
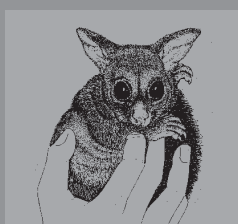
It is believed Lulu survived the trip because the container was relatively



Lulu at the QPWS office

cool and contained a number of potted plants that may have provided some nourishment and water.

Rehabilitate and Release



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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.

Welcome to the January edition of *Rehabilitation and Release*. It is always a pleasure to write the opening words for *RnR*, but this edition is special as it marks the third year of the newsletter's production! Doesn't time get away! In those three years we've seen increasing contributions from carers to *RnR*. These articles have reflected the real life experiences of Queensland's wildlife care community and shared knowledge.

2004 is shaping up to be a significant year for wildlife care. Over the past months, a steering committee made up of wildlife care groups, animal welfare, conservation and government representatives has been working to establish the Queensland Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (QWRC). The Council will co-ordinate carer interests, including setting the standards for wildlife rehabilitation and organising activities such as accreditation, training, wildlife hotlines, codes of practice and insurance. The steering team's unstinting hard work has paved the way for the first election of council representatives to the Council this year. I'd like to express my sincerest thanks for their incredible effort in progressing the establishment of QWRC. It's been a formidable effort (while still continuing with their demanding caring duties).

The Council was one of many recommendations on wildlife care made during a review of wildlife legislation in 2002. The good news is that the new legislation was passed in December and will become effective on 1 March 2004. Carers can have a look at the changes at www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/SLS/2003/03SL375.pdf. The changes are also summarised in an article below.

Other projects to come to fruition during 2004 include an information CD on wildlife care that has been produced by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Griffith University students. The four talented multimedia students volunteered hundreds of hours of their time to design the CD, which will be loaded on the web and distributed to care groups during the year. A very special thanks to Wildlife Education Ranger Deb Hotchkis and Senior Communications Officer Angela Pattie (and their many helpers) for making this top-class resource a reality.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the support you have given *RnR* over the past three years and I look forward to continuing this partnership into the future.

'til next time
Leslie Shirreffs

New wildlife laws herald change for carers

The State Government has signed off on the new wildlife management laws that will impact on wildlife carers. Permit and licence-holders have until 1 March 2004 to become familiar with the new legislation, as it comes into force from this date.

- **To get an individual rehabilitation licence, carers will need to satisfy an "accreditation standard" or become a member of an accredited wildlife care group.** The accreditation standard will be set by the Queensland Wildlife Rehabilitation Council.
- **The Rehabilitation Council may update the Code of Practice for the Care and Rehabilitation of Orphaned, Sick or**

Injured Protected Animals by Rescue Permits Holders and Wildlife Care Associations to better address animal welfare concerns. Wildlife carers may find some of their care practices may change.

- **Rescue permits will be renamed rehabilitation permits.**
- **Abolish returns for wildlife care.** However, wildlife carers are encouraged to keep records voluntarily and submit them to QPWS's Wildnet database.
- **Anyone who rescues a sick, injured or orphaned marine mammal or turtle must immediately inform a conservation officer.** Previously, people had 72 hours to report to a

conservation officer. While this still applies to terrestrial wildlife, it does not apply to marine mammals or turtles.

- **Carers will be allowed to take dead common animals (e.g. road kill) if they are used to feeding an animal kept under a rehabilitation permit (e.g. raptor rehabilitation for *Accitripidae*, *Falconidae* or *Strigidae*). However, the carer cannot take echidna, koala or platypus.** All care should be taken towards limiting the transfer of disease to an animal in care.

Further information about the wildlife regulation changes will be published on the EPA website www.epa.qld.gov.au.

Hot roof shuffle lands possum in care

Carer Debra Turnbull learnt the value of networking with other carers when she spent time caring for a possum injured in a fire at a Brisbane school.

Debra said workmen found “Rhonda”, an adult brushtail possum, cowering in the corner of the burnt-out roof of the Wooloowin State School office.

Although badly burned and bleeding, Rhonda’s feet were free of infection. She had a 20g baby.

“Rhonda had burns to her feet consistent with running over the hot roof. That’s how she got her name – after Rhonda Birchmore in *Hot Shoe Shuffle*,” Debra said.

“I would like to thank, Megan Tennant, Gail Gipp, Annie Saunders and Deb Hotchkis for their suggestions about

Rhonda’s care. By talking and networking, I was able to canvass possible care options and ensure the outcome was the best for Rhonda’s rehabilitation and release.

It was decided to treat the feet by bathing them and applying paw paw ointment. Rhonda was not too keen on this and it took two people to treat her feet. On about the second day Rhonda’s baby was out of the pouch but still firmly attached. I put the baby back in but half an hour later he was out again.

At this time, Alan and Stacy Franks from Hollow Log Homes sponsored a possum box for Rhonda. The plan was that Rhonda would sleep in the box while her feet were healing and then the box would be placed in a tree near the building she used to call

home. Rhonda was happy to call it home.

I took advice from a few experienced carers and decided to tape the baby into the pouch. This worked but Rhonda was still very distressed and I worried about the baby. After a couple of days I removed the tape and decided to let nature take its course.

That night Rhonda rejected the baby and he died. After this, she was a different possum. She slept well, was easy to treat and was much more relaxed. Her feet healed very quickly.

The day Rhonda’s box was put up a tree at Wooloowin School was a day of celebration. The children



Caption: Rhonda puts her feet up

were excited and organised to have some apple and banana put near the box for the first week – just to welcome Rhonda back and make things easy for her for a while.

One of the parents spoke to me afterwards and described the symbolism that Rhonda represented for the children. Her home was burnt down, she got a new one and she got on with her life. The children and the school community would do the same.

“Share your know-how” say senior carers

by Deborah Turnbull, Annie Saunders and Gail Gipp

There is one thing common among all carers – they love to offer advice. Sometimes, the advice from one carer conflicts with advice from another. What do you do? Here are a few things to consider when taking advice from another carer.

- ✓ **All advice is right in at least one situation.** Just because something did not work this time, don’t totally discard the advice. It may come in handy one day.
- ✓ **All advice is wrong in at least one situation.** There may be a care option that has worked for the last 10 animals. That does not automatically mean it will be right for the 11th animal.
- ✓ **There are two types of experience to consider** – a person’s overall caring experience, and your experience with an individual animal. Never underestimate the value of the latter.
- ✓ **If the advice from one person proves to be inappropriate in one situation,**

do not assume that all of that person’s advice is going to be wrong. Take into consideration that most advice is given over the phone. The quality of advice given depends on the quality of observation you are able to provide.

- ✓ **Take one plan of action and stick with it,** unless of course the animal’s condition deteriorates. Babies do not tolerate constant change. Consistency can make all the difference.
- ✓ **Listen to advice** and ask why. There has to be a reason why advice is deemed to be good. Understand the situations in which this advice can be applied successfully. It will help you know whether or not that particular advice is right in any single situation.

What do you call a group of...?

1. Hippopotamuses
2. Moles
3. Magpies
4. Ravens
5. Frogs
6. Jellyfish

1. A bloat. 2. A labor.
3. A tiding, gulp, murder or charm.
4. An unkindness. 5. An army.
6. A smack.

Julie in driver's seat of koala ambulance group

Julie Zyzniewski is the president and founder of the Logan Wildlife Ambulance (LWA) which celebrated its 10th anniversary this year.

When Julie, from Logan, founded the group it was focused on helping about 50 koalas. Today, LWA rescues about 700 animals of all species each year. It also provides education and vegetation management support to the local community.

This group plays a vital role in the successful implementation of koala conservation programs in south-east Queensland. Its reputation and success also ensures it is held in the highest regard by QPWS.

Julie's strength of character and vision for the group have been major factors in its success.

"I am a big believer in incremental change — that a small number of people can make a big difference. I like the feeling that I have touched peoples' lives



Julie Zyzniewski

positively and changed the way that they look at the wildlife that shares our community," Julie said.

Julie quotes author Ambrose Pratt when asked why she has an affinity for the koala: "The koala is '... absolutely non-verminous: it does not sweat and it always smells wholesomely and rather pleasantly of eucalyptus!'"

Between the management of LWA and rescuing and hand-rearing wildlife, Julie somehow finds two weeks a year to fossick for emeralds in the southern gem fields.

"I just love playing in that giant sandpit," she said.

Latest on the creation of QWRC

In the last edition we introduced you to the soon-to-be-established Queensland Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (QWRC). We would like to take this opportunity to keep you up-to-date with the progress of the steering committee currently working towards that goal. The steering committee is finalising the formation of the QWRC and QWRC terms of reference documents.

The formation of QWRC

This is the process by which QWRC will be established. It addresses all issues leading up to the election of the first Council. The committee will identify and define the means by which all people currently permitted to rescue/rehabilitate wildlife can have equal and statewide representation. It will ensure all stakeholders have a clear understanding of, the opportunity to participate in, and contribute throughout the establishment process and into the future.

The terms of reference

This document is a set of guidelines for QWRC

operations in the future. It addresses issues such as membership, number of members on Council, how often the council will meet and where, and terms of office.

It is envisaged that once established, the Council will:

1. Unite wildlife rehabilitation interests under one structure or association.
2. Provide the means by which those actively involved in wildlife rehabilitation will have a representative statewide body.
3. Identify and plan strategies to overcome educational deficiencies identified as currently existing in wildlife care practices.
4. Provide advice and direction to both the government and the community on all relevant aspects of wildlife rehabilitation.
5. Influence both policy and legislative changes in the future.
6. Advance wildlife rehabilitation practices in Queensland.

Everyday plants around the house can have some unexpected effects on your charges.

Celery: It is known to cause skin irritations and has been known to accumulate nitrates to the extent where it has been fatal to cattle.

Azalea: The leaves are toxic. The toxic principle is most probably andromedotoxin, one of the grayanotoxins, which are nitrogen-free resinoid compounds. They are reported to have veratrine-like properties and to produce symptoms resembling those of aconite poisoning. Arbutin, a

glucoside of hydroquinone has also been reported from this family. Loss of appetite, repeated swallowing, swallowing of cud without chewing, copious salivation, depression, nausea and

vomiting. Kidney damage has been reported. Difficulty in breathing, convulsions and coma may also ensue.

Bird of Paradise: All parts are toxic. Possibly contains hydrocyanic acid. Gastrointestinal disorders such as diarrhoea, vomiting

and disorientation are possible.

Chillies: Burning or stinging of lips, tongue and throat; nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea. Burning sensation of the eyes and skin usually

minor; blistering after prolonged exposure. Fruit and leaves are the toxic components. Large quantities usually have to be consumed to elicit toxic response.

Sweet potato: Pulmonary toxicity. Only occurs in cases where tubers have become mouldy or have been injured

in some way some time prior to consumption.

Sweet pea: Seeds contain cyano-amino-acid aminopropionitrile. Can cause skeletal deformities or irreversible paralysis of the legs followed by death in rare cases.

Potato: Poison in uncooked sprout and sun-greened skin. After prolonged exposure to sunlight or overlong storage such that sprouting occurs, intensive production of alkaloids is initiated, particularly in the 'skin' and 'eyes'. Can cause gastric irritation, fever and diarrhoea.

Did you know?

Tree-roo carers work together

by Lee K. Curtis

Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo is one of only two tree-kangaroo species in Australia.

Little is known about the ecology and basic biology of these endearing, elusive creatures. This lack of knowledge makes hand raising orphans and caring for injured adults in captivity challenging and frustrating.

Margit Cianelli, a former zookeeper at the Stuttgart Zoo, moved to 64ha of old growth rainforest on the Atherton Tablelands 30 years ago. She began rehabilitating native wildlife, among which were Lumholtz's tree-kangaroos. They were orphans, victims of traffic accidents and dog attacks, and animals that had been blinded in territorial disputes.

She and fellow carer Beth Stirn were the only two to care for the rare tree-kangaroos for many years. She is currently hand raising seven-month old Susan.

Karen Coombes arrived on the Tablelands five years ago and settled on 68ha of prime Lumholtz's tree-

kangaroo habitat near Malanda. She is currently studying the population dynamics and ecology of Lumholtz's tree-kangaroos as part of a PhD degree. Karen was a carer in the Northern Territory for many years and soon found herself rehabilitating injured adult and orphaned tree-kangaroos. At present she is surrogate mother to a 20-month-old orphan, William.

These carers work very closely with Atherton Tableland vets John McKenzie and Wendy Bergen. The lack of information about Lumholtz's tree-kangaroos is one of the reasons those involved in hand raising them deem knowledge sharing to be essential to the species' survival. Although the carers and vets have differing opinions on a variety of issues they communicate openly with each other.

One of the issues that the carers and vets differ on is what to feed orphaned tree-kangaroos. After observing Lumholtz tree-kangaroos for many years, Margit believes some of the mother's stomach contents



Karen Coombes and William

are somehow passed on to their pouch joeys. She is convinced that this substance provides the young with bacteria or protozoa necessary in the breakdown of chemical compounds.

Prior to inoculation, Margit feeds her young browse. After inoculation, she feeds her young orphans small amounts of a wide variety of fruits, pumpkin seeds, chick peas, vegies and leaves consisting primarily of asian greens and watercress. She is selective about the types of rainforest leaves her young eat and gradually increases the amount. She believes that building good muscle mass is vital to the survival of human raised tree-roos.

Karen, on the other hand, firmly believes that the young should be



Margit Cianelli and Susan

encouraged to eat as many rainforest leaves as possible from an early age to encourage bacteria growth and stomach development. Karen did not feed William any vegetables when he was young. Now that he is older and regularly out in the rainforest eating leaves, he is given a small amount of banana or sweet potato as a rare treat.

Both Lumholtz tree-kangaroos appear to be flourishing and close tabs are kept on their progress. Karen and Margit are in regular contact with each other and the vets. They all have the animals' best interests at heart and fully realise that the more they share their experiences the sooner we will understand these rare and wonderful creatures.

Make sure your animal is ready for release into the wild

by Janet Gamble, RSPCA

The welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state. Therefore, good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being.

The RSPCA believes that an animal's welfare should be considered in terms of five freedoms (see RSPCA Queensland website). These freedoms form a logical and comprehensive framework for analysis of welfare.

It is important to consider the freedoms when evaluating whether an animal is ready for release. For example, an adult female brush-tail possum was handed-in to the RSPCA's Fairfield Shelter on 9 July. The possum had extensive necrotic wounds on her rump, right side and inner thigh. These were consistent with dog bites. She was very thin, dehydrated and pale. Staff also found dissolving sutures in the inner-thigh,

which suggested that she had been to a vet between four and eight weeks before she was found.

Unfortunately, the RSPCA had to euthanase the possum and her male joey. It appeared that the animal had been in care. While it is possible that she escaped from care early, she was clearly not ready for release. If the carer could not provide follow-up treatment and assessment, then the possum should

have been euthanased at the initial assessment.

It is impossible to treat every wildlife patient requiring care. Euthanasia should be viewed as a responsible management tool, used to relieve pain and further suffering and should have been used in this case. Displaced "feel good" deeds should never replace what is fair and in the best interests of an animal.

Northern region on a mission to save cassowaries

Mission Beach has long been recognised as the endangered southern cassowary activity hotspot in north Queensland.

In 2001, the Cassowary Advisory Group (CAG), Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) built a facility to manage the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned cassowaries in the area.

QPWS Garners Beach Cassowary Rehabilitation Facility is managed by QPWS Ranger Shayne Allanson of the Mission Beach Management Unit and is staffed by an enthusiastic group of local QPWS volunteers.

The cassowary rehabilitation facility is just north of Mission Beach on the Garners Beach Section of Clump Mountain National Park. The late Frieda and Joseph Jorrison donated the 29ha that form the small section of park to QPWS for the cassowary conservation. Frieda was known locally as the "cassowary mother" because she observed cassowaries in detail and kept records of a family tree of local birds dating back to 1960.



Stretch in the pen with friends

Community lends a hand

The centre relies on dedicated volunteers to rescue and rehabilitate the animals. They collect native fruit, help search for injured birds, respond to roadside cassowary/car collisions, search for missing parents and monitor released birds.

Last season, the Mission Beach community dedicated more than 2000 hours to the cassowary rehabilitation program.

Caring for a cassowary

Unless a cassowary chick is sick or injured, the best plan is to try and reunite it with the adult male in its natural environment.

When caring for a cassowary chick, place it with a couple of week-old chickens. This teaches the young cassowaries to forage and keep them exercised. Staff take the chickens away when the cassowary is between five and six months old. (The chickens usually need a break as cassowary chicks love to have mock battles!). During this time human interaction is very limited, which is essential for rehabilitation.

Cassowaries require specialised housing. The birds need snake-proof



Shayne Allanson and Hoppy

pens up until they are five months old, as scrub pythons are a natural predator.

At seven months, they are moved to a large facility (800sq.m with 2m-high fences covered in shade cloth). This facility has a man-made creek, as cassowaries love water, and a covered vet treatment area. Volunteers have planted food trees in the enclosure.

Older cassowary chicks are never housed together as they are very territorial and can wound less dominant birds.

The graduates

The first chick, Elmo, was released in October last year and is sighted regularly by volunteers. Elmo has removed his transmitter but still has his coloured identification tags. He appears to have established a territory at the Hull River National Park release site and was doing well as of October last year.

Lucky was two days old when she came into care in September 2002. She was successfully released into Ella Bay National Park in September 2003. Her

progress is being monitored via a radio-tracking transmitter. She has remained in the release area, which is a sign that the area is suitable.

Hoppy was two weeks old and had a broken femur when he came to the facility in December 2002. The leg was successfully pinned. He is now 11 months old and was released prior to Christmas 2003. His release was filmed by Aussie Animal Rescue.

Ten-week-old siblings Huey, Dewy & Louie lost their father in January 2003. These chicks were raised by supplementary feeding in the wild. A Mourilyan Harbour resident fed them three times a day for four months before gradually cutting down until the chicks dispersed. This is believed to be the first structured free-range rehabilitation.

Stretch, who is still in care, was found on one of the local beaches in October 2003.

The future

Rehabilitating cassowaries at the centre has enabled

(contd on page 7)



Volunteers and staff work in the cassowary enclosure

(contd from page 6)

QPWS rangers to observe closely and document the behaviour of wild cassowaries in captivity. This information has been invaluable, as it provides the technical framework for the future development of a best practice wild

cassowary rehabilitation manual.

Recruitment of local volunteers to assist with the program has seen the local community take an active role in managing the endangered southern cassowary in their own backyard.



Description: adults stand 1.5–2m high to the top of the head. Females are larger and more brightly coloured, with taller casque or helmet. Both sexes are covered in glossy black hair-like feathers, which consist of two shafts. The wings are a few long, bare quills. The head and neck are naked except for scattered bristles. A pair of red wattles hang from the front of neck. On top of the head is a large, blade-shaped horny casque or helmet. They have three toes, the inner toe with an elongated nail.

Behaviour: cassowaries (*Casuarus casuarinus*) make a low rumbling call, like the sound of an approaching truck. They live alone most of the year, except during breeding season when they form pairs. The couple remain together until the female is ready to lay eggs. She then leaves the male to incubate the eggs and rear the chicks. Once finished with a mate, the female may take another and lay another set of eggs.

Diet: cassowaries feed on fallen fruit, particularly of the family Lauraceae, from rainforest trees and vines. Besides fruit, cassowaries will eat fungi, snails, dead birds and even large dead rats.

Reproduction: cassowaries breed from June to October. The nest is a scrape in the ground lined with grasses, fern fronds and leaves. They usually lay four lustrous, mid-green eggs. The incubation is 45 to 60 days.

Distribution: there are three distinct cassowary populations, two on Cape York Peninsula and one in the Wet Tropics biogeographic region of northern Queensland.

Predators: cars, dogs, competition and nest predation by pigs.

Status: endangered.

Threatening processes: habitat loss, fragmentation and modification, traffic accidents, visitor impacts, dogs, competition and nest predation by pigs, catastrophic events and disease.

Human interaction: feeding wild cassowaries has increased the risks of traffic accidents, dog attacks and negative interactions with people.

Funds to finance bird research

The QPWS and the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria Queensland Branch (ARAZPAQ) have formed a partnership to co-operatively address the survival of the cassowary.

ARAZPAQ has committed \$5000 to a program which will monitor rehabilitated cassowaries once they have been returned to the wild. It is envisaged the money will provide for radio-tracking of the birds once they are released.

The new partnership will complement an existing joint effort between the QPWS and Hartley's Crocodile Adventures to rehabilitate orphaned and convalescing cassowaries for release back to the wild.

Under the partnership with Hartley's, two captive cassowary rehabilitation centres, at Hartley's and the QPWS Cassowary Conservation Unit at Garners Beach south of Innisfail, were funded

through the Cassowary Advisory Group.

It is hoped the ARAZPAQ funding will allow a post-graduate student to monitor the cassowaries once they were released from both centres, helping provide valuable information to inform future management of the endangered species in the region.

Environment Minister Dean Wells said reduced habitat has brought cassowaries into more frequent interaction with suburbia.

"The information we can gain from this monitoring and research will ensure that future endeavours to rehabilitate and release cassowaries will be best-practice standard and increase the likelihood of the bird's survival," he said.

Mr Wells said the QPWS had adopted a pro-active approach to cassowary management by increasing public awareness about feeding the animals.

Who am I?

Congratulations to Kelly Clark from Brisbane, who won the July quiz. She received the book *Care of Australian Wildlife* by Erna Walraven. The answer was a bush stone curlew.

The new clue is:

*My parents are tough if I don't tow the line
When they crack the whip all is fine
I love to forage on the forest floor
Looking for insects, bugs and more*

Post your answer to Debra Hotchkis, PO Box 3454,



Burleigh Town LPO, Burleigh Heads QLD 4220, or e-mail Debra.Hotchkis@epa.qld.gov.au. The first correct answer wins.

Helen reflects on raising Bailey

by Helen Darbellay

The first contact I had with Bailey was actually through his mum. She was hit by a car at Toowoomba on 21 June 1997. I volunteered to transport her to the Moggill Koala Hospital on 23 June, where it was discovered that she had a tiny baby in her pouch. Mum hung on for a short time but finally reached “that stage” and was euthanased.

It was felt that the baby was too small to hand raise. However, as far as I was concerned, he was alive and therefore deserved a chance. Even after being informed that the odds of survival were about 10 percent, I still wanted to try.

On June 30, he became my baby. He weighed 56g and was not much bigger than my thumb. He had no fur, his eyes were sealed shut, his ears were still flattened to his head and I thought he was gorgeous.

I immediately named him Bailey and gave him his first bottle, which he downed in a few seconds. His “mum” was an Esky, her “pouch” was a large sock and her “warmth” was a hot water bottle.



Moving out of home is hard, even for koalas

Over the next three weeks he gained weight steadily, with me increasing his milk intake by 0.1 of a millilitre per feed each week.

We had our first major setback on July 25 when, to my horror, I nearly overheated Bailey. This was one of many setbacks, such as teething and “papping”. However, he just kept surviving. He even survived the many feeds he missed because the alarm clock failed to wake me as I had turned into a zombie from weeks of two-hourly, round-the-clock feeds. In the end I used two alarm clocks.

Over the months he grew more to look like the baby koalas we are familiar with and by September he weighed 190g and began eating leaf. By January 1998, he had a “tree” in his own room and weighed 660g.

Bailey failed his first attempt at pre-release at the Moggill Koala Hospital “kindy”. He also went on to fail his first two attempts at release to the wild, but it was a case of third time lucky and he hasn’t been seen or heard of since.

We think this is a successful release. As with all hand-raised orphans released back to the wild, we have to assume that no news is good news.

Good luck Bailey, you fought really hard for your life – may it be a long one.

Deborah set on saving frogs



Deborah Pergolotti with a patient

by Deborah Pergolotti

Some people consider frogs hardly more advanced than insects, so the idea of rescuing one and taking it to a carer or vet would never cross their minds. However, this is changing in far north Queensland.

Prior to relocating to Cairns in 1996, I was involved in several wildlife groups in Sydney, including the Frog & Tadpole Study Group and the Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony Committee. However, being spread so thin was not very productive so I decided to focus on frogs. After moving to the tropics, I became involved in volunteer stream-dwelling frog monitoring for two years and concurrently sat on the North Queensland Threatened Frog Recovery Team. Unfortunately, these failed to satisfy my thirst for outstanding conservation results.

In August 1998, I started receiving injured frogs from neighbours who noticed my enthusiasm for nature. Word got around and more and more injured frogs started arriving on my doorstep. It was normal to have 10 or 15 injured frogs in care at one time.

In April 1999, two frogs were turned in with lumps on their faces. The frogs had cancer. This not only became a turning point in

frog rescue, but also confirmed the notion that there were serious problems with local frog populations that needed to be investigated.

By June 2000, there were routinely over 50 frogs in care and a collective had to be created to provide care. Thus, the Cairns Frog Hospital (CFH) was born and an association was created to attract financial support and community interest. The group is called the Frog Decline Reversal Project (or FDR Project for short) and the CFH is one of the group’s conservation activities.

Nowadays, there are constantly more than 100 frogs in care (still crammed into my own accommodation) and the range of undocumented conditions has grown.

I am determined to find out what is causing these new disease problems in far north Queensland frogs. I also wants to ensure research is underway before the frog populations reach critical levels.



Common green tree frog



Rebecca Walker from Cairns nurtures a joey that is recuperating from a traffic accident



Brisbane's Rose Darroch is raising Elliot, an orphaned eastern grey who she describes as very gentle and loves sucking on fingers



Rick from Rockhampton and Curly take a kip



Chatty and Gidget socialise at Tina Janssen's place in Mackay

Thank you to those carers that sent in pictures of their charges. Due to space constraints, we were only able to print a few.



Neil McLauchlan from Malanda holds an orphaned brushtail possum who is nibbling on sweet potato.



This brushtail possum looks like its settled in for good at Pat Hendricksen place in Mackay



Colleen Bride from Granite Gorge is pictured with an adult quoll



Carolyn Bondeson from Chillagoe holds a teenage curlew that is almost ready for release



Sigi Edwards, Secretary of FNQ Wildlife Rescue and bird carer, holds a buff-breasted paradise kingfisher



Gloria Litchfield from Alexandra Hills is caring for a swamp wallaby called Poppy

Hot weather brings on botulism in birds

Rosie's Wrap



Whenever there is a very hot and dry summer, botulism becomes an issue in wild birds.

Although the disease mainly affects water birds, I have seen a clinical case of botulism in a captive cassowary whose water supply was contaminated with the toxin. In this case a pond above the cassowary enclosure had been fouled with excess food waste from ducks and geese.

With the build up of organic material in a pond with poor aeration and high temperature, conditions were ideal for *Clostridium botulinum* to grow and a number a buff-banded rails and pygmy geese were affected with flaccid paralysis.

When the pond was cleaned out, the contaminated silt was mounded beside the pond, and the water supply to the cassowary pen trickled through the contaminated silt after rain. The next day the cassowary became wobbly on his feet. Botulism was suspected because of the previous cases and the problem with the water supply was addressed. The cassowary made an uneventful recovery.

Some species of birds are more susceptible than others, and it's not always the small ones that are more vulnerable. I have seen most cases in black ducks, pelicans and swans. Even very severely affected black ducks may recover with supportive care, while

pelicans often die even after intensive supportive care.

The cause

Clostridium botulinum type C, the major cause of avian botulism, is a spore-forming, oxygen-hating bacteria that is common in soil and aquatic environments. The organism produces a toxin that causes flaccid

waterfowl. Pelicans appear to be more susceptible than their size would suggest.

Diagnosis

Clinical signs include flaccid paralysis of legs, wings, neck and eyelids, in order of the onset of effects. At post mortem there is typically an absence of gross or histological abnormalities.

Treatment

For animals with no neck control, no oral fluids or food should be given until their normal posture returns. Regurgitation is common, so stomach tubing with supplements can lead to aspiration. Perenteral fluids and glucose are required to prevent dehydration and starvation. These may be administered intravenously



Swans are susceptible to botulism

paralysis and death in vertebrates.

Optimal toxin production by Type C strains occurs between 35-37deg. The build up of anaerobic sludge rich in decaying organic matter in waterways provides ideal alkaline pH and nutrients for spore germination.

Flooding of dried out riverbeds often sets off an outbreak. Significant amounts of toxin or organism may be flushed into an area following heavy rain. Strains of the bacteria vary in how toxic they are. Carrion-eating flies and maggots play a significant role in transporting toxin to

Definitive diagnosis can be made by mouse inoculation and antiserum protection.

Several birds should be tested in an outbreak as the number of mouse lethal doses in affected bird serum varies greatly. There is an antigen ELISA available for Type C and Type D botulinum toxins, which can be used with serum or body fluids. A negative Ag test does not exclude a diagnosis of botulism. A culture of the organism from the alimentary tract is possible but is not diagnostic on its own. Differential diagnoses include avian cholera (Pasteurellosis), chemical intoxication and castor bean poisoning.

or intraosseously; however, intraosseous administration is the most convenient method for longer-term therapy. Fluid therapy can also be used to induce a diuresis to assist in toxin excretion.

Is there a human health risk?

Humans run little, if any, risk of catching botulism from handling infected birds. Humans are resistant to Type C and D botulinum toxins, although a natural outbreak of Type C has occurred in monkeys. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to give a categorical assurance that there is no risk to humans. The toxin is heat labile and destroyed by cooking.

Tour takes in wildlife spotting

by Penelope Hacker

One of the greatest thrills a wildlife enthusiast can have is to see a creature in its own habitat, particularly if that habitat is in a beautiful, remote location.

I recently gained the confidence to tag along on my friend's tours to Cape York, the Simpson Desert and Lake Eyre. This year I went on tour to the Cape, but decided to visit the Musgrave area and Iron Range first to search out some special wildlife.

The Cape trip

At Musgrave I wanted to see the golden-shouldered parrot, a termite mound-nester. I had a long list of birds to see at Iron Range, as many are found only in that special lowland tropical rainforest.

At first I thought we were going to be disappointed at Musgrave. However, the owner of Artemis Station (where the birds occur) kindly volunteered to find them. It took her five minutes (we had been walking in the area for a couple of hours!) to find a male and a number of juveniles. What a thrill to see a species that only numbers about 150 breeding pairs.



A male and three juvenile golden-shouldered parrots were spotted at Musgrave

The drive into Iron Range was not as difficult as I had feared. We set up camp in the rainforest rather than at windswept Chili Beach and were rewarded for our efforts by seeing the spectacular eclectus parrot the first day.

More treats followed – huge, black palm cockatoos, tiny red-cheeked parrots, a beautiful frilled monarch butterfly, a yellow-billed kingfisher and a white-faced robin. At night we saw a spotted cuscus.

After four days we joined Peter at Archer River. The driving became difficult as we headed up the Overland Telegraph Track. On the way up the Track we passed through beautiful heathland with flowering grevilleas and bizarre pitcher plants, and saw more palm cockatoos. The creeks along the track had clear, drinkable water and lovely waterfalls (ideal for swimming away from crocs).

We crossed the so-called wet desert south of the Jardine River before crossing the river by ferry and camping by the beach. We had white-lipped tree frogs in the campsite and loads of beautiful birds and butterflies, including yellow-bellied sunbirds and marbled frogmouths.

We criss-crossed the Cape on the way back to Cooktown, stopping at spectacular headlands and beaches. We also visited Weipa where we saw numerous birds, including spotted whistling ducks. Then we crossed Lakefield National Park – Queensland's second largest national park –

which was full of red and white lily-filled lagoons, huge termite mounds and waterbirds such as black-necked stork, magpie geese and broilgas. We also saw a huge male saltwater crocodile sunbathing on the bank (fortunately on the opposite side of a waterhole).

Desert delight

My favourite trip was the desert country. The Simpson, with its red sand dunes, is always spectacular; however, this year it was even more amazing with carpets of yellow and white flowers. There was a subsequent explosion of wildlife, especially birds. Masked woodswallows were everywhere, as were crimson chats. The pied honeyeaters would sit on top of a bush, fly up and float down, singing sad little songs.



Driving through the Simpson Desert

We saw geckoes at night and the stars were incredible. On the western outskirts we saw dingoes, nesting budgies and zebra finches.



Penelope Hacker, watched by friends, gets herself out of a tight spot

Down the Oodnadatta Track there were beautiful blue-winged fairy-wrens. We visited Dalhousie and the amazing mound springs (naturally occurring outlets from the Great Artesian Basin).

At our camp near Lake Eyre South, there were masses of birds, especially waterbirds like the hoary-headed grebe and red-backed kingfisher. Water is a great magnet in the arid country.

Then it was up the Strzelecki Track where we saw camels and emus. Between the Strzelecki and Tibooburra there were birds and wildflowers everywhere. From there on up through south-west Queensland we started seeing macropods (mainly reds) just starting to recover from the devastation of the drought.

I have done both of these trips twice, and would certainly like to do them both again as they are different each time. Though I have concentrated on the wildlife, there is much else to see. If you are interested, please e-mail me at pahacker@iprimus.com.au

Jubilant carers farewell jabiru

by Andrew Bryant

I got a call about a jabiru with a broken wing wandering near the Redlynch turnoff north west of Cairns on the Captain Cook Highway last year. Armed with a net, a blanket, gloves and a pinch of bravery, my sister Kate and I set forth.

We located and captured the lad with little trouble, bundled him up and took him to our veterinarian Annabelle Olsson. We left the surgery uttering the fateful comment “we’ll look after him if you like”.

Sure enough, we got the call to come and pick him up. One hundred meters of fencing wire, 50m of hessian, a few mesh panels, a few hundred cable ties and a few hours later, we had built a sound enclosure in our backyard. It had to be covered, as jabirus can jump tall fences. It was time to receive the lad, who we named Julius Jackson.

Annabelle had done a fantastic job at strapping his broken wing and had given use clear instructions on how and what to feed him. Little did we realise what we had let ourselves in for — not for the weak hearted or the short-of-cash, I can tell you!

We finally arrived home and plonked him in his new pen. Before too long he got up and, to our delight,

quickly scooped the three pilchards we left on a tray for him. These fish were fine for the first day or so, but then began to fall apart when he touched them. “To the bait shop”, we cried!

Luckily both of the local bait shops could supply us with quite small mullet, which held together well. Smaller mullet (7-10cm) was the best. These were great for about a week. We put about three fish in his tray at a time, and if he ate them, we put in another three. We repeated this until he was full. He normally ate nine fish for breakfast, nine for lunch and nine for dinner. This would sometimes vary — one morning he gulped down about 29!

We also put a 600mm crate of water beside his food tray. Each week we got waterweed from the local creek, which he loved. We changed his water every other day.

He decided that he had had enough of the mullet and eventually we struck on mud herring. We also decided to try him with a mouse or two. Well, was he impressed!

We decided to give him one mouse after each feed of fish. Smaller mice were the best and rats were no good at all. Many thanks to Sigi and Marcus, Alex and Guy

and Kim from The Gourmet Rodent Factory who all contributed to the jabiru’s taste for live food.

By about week three, Julius started doing amazing lunging open wing displays and a fair bit of striding in the daytime. He was obviously getting ready to go.

His bandage came off in week four. Kate and I held our breath as we watched



Julius is released in the Mareeba wetlands

him tentatively preen his newly-uncovered wing. As each day passed, he would cautiously preen and test his wings, each day getting a little braver with them. Before too long, he was doing little full wing stretches and short flaps.

By week five, he was doing full weight bearing runs and mini flights in the pen. It was now time to release him.

On 18 July 2003 we took him to the Mareeba

wetlands. He sat there for half an hour. As the day was wearing on, I gave him a little nudge and up he jumped. That was a very special moment, as he now knew he was free. He strode to the waters edge and started to “suss out” his new space. He dove for fish, spread his wings gracefully and danced across some of the deeper water. His wing was fine.

We sat and watched him poke around the waters edge for another three hours. We saw him have a bath and hold his wings out to dry in the sunlight. He wandered far up to the other end of the main pond and looked very happy indeed.

Words seem to fall short as I try to sum up our time together. It was an honour to play our part in this little tale. Good fun too.

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