

# Wildlife News



Issue 139 Mar - Apr 2016

## Wiggy Possum

By Sharon Miller

I was on a hotline shift when I received a call from a family in Goonellabah – ‘A possum has fallen through our ceiling!’ - Strange, they don’t usually fall through people’s ceilings. Turned out it was a juvenile that had probably been shaken from his mother’s back in the hurly-burly of a mountain brushtail possum’s social life, then it likely wandered about looking for mum until he happened upon a hole in what was his floor. Down he went, but he was fortunate that he sustained no injuries, and the residents found him quickly and contained him before ringing us.

I called Rowan, who willingly upped and went to the rescue of our poss. Having secured the animal and after weighing him (370g), Rowan rang for advice on where to take him for care.

As often happens when you’re on the hotline, no-one was answering the phone that night despite my best efforts. I told Rowan that I would gladly take him but was stuck on the phone, and had no possum milk. Rowan to the rescue again!

He went to Nat’s to pick up some supplies for me, and then brought the little one right to my door. I decided then to name him Wiggy (for obvious reasons) and he settled right in.

Wiggy has grown fast and fatly. He has had a couple of holidays with Jenny Staples when I was away for family or work commitments, and was a well behaved guest I’m told. But I think all the animals are good for Jenny.

When he arrived at our house his coat was like suede, but he’s now your regular bushy possum-bandit. He has recently moved into his final large cage before release in 2-3 months time.

The local possums come to visit him and we hear some wild racing around his cage some nights, so he’s learning ‘the way of the possum’ by example. I love to see his wide brown eyes poking out of his pouch, checking to see if I have his favourite tucker for him, and I’ll miss him when he goes.

There’s a large emotional input when you care for these small, furry animals and you desperately want them to succeed. However, being realistic, the percentage of bobucks that go on to thrive and breed after rescue are quite low. Even though we know that, we still do what we can – one more is one more and you have to try.

Good luck Wiggy!



*Sharon*

## Thermometers & Baskets For Sale

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We now have a limited supply of these great digital LCD thermometers. The probe is stainless steel and waterproof and the display is powered by 2 x LR44 button cells which are included.

These are a great buy at just \$4.00 available from Nat's (food supplier) in Lismore. They won't be on the verandah so call to arrange collection on: 0431654157.

\$4

Great for aquaria, aviaries, reptile enclosures, any wildlife application or just if you want to know the temperature!



Rescue baskets. Smooth plastic, well-ventilated, easy-to-clean and colourful. An absolute bargain! Contact Sandy: 6628 2680

\$15

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Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of NRWC Inc.

# Training Report

Article and pictures by: Rowan Wigmore.

Non-venomous Snake training was done with Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers (TVWC) on the 30th of January at Crabbes Creek Hall.

A few NRWC members attended; Amica, Alison, Lou, Megan, Soli, Fox and Kelley but sadly several that had nominated were unable to attend on the day.

We had a total of 16 snakes and everyone was able to handle green tree-snakes, brown tree-snakes and some friendly and not-too-friendly pythons. The weather was quite hot and a shower at midday made for a very sticky afternoon which tested the endurance of the humans as well as the reptiles.

As usual TVWC put on a great day. Sue, the presenter, took us through identification and handling procedures in the classroom demonstrating her wealth of knowledge and experience. There are some differences between TVWC and NRWC practices which are quite minor but I assured the group that as a newly-minted reptile coordinator I would be rewriting the NRWC protocol to be more up-to-date and somewhat in line with TVWC procedures.

Sue, Jo and their helpers put on a great vegan morning tea and light lunch which is always well received as were the icy-poles in the afternoon!

I explained to our members that although it would be good to have an experienced handler with you when you go on your first call, the logistics and urgency of most snake calls means that it is impractical to do so. There are many very simple relocations that are no more difficult than the training scenarios so you need not fear doing your first call. *(If you have done training before and are still waiting to be called please contact the Hotline by email or phone and state that you are willing to go out on simple calls unaccompanied.)*

The practical handling in the afternoon went well. Two participants were petrified at first but were later able to handle them with ease. Well done to Sue and Jo for their support and persistence. One python, probably the most feisty one that anyone would encounter, was a bit of a handful but all were able to gain the confidence to handle it easily.

Many thanks to TVWC. If you would like to do snake handling a course will be run later in the year when the weather warms again. This year we have taken more snake calls than ever because another rescue group has fewer rescuers. We always need people to do snake rescues so consider giving it a go.

Rowan



# A Mother Blue-tongue

Story and pictures by: Rowan Wigmore

A mother Blue-tongue lizard came into care heavily pregnant and we knew that the babies would be due any day. Ideally it would have been more natural for her to have given birth in her local area but the shed she was living under was being demolished and the area redeveloped.

On Christmas day at about midday she commenced labour when four little lizards were thrust into the world. She continued with giving birth 2 to 4 at a time and taking rests in between. I fed her during the birthing as she had refused food for nearly a week before. The reason was quite obvious – she was bursting with babies and they were putting pressure on her stomach and lungs with her breathing becoming shallow and laboured a day or so prior to giving birth. As soon as some pressure was taken from the stomach she was a very hungry lizard. I am not sure if that is why some babies get eaten by the mother at birth but all survived. It was a remarkable privilege to be present at the birth and see these autonomous reptiles greet the world for the first time.

At 5pm the last two popped out and that brought the total tally to 18. Mum was exhausted and took the next day off sleeping. At birth the little ones each escaped from the remnants of yolk sac which they consumed as a first meal tearing the umbilical cord from themselves and eating it too.

At an average of 14 gms at birth these little guys packed on the weight and 10 days later weighed an average of 31 gms. During that time they have eaten 1 tin of recovery food (like Hills AD), 2 punnets of blueberries, a banana, 4 small tins of cat-food, 10ml of vitamin supplement, 30 ml of liquid calcium supplement, 10gms powdered calcium supplement and several green salad leaves.

Due to a prolonged period of wet and windy weather I decided to keep them until a few sunny days were forecast. This was a great opportunity to increase their weight. When the wet weather stopped I released them together, but due to the redevelopment of their former home, a plethora of roaming cats and proximity to major roads we had to find them a new home close to where they were rescued. Very few baby lizards make it to adulthood and much has to do with the suitability of their territory. Mum had a distinctive smell when pregnant, and it may be this on which predator species pick up and devour the newborn. This smell faded in the days following birth and I am optimistic that delaying their release worked in their favour.



*Pictures from top: Mum while pregnant, Two babies in their enclosure, All 18 waiting for their enclosure to be cleaned. (They did a lot of poo!)*

When I looked at the 18 small faces as they were being released I knew that nearly all would never make it to adulthood - but that was nature and hopefully our intervention was best for mum and her menagerie that have had a bit of a leg-up in life.

*Rowan*

# Raptor Report

Article and pictures by: Wendy Lawrence

I'd like to start by saying how really pleased I am that Joseph Azad is now a licensed raptor carer for our group. I look forward to being of as much help to him as possible. I'm sure he'll find his experiences with these amazing birds fascinating, rewarding and at times, sadly, also distressing.

For a few years now I have been spending over three months in England every year caring full-time for my very elderly mother; and this, together with continuing back problems, means I'm not able to care for the raptors as consistently as I have done in the past. So having Joe around will be an enormous help for the raptors - and a great relief for me!

I'd been hoping no young ospreys from the Ballina nests would get into trouble this breeding season and, fortunately, that was the case. However, Seabird Rescue got a call about a young one clinging on to branches in a back yard. There appeared no injuries other than concussion that lasted a couple of days. I was lucky to buy fresh, fairly small mullet from the Ballina Co-Op that were a perfect size for the young osprey. It took to these with relish and also coped very well when moved to a larger aviary. Often young ospreys take a while to work out what branches and block perches are there for and remain on the ground for a day or two. This one had no such problems. A few days later I returned to Ocean Shores to where I had been told there was a nest. I couldn't see any sign of adult birds nearby - probably because there was loud building work going on at the time. I found a lovely quiet spot further away along the creek and released the osprey there. It was a wonderful and powerful take off; the osprey gained height and turned towards the sea, then shortly after flew inland. To my delight no birds attacked or flew after it. I hoped contact was soon made with its parents.

I've had three barn owls so far. The first two were picked up by Kate Geary on Eureka Road and taken to Rebecca at Keen St vets. Sadly one had to be euthanased but the other was soon ready for me to collect. Within a couple of days the owl was much livelier. There was no sign of a suspected eye injury as it ate well and flew the length of the aviary with no problems. About a week later I met Kate at the Tintenbar store to hand back the owl for release. She released it later that night very close to the spot where it was found.

In October I got a call from Jenny to let me know there was a barn owl for me to collect from Keen Street vets. This young owl had got caught on a barbed wire fence, ripping its left wing. Rebecca did an x-ray and luckily no broken bones or damage to muscles and tendons. The



Injured barn owl wing.



Osprey release.



Injured barn owl wing now healed.

area was dressed, stitched and the young owl put on antibiotics and Metacam twice a day for a week. Nearing the end of the week the wound wasn't looking as good as I had hoped and by now some of the stitches had been pulled out. So it was given a different dose of antibiotics for another week.

A week later it was back to Ray for a check up and for more antibiotics and Oticlean to spray, twice daily, over the wound. The owl's joint was by now stiff and some inflammation remained. The stiffness was the most worrying aspect as, without the joint being able to open fully, the owl wouldn't be able to fly properly, let alone silently. After talking to Rebecca and Ray, I started giving gentle physio every evening before feeding time. The owl was incredibly accepting of the treatment, making no attempt to get away, just turning its head and nibbling at my fingers when it had had enough stretching and massage. Three months later the wing was virtually as straight as the other one. It was flying, perching, balancing very well and new feathers had virtually covered the large wound. After a few more weeks of physio and exercise, I left the door open one still, moonlit evening. I made sure the owl had eaten the mice put in the aviary earlier. The owl didn't seem in a hurry to fly out so I left, letting it take its own time. I returned an hour later and it was gone.

I collected a nestling sparrowhawk from a farm on the

outskirts of Alstonville one Sunday afternoon in December. It must have been blown out of the nest, with its sibling, and landed in a paddock still gripping some of the nest materials. There had been a bad storm the previous Friday evening. I got a call on Sunday from the owner of the farm to say her sons had found a nestling raptor in the grass whilst riding their bikes. Another nestling was dead next to it. I was amazed that even one of them was still alive after the storm and almost two days in the sun.

I could barely see its eyes as there were masses of bush ticks and four larger paralysis ones all around, virtually closing the eyelids and more were amongst the tiny feathers above the cere. I pulled off everyone I could see and had a look around the body but didn't notice any more. So the next morning I was horrified to see an even larger number of ticks. So off they came and the same thing happened in the afternoon. Thank goodness no more were to be seen the following morning or again. The sparrowhawk is now doing really well after its dreadful start.



Sparrowhawk

Thank you to everyone mentioned in my report and I must also thank Chrisy Clay, Sue Higgins and Cheryl Cochran who have helped me out on a number of occasions over many, many years. Thank you.

*Wendy*

# Crèche Time

Article and picture by: Wendy Attrill

It's that time of year again when our little flying fox orphans are off to crèche to prepare them for release. This year is very different from last year as not many orphans came into care to our group or other neighbouring wildlife groups. We have just 13 littlies in the aviary so far from Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers and Clarence Valley WIRES and ourselves.

Crèche is held in the group's large flight aviary, where the gang will stay for about 4 weeks and then will be released just before the full moon. This gives them enough time to get used to their surroundings and build up flight strength ready for release.

Once the first ones are released we will continue to support feed them for as long as required and there will be a second intake for the release aviary, where again the juveniles will stay for another 4 weeks.

Only people vaccinated for Australian Bat Lyssavirus can go into the aviary, but don't let that stop you from helping out! We have a small group of wonderful, dedicated bat feeders, and some are feeding a few times a week. But we are always looking for more helpers to share the load.



Jobs that you can help with include; chopping fruit, washing dishes, cleaning at the bat aviary. Other ways you could help would be to collect apples from Lismore and take them to our cool room at Wollongbar - this is a two person with a van or car and trailer job.

And another way for you to help, is to buy or grow watermelon! This is the only time bats will get to eat watermelon in their life, and they love it! So if you have a spare watermelon lying around, please give it to the bats. If you would like to help out please contact me by email: [bellbird74@gmail.com](mailto:bellbird74@gmail.com)

Wendy

# A Generous Local Business

Article by Rowan Wigmore, Picture: Richard Eaves

After looking at all of the available reptile enclosures and not being happy with what was available new nor with modifying old furniture, I decided to make my own. Firstly the doors were the major issue. They need to be lockable and provide easy access. A local Lismore glass company provided a reasonable quote and the glass was ordered.

Next came the cabinet. It must be waterproof to withstand the rigors of cleaning and other spillages. Marine grade ply was chosen but as I lack the equipment to cut it accurately I decided to shop around locally and see if it could be done for me.

**Lismore Joinery Works** was the first company I called and when I explained the project to Sid Page, the owner, Sid generously offered to supply and cut the material totally free of charge in recognition of the good work that NRWC does! So if you need joinery, cabinets, office partitions or a kitchen renovation, why not use a local company that recognises our care for wildlife and you'll



be supporting a local business providing much needed employment.

Rowan

# A New Aviary

Article and pictures by: Valerie Shields

Phew! What a relief when the last screw went into the aviary and was declared finished. Within hours it had its first two occupants Chuckles and Gonzo, two tawny frogmouths who had been in Cheryl's care awaiting their release. It was raining when they were first introduced to the aviary and Gonzo relished in it - spreading his wings and twisting and turning to catch every drop. He looked amazing. Chuckles had his wide eyed surprised face on - more hilarious than amazing.

Within a week 'Newbie' was found not far from here after a vehicle collision. He had suspected fractured rib, and after anti-inflammatory and a few days on his own in a smaller enclosure, it was decided he would do better with company, so was introduced to Gonzo and Chuckles. Chuckles seemed to understand that 'Newbie' needed a friend and left Gonzo's side to sit with the new kid!

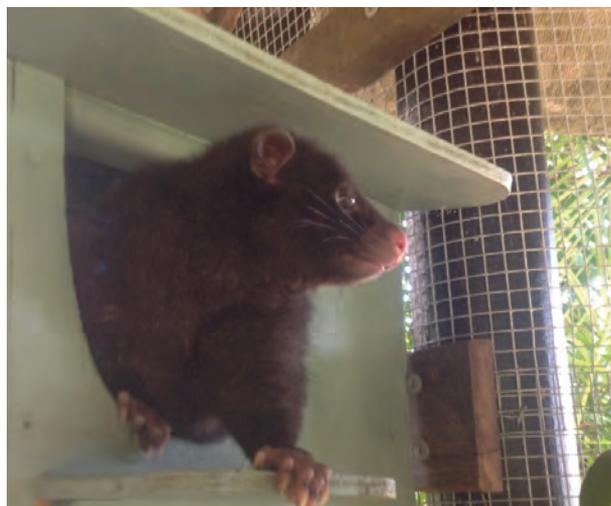
I loved to watch them in the late afternoon when they



would start to get more active. After spending a week in the enclosure Newbie was getting impatient and wanted his freedom back. He was flying well but unlike tawnys that come into care as juveniles and have not experienced the freedom that Newbie had, he was getting impatient. He wanted out! I contacted Trish (the kind lady who stopped to move what she thought was a dead tawny off the road) to take us to the area she found him for his release. Without hesitation he flew straight up into a huge tree and landed safely. A good release is so rewarding! Only a few more weeks and the door will be opened for my friends Gonzo and Chuckles to venture out and enjoy the biggest aviary ever - freedom!

A huge thank-you to Paul Cheeseman for your many hours help on the aviary and to the committee for funding the wire, also to Cheryl for her amazing knowledge and patience while I'm learning about my temporary furry and feathered friends.

While in the early stages of building the flight aviary that Gonzo and Chuckles are now occupying I got a call from Cheryl asking if there was a chance of enclosing the old 'Outhouse' for use as release aviary for a juvenile Mountain Brushtail that Nat had raised and was now in need of soft release. It was the push I needed to get that project finished. Before long little "Squee" moved in. So gorgeous! Nat did a great job to get her to this stage. She settled in well and felt safe in her new home. She was in the first week of soft release when I woke to her unusual panicked banging around on the house roof. I went to see what was wrong and at the bottom of the verandah post was a very handsome but huge python. After calling Poss to another verandah post she climbed down onto my shoulder for a safe walk to the aviary.



Now for the python, I really wasn't overly thrilled about tackling this big guy at 2am but he wasn't welcome with poss being so vulnerable. I took him to the local creek, thinking it was far enough away but still within its home range. Two days later it was back. Luckily it returned during the day when Squee was locked in. It was wary of me now and by the time I had taken its photo and gone to get the snake bag it was heading into thick undergrowth. A few days later he returned and this time he was captured and taken to another suitable creek, still within its home range.

Squee is doing well now and enjoying her life outside of her aviary.

Valerie

# Missing Things

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*Article and pictures by: Rowan Wigmore*

I received a call from Cheryl who was staffing the Hotline early one morning. She was distraught as her last caller was an odious oldie on the phone who was possibly the rudest person with whom she had ever had dealings! Would I speak with her as she had threatened to have a neighbour kill a python? I have had dealings with members of the public like this before and while they are very rare, in my experience they share a common thread; the person is generally old, female, religious and has a deep hatred of snakes. I cannot fathom the religious bit. Why would someone who believes in god's creation want to harm one of god's creatures? Snakes are not 'evil'. The only species I have met with a propensity for evil is us humans. Without going into great detail I said that I was on my way and would be there within 40 minutes and that she was to leave the snake alone!

She was indeed a 'charmer' – her manner stretching my diplomacy to the limit. I found the snake coiled in a hanging basket off a small shrub. It climbed the shrub well when I disturbed it and I was easily able to coax it out and into my bag. The snake seemed healthy enough, had a calm disposition, had no ticks and was only slightly under weight. Had there been a suitable area of bushland nearby I would have released it there and then but I decided to take it home and research a suitable release site on Google maps.

That afternoon I bathed the snake and examined it more closely. To my horror I found a deep depression in its right side which was apparent only in some positions and when the body was in water. The depression was sensitive and when touched the snake let out a strong hiss. Hissing can be a defence sound and it can indicate pain. The latter was the case here. Snakey seemed to like the water and soaked for over an hour.

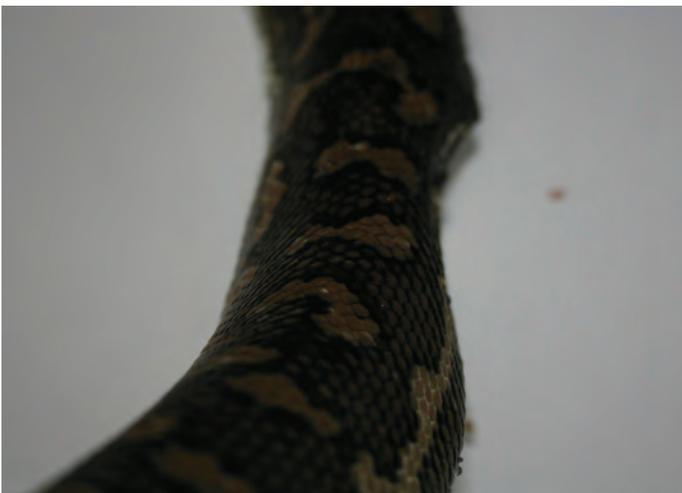
I scheduled a trip immediately to Currumbin Wildlife Hospital (CWH) and took the snake up myself. It stayed for over a week on anti-inflammatories, antibiotics and pain killers. It had tissue damage and several broken ribs. It came back courtesy of Amica and was back in my care receiving baths and injections daily. It was a little clumsy in the bath and liked moving around the perimeter and going completely underwater. I contacted CWH regarding feeding and on-going care and was told to bring it back in 6 weeks and to feed small morsels. - If the ribs were still causing pain the food would likely be regurgitated.

I started feeding with warmed defrosted "hopping rats" (\$30 for 6) but the snake couldn't find the rat even when it was banging on its face! I dropped the rat from my tongs several times but the snake couldn't find it. It found a drip of "rat water" which it was interested in and one on its body caused it to bite itself but it couldn't find the rat. Eventually it came across it and ate it but without coiling. I suspected that the snake could not see.

Evan at Lennox Head agreed to see me next day and concluded that the snake had severely impaired vision possibly caused by head trauma and it had something akin to an epileptic fit while being examined. Unfortunately euthanasia was the only option.

I was so glad that I was unable to release the snake when I found it and it was a salutary lesson for me to be extra vigilant when assessing an animal for release. The obvious injury was not the only one it had and its behaviours masked its underlying condition. How this happened to such a gentle creature I will never know, but it is so sad that it did.

*Rowan*



# Committee Report



By: Jenny Staples.

Our Committee meeting for January was held the Lismore Workers Club. Below is a summary of the hot topics discussed.

The 2016 training program was under consideration again as Paul Cheeseman our wonderful training officer has decided to become a 'grey nomad' and will be taking off with his wife Jenny to explore other parts of the country in his van. We wish Paul well in his travels and hope he can return to the group sometime in the future.

This leaves us with a big gap in the training team and a vacant spot on the committee. We now need someone who would be willing to help with organising the training days. There are a number of tasks involved before and on the day that can be done such as recording the participants, photocopying notes, media notification as well as organising food for morning tea. Any help will make the task easier so if you can help please contact us. You don't even need to be there on the training days to assist.

The committee is considering reviewing our health and safety issues. We hope to implement a new policy to cover possible situations that may arise during fund raising, bat feeding, cage moving, training days and other associated activities. Hopefully this should be organised in a few months and will be sent out to members.

At the previous meeting we were considering the group's participation in community events. We are now looking into the possibility of the group having a stall at The Channon Market as a PR option.

Sandy has purchased new rescue baskets for the carers. These are available for \$15 and are excellent for transporting animals and being plastic are easily cleaned. All carers should have a least one. Contact Sandy before they are all snapped up. We will also have some excellent F10 disinfectant for sale. This is very good for cleaning cages and baskets especially after birds with Beak and Feather disease.

We are always looking for stories from carers to add to our website. (*...and the Newsletter! – Ed*) If you would like to contribute just email us or phone Sandy. Her number is on the back sheet with the other committee members

I hope everyone is having a great start to the year and are looking forward to a quieter autumn season after a busy summer.

*Jenny*

## Bunnings Fundraiser

Report and pictures by: Rowan Wigmore

We were lucky enough to be invited to do a "sausage sizzle" at Lismore Bunnings on 3rd of January. This was organised by our fundraising guru Pam who was ably assisted all day by her friend Chris. Rolf, Sandra and I helped and we all did extra time due to the number of customers on the day. The patronage exceeded our expectations and we had to fetch more supplies at lunch!

The upshot of this very successful day is that our coffers have been boosted by \$1206.60 which was a phenomenal result.

Many thanks to Pam for her tireless efforts in the heat, Chris for putting in such a long day and Rolf and Sandra for working well into extra-time.

Pictured: L-R Chris, Pam and Rolf



# Casino Fly-out

Article by Kay Johnson, Picture by: Ted Baker



Over the past several weeks, the river banks in Casino have played host to as many as over 200,000 little red flying-foxes whose twilight fly-outs could only be described as awesome. Some of our members recently gathered together nearby the colony to observe, photo and experience this spectacular sight. The little red flying-foxes are the most widespread, and smallest species of megabats in Australia and the only species that regularly rests in clusters, with as many as 30 hanging together like a bunch of seed pods. They are nomadic, covering a huge range, from Shark Bay in WA, around the North and into Qld, NSW and northern Victoria. Some have been recorded in SA. Being nectar and pollen feeders, they cover the widest range of all the species, going much further inland than the larger flying-foxes. Unlike their cousins in the species (the larger black and grey-headed flying-foxes) who birth their bubs in October and November, the Little Reds will birth their young in April/May, which is a quieter time for our dedicated NRW bat carers and rescuers.

*Kay*

## Forthcoming Channon Market Stall

Article and picture by: Rowan Wigmore



In an effort to connect with a wider demographic and to recruit more members we are running an information and recruitment stall at The Channon Market on March 13th.

We need volunteers to staff the stall and to assist with setup and dismantling. Ideally we would like to see some of our newer (younger?) members take part. This might be a way of re-engaging with the group.

We are endeavouring to dovetail this recruitment into an introductory training course to be held in April at Southern Cross University on a date to be advised.

Please consider coming along even if you can only spend an hour. Email me on [rowanw@iinet.net.au](mailto:rowanw@iinet.net.au) to register or if you need further information.

*Rowan*



# Happenings

By: Jenny Staples

Isn't it great to know we are past the really busy bird season with fewer birds coming into care. There are still a few young ones getting into trouble with their flying escapades and unfortunately the stormy weather we have had recently has not helped. However, most of the nestlings had grown up and do not need to be rescued.

Thanks to all of you that have helped with rescues and pick-ups even when this has not been convenient. Snake handlers have also been on their toes with many snake rescues. Some were needed to be sent to Currumbin Wildlife and Rowan has done a great job co-ordinating all the reptiles that have come into care. Cheryl, of course, is always around to give advice and guidance to carers when needed. Many thanks go to both of them for their tireless efforts in caring for our animal friends.

There have been a large number of calls for parrots, lorikeets and rosellas with beak and feather disease. This is often the result of the public feeding the birds. If you can discourage people from this when you are on a rescue or taking a call on the hotline it might spread the word that this is not good for wildlife and results in over population and health problems.

Our wonderful hotliners do a great job in keeping the roster covered but this time of the year we have some of our regulars away. We really need some new members to volunteer some of their time to assist so that our hotline shifts are full and covering the blank spaces does not become a burden for a few. If you have been trained for the hotline and not currently involved please contact me and lend a hand. Even a few hours per week will help. If you are not trained, we can easily give you some time so that you can join the team. Training only takes a few hours and we can arrange the date and time to suit you. Even full time workers can do a quieter shift from 5pm till 9 or 10pm.

To save time and phone calls, could all members be mindful of letting us know if you change your availability or are going away for a few days or more so we can update the rescue list. You can always contact us on the hotline email [nrwchotline@gmail.com](mailto:nrwchotline@gmail.com) or phone 6628 1866 and we will get back to you.

Hopefully we will see some of you at our next training day. It is always good to put faces to the voices.

*Jenny*



## Wildlife Food for Carers

Byron:  
Caroline Sutherland: 6685 1580

Casino:  
Sue Higgins: 6662 6613

Lismore:  
Natalie Wunsch: 04 3165 4157  
Pam Mitchell (*Reptile food*): 6624 8870

*All purchases must be paid for at time of pick-up.  
Bringing correct change with you really helps.*

KEEP  
CALM  
ITS  
QUIZ  
TIME

Wildlife Quiz will return  
in the next edition.

**WILDLIFE STORY SUBMISSIONS**  
[nrwc@iinet.net.au](mailto:nrwc@iinet.net.au)

Send digital pictures full size please with the  
name of the photographer.

All stories welcome no matter how small.

# Mikey and Axel

Article: Sandy Norris, Pictures: Wendy Attrill

On the 5th November, 2015 a compassionate young woman from Germany named Tessa was jogging the Byron lighthouse track when she came across other people photographing a microbat that was on the path and unable to fly away. Tessa picked up the microbat and cradling it in her hands, took it all the way home and called Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers Inc for help. The microbat was collected by NRWC member Dana who took it to Vitality Vetcare Bangalow for assessment. The Vitality Vetcare Bangalow vet x-rayed and hydrated the microbat and after a thorough examination found that he had no health issues. This little microbat, named Mikey, weighed just 4 grams, was unable to fly and only a few weeks old. Without Tessa rescuing this little orphan he would not have survived.

Mikey was a Gould's long-eared bat and as he was so young, we immediately sought advice from Julie, the microbat specialist from Bat Conservation and Rescue Qld who gave us some great care-tips for looking after him. Five days after he came into care a friend arrived for Mikey, a Gould's wattled bat. This one we named Axel, who was severely dehydrated at the time of rescue and covered in spider webs.

Mikey grew and Axel regained his strength. Soon Axel was doing flight laps around our dining room each evening while Mikey did his first clumsy fluttering attempts at flying. We decided they had outgrown the camp cupboard we were keeping them in, so they graduated to our small 3 person tent that we hadn't used in years. Mikey got better at flying in the bigger tent. At this time we started looking for a bigger tent so that they could fly all night. As luck would have it, we mentioned this to a friend of ours, who told us that a friend of his was trying to sell/give away an old tent a few years ago and might still have it. Guess what - he did!

We collected the 30 year old canvas tent from the Coutts family in December and set it up for the boys. The tent is at least 4m x 4m and 2.4m high in the highest spot. We couldn't have bought a better tent for them if we tried. The boys loved flying around in it all night, especially Mikey who got stronger at flying every night. During the day, we would secure them in the camp cupboard and at dusk we would put a black light in the tent to attract wild insects into the tent. After dark, we would close the big tent up and let the boys out of the camp cupboard for a night for flying and catching insects in the tent. Axel was a fantastic teacher to Mikey as juvenile microbats need an adult to teach them how to catch insects. We set up a camera in the tent to watch the antics; watching them was a lot better than TV!



We knew Mikey was ready for release the night we went into the tent and he wasn't interested in the food mix we had but flew around the tent for 15 minutes non-stop catching insects as he went. A few days later, with good weather predicted for the following days, we released the boys. Axel was released back at the site he was rescued from at about 9:40pm - well after the kookaburras were asleep. Mikey was released back at the lighthouse track after 10pm the same night. The first step up from the pass car park is where Tessa rescued him and she was there for his release too, which was really lovely. She told us she will say hello to him every day as she jogs the track. What a lucky little fellow Mikey was that she came along that day.

The canvas tent continues to be used for two more microbats, this time two girls in care, Fifi an eastern freetail and Rose a Gould's wattled bat.

*Sandy*



# A Tale of Two Turtles

Article by: Cheryl Cochran.

Pictures by: Megan Moore, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and Richard Eaves

Two very lucky turtles were released recently that came from the far west of the area NRWC covers, one from Mallanganee, and the other from Bottle Creek towards Bonalbo. Both turtles were likely to have been hit by cars and had badly cracked shells.

First stop for them both was an assessment at Keen St vet in Lismore to see if rehabilitation was an option. Luckily both had a chance so then it was up the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital for them where they were in care for the next two months. CWH has specialised turtle facilities and turtle rehabilitation is a lengthy process. All the turtles in care there have their own ID number marked on their shells so there can be no mix ups.

Each of these turtles travelled over 400 kms. Thanks to the many carers involved and also to Sam at Keen St vet who helped out also.



Pictures: L. Malanganee turtle showing crack in carapace. C. Bottle Ck turtle. R. Releasing at Bottle Ck.

# Transporting Animals

By: Rowan Wigmore

Recently the Committee decided that a central point-of-call was needed to facilitate animal transfers to the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital (CWH) to best use the limited resources available and not to overwork our few dedicated transporters. They also noted that we had no transport protocol except for the standards and guidelines set out by the Office of Environment and Heritage to which we are bound as a condition of our licence. This is a government document and does not make for the easiest reading so we have produced our own which is compliant with the Code and less likely to trigger narcolepsy.

The protocol is reproduced on the following pages and contains some useful information for all transportation of animals that come into our care. A laminated windscreen 'caution' notice will be provided to all on the callout list.

As a carer, you can contact a Currumbin Transfers Coordinator (listed on the pin-up page) if you have an animal in need of specialist treatment.

As a member you too can help by considering to offer



your services as a transporter or if travelling to or from Queensland, contact a coordinator to see if you could assist by either taking an animal or retrieving one from CWH. The hospital is not far from the freeway and the 10 or so minutes spent might save someone else a trip.

If you require assistance with fuel costs, send a receipt with trip details to the NRWC PO Box. You can be reimbursed up to \$20.

Rowan

# Currumbin Transfer Protocol

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## Background.

Currumbin Wildlife Hospital is our nearest facility providing specialist care for native animals. Sick or injured wildlife receives specialist treatment that can only be given in a hospital environment.

Animals transported to the hospital must be done within the Standards and Guidelines in the *Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Protected Fauna* produced by the Office of Environment and Heritage which is the base document for this protocol. General information here also applies to local transfers.

## Location.

27 Millers Dr, Currumbin QLD 4223. Phone: **(07) 5534 0813**

Northbound on the Pacific Motorway take the Stewart Rd exit, (EXIT 95) turn right into Stewart Rd, then turn left onto the Gold Coast Highway. Millers Rd has limited parking but there are some 15min drop-off bays outside the hospital. The hospital is barely visible from the street as it is behind vegetation. Note that it is separate from Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.

## General.

Transport must minimise further stress and injury. This applies to all movement of animals. Fauna transport should be the sole purpose of the trip and undertaken and done in the shortest possible time. Stopovers are not permitted and animals must not be left unattended in vehicles. Your driving should be smooth to minimise g-forces which are foreign to the animal and may cause pain and stress. Currumbin should be advised that animals are being brought to them before departure. Not only is this a courtesy call but may be of assistance if stopped by police. – (See “Venomous Snakes” below.)

## Containers.

Container sizes must be appropriate for the species, size, strength and temperament of fauna and be designed, set-up and secured to prevent injuries. This may involve padding walls and covering floors with a non-slip, non-ingestible, tangle-free surface.

Containers must be designed to prevent fauna from escaping and must be positioned so breathing is not restricted and its pain or discomfort is minimised. Containers must minimise light, noise and vibrations and prevent contact with children and pets.

## Temperature.

Animals must be kept at a comfortable temperature and not be placed in direct sunlight. A range of 25 – 27°C is appropriate for most species and ages. Unfurred joeys require 31°C (can be supplied by heat pad) while 21°C is suitable for echidnas, platypuses and frogs.

## Bats and Snakes.

During transport, containers holding snakes and bats must as a minimum have a clearly visible warning label that says ‘DANGER – LIVE SNAKE’ or ‘DANGER – LIVE BAT’.

## Placement.

Animals must **never** be carried in the back of uncovered utility vehicles or car boots that are separate from the main cabin. Modern cars are designed to protect the passenger cabin and the boot area is part of a car’s ‘crumple zone’ in the event of a rear-end collision. Temperature in a boot is not regulated and carbon monoxide from the exhaust may enter due to the low pressure area behind the vehicle and worn boot seals.

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Boot areas are noisy and may contribute to stress. Additionally the driver may not hear distress calls from an animal. The rear area of a hatchback is suitable provided that the rear parcel-shelf is removed and the animal is placed as far forward as possible. Containers should ideally be placed on passenger seats and be restrained by the seat-belt.

## **In-car Entertainment.**

Noise from a radio or music is foreign to wildlife and can increase its stress levels. Please do not operate entertainment systems while carrying animals.

## **Air Bags.**

Vehicles may be fitted with many air bags as part of a Supplemental Restraint System. These deploy explosively in the event of a collision and take up a large volume. The front passenger air-bag is very large and can crush a cage that occupies its deployment area. Only place small containers on the front seat. Generally if they take up space that a human would occupy they will not be harmed by air-bag deployment. Refer to your vehicles operating manual.

## **Accidents.**

If your vehicle is involved in an accident, emergency workers need to know how to best look after any animals on board. A windscreen sign that states that sick or injured wildlife is being carried should be displayed. Workers can contact the Hotline for advice.

## **Venomous Snakes.**

Venomous snakes must be transported in a **locked** container.

Police have an interest in persons carrying venomous snakes as they are often captured and used to 'secure' drugs or cash from illegal operations until their inevitable death. If stopped by police it may take some time to convince them of your good intentions so remember to carry your membership card and ask them to contact Currumbin Hospital, the Hotline or a Currumbin Transfers Coordinator to validate your story.

## **Disembarkation.**

On arrival at CWH please remove animals from the vehicle using the passenger side only. This minimises the chance of passing traffic causing an injury to you, a door strike or the animal hearing fast-moving traffic nearby. Do not place animal containers on the roadway.

Currumbin has a protocol that all snakes are considered venomous until correctly identified by their reptile specialists. Snakes are to be taken in last and containers may not be left unattended.

## **Check-in.**

Details from the Admission Form\* are entered into CWH's system and a unique identifier is assigned. Please obtain the admission number for all animals and pass to relevant coordinator. In the event of two similar animals being admitted at the same time, mark the respective admission sheet with the type of container the animal arrived in to avoid confusion.

*\* The admission form is now available as a Document Template for MS Word and should be supplied by the carer with their animal. The template will be sent as an attachment with the emailed newsletter. - Ed*

*Rowan*

# F10 - Disinfectant

By Sandy Norris

NRWC has purchased some veterinary grade F10 disinfectant for disinfecting rescue baskets. The F10 is available for purchase already made up into spray packs from the Lismore food distributor Nat (along with a Material Safety Data Sheet). 500mL \$3 or 1 litre \$4.

The following general information is taken from the vet-n-pet-direct website which describes the product in more detail. F10SC is a total spectrum disinfectant that, unlike other strong disinfectants on the market, has no adverse side effects on people, animals, or on equipment and surfaces. It is ecologically friendly and biodegradable, and carries a wide range of registrations and approvals from around the world.

In Australia, F10SC is registered for use in animal production and housing facilities, approved for use in food export processing as a non-rinse disinfectant, and is also listed as a Hospital Grade Disinfectant.

The benefits of using F10SC include:

Kills all types of pathogen – F10SC is bactericidal, virucidal, fungicidal, and sporicidal.

Minimal chance of microbial resistance due to F10SC's unique benzalkonium chloride and polyhexamethylene biguanide combination of actives and mode of action.

\*Rapid kill times – less than 30 secs for gram positive bacteria, 60 secs for gram negative bacteria, Canine Parvovirus 20 mins.

Successfully tested against avian influenza (bird flu) viruses at a concentration of 1:500 in 10 mins. Non-corrosive, non-toxic, non-tainting, non-irritating, aldehyde-free.

Highly cost effective. Biodegradable & ecologically friendly. Tried, tested, independently verified and documented, and approved around the world.

*Sandy*

## FOR SALE

**Thermometers.** LCD with probe and 2 x LR44 batteries included. Essential for reptile and other wildlife care. Similar ones in pet shops sell at \$17! These are a bargain at just \$4.00 available from Nat's food supplies in Lismore. Ph 0431654157.

**Rescue Baskets.** Plastic ventilated baskets suitable for wildlife transport. Easy to clean, strong and in the new season's colours. Sandy: 6628 2680

**F10 Disinfectant.** Essential for preventing spread of diseases by contaminated enclosures or baskets. 500mL \$3 or 1 litre \$4. Available from Nat's food supplies in Lismore. Ph 0431654157.

## SERVICES

**Kitchens, Joinery,** Cabinets, Office partitions or custom shopfitting solution see Lismore Joinery Works in Habib Dve Lismore for all your specialist woodworking needs. No job is too large or small.

Phone: 6621 3432.

*Lismore Joinery Works supports Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers.*

## POSITIONS VACANT

**Training Officer.** A vacancy exists on the Committee for a dedicated and well-organised person to join our team. The training officer coordinates publicity for training days with members and the public, organises email advices, collates and manages attendances and coordinates support people for training days. No delivery or public speaking required. If this sounds like something that you would like to help with contact Jenny 6688 6292. Job sharing an option.

**Hotline Operators.** Urgently needed reliable people that can spare a couple of hours or more to staff the Hotline. Offer advice to the public and coordinate rescuers is all it takes. All shifts are available. Contact Jenny 6688 6292.

# Ed by rowan wignore

## Consequences of our actions.

We are all aware that for any action there is a consequence. It could almost be another Newton's third law (*For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction*) but very few of us seem to consider it in our daily lives. Younger brains either are less considerate or are dismissive about the consequences of their actions for whatever reasons. We see it every day in news reports of accidents involving speeding young drivers. Older people too that you would think know better, are again dismissive especially if it involves their child or pet.

Sadly as wildlife carers we see this on a too regular basis as I did recently with another carpet python. This poor snake was attacked by a dog in Byron Bay because the owner did not have it constrained on a leash. The snake suffered three gashes on its back, a puncture wound, exfoliation of the skin and rib fractures. NRWC member Jools M who has not completed a reptile course, was happy to investigate the snake's predicament and to her credit was able to contain the injured animal after seeking advice. I believe that she went back several times to the site as the snake had hidden itself under a building and she was waiting for it to reappear. – Such dedication! The snake was taken by her to Lennox Head vet Evan and I picked it up next day.

Evan had elected to leave the wounds open temporarily, as some germs do not live in air and had administered pain relief and antibiotics. I was to continue the antibiotic injections, care for the wounds by irrigation and application of a gel and return the snake for stitching the following week.

After stitching the snake will require long term care. The skin must slough (shed) successfully after the stitches are removed and as it will not be summer when that happens, the animal will be in care until October or November during which time its enclosure must be heated and cleaned regularly and it will need feeding about every 3 weeks with large rats at around \$8.00 each.

So one person's inability to properly control their dog for a few moments results in a huge amount of time rescuing, transporting and rehabilitating an animal, a vet's time and resources, medications, heating and food not to mention the pain and trauma that the snake endured.

If you hear of anyone angrily being told to control their pet, it's probably me – and you can understand why.

Rowan

