

# Wildlife News



Issue 137 Nov - Dec 2015

## The Power of One

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*Story by: Lou Miller and Rowan Wigmore*

*Pictures by: Valerie Shields and Cheryl Cochran*

As we mentioned in the previous newsletter, a few of us involved in Flying-fox rescues have had to rescue several from the barbed wire surrounding Byron High School - a really heartbreaking job. The flying-fox pictured overleaf is "Fedra" and she had suffered horrendous injuries from the wire at the school. This little bat was the inspiration for Lou Miller to approach the school Principal Peter King along with Norm Graham from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, to see if the school would consider either removing the wire or covering it with shade cloth as prevention is always better than cure. In fact we would have listened to any solution that would stop the horrific suffering to which these beautiful little creatures and other native animals were being subjected.

We were surprised and delighted when he agreed to remove the wire! The enormity of the job and the cost to the school was reduced by some willing hands from our group and the assistance of Nigel from National Parks and Wildlife Service.

So this is what we are doing here. Six of us gathered on a very warm Monday in September at the school (Lou, Valerie, Miles, Rowan, Phoebe



*Continued ...*

# The Power of One

Continued ...

and Nigel from NPWS. Together with great enthusiasm and energy we removed, cut and rolled for recycling, 3 strands of wire from the top of the fence. It was just a little under 1.5 kilometres of barbed wire. Hard work but very satisfying!

If you ever doubt that one person can make a difference Lou has certainly shown the power of one.



*Lou and Rowan*



## members

*NRWC would like to welcome these new members into the fold and hope that you enjoy your time with us and the animals.*

*Therese Carew, Joshua Gill, Craig Green, Soli Herrera, Susan Huxley, Gwyneth Jones, Jools Macafee and Kavanagh Macafee*

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All submissions are welcome. Deadline for editions is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Email: nrwc@iinet.net.au

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

# Training Report

Article and pictures by: Paul Cheeseman

Advanced flying-fox training was presented in September 2015. See the excellent report by Sandy Norris in this newsletter.

Unfortunately, Introduction to Birds was cancelled due to low numbers. We're hoping to run this course again next year, so stay tuned for further details.

Introduction to Possums and Small Marsupials was held at McLeans Ridges Hall on Sunday 11 October 2015. Prior to using the room at SCU Lismore, this was our training venue and it felt good to be back there again. The hall is resonant with the history of McLeans Ridges. Nineteen persons attended the course, including two persons who joined on the day. Thanks to Chrisy Clay, our presenter, Cheryl Cochran for providing expert advice and morning tea, Jenny Staples, Valerie Shields and Dani Byrnes for doing the bookings.

Some feedback from this day was:

*I enjoyed most learning to identify species, proper way to warm and transport animals, and morning tea.*

*The most important thing I gained: a realistic awareness of care/rescue aspects and level of commitment required.*

*The most important thing I gained: there are a lot of people who care and dedicate a huge amount of their time.*

*Great to update and meet others within the group.*

*I enjoyed most hearing personal experiences and sharing knowledge.*

At Possum training I did some speedy interviews with some of the participants:



Megan is studying vet nursing and works at Keen St Veterinary Clinic.

Megan loves caring for animals and has no issues with the dual role of caring at work, and then caring at home. She said that she often takes wildlife home at the end of the day if a carer cannot be found.

Megan has a vision of owning a small property and setting up lots of aviaries and enclosures for wildlife care.

Megan said that the veterinary nursing course does not contain much content on wildlife. She has found that the best way to gather

information and expertise is through the NRWC.

To further develop her wildlife skills she would have to do a specialist course and work in a wildlife hospital.

Pam and Sallyann are a mother and daughter team from Woodenbong.



They travelled one and a half hours to be at this training.

Sallyann is the main mover for joining NRWC, and Pam is joining as she can see that there will be times when she needs to help out. Sallyann wanted to be a vet nurse but could not because of health issues. So she has decided to be involved with animals in other ways.

Sallyann has two horses, fish, a penny turtle, shrimps (all in separate tanks), six dogs, a whole lot of heirloom breeds of chickens, a budgie, and probably something else that I missed.

She joined NRWC because she is interested in wildlife and because she thinks it is logical to volunteer your time if you love animals.

Pam and Sallyann reckon they are the only carers currently at Woodenbong.

*Continued ...*



Cheryl and Chrisy

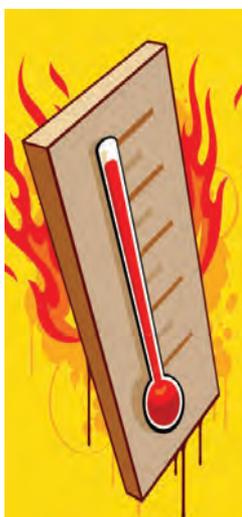


Possum Training



## What is coming up?

There are only three more courses being held this year. As usual, register your interest by emailing [training@wildlifecarers.com](mailto:training@wildlifecarers.com)



### **Heat Event Training Saturday 31 October 2015 Tullera.**

This is a free training day and is for non-vaccinated and vaccinated members alike as all members may be called upon for help during heat events. Training will cover all aspects of preparation and dealing with :

- History of heat events in the Northern Rivers
- Impacts of Climate Change
- Location of flying fox camps in the Northern Rivers
- What to expect during a heat event and on the following days
- Coordination with NR WIRES
- Ways you can help, including PPE and equipment you can buy in preparation
- Viber
- Vaccinations

*Continued ...*



## **Non-venomous Snake Handling**

**Presented by Sue Johnson of the Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers.**

**28 November 2015**

**Crabbes Creek hall from 9am to 4pm. Cost \$10.**

Snake handling tools will be for sale. We will also try to car-pool. Closer to the date, I will email all those who have expressed interest to confirm attendance, to advise equipment costs and to advise lifts offered and lifts needed.

Please note only members who have attended NRW's Introductory to Rescue and Rehabilitation (Basic Training for new members) are able to attend this course.

## **Basic Reptile First Aid**

**Presented by Sue Johnson of the Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers.**

**12 December 2015 at the Crabbes Creek Hall from 9am to 3pm. Cost \$10**

Snake handling tools will be for sale. We will also try to car-pool. Closer to the date, I will email all those who have expressed interest to confirm attendance, to advise equipment costs and to advise lifts offered and lifts needed.

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## **Conclusion**

This is my first part-year as training officer and I've realised how important these training days are. Not just for sharing knowledge and skills but for building community, for networking, for checking in with members about their needs, for stocking up on equipment and materials, and for inspiration.

Let me know of any interesting courses you have heard of, and ideas you have for training. If you are aware of a skill shortage in the group or a potential skill shortage – let me know. Thanks.

*Paul*

# Handling Rescue Donations

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*By: Kay Johnson.*

On many occasions, members of the public demonstrate their appreciation of a rescue/relocation from their home or property by way of a monetary donation, which is handed to the NRW rescuer.

So that we can ensure that the member of the public's donation is acknowledged, and receipted appropriately, with the receipt returned to that MoP, may we request that the rescuer forwards any donations, along with the MoP's full name and address, to our **PO Box 6439 South Lismore NSW 2480.**

That way, we are fully accountable (to our auditors), and to the MoP, in being able to acknowledge the donation.

If the MoP does not require a receipt or wishes to donate anonymously, please make a note to this effect and post with the donation to the same address.

Many thanks.

*Kay*

# A Perilous Magpie Rescue

Story and pictures by: Rowan Wigmore

Late in September, during a period of very strong winds, I received a call from the Hotline about a magpie trapped by its leg in a tree about 30 metres from the ground. The address was nearby and I could easily see the tree from my window. The Hotline advised that a tree-climber was on his way to retrieve the bird and asked if I would be able to help and examine or convey the bird to a vet clinic?

Armed with a pillowcase, binoculars, camera and carry-box I went to investigate and had great difficulty finding the bird. The location was correct but the bird was concealed by a large nest and was indeed tethered by the tail and swinging precariously.

This occurred during a time of very strong winds and I was amazed that anyone could see it – let alone realise its predicament and call the Hotline! However I soon met the astute member of the public (Doug) who, while walking his dog, heard the calls of distress and investigated - finding the hapless bird and calling us.

The position of the nest was only a couple of metres short of the top of a large silky-oak tree and as you can imagine the branch thickness near the nest was 50mm or less. I thought at this stage that a tree-climber may not be able to reach the bird but rather than wait for his verdict I decided to explore other avenues of rescue.

With the help of the Hotline and Cheryl, I started ringing various agencies like Essential Energy, the fire brigade, local police and cherry-picker hire places. Unfortunately as it was nearing 5:00 PM, many of the agencies were unable or worse still, unwilling to help. My heart sank with the realisation that if our climber could not reach the bird (and I thought this highly likely given the wind strength and branch thickness near the treetop) it would stay swinging from its leg until it died from starvation.

Shortly after I made this horrid realisation our trusty tree climber, Ben Garland arrived and began to get ready for the climb. I pointed out the nest position and the limb thickness nearby and he responded that it was near the limits at which he could operate safely. The tree had obviously been sick in the past as Ben pointed out some blue plugs where some treatment had been administered. Oh dear. It wasn't looking good and my imagination was running riot with pictures of a bird dying a slow death or Ben plummeting to the ground as a branch broke!



Above: The nest location.  
Below: A watchful parent.



Continued ...

## A Perilous Magpie Rescue *Continued*

After getting setup, Ben began the task of throwing a line over a high branch to pull his sturdy rope up. The wind kept thwarting his efforts for a while before abating and allowing him a measure of success. The level the rope had reached was well short of the nest. What was he to do?

It all became apparent as he climbed the tree with a swift stepping motion. He would reach the intermediate level, affix himself with an additional rope, I would release the first rope at the base of the tree and then he would use that rope to climb higher. Rather him than me. I was getting vertigo just watching!

He made it to the nest just as the magpies summoned help. It appeared that magpies from all around heard the parent's calls and were busy swooping the only person able to help their offspring. Oddly just 3 metres away in an adjacent tree another magpie family had a nest. There must have been a very sharp territorial boundary between them or these pairs just got on well. Most unusual. Ben released the bird and carried it down in a pillowcase. The culprit was thought to be baling twine but on closer examination was found to be a thin high-tensile plastic that is sometimes woven into bags that contain garden or agricultural materials. The magpies had used strands of this to line their nest with catastrophic results.

I took the bird home for a quick examination and found the foot to be strongly bound. The magpie was not doing well and looked stressed and exhausted. Uralba St vet clinic was still open and were willing to look at him/her if I brought it straight down. At the vet clinic, as I removed the bird from the carrier, I saw that one leg was badly broken and after vet examination, it was decided to euthanase the bird. A sad ending but a release from the pain it must have been feeling.

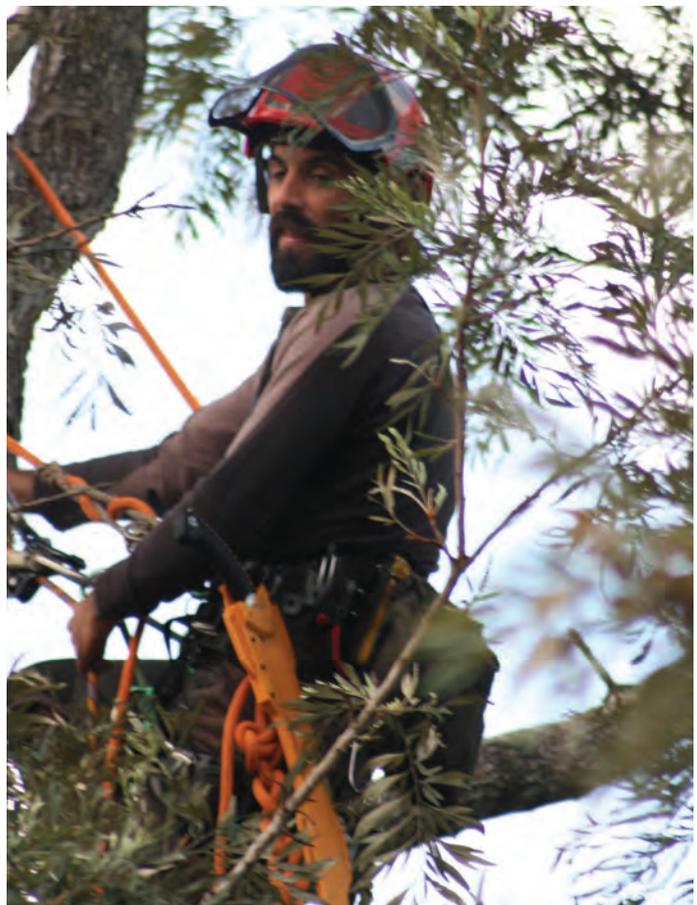
Thanks to all that were involved in his/her rescue especially the efforts of Ben Garland.

If you need any form of tree maintenance or anything to do with trees or shrubs then please consider using the wildlife-friendly Ben. His number is **0457722618**.

*Rowan*



*Above: Bird in a pillowcase  
Below: Ben in action!*



# Committee Report

By: Jenny Staples.



Our Committee meeting for September was held again at Paul Cheeseman's home which made for a more casual and friendly atmosphere. Apart from the usual secretary and treasurer's reports we discussed a wide range of topics.

The 2016 training program was under consideration. We discussed whether we were probably providing too many training days as some were not getting a suitable number of participants to warrant the amount of effort put into running them. So we are reviewing the program and considering offering some courses, such as possums or macropods, every two years. We would welcome members input so you can let us know your ideas on how to make these days more productive.

The committee is also considering the group's participation in community events. Which of the various ones will we support? Vitality Vetcare, Byron Bay Volunteer Expo, Big Scrub Day. These days usually require a number of members to assist and sometimes we can't get enough to volunteer their time. The exception seems to be The Car Boot Market in Lismore which was well supported by keen workers on the day.

We are also looking into adding information onto our website on how the general public can make a bequest in their wills to our organisation. It is hoped that some people may consider this in the future.

Congratulations to Wendy Attrill, who succeeded in getting a grant through the NSW Wildlife Council for the purchase of a humidicrib to be used for orphaned bats that come into care. This will make a big difference to the survival rate and make life easier for our bat carers.

It was brought to our attention that another wildlife group was recently audited by the NPWS. This required the group to produce records of the animals in care and some carers' facilities were inspected. Each carer is required to keep records of the animals that they deal with including pickup and deliveries to vet or MoPs. Just a sentence in an exercise book, especially for wildlife, would be sufficient with details of date, animal and situation. So if you haven't been doing this now is the time to start as any of our members can be selected for audit.

On the subject of bats, we are mindful of the long range weather forecast for a hot summer coming up. There will be a Heat Event Training day at Tullera on Saturday 31st October. All members (vaccinated and nonvaccinated) are encouraged to come along so that we will be better prepared if the bats are affected as was the case last year. Email [training@wildlifecarers.com](mailto:training@wildlifecarers.com) or call the hotline for more info on this. *See also training report page 4 - Ed*

Lastly, by the time you read this we may have a new committee decided at our AGM at Rocky Creek Dam. If you missed it but still want to be involved contact a committee member.

Thank you, members and carers for your support, for all your enthusiasm and assistance throughout the year and we look forward to 2016 being even better for our wonderful wildlife.

*Jenny*

## Donations

Donations may be made at any time through the secure "Givenow" Website. \$2 and more are tax deductible!

<http://www.givenow.com.au/northernriverswildlifecarers>



# Advanced Flying-fox Training

Article by: Sandy Norris  
Picture by: Wendy Attrill



Cheryl Cochran (NRWC Bat Coordinator) and Rhonda Miller (Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers (TVWC) Bat Coordinator) jointly organised for Advanced flying-fox training to be provided by Connie Kerr to all our vaccinated carers on 20 September 2015 at Southern Cross University.

Connie has been a wildlife carer for 15 years primarily working with Bats and flying-foxes. She is an independently licenced wildlife carer and works closely with Daintree Wildlife Rescue, FNQWR (Far North Queensland Wildlife Rescue) and Tolga Bat Hospital. In conjunction with her partner Dave Pinson (Author of the Flying-fox Manual) she has travelled and presented flying-fox Care Workshops all over Australia and runs an online email forum that covers all aspects of bats. Connie is currently part of a team developing NightWings Rainforest Centre at Wonga Beach, which comprises a 15 hectare 70,000 tree rainforest revegetation project, and wildlife rehabilitation, with the main focus being on bats (see <http://www.nightwings.net>).

26 Flying fox carers attended our course including carers from NRWC, Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers, Northern Rivers WIRES, Clarence Valley WIRES and even a carer from Central NSW WIRES who travelled all the way from Bathurst just for the training.

After a four-year gap in being able to provide advanced flying fox training, it was very beneficial to all members who attended. There were lots of great questions, stories and anecdotes that I think are among the most valuable things you get from attending a training workshop. That, and being surrounded by other people who love bats. With so much to cover, the training went overtime which highlighted the value in looking at the potential for having a two day workshop next time we run this training (assuming we all have the stamina for this).

Thanks to the NRWC committee who agreed to invest in this training. With the great attendance, we were almost able to cover the costs which we shared with TVWC. Thanks to the training team and hotliners for taking all the bookings. Thanks to Cheryl and Rhonda for initiating it in the first place. Thanks to all the attendees for bringing your enthusiasm and interest to the day and thanks to Connie for travelling all the way from Cairns to provide this valuable training. I'm already looking forward to the next one.

*Sandy*

# Wildlife Quiz

By: Paul Cheeseman and Joe Azad.

1. I have just set the gourmet world on fire. Native to the Northern Rivers, I am a citrus. What am I?
2. I am found on the East Coast of Australia, I am a rainforest giant, I can kill a cow in 20 minutes, but I have been a staple food for Indigenous people for millennia. What am I?
3. Discovered in 1845, with a spate of sightings and specimens collected through the rest of the 19th century. With no confirmed sightings through the 20th century, I was considered extinct. In 1989 Dick Smith offered a \$25,000 bounty for a dead or alive specimen. It wasn't until 1990, quite by chance, a group of road trippers from the Australian Museum collected a mummified, pancake-flat road-kill specimen. Thus breathing fresh life into the treasure hunt for me, a priceless little jewel. What am I?
4. Some think a cobra is fast, but my reflexes are faster. Mongooses eat cobras but my reaction time is faster. I am a straight shooter and I have the fastest reaction in the animal kingdom to date. What am I?
5. I am the largest bat in Australia. What am I?
6. Clarence Valley man, Ram Chandra (1921-1998) was famously associated with what Australian reptile?
7. About one third of Australian Skinks are burrowing species. (p.46 Wilson and Swan, 2009.) Name the parts of their bodies that have modified for this lifestyle
8. I am a snake occurring in the Northern Rivers. I am a dietary specialist eating only blind snakes (Typhlopidae). When threatened, I contort my body into a vertical hoop, thrashing and re-positioning when disturbed. (P.512, Wilson and Swan, 2010) What am I?
9. I am a former ABC newsreader who was also a Flying-fox carer. I am currently a governor of the Taronga Foundation, a director of the Zoological Parks Board of New South Wales, a trustee of the World Wide Fund for Nature and a patron of WIRES. Who am I?
10. How many frogs and toads occur in the Northern Rivers (including the Cane Toad)?  
a)16 b)28 c)37 d)45

## “Gloopy” the Water Dragon

By: Rowan Wigmore

This little water dragon was rescued from a house in Lismore. The member of the public (MoP) said that she thought that her cat had attacked it as it had “gloop” coming out of its body. I was mortified and pictured a small lizard ripped open by a cat and so riddled with infection that it couldn't possibly survive. Another sub-optimal rescue I thought. I glumly went to the house and was greeted by a shoebox containing a bright and alert baby dragon that had four engorged ticks hanging near its left front leg. I reassured the MoP that it appeared in good health apart from the ticks that she had thought were “gloop”! I took the lizard home, carefully removed the ticks, treated the sites with Betadine antiseptic and left him/her in a warm box overnight to recover.

Next day he/she had made a full recovery and was very active. I tried feeding and quickly then learned that they are notoriously difficult to feed in captivity. Julie Curtis suggested that the best course of action would be to release him/her but not where the cat was! Cheryl suggested that a member (Aaron) lived nearby and that he might allow it to be released on his property. I called him and with his approval released little Gloopy in a lovely thickly vegetated part of the garden about 10 metres from his previous home in an area with lots of insects and near another adult dragon.

Sub-optimal rescue? Happily I couldn't have been more wrong!



Rowan

# Bush Stone-curlew

Article and picture by: Chrisy Clay

As a wildlife carer you come across a wide range of animals, some common and others less so. Like when Rowan rescued this Bush stone-curlew from the front of a take-away store near the Lismore Airport!

Bush Stone-curlews are a threatened species in NSW, and are a very unusual bird.

We've only had a few come into care over the years, and as an organisation, we really don't know too much about them. A few years ago I had some experience with one, so Cheryl asked if I could take it for a while for observation. So after it was assessed at Keen St Vet Clinic by the wonderful Dr Bec, it came home with me.

They're such a strange bird. Very different from anything I cared for before. I'd love to learn more about them, as their behaviour is quite distinct.

After 48 hours the curlew made it pretty clear that it wanted to go, so my daughter Bella and I took it back to the nearby Lismore Lake. Early on a foggy Saturday morning, Bella and I watched this strange bird fly off strongly.

Chrisy



## Quiz Answers



1. Finger Lime *Citrus australasica* var. *australasica*
2. Black Bean *Castanospermum australe*
3. The Night Parrot *Pezoporus occidentalis*. The first photographic evidence accompanied by a 17 second video of living individuals was released on 3 July 2013 by wildlife photographer John Young, a man with an obvious talent for determined persistence . There are an estimated 50-250 individual birds.
4. The sting of the box jellyfish is the quickest reaction in the animal kingdom. (The retractable stingers of the jellyfish When a jellyfish detects its prey, it extends a kind of venomous vein. Like fiery filaments of doom, the job of these hair-like barbed structures is to inject neurotoxins into its prey. It turns out that the acceleration of these stingers as they emerge is 5,410,000 g. The speed of light is a foot per nanosecond. So, in the time it takes for a jellyfish to whip out its stingers, light has travelled a distance of two football fields. It's a timescale so fast, that the astronomical shifts down to the mundane!
5. Grey-headed Flying-fox *Pteropus poliocephalus*
6. The Taipan.
7. a) bodies elongated for greater flexibility, b) snouts either streamlined to help slip through dry, loose sand or reinforced with a tough cuticle to push through damp compost, c) limbs either reduced in size or lost, and d) exposed ear openings are either reduced in size or covered by scales (p.46, What Lizard is That? By Steve Wilson and Gerry Swan, 2009).
8. The Bandy-bandy *Vermicella annulata*
9. Richard Morecroft
10. d).45 (Source:[http://frogs.org.au/frogs/ofNSW/The\\_North\\_Coast](http://frogs.org.au/frogs/ofNSW/The_North_Coast))



# Happenings

*By: Jenny Staples*

Spring has sprung with the hotline getting busy over the last few weeks. We always have a large number of calls for baby birds and other little critters coming in which keeps us on our toes. Snake calls are also very numerous but are usually just for snakes in an undesirable place such as backyards. We therefore give advice on how to move them along away from harm's way which doesn't always suit the callers who want the invading reptile taken away, pronto! When the hotliner explains our policy on snake removal and offers them the phone number of the commercial snake catchers it's amazing how quickly the member of public (MoP) changes his or her mind.

I had a request for some information on birds from a Year 9 student from Richmond River High recently, doing an assignment on bird conservation. I emailed him some information on feeding birds and then did some statistics gathering from our hotline database so I thought I would share it with you. I looked at the number of bird calls over a three month period; July, August and September this year and compared this to the period from Oct to Dec last year.



The results show how busy we get in spring compared to winter and what a significant difference our work does have on the environment. Considering that WIRES probably have a lot more calls and animals in care it also highlights how many animals are in need of help. Then consider that there are a number that don't get reported. Luckily we only have to bring in a proportion of the birds into care otherwise we would be swamped. It is wonderful to hear that most of our new members as well as the experienced ones are happy to go to rescues when asked by the roster people and report back to Cheryl or us. I can understand that there are times when this can be inconvenient but necessary.

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. This is important with the Xmas break coming. We always need help with the roster, our vital link with the public so if you can spare some time to assist please let us know. You can always contact us on the hotline email [nrwchotline@gmail.com](mailto:nrwchotline@gmail.com) or phone **66281866** and we will get back to you.

At the recent training day for possums and small marsupials some reminders for all carers were discussed. Even though most carers are aware of these points it is a good reminder of the importance of these when heading off for a rescue. Of course this also applies to all animals in our care not just the furry ones:

*Continued page 14*

# History Might Repeat

.....  
*Article and pictures by: Sue Higgins*

The heatwave in Casino last year didn't only effect flying-foxes, it also took its toll on vulnerable avian individuals as well.

A clutch of five Eastern Rosellas had made a home in a nest box in the Motor Home Village when the heat event occurred. The sudden rise in temperature was too much for the little chicks, one chick had perished in the nest box and the remaining chicks were severely compromised so they were taken into care.

One more perished after coming into care and the remaining three were raised successfully. Fortunately NRWC carer Lorraine lives in the same village and has an aviary so they were able to be released back very close to where they were rescued.

Once again at the start of October this year after a couple of very hot days an inspection of the nest box revealed six very young chicks who were already suffering from the heat, the decision was made to remove three in the hope it would give a better chance of survival for the remaining three.

They are being crop fed several times a day and the little guys haven't looked back. They will be taken back for release once they are flying and self-feeding.



*Pictured above right: Chicks on arrival.  
Lower right: Just three days later.*

*Sue*

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## Hotline Happenings *Continued*

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- \* Don't leave any possum or small marsupial with a MoP or in a vet clinic overnight, especially juveniles.
- \* Don't believe a MoP's advice on identification or age of animal. All rescuers should ring the relevant coordinator after picking up an animal.
- \* If an adult possum or sub-adult possum/small marsupial was able to be picked up by a MoP, it needs to be assessed by a vet
- \* Hotline operators should remind rescuers they are to contact a coordinator or the hotline before taking an animal to the vet.
- \* The rescue database needs to be updated live by hotline operators, or within a few hours of the shift ending.
- \* Hotline operators should ask all rescuers to ring the relevant coordinator after picking up an animal.

With this being the last issue for the year, may I thank you all for you work and dedication to helping our wildlife and we look forward to another great year in 2016.

*Jenny*



## Flying Fox Report

Report and picture by: Cheryl Cochran



I'm pleased to report its all been very quiet on the bat front, native trees flowering profusely everywhere you look and there's been little rain to wash out the pollen and nectar the bats feed on. Hopefully there are happy mothers out there carrying healthy babies.

Last year baby bat season started like this year and all looked good until the November heat wave when they dropped from the sky in the hundreds. So the message is be prepared! Make sure you have on hand food, syringes and baby equipment at the ready. Bat carers please be sure to let me know if you will be away over the next two months. The picture is of one of my most memorable babies, "Chatty Man", so named because he always had something to say whenever he saw you.

*Cheryl*

## Blessing of the Animals

Article and picture by: Rowan Wigmore

St Andrews Anglican Church in Lismore held its annual Blessing of the Animals service on Sunday 18th of October and the NRW was invited along with Friends of the Koala, to staff an information stall in the hall for parishioners after the service. Reverend Alan Shaw who organised the service said that animals often bring out the best in us and the service was a way of remembering God's love through animals.

Jenny and Kay had setup the stall with posters and our informational materials and Richard and I brought along "Stumpytrunks" the shingleback lizard. Stumps was a great drawcard bringing people to the stall and we fielded many questions about wildlife and especially reptiles, as he is an unusual character and one not seen in the local area. Although we were there for only a couple of hours we raised the awareness of what we do in the community for all creatures – great and small.

*Rowan*



## Annual General Meeting Report

By: Rowan Wigmore

The Annual General Meeting took place on a mild day at the picturesque Rocky Creek Dam picnic area near Dunoon. There were a few changes to the committee that you may notice from the "green dots" on the Pin-up page. I scored publicity officer, so if you have some good ideas about raising the profile of the group or any other publicity opportunities please let me know!

The meeting was brief and we all enjoyed a shared lunch outdoors. Valerie's mother, Madge from NZ came along and brought some lovely pastries and a flan to go with Cheryl's vegan wombok salad.

*Rowan*

# Tips for Living with Snakes

Article and picture by: Chrisy Clay

(As appeared in the Ballina Shire Advocate Newspaper on the Thursday 13th November 2014.)



Snakes are part and parcel of living in Australia. Snakes occupy nearly every corner of the country, and you're just as likely to encounter a snake in our towns and cities as you are in rural areas.

More than 20 species of snakes occur here in the Northern Rivers, but only a few are considered harmful to humans. Most of these species are not aggressive and would rather retreat than stand their ground. To reduce the chance of encountering a snake, there are a number of really simple measures which everyone can do.

Bottom line is that snakes only live where there is food, shelter and water. Keep lawns short and paths clear, and don't leave piles of rubble, iron or timber lying around in your backyard. Store things away, up off the ground if you can. Gaps in rock retaining walls should be concreted, particularly if the wall is close to your house, as snakes will love to bask and hide within them.

If you have birds or chickens it's really important to keep rodent populations under control. Don't leave grain or seed lying around that will attract mice and rats, as they in turn attract a number of different snake species. Chook pens, bird aviaries and rabbit hutches all need to be wired with 1cm squared wire and have no gaps – you would be amazed at how small a gap a carpet python can squeeze into!

If you don't want snakes in your house you must have screens on your doors and windows. A well-maintained house, with no gaps in the walls and ceilings, and with well-fitted screens will prevent any snake from coming inside.

Finally, when moving around outside keep a look out for snakes, particularly if you are walking through uncleared areas or moving things around in the backyard. Wear covered shoes and tread heavily so that any nearby snakes have time to retreat. Most of all watch where you are putting your feet; a large percentage of those who are bitten by snakes have accidentally stood on one!

Most people would rather not encounter a snake around their home, and these simple measures will greatly reduce the chance of doing so.

A little understanding and foresight on our behalf can make all the difference in ensuring the safety of your family. If you require further advice or assistance in removing a snake from inside your house, the Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers have trained, volunteer snake handlers to assist.

*Chrisy*

# Venomous Snake Training

Article by: Rowan Wigmore

Pictures by: Rowan Wigmore and Max from TVWC

On Sunday 11th of October I attended a course on venomous snake handling at Geckoes Wildlife in Closeburn (Near Samford about 50 mins drive north-west of Brisbane.) facilitated by Martin Fingland. I was joined by several people from Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers that I had met previously at non-venomous snake handling at Crabbes Creek and a couple of other people ( a school teacher and a national parks employee) that had a need to handle venomous species.

Geckoes is on a lovely tree-lined property that was once a tree-less farm 20 years ago. Our 'classroom' was a great outdoor pavilion surrounded by bush and Martin used handouts and a conversational style to teach the theory component. It was a welcome change not to have a PowerPoint presentation.

After a brief lunch we went to a shady clearing nearby for the practical component. Martin started us with pythons; carpet, spotted and woma, that we had to consider as venomous and we refined our techniques with these forgiving creatures before trying the more-challenging elapids.

When the venomous arrived we started with a docile red-bellied black, moving incrementally to more feisty eastern browns, tiger snake, an inland taipan and death adder. Basically we did just about every venomous snake except the copperhead!

Martin stresses safety and showed us that many of the snake catching and handling techniques displayed by some 'professional' catchers and the plethora of temporarily living humans on Youtube are simply irresponsible and stupid. I also learned quite a few new things that perhaps I should have already known; such as the fangs on nearly all Australian venomous snakes are only around the 2 to 3 mm length and that the death adder is a very slow moving and somewhat gorgeous, snake – apart from that fast strike! Sturdy footwear, thick socks and jeans will provide a great measure of protection and of all the snakebites given only 10 to 15% result in invenomation and generally because the human has tried to kill or injure the snake.

Armed with my new-found knowledge and abilities I couldn't wait for my first call-out. It didn't take long and on the following Friday I assisted Cheryl with two gorgeous eastern brown snakes caught in netting which were later liberated near a crystal clear creek.



Inland taipan



"Classroom"

Years ago I was curious but petrified to some degree of snakes. With some training, mentoring and practice I am now very happy and respectful in the company of Australia's most venomous. Knowledge is power.

*Rowan*

# Ed by rowan wignore

Following on from my article about feral cats in the previous edition some positive news has emerged that we might have the answer from a native animal and it has been on our doorstep all along – if you live in Tasmania that is.

Recent research has found that reintroducing Tasmanian devils to the Australian mainland would drastically improve the welfare of native wildlife by curbing the spread of feral cats and foxes. Devils have been absent for about 3,000 years, presumably as a result of conflict with the dingo. University of NSW scientists say the evidence suggests that Tasmanian devils and dingoes cannot co-exist, but introducing devils to non-dingo areas would benefit native fauna. Humans have eradicated dingoes throughout most of Victoria and NSW to protect livestock, but that has left foxes and cats to become primary predators. Twenty-nine mammals have become extinct over the past 200 years, with about twenty of these blamed directly on feral cats. The government is committed to eradicating two million feral cats by 2020.

The Victorian Government is considering releasing devils into the state's Wilsons Promontory National Park - saving devils from extinction in Tasmania, and restoring damaged ecosystems on the mainland. The proof that this may work is that following the decline of devils in Tasmania due to Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD), species such as the feral cat have been increasing. This in turn is associated with a halving in population size of a smaller, native predator, the Eastern Quoll that was once present, but now extinct in Victoria. Some have also suggested that the reason foxes have only recently established themselves in Tasmania is not solely due to humans introducing them, but because devils declined around the same time. Prior to DFTD, devils may have been acting as a first line of defence against foxes by killing their cubs.

It is not often we can achieve win-win situations, but helping prevent the extinction of the Tasmanian devil by re-establishing a mainland population, and restoring desperately needed ecosystem function to habitats, may just be the best conservation win-win waiting to happen.

Rowan

## 2016 Calendars Now Available

By: *Sandy Norris, Treasurer*  
Picture by: *Wendy Lawrence*

On behalf of NRWC I have produced our NRWC wall calendar for 2016. Thanks to Paul Cheeseman and Cheryl Cochran for the review that they provided and to other committee members for their encouragement and support.

This year's calendar has beautiful photos of orphans taken by the dedicated NRWC members who have raised and released these animals. Some pages have been donated by individuals and local businesses to assist with production costs.

The calendar would be an ideal Christmas gift idea for your family and friends and will be for sale at \$15 each, plus \$3.50 postage (for up to 2 calendars) if you need them posted. They'll be available online via Paypal or you can email [treasurer@wildlifecarers.com](mailto:treasurer@wildlifecarers.com) if you would like to place an order.





The hot weather is upon us so please think about the wildlife near where you live and put bowls of water out for birds - not too deep and with a means of escape for smaller birds. Water placed away from your house on the ground will enable reptiles and other animals to have a drink without coming near your dwelling.

Consider coming along to heat-event training! Details inside.

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