

Wildlife News



Issue 136 Sept - Oct 2015

Peter Pinky

Story by: Sandra Handley

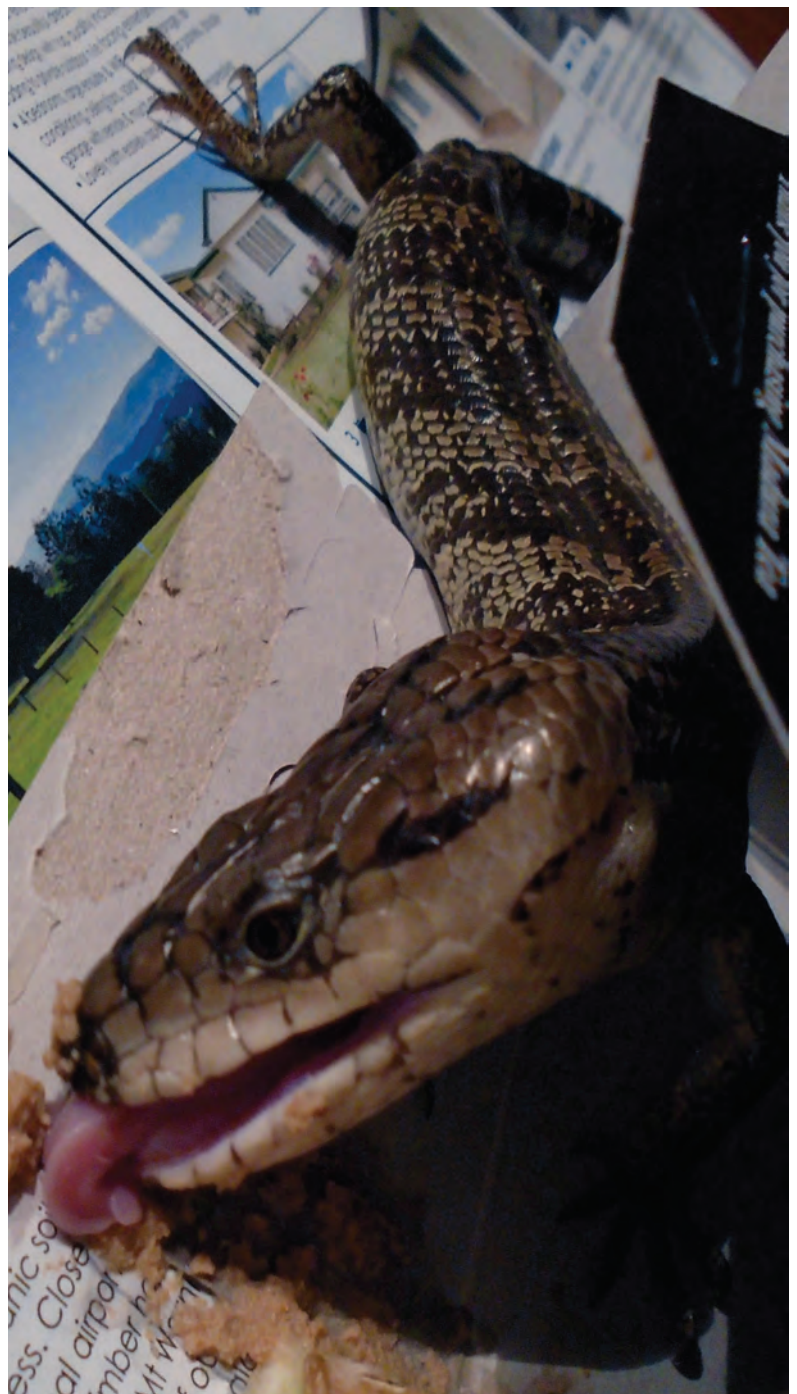
Pictures by: Rolf Meier

We've been looking after a pink tongue skink for the past few weeks. Peter was found sitting in a Lismore garden in July. He was very listless and skinny and vomited any food he was given back up. He only weighed 65 grams but was average length at 30cm long.

He's now a very well travelled lizard who has met several NRWC members! He went to the Keen Street Vet, then was picked up by Rowan and taken to Goonellabah. I picked him up from there and took him to Richmond Hill for a couple of days before deciding there was something seriously wrong with him. After discussions with Cheryl we decided to get him up to the Currumbin Wildlife Hospital for checking. Jackie and Rolf provided transport and he was kept by CWH for a few days doing blood and faeces tests. From Currumbin he got a trip back to Richmond Hill via Ocean Shores and Newrybar thanks to Wendy, Dana and Joseph, then a week later we had to return him back to Currumbin for follow up tests, transported this time by Sharon, Myee, Wendy and Sandy. He's now back home with a pretty good prognosis as his blood tests have improved and now we've just got to put some weight back on him. It certainly takes a community to care for some of our wildlife – a huge thank you to everyone who helped out!

Peter loves Hills AD (a medicated cat food) but he'll also eat the occasional mealworm, mushroom and broccoli - although it takes him about an hour to eat a meal and he needs lots of encouragement. Luckily Rolf is really patient about jiggling a mealworm on a pair of tweezers in front of him. He's just started to get a bit feisty and it's great to see him hissing and poking his tongue out in a 'get out of my face' display as

Continued ...



Peter Pinky

Continued ...

previously he was very passive and just lay there when we moved around him.

He's pretty happy hiding out amongst the litter in the bottom of his cage or sunning himself on a log during our glorious spring days. After 3 weeks he's put on 20 grams and will probably take another month in care before being released.

Today he started shedding his skin which we didn't realise skinks do. It's great to be learning more about these reptiles as Peter is the first pink tongue we've had in care.

Sandra



members

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

*Melissa Dean,
Pam Scarlett,
Sallyann Scarlett.*

AGM

**Sunday
25th October
Rocky Ck Dam**

Contents:

September - October 2015

News and Information

New Members	2
Paws-in-the-Park	6
Masters Fundraiser	7
Wildlife Quiz	8
Committee Report	9
Quiz Answers	10
Hotline Happenings	11
Feral Cats	14-15

Training

Training Report	3
-----------------------	---

Rescues and Care

Peter Pinky	1-2
Mags Goes Shopping	4-5
Rescued Conure	12-13
Flying-fox Report	13

Stories

Bali Birds	7
------------------	---

Opinion

Editorial	16
-----------------	----

Administration

AGM	9
Donation Thanks	10
On-line Member Form	11
Pin-up Page	17

Wildlife News is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers Inc. All submissions are welcome. Deadline for editions is the 15th of the month preceding publication. Email: nrwc@iinet.net.au

Training Report

By: Paul Cheeseaman

The race to reproduce is upon us; wood ducklings, lapwing chicks, nest-building magpies are all around.

Jingi wallah to the caring busy season. So time to get into the groove. Do you need to do any of our upcoming courses which between them embrace reptiles, birds and mammals? These courses are open to carers old and new. If you are an experienced hand come along and be reminded of everything you've forgotten, meet some of the class of 2015 and share your knowledge and wily ways. And new carers come along and drink at the fount of knowledge, quench your thirst and leave prepared and confident.



Introduction to Caring for Native Birds, Sunday 13 September at Southern Cross University, Lismore.
Presenter: Chrisy Clay
Z1.81B Z Block, Southern Cross University Lismore.
9.30am-3.00pm
\$15, morning tea supplied, BYO lunch.

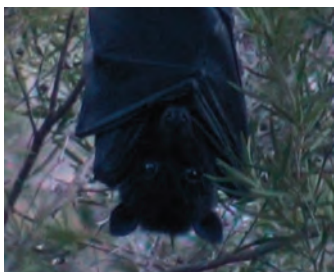


Introduction to Possums and Small Marsupials, Sunday 11 October at McLeans Ridges Hall (on the Cowlong Road and McLeans Ridges Road intersection).



Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers have confirmed that they will be running both the reptile first aid and snake handling courses, but haven't set any dates yet.

These are likely to be late September and October. I recommend these courses for all carers as reptiles are a part of life in the Northern Rivers.



Heat Event training, will be held in late October. This is a new course and details will be provided as we finalise them

Naturally we will email all members with specific dates when venues and trainers are confirmed. If you do wish to nominate for, or inquire about, a training course then please email training@wildifecarers.com

Paul

Mags Goes Shopping

Kmart's website says that they make "Low prices irresistible". They certainly had something irresistible for a young male magpie! Mr Mags entered the store on Sunday 12th of July and had no intention of leaving. He had explored all of the departments and much to the annoyance of the staff and manager, left calling cards on some of the merchandise. Attempts by the staff to shoo him out were only temporarily successful, with Mags returning very quickly. Clearly he didn't mind being there at all!

I received a call from the Hotline on Monday and went out to assess the situation. The staff were helpful and very concerned for the bird's well-being. They and some concerned shoppers had offered food to the hungry bird, which was sustaining him but also allowing him to continue dropping calling cards! When I arrived mags was in the toy department up high on a sign and was starting to look weary. I had taken a small amount of mince with me and thought that I may be able to lure him down. In the past I have caught a magpie that had a visible tick on his chin by luring him close and offering mince. In a small window of opportunity I was able to grab him by the tail, remove the tick and then release. This bird was not going to be as easy. Mags was hungry but still wary of his situation and the food being offered. He would not come below the top of the shelves but was interested in the mince. I placed a very small amount on the top of some shelving and he came close but not close enough to be

grabbed. We needed some sort of net to throw over him but the height of the shelves made that an almost impossible task.

I informed the hotline and asked whether we or WIRES might have suitable equipment but drew a blank. Tuesday the 14th we decided that we would attempt to catch the bird in the evening after 8pm when most of the shoppers had left. Cheryl put out a request for helpers and I soon had more people than we needed volunteering to help. Earlier that day I made a throw-net from some fruit-tree netting, flexible electrical conduit, old building cable (to weigh down the edges) and some elastic binding. It was about the size of a large hula-hoop and was similar to some that I have seen online. I thought it might be our only hope of catching him. Hayden, Richard and I went in and easily found the bird. He was looking tired and we thought he might now be an easy catch. Not so. Mags had us on a merry chase from one end of the store to the other, refusing to come down and avoiding any attempt to get close with the net. We left exhausted and despairing that the only apparent way of ever catching the bird would be to not feed it until it eventually became too weak to fly and then catch it. The problem with that scenario is that the bird would have been close to death by that stage and would need rehabilitation afterwards.

Continued ...



Mags Goes Shopping *Continued ...*

On Wednesday I was scheduled for a run to Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and used the opportunity to evaluate some trapping equipment at a nearby supplier. They had a very sturdily built large bird trap that would be the best way to catch the magpie. It was for sale at nearly \$300. I had spoken to Cheryl about obtaining one and she had contacted committee members about it but approval to purchase was not yet forthcoming. I took a punt and bought it myself, as I couldn't bear to see the bird suffer any longer.

Later that night I went into Kmart and set up the trap on top of some shelving near where Mags was. He came down immediately and delicately ate the mince on the trigger-tray and flew off! I was disappointed to say the least! I tried again with the mince and when he flew down, I bumped the shelving which triggered the trap but also scared the bird and he was able to fly away before the trap closed.

I was really annoyed as I had spent nearly \$300 on a trap that didn't catch birds! How could I expect the committee to pay for something that clearly didn't work? Reassessing the situation I decided to reset the trap, push the mince firmly into the trigger-tray mesh and use the other trigger arm that is slightly more sensitive. Mags had flown down to the other end of the shop and with the help of the staff we cordoned off the area where the trap was to prevent it being triggered by someone bumping the shelf. I went home to await the call but none was forthcoming. - Until next morning.

At 06:15 I happily received a call from the duty manager that the magpie had indeed been trapped. She had placed a cardboard box over the bird to subdue its struggles and would let me in by the service entrance.

The bird was caught in the centre of the trap and was in good condition. I took it out of the trap and brought it home while I awaited the opening of the vet clinic. Mags was offered food and water but by this stage I was the enemy and he was having nothing to do with me or anything that I had.

Dr. Rebecca Knee at Keen St Vet Clinic examined Mags and found a minor gapeworm infestation in his mouth and a wheeze in one lung; possibly caused by flying into something. He was treated and needed to go to a bird-carer for a couple of days and have further antibiotics. Cheryl took Mags and he responded well. On Thursday he definitely wanted out of the aviary and she decided to free him.

I met Cheryl in Lismore and we sought out a good release site close to Lismore Square. On the eastern side I saw a magpie clan but the western side appeared to be a better site. We joked that no matter what side we chose it would probably be wrong but the western side was clear of traffic. Mags was keen to get out of his carry-box and



took his bearings for a while before flying strongly away... right into another clan's territory where he was instantly chased off. He sought solace to the north of the shopping centre happily being free again.

Everyone involved in his rescue deserves special thanks. Richard and Hayden for assisting, Cheryl for her care and the Kmart team especially for caring about the bird despite the damage he did to their merchandise. I was told that on one day they had to throw out \$300 worth of damaged stock! As always the Keen St Vets for their professional treatments and also the NRW committee that decided not only to buy the trap but to get another for the injured bush turkeys and other large birds that are hard to catch.



Rowan

Paws-in-the-Park

Article by: Cheryl Cochran

Pictures: Rowan Wigmore



Keen St Vet clinic held it's Paws in the Park charity day early in August benefitting both Northern Rivers Wildlife carers and Northern Rivers Animal Services. This year was a shortened version starting at nine thirty with a doggy walk to the Lismore Rugby oval and from ten till twelve there were various activities and fun competitions for the dogs with their owners. The weather was perfect and it was nice to see such well-behaved dogs having a great time.

NRWC ran the canteen for the morning making a tidy profit of just under four hundred dollars. We had a great bunch of helpers on the day so no one had to work too hard and we were cleaned up and on our way home shortly after twelve thirty.

Thanks to Rowan and Joe who staffed the barbeque,



Pam, Valerie, Kay, Khaos, Andree, and Val who served in the canteen. Special thanks to Rowan who sliced the kilos of onions!

Also thanks to the Lismore Rugby Club for the use of their facilities and to caretakers Wayne and Noreen who were most helpful when we were setting up.

Cheryl

Masters Fundraiser

By: Pam Mitchell

Pictures by: Rowan Wigmore

On Saturday 15th of August NRWC held a sausage sizzle at the entrance to Masters in Lismore. Even though it was a fairly quiet day we managed a profit of \$624.

Thanks very much to our helpers: Christine Went and Sebastian Taylor (friends of mine who always help - not NRWC members), Mary King, Rolf Meier, Sandra Handley, Valerie McQuire, Kay Johnson, Marcie Lawrence and Rowan Wigmore. (And thanks to Pam herself who did a great job of organising, setting up and dismantling. - Ed)

Masters is booked up for the rest of 2015 but have put us down for the first half of 2016.

Pam



Bali Birds

Article and picture by: Jenny Staples

While enjoying our Bali holiday we spotted this bird's nest on top of the light fitting outside our room. I thought it was such a great one that I would share it with you.

I don't know what bird it is - just a small one, brown and about the size of a noisy miner.

The interesting thing is that almost all the rooms in the complex had outside lights with nests on them.

Seems that the resort liked the birds nesting there. They must be fairly environmentally friendly.

Jenny



Wildlife Quiz

By: Paul Cheeseman

1. I am a bird of reed beds and waterside vegetation. You may encounter me once but then I will be twice as shy. I am a _?
2. I am the only Do-It-Yourself Cuckoo in Australia. I am a _?
3. I was born in 1886 at Yamba, NSW. My father was a bird-artist from Kent, England. Educated at local public schools, I moved with my family to Sydney about 1894. I later attended art school and soon followed my father's example — painting mostly birds. I was a founder of the Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club. Birds were an integral part of my life. I am perhaps best known for my classic Australian bird book - What Bird is That?. Who am I?
4. Name the species of spoonbill found in the Northern Rivers?
5. I am arguably the most numerous raptor in the world. Sometimes I gather in large flocks over the Lismore Recycling and Recovery Centre (the tip), wheeling and soaring and diving through the skies: this is a typical behaviour of mine.
6. Name the species of ibis in the Northern Rivers.
7. What is the NSW bird emblem?
8. What are the five most frequently encountered black and white land birds of the Northern Rivers? No Shades of Grey thanks, this is a family newsletter!
9. The island of Papua New Guinea is the land of birds of paradise but one bird of paradise can be found in the Northern Rivers. What is it?
10. Where do Lace Monitors usually lay their eggs? Clue: its nest excavations can sometimes be confused with Echidna's feeding excavations.

(Answers on page 10)

Paul

2016 Calendars



Work has started on the 2016 NRW calendar. We are hoping to get it finalised soon so we can get it printed and into circulation earlier than we did last year.

If you would like to sponsor a page for a cost of \$110, or if you know of a business that would like to, please contact me on:

sandraenorris@gmail.com

If you have a photo that you would like to submit for use in the calendar, please email it through. We are looking for photos of all the beautiful species we care for.

Committee Report

By: Jenny Staples.



Our last committee meeting was held at Paul Cheeseman's home which allowed a more friendly environment to discuss the important matters. Apart from the regular reports from secretary Cheryl and treasurer Sandy, we covered a wide range of interesting issues including the organisation of upcoming events, signage for the bat colonies, new equipment and design of a new membership card. We also welcomed Rowan (our Wildlife News editor) as an ordinary member.

By the time you read this we will have catered for Paws in the Park on the 2nd Aug. So a big thank you to Cheryl and her helpers who served on the BBQ and provided sandwiches and yummy treats to the public.

Sandy & Wendy have been looking at the potential to create some signage for the bat colony at Casino will help inform the public of the benefits and facts about bats. Also on the subject of bats, Wendy has submitted an application to the NSW Wildlife Council Wildlife Carer Grants Scheme for funds to purchase a humidicrib which she will use for the babybats that come into care, especially during heat events. Hopefully she is successful and the bats will benefit.

Rowan was also able to find a bird trap that will replace hoop nets and make catching birds that can fly a lot easier. We often are required to rescue larger bird such as ibis and magpies that can still use their wings or birds that are trapped in stores and this type of net fits the bill. It can be set up and left to capture the bird easily. The committee plans to have a few of these available for rescuers to use.

We also have some snuggle-safe and rescue cages available for purchase by carers. These are similar to a cat carry cage, made of plastic, easily cleaned and are suitable for possums and larger birds. The cost is \$35 and anyone interested can contact Sandy or Cheryl.

The committee has also approved of a new membership card which will be sent out soon for each renewing membership. The design has some tawny frogmouths on the front. Thanks again to Sandy for her design.

Under discussion was also a plan to try to keep new members engaged in our caring activities. Paul suggested that we adopt a 'buddy' scheme whereby more experienced carers could engage with new members and possibly invite them to assist with rescues or caring. It will be beneficial for those new people interested in snake and bat calls to tag along with the 'old hands' and see how it is done. So if you would be interested in being involved in becoming a buddy you could email us at nrwchotline@gmail.com.

Lastly, Our AGM is coming up and you may like to consider becoming involved. We would welcome anyone interested in nominating for positions on the committee. Feel free to discuss this with any of the members and we will be happy to discuss the positions with you.

Jenny

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will be held on Sunday 25th of October at the Rocky Creek Dam picnic area Dunoon.
(GPS coordinates: 28°38'15.7"S 153°20'47.5"E or -28.637703, 153.346515)

There are gas bbqs in the picnic area.

More details will be advised by email or check with the Hotline prior to the date.

Nomination forms will be available for committee positions.

Donation Thanks

By Sandy Norris



Thanks to the following people for the cash donations we received during the 2014-2015 financial year. NRWC received just over **\$9000** from these generous people:

Anonymous, Wendy Attrill, Pat Barnidge, Libby Barry, Alison Bath, Brian Bayley, Lorraine Black, Rebecca Blair-Hickman, Paul Cheeseman, Jennie Clowes, Alyssia Cross, Andrew Davis, Eden at Byron, Fiona Fennamore, Pamela Foster, Greg Alderson & Associates, Helen Herman, Ann Hewett, Kelly Hewitt, Lyn Hunt, Joe Oram & Associates, Kay Johnson, FW & JD Kemp, Connie Kerr - Batsonline fundraiser for Casino Heat event orphan bats, Jackie Kirby, William Knowles, Wendy Lawrence, KA Manning, Des Marshall, Carlene Marthick, Myee Michael, Louise Miller, Sharon Miller, Steven Miller, Barbara Muller, Sandra Norris, Margaret Northam, A Payne, Ritchies IGA, Valerie Shields, Rhonda Sly, Roxanne Smith, Jenny Staples, Sue, Jude Sutherland, Raija Toivanen, Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers - Indiegogo Casino heat event orphan bats fundraiser by Julie-Anne Bauer, Meg Walker, Amanda Wallace, Lyn Wallace, Sue Williams, June Willis, Peter Winch, Wolfgang, Brendan & Zea.

Sandy

Quiz Answers



1. Once Bittern, twice shy! There are three Bitterns in Australia: the Australian, the Black and the Little.
2. The Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianinus*, one of the cuckoo family, differs from other Australian cuckoos in making its own nest and rearing its own young (From: Field Guide to Australian Birds (2003) Michael Morcombe)
3. Neville William Cayley (1886–1950). (From: AH Chisholm, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cayley-neville-william-5540/text9439>, published first in hardcopy 1979, accessed online 12 June 2015.)
4. The Yellow-Billed Spoonbill so called because of its yellow bill and the Royal Spoonbill so called because of its breeding plumage, crown-like white plumes on the back of its head and nape.
5. The Black Kite *Milvus migrans*. (From: <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Milvus-migrans> accessed online 13 August 2015.)
6. The Glossy Ibis so called because its wing feathers are gloriously iridescent, the Australian White Ibis, and the Straw Necked Ibis named for its straight yellow breast plumes. (From Australian Bird Names – A complete Guide by Ian Fraser and Jeannie Gray.)
7. The Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo gigas*. The world's largest kingfisher.
8. In no particular order – Willy Wagtail, Magpie, Magpie Lark, Pied Currawong and Pied Butcherbird.
9. The Paradise Riflebird *Ptilorus paradiseus*.
10. In termite mounds.

Paul



Happenings

By: Jenny Staples

Our hotline, which functions 24 hours a day 7 days a week is still having a relatively quiet time for rescues with only a few calls per shift. However, with my local magpies and lorikeets starting their nest building and renovations of tree hollows, I expect that it won't be long before the springtime rush is upon us.

Winter is a good time to revise what you have in your rescue box or basket, checking if there are essential items you may need when the call comes through to go on a rescue. Towels hot water bottle and pouches as well as an old blanket are needed especially for road side accidents of macropods and possums. A sturdy set of gloves is a must and plastic gloves are always handy for messy situations. Occasionally we have kind people who donate linen to our group so if you are in need of some new towels etc. check with Cheryl to see if there are any stored for you to use.

The quiet time is also a great opportunity to start helping on the hotline roster. We are always in need of people to help with this vital part of our organisation. Covering just one shift a week or a fortnight can make things easier on the rest of the team especially when some are away or unable to do their allotted time slot. We are keen to have as many people involved as possible so if you have any spare time even just a few hours a week please consider contacting us and we will organise free training for you. This only takes one or two hours and you will learn heaps about dealing with the public and helping our wildlife friends.

Six of our new members have recently been trained. We welcomed Annie, Hayden, Rochelle, Jackie, India and Penelope to the team. One of these may ring you soon for a rescue. We hope that they will enjoy being on the roster and contributing to this essential activity.

Happy caring until next issue.

Jenny

On-line Membership Form

By Sandy Norris

The NRWC management committee have agreed to providing an online membership form with online payment options. This is intended to make it easier for members to complete and renew their membership, especially when there are so many members who don't even have a printer nowadays.

The form is filled in online with payment via paypal. If you don't have a paypal account, you can pay using your credit/debit card: <http://www.wildlifecarers.com/how-you-can-help/membership/>



Rescued Conure

Article by: Paul Cheeseman

Pictures by: Nat Wunsch

There is a pet shop in Lismore that sees its role as a defender of pets and their right to a full and happy life.

I discovered this on a call-out to NORCO in South Lismore on 24 June 2015: a Lovebird was perched over their door. I drove up, flashed my NRW Card at the crowd that had gathered, and said "let me through, I am a wildlife carer". Then with my trusty fishing net - which has yet to catch a fish, I caught the bird. Such was the tension and drama of the moment that several spectators fainted on the spot.

Then it was time to ring Cheryl, our Bird Coordinator. Cheryl advised me to take the bird to R&J Aquatics and Pets in Keen St, Lismore. One of our members, Nat, works at the shop.

NORCO wanted to put up a FOUND poster and I mentioned this to co-owner John Bailey. John advised against this as posters provide an opportunity for unscrupulous scalliwags to claim the (valuable) animal. Instead John said he would put up a Facebook post about the bird. A photo and post were up within 15 minutes.

I was intrigued at this glimpse of Lismore life and on 30 June 2015, instead of doing my tax return, I found myself back at the shop for a longer chat with John. What I found was a man with strong views on animal care and the responsibilities of pet shops. I also found that the Lovebird was a Pineapple Conure. Conure being the aviarists' name for a small parrot or large parakeet belonging to either of two genera found in Central and South America.

R&J Aquatics and Pets is owned by Rheia and John. They took over the previous business at this location in September 2012. John told me he had been breeding fish for many years before this and had run the Australia's largest on-line aquarium forum.

The business has a coat of arms and a motto. The motto *Bestia Pro Vita* – Animals for Life reflects their principal that to keep a pet is to have a commitment for the life of that animal. To achieve this R&J try to ensure that prospective pet owners are capable of caring for the intended pet.

John also stated that they sell no gimmicky or hazardous equipment, that they educate pet owners on how to keep pets in optimal condition, eg free fortnightly talks on fish-care are held in the store, they work with breeders – they know the provenance of every animal.



Every breeder is visited and briefed and spot checks are made of animal rearing facilities. *(I asked John why the business did not document any of these practices: he said he preferred verbally communicating with customers.)* They also provide a service for rescued animals.

Rescued animals consist of **found animals**, such as the Conure, and **relinquished animals** that are handed over by owners. R&J has received thousands of fish, 300 rabbits, 300 guinea pigs and 200 birds. R&J does not deal with cats and dogs. Homes are found for all of these animals except for animals requiring euthanasia. However found and relinquished animals are treated slightly differently.

Relinquished animals can be re-homed to a suitable new owner as soon as possible. The shop makes no profit but does make a small charge for any feeding expenses. Occasionally John has interceded to rescue animals that were being maltreated eg 15 rabbits kept in, and being sold from, a car boot.

The majority of relinquished animals are due to the owner not having been properly aware of the animal's

Continued on page 13



Flying Fox Report

Report and picture by: Cheryl Cochran

Still not a lot of rescues during winter with good weather and plenty of trees flowering to provide food for flying foxes.

The unusual thing this year is the number of out-of-season young flying foxes being rescued. We have taken five into care since the end of June, two blacks and three greys, ranging in age from just thirteen weeks old. We do occasionally get black flying foxes having babies out of season but it's very unusual for Grey-headed flying foxes, their normal birthing season is from October to December.

Our first one is a grey girl who was rescued from barbed-wire on top of a security fence around Byron High School on the 22nd of June. She was just thirteen and a half weeks old and weighed only 285gms. It was very distressing and difficult for Lou and Valerie who rescued her as she was caught on the wing and her belly. Fortunately MyVet at Byron were able to anaesthetise her to remove the wire entangled in her tummy. We decided to send her to Currumbin Wildlife hospital as the hole was quite large and she also had some mouth damage. They

weren't able to stitch her wound but glued it together to prevent infection. Due to a possible fracture at the tip of her mouth she had to have a soft fruit/liquid diet for a while which consisted of custard apples, juice and yoghurt which she loved!



The fence around Byron High has entangled around ten flying foxes in recent years mainly due to being in such close proximity to food trees in the Arakwal National park which surrounds three sides of the school. Lou took up the challenge to get the problem resolved. Lou organised a meeting with the school Principal and a representative for the National Parks & Wildlife office in Byron Bay. It was resolved to replace the barbed-wire around the school with plain wire and NPWS along with the Rural Fire Service will remove all vegetation within a few metres of the fence around the school. Once this is completed there

should be no more entanglements. Lou is now tackling a similar situation at Red Devil Oval in Byron, let's hope she has a win there also. Go Lou!

Cheryl

Rescued Conure

Continued.

care requirements or biology. Fish for example require the right size of aquarium otherwise their growth is stunted.

Found animals are posted on Facebook and kept at the shop. If a bird, it is quarantined at the shop and is checked by a local bird expert. After two weeks it is housed with one of R&J's breeders. If after six months the bird is unclaimed then it is given to the breeder. No payment is required. NB native birds are treated differently to comply with regulations. Only about 2% of found animals are reunited with their owners.

John is extremely concerned about scammers claiming and on-selling found animals. Regarding the Conure, John stated that there had been multiple fraudulent claims of ownership. The Conure is now with a breeder.

In researching this story I found out that many pet stores e.g. Petbarn are now providing rehoming centres or adoption centres where they partner with rescue organisations who provide rescue animals seeking new homes. An adoption fee is usually charged which is paid to the rescue organisation.

Paul

Feral Cats

Article and picture by: Rowan Wigmore

The Northern Rivers Echo of August 6th 2015 ran a front-page article about the rise of feral cats and their devastation of local wildlife. I thought it timely to recount my experiences with these dangerous predators and detail what is being done federally and locally to remedy the problem.

I want to make it clear at the outset that I am not a hater of cats. I have respect for their evolution which has enabled them to be an apex predator, a social animal and a domestic pet. Cats are loved by many people and bring them comfort and companionship and in some cases a reason for living. My late parents had an indoor cat, which they loved dearly, and she was a big part of their life. Friends of mine who live in the hills beyond Mullumbimby are cat lovers and have provided their moggies with a 'Cat-Hilton' on the verandah where the cats can move freely within and enter the house, yet are protected from the wildlife and vice versa. I do however take issue with irresponsible pet owners who are ignorant or wilful in allowing their cat to roam or, worse still, dumping their former pets when they are no longer cute or wanted.

So what is a feral cat? Prior to Europeans settling in Australia there were no cats. Land-based apex predators were indigenous Australians, dingoes, the Tasmanian tiger and the Tasmanian devils. Europeans brought with them their domestic animals. Some were released intentionally like the rabbit, carp and fox, some came unintentionally like rats and some were dumped when no longer wanted like the alpine horses. Australian native animals had never encountered such animals and were poorly equipped to evolve or deal with these new predators. So too it is with cats. They are dumped, left behind or escape households to fend for themselves in the wild. They become feral.

Thirty species of Australian endemic mammals have been made extinct over the last 200 years attributed solely to feral cats. This is far more than for any other continent over this period although According to the IUCN, only three countries have lost more animal species than Australia. (The USA has lost 266!) Ours include the Pig-footed bandicoot, *Chaeropus ecaudatus*, Desert bandicoot, *Perameles eremiana*, Lesser bilby, *Macrotis leucura*, Desert bettong, *Bettongia anhydra*, Nullarbor dwarf bettong, *Bettongia pusilla*, Desert rat-kangaroo, *Caloprymnus campestris*, Broad-faced potoroo, *Potorous platyops*, Kuluwarri (central hare-wallaby), *Lagorchestes asomatus*, Crescent nailtail wallaby, *Onychogalea lunata*,

White-footed rabbit-rat, *Conilurus albipes*, Capricorn rabbit-rat, *Conilurus capricornensis*, Lesser stick-nest rat, *Leporillus apicalis*, Short-tailed hopping-mouse, *Notomys amplius*, Long-tailed hopping-mouse, *Notomys longicaudatus*, Large-eared hopping-mouse, *Notomys macrotis*, Darling Downs hopping-mouse, *Notomys mordax*, Broad-cheeked hopping-mouse, *Notomys robustus*, Long-eared mouse, *Pseudomys auritus*, Blue-grey mouse, *Pseudomys glaucus* and Gould's mouse, *Pseudomys gouldii*.

The ABC news site reports that Environment Minister, Greg Hunt had declared that feral cats are environmental public enemy number one and with good reason. It is impossible to obtain very accurate numbers but estimates place the number of feral cats somewhere between 8 and 20 million. – About one for every human. Each of these consumes a minimum of five to ten native animals per day. That's 40 to 200 million skinks, geckos, birds and small furry mammals eaten every day by feral cats! Cats are known not to eat all that they kill so these numbers are likely to be higher. In response to the clear and present threat posed by cats, Minister Hunt has set an ambitious goal of virtually eradicating feral cats from Australia within the next decade.

Cats have recently been removed from Macquarie Island through an integrated program of baiting and trapping and while this has proved the benefits of eradication, the task on the mainland is significantly more difficult. New cat-specific baiting technology is promising to increase uptake rates and reduce non-target impacts and there is mounting evidence that healthy dingo and Tasmanian devil populations can suppress cats and foxes. Organisations like Arid Recovery and Australian Wildlife Conservancy have shown that inside predator-proof fences most native mammals breed well, giving hope for recovery.

I first saw a feral cat when living in Lismore in 2008. I had set-up an infrared camera to video activities in the garden and while the possums were the highlight of the video, I was shocked at the amount of cat activity at night. As a keen gardener I had encountered cat scats and was not pleased at the prospect of potential toxoplasmosis infection from a neighbour's wandering animal, nor was I happy about the threat they posed for the lizards, snakes and small mammals that lived in the garden.

What to do was the next problem. I obtained a humane trap for around \$100 from a trapping supplier on the

Feral Cats

Article and picture by: Rowan Wigmore

Gold Coast, and placed it down the side of the house. Next morning I was 'greeted' by the howls of one of the most vicious, horrible and filthy animals that I had ever seen – an entire feral tomcat about the size of a small Labrador. This was not a domesticated cat and certainly not something anyone would want to be left in a room with. I called the Lismore Council ranger who checked it for a microchip (there was none) and took it away. The ranger explained that animals that are feral and cannot be identified are put down. Those that are 'chipped' are reunited with their owners after verifying that all vaccinations and desexing has taken place and unclaimed animals can be re-homed if appropriate.

Is it legal to trap a cat? The Lismore City Council website has some information about stray cats and it refers to the NSW Companion Animals Act of 1996. This act details a number of provisions but 'Section 32 - Action to protect persons and animals against cats' states: "(1) Any person may lawfully seize a cat if that action is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person or animal (other than vermin) from injury or death." I recommend you do your own research if intending to trap stray cats.

During my time in 2008 I handed 6 cats to the ranger and only one was returned to its owner.

After we moved to Melbourne and settled in the quiet country town of Gisborne we bought a house. On moving in I noticed the distinctive smell of tomcat urine near the front door. Time for the trap! In a 3-year period I trapped

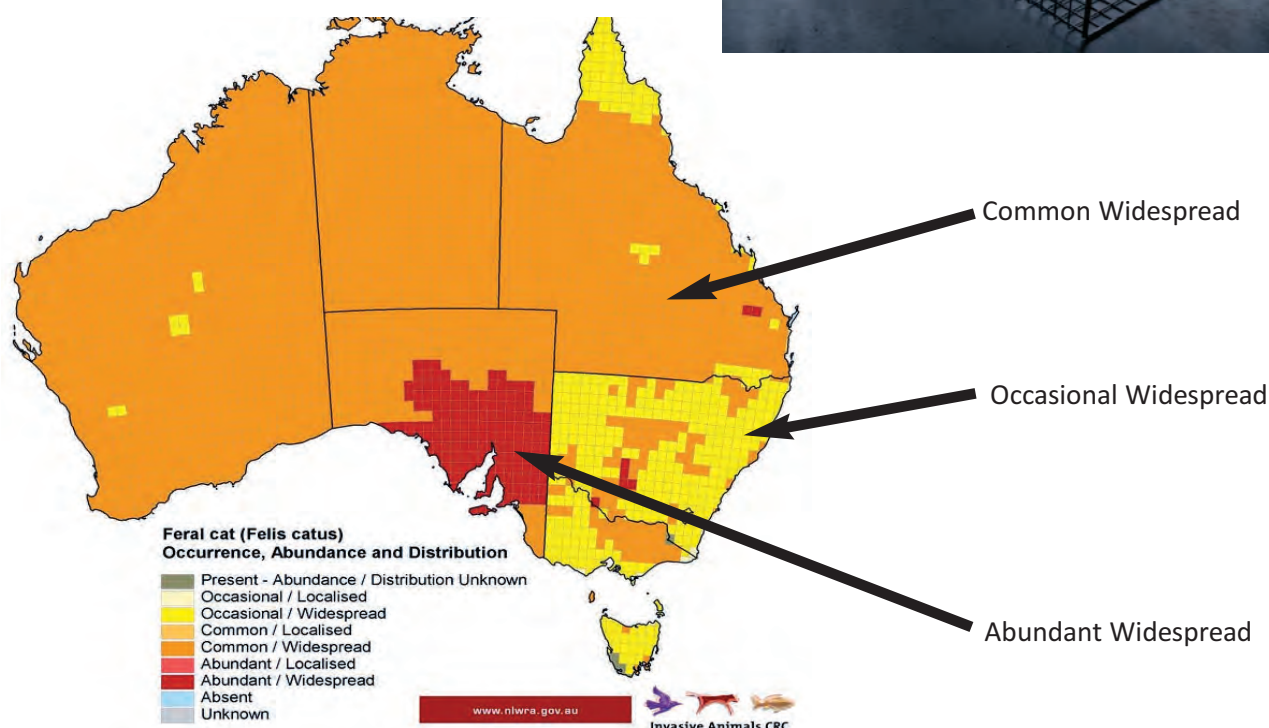
24 cats and only one was not feral and returned to its owner. That's an average of one every six weeks! The small birds like finches and blue wrens soon returned.

Clearly there are feral cats everywhere as the National Land & Water Resources Audit map shows. You can do your part by trapping on your property. The NRWC has two traps that are suitable for cats and the Lismore Council will loan traps to landholders. Why not try one and see how many are in your area? – The wildlife will certainly thank you. The best way not to have feral cats is for pet owners to be responsible and desex, vaccinate and microchip their pets and to keep them confined – especially at night.

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/caa1998174/

http://www.australianwildlife.org/media/239018/20150726_courier-mail_its-war-on-killer-feral-cats-low-res.jpg

Rowan



Ed by rowan wignore

The weather is warming and we are coming into the busy season for wildlife rescues. I saw my first python in my yard recently. It was moving slowly into a garden bed and was upsetting the noisy miners and magpies. I watched the snake for a while as it climbed a shrub and looked out at various locations getting its bearings. I stayed with the snake, as I feared it may cross the road and I wanted to ensure its safe passage. I pondered whether many other people would have cared for this creature enough to do this and I thought about some of the animal interactions with humans that have recently been in the news.

Sharks.

These magnificent creatures are maligned as much as snakes. Recently there have been many shark attacks in the news and several 'close shaves'. As usual, everyone is an expert on sharks and most are willing to share their views on the solution to the 'problem' which generally means culling. I am totally opposed to the culling of sharks. The Western Australia cull has had no impact and it is a pointless slaughter of yet another animal we share the planet with. There is a reason that so many are coming closer to the beaches and we must find it. Devices that emit an electrical field are known to be an effective deterrent and aerial spotting can alert beachgoers to the presence of a shark. We don't need to do this from an expensive helicopter, what about tethered balloons or drones? We have the technology and we have brains. We should use them.

Whale.

In early August on Sydney's middle harbour a Southern Right Whale with fishing line and plastic garbage stuck in its mouth closely approached a fishing vessel as if asking for help. The fishers were able to get close enough to remove the obstruction and the whale slapped the water with its fin as if to say 'thanks' before swimming off. Marine experts said that the behaviour displayed was that of a relaxed animal freed from its predicament.

Magpie.

The Fairfax press ran a story about a young magpie called 'Penguin' whose antics saved a family. Penguin was an orphaned bird raised by a family who themselves had suffered hardship when the mother was paralysed after a near fatal fall. The story of Penguin's rescue and the incredible joy and strength she gives to those who helped her survive demonstrates that, however bleak things seem, compassion, friendship and support can come from unexpected quarters. This is an amazing story of hope and courage with some incredible photos. See for yourself and I bet you won't have a dry eye!

<http://www.penguinbloom.com/>

<http://www.thisiscolossal.com/2015/03/penguin-the-magpie-cameron-bloom/>

Rowan

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