



wildlife matters...

Our Little Miracle by Barb Potts

A cat has nine lives but how many does a baby bird have?

When walking my dog Sparkie in a leash-free park around 6.30am one day, he stopped and sniffed the ground, as dogs do. He looked at me then back at the ground numerous times.

Sparkie has a habit of rolling in the most unmentionable things so I called him away. He wouldn't come but kept looking at the ground and then at me. Determined that he was not rolling in anything, I demanded that he come to me. He came about a metre and then went back to the same spot. Again he looked at the ground and at me several times. It was then that I decided I needed to go and have a look at what he had found.

On the ground was a baby bird, which appeared to be dead. I turned to walk away and heard 'cheep cheep'. Obviously it wasn't dead so I picked it up. The poor little thing had no feathers, no down, eyes closed and was frozen.

I don't know a great deal about tiny baby birds so decided to ring Cindy, a Vet Nurse that I knew very well, to get some advice. Cindy very generously offered to take care of the baby.

On arrival at Pendle Hill Vet Hospital the baby was extremely swollen and bubbles of air could be seen in his chest. The vet diagnosed a puncture to the trachea and each time the bird breathed some of the air went to the lungs and some to the chest cavity. Little hope of survival but it was decided to, 'give it a chance'.

The Vet inserted a needle into the chest and the air was extracted. A heat box was supplied by North West Branch to keep the little mite warm even though it was not expected to live.

Next day: Eating well and no air in chest. Cindy called him 'a little miracle'. Following day: The miracle was eating well and no air in chest. A week later: Eating well, eyes starting to open, feathers developing under the skin. In Cindy's words, 'a very happy bird'. And what is it: A Rainbow Lorikeet and he has been named 'Bubbles'.

First miracle: That Sparkie found it.

Second miracle: Sparkie didn't hurt it and made me go and look.

Third miracle: That it survived one of the coldest September nights in Sydney.



Fourth miracle: That I took it to Cindy who is so dedicated to helping all animals.

Fifth miracle: The Vet was able to extract the air in the chest.

It just goes to show you that some people care enough (the Vet and Cindy) to help even the tiniest and most vulnerable of creatures.

My many thanks to Cindy, who I believe is the best Vet Nurse in Sydney, and the Vet for helping me.

Postscript: This is not the first baby that Sparkie has found. He came into the lounge room one night with a baby brushtail attached to his neck. Again he made no attempt to hurt it and the little one grew up and was released.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:	
Going Cuckoo	2
Netting Notes	2
Cheeky	2
Bushfire & Animal Rescues	3
Wildlife & Burns	4-5
Member's Minute	6
Summer Heat Affects All	6
Is It Ethical	7
Howard's Work Recognised	7
Poem: The Neighbourhood	7
Attention All Members	8
Training Schedule	8

I held it in my hands to try and warm it up while I returned to the car, wrapped it in a possum pouch and zipped it inside my jacket. I continued walking while the little thing warmed up.

Going Cuckoo by Irene Callahan

A Saturday morning – 11am

I was sitting at my computer, in my office which has a lovely close outlook on mature trees and shrubs, including a large gumtree at the back of my property but just over the fence-line in my neighbour's garden.

All was calm until, suddenly, a huge fracas developed. Currawongs and a large flock of noisy miners, were flying everywhere in a frenzy, swooping each other and calling urgently, accompanied by a raucous and distinctive 'kawking' which I immediately recognised as a channel-billed cuckoo. In order to find out what all the commotion was about, I went out into the garden.

There I located the cuckoo sitting in the gumtree... but moving occasionally from branch to branch and taking no heed at all of the chaos going on around him. I was already aware of a currawong nest in the gumtree, but noticed Mum was no longer

sitting on it and had joined the fray.

Then I noticed a second cuckoo in a different part of the tree and observed that the markings on the chest and head were slightly different. I realised immediately they were a pair, and not a young one being fed by the currawongs, as I initially thought might be the case. From different parts of the tree, they were each making their way towards the currawong nest. Currawongs were swooping them and miners were swooping both the currawongs and the cuckoos which seemed undeterred.

Suddenly one of the cuckoos landed on the currawong nest, followed fairly promptly by its partner. I then saw, to my dismay, one of the channel-bills take and swallow two eggs. Its partner grabbed what I could tell was a newly hatched chick. All this time the currawongs and noisys were still swooping and calling.

Once the eggs and chick had been consumed, the channel-bills very quickly left the scene and everything quietened down... a wildlife drama unfolding before my very eyes. I felt very sorry for the currawongs, but somewhat consoled myself with the belief that 'what goes around, comes around!'

A couple of hours later, I checked the currawong nest and found to my surprise, one of the currawongs was back sitting on it and the following day... she was still there. However Google told me that currawongs lay only three eggs, so what was she sitting on?

I believe that the female cuckoo must have laid an egg of her own, prior to the fracas, and therefore unobserved by me.

Time will tell!

Netting Entanglements & Netting of Fruit Trees

Netting on backyard fruit trees is often put up incorrectly, leading to unnecessary injury and death of native wildlife from entanglement in loose netting as well as ineffective protection of fruit from birds and animals.

Many birds and animals are rescued from backyard netting every year. The pain and suffering of birds and animals and the many hours of rescue work involved in

rescuing from entanglements can be avoided by using appropriate materials for netting and by installing nets tightly over frames and trees.

Netting flyers which outline how to correctly protect backyard fruit trees are available from the Wildlife Office. All bat carers have been sent a pdf version. Please make the flyers available at community education events and leave at rescue sites that

involve entanglements.

Pdf versions of the flyer can be downloaded from the Sydney Wildlife website. Alternatively contact Wendy by email wendysmws@gmail.com and she'll send you one. Similarly, if you would like larger stocks of the flyers for community education or other events, again contact **Wendy by email and she'll arrange to get stocks to you.**

Cheeky! by Anne Cherry

I occasionally treat my local magpies, in the vain hope they might adopt any youngsters I have in my care. They have become cheeky and, this afternoon, I heard some thumping around on the back deck –and thought it was the wind blowing the awnings.

But no! – it was a magpie that had come into the house, picked up my iPod from the kitchen bench, taken it out on the back deck and



was playing with it. I went out to rescue the iPod and the magpie took off with it, the earphone cord in its beak and the actual iPod trailing along behind! Fortunately the iPod came away from the earphone cord, after banging against the railing, and landed on the ground.

However, the earphones were last seen heading off into the distance. They are going to make an **interesting addition to the magpie's nest!**

Bushfires and Animal Rescues

With bushfire season here, it is timely to outline a few facts regarding bush fire behaviour and how wildlife rescuers can look after themselves when conducting rescues in bushfire affected areas. The following information has been approved by the NSW Rural Fire Service:

First and foremost, never enter a bush fire zone without the relevant authority. This can be gained by speaking with the incident controller or one of the fire fighters at the scene. Having said that, we all know that animals sometimes continue to emerge from bushfire affected areas long after a fire has passed and also that the dangers from a bushfire remain well after a fire has passed. Falling trees are just one of many hazards presented in the days and weeks after a fire.

About bush and grass fires:

Let's start by talking about fire intensity.

The term "fire intensity" refers to the amount of heat being generated by a fire. The higher the intensity, the harder the fire is to control and the more damage is likely to be caused. Fire intensity depends on three major factors: vegetation, weather and topography (or landscape).

The intensity of a fire increases in proportion to the amount of available fuel. The more available fuel (vegetation), the greater the fire intensity. Forest and scrub fires are intense and generate significant heat. Grass fires move quickly and are often influenced by wind changes quicker than forest or scrub fires.

Aside from hot dry weather, wind speed and decreasing relative humidity also make a contribution to the increase in the rate of spread of fire and the resultant fire intensity. As fuels dry out ignition is easier and the rate of spread of the fire increases.

Fire behaviour:

Wind speed is one of the most important factors in determining fire behaviour in dry fuels. Wind acts on a fire in the following ways:

- Flames are tilted forward which provides radiation and pre-heating of unburnt fuels.
- Wind increases the chances of direct flame contact with fuels ahead of the fire.
- Wind maintains the oxygen supply to the combustion zone.

Wind shifts the "convection column" ahead of the fire so that the convective energy of the fire reinforces and increases the wind speed in the flame zone. This provides additional momentum to fire spread.

Wind blows burning embers ahead of the fire which can result in creating spot fires well ahead of the main fire front.

Fires burn more quickly and with greater intensity up slopes and hills than on flat ground or downhill. If caught, never run up hill from a fire. If attempting to run away from a fire that is spreading uphill – run to the side until you reach an area that is low in bush fire fuels, such as burnt ground. Remember however that you should not be on an active fire ground without permission and without being accompanied by a member of the emergency services.

Some hints on how to look after yourself in bush fire areas:

Looking after yourself is crucial. If you end up getting burnt or dehydrated, you may not be able to assist the very critters that you went to rescue.

Clothing:

If you are conducting a wildlife rescue anywhere near a bushfire or where a



bushfire has been you should wear appropriate clothing. This includes natural fibre long pants (such as jeans), light long-sleeved wool shirt or jumper or close-weave cotton overalls. Wear good, solid footwear (preferably leather), gloves and a hat. If possible take a damp tea towel to breathe through.

Keep hydrated:

Keep up your fluid intake as high air temperatures, and the added stress of wearing extra clothing to shield against radiant heat, may combine to make you sweat heavily. Even after a bushfire the environment can remain hot. It is important to keep yourself hydrated with water – soft drinks and alcohol are not appropriate. The darker yellow your urine becomes, the more dehydrated you are likely to be. Drink water at every opportunity - even if you don't feel thirsty.

Finally, **lead by example** and have a Bushfire Survival Plan at the ready for your own home. These can be downloaded from the NSW Rural Fire Service website: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/file_system/attachments/Attachment_BushFireSurvivalPlan.pdf Page 18 of the plan provides further information about appropriate clothing.



A recent call to the office went like this:

Caller: *I've found a stray cat in my garden and he has had five kittens.*

Rescue Hotline volunteer: *He has had five kittens has he?*

Caller: *Yes, that's right.*

Rescue Hotline volunteer: *I'm sorry, but we only deal with wild animals.*

Caller: *Well it's a wild cat.*



Wildlife and Burns extract from a paper by Dr Anne Fowler

With the bush fire season almost upon us it is timely to be discussing injuries caused by fire. Burns are not solely the domain of bushfires – many a paw has been burnt as a result of walking across hot barbeques. Acknowledging that some Sydney Wildlife members will have already completed burns courses, following is some burns information reproduced with the kind permission of Dr Anne Fowler. A copy of the full paper from which this information has been extracted is available from the members' section of the Sydney Wildlife website.

Assessment of Burns

The first thing to understand is the role of skin – from this we can appreciate what happens when it is damaged or lost. Skin is the largest organ in the body. It is responsible for keeping fluid in the body. It acts as a barrier to invasion by external organisms – such as bacteria and fungi. It provides a surface that allows us to feel our environment, without being damaged

by it. The body is continually replacing the skin – it takes 12 weeks to grow from the deepest level to being shed as dead cells.

Without skin, fluid and electrolytes are lost from the body. The body requires more energy to replace the skin, so metabolic requirements increase. Susceptibility to infection occurs. Movement becomes painful and further loss of blood and tissue is likely as the underlying tissues are unable to cope with trauma. There are a few things to consider when assessing burns:

- Depth of the burn
- Extent of the burn
- Location of the burn

Depth of the burn:

This was described as first, second and third degree burns. However, the terminology below is descriptive and able to be understood by people without training in burns.

1. **Superficial burns:** involve the outermost layer of the skin. This is very painful. The skin is red, but not blistered. This was a first degree burn. The best example of this burn is when you burn yourself on a hotplate. It is uncommon that this burn is seen in wildlife. Bird skin does not blister as prominently as mammalian skin as it lacks collagen.
2. **Partial thickness burns:** involve the deeper levels of the skin. It is painful and was known as second degree burns. There are two levels of partial thickness burns:

Superficial partial thickness: The skin begins to blister but will heal within 2 weeks without scarring.

Deep partial thickness: The skin is blotchy with red or white areas. Blisters may be present. Nerves have been destroyed so it is not painful. This burn will take 2 – 4 weeks to heal with possible scarring.



3. **Full thickness burn:** destroys the full depth of skin, including tissues below. This will take at least 2 – 4 weeks to heal – dependent on the size of the burn. Escharotomy which involves cutting away the dead skin and suturing fresh edges together may be required for areas with full thickness burns.

Extent of the Burns

The amount of skin that has been burned needs to be considered. As carers and vets, we are unable to induce month-long comas, do extensive skin grafting and repetitive surgeries on these animals. The welfare of the animal must remain our prime concern. It is not fair for the animal to suffer with no chance for rehabilitation. So an assessment of the severity of the burns is needed.

- Burns to less than 15% of the body have a reasonable prognosis
- Burns to 15 – 50 % of the body have a poor prognosis
- Burns to over 50% of the body have no prognosis and prompt euthanasia is required.

Location of the Burns:

For wildlife, whose release is dependent on a functional body, some locations of burns may impact on rehabilitation.

- Damage near joints where scar tissue restricts the movement of limbs or digits has a great effect on our tree-dwelling marsupials. This is also pertinent around face structures such as eyelids and mouth.
- Nail bed damage is significant. Nails are used to climb trees to eat and escape predation, to groom, to fight, to care for young. An animal may cope with one nail lost on a hand, but more than one nail lost may affect its survival.
- Burns may be hidden by feathers and the true extent of the burn is not appreciated.

First Aid... First

The entire animal should be assessed and treated. The following things are important in the procedure for treating burns.

Examine the Animal & Collect Vital Signs

- What is the mental status of the animal? Is it bright, alert, dull, or quiet?



Koala in rehab: a survivor of the Victorian bushfire but 'many a paw has been burnt by walking across a hot barbeque'

- What is its breathing like? Fast, harsh, gurgly, or moist? We are looking for animals with smoke inhalation or burns.
- What is its heart rate? A shocky animal will have a fast heart rate.
- Pinch the skin. Does it tent? This indicates at least 10% dehydration.
- What is the gum colour? Is it pink or white? What is the refill time when you press on the gums? It should be 1 second; longer indicates shock.
- Is a joey present? If it is dead, remove to prevent infection of the pouch. If the joey is alive, and the mother lactating, then an individual

assessment is made as to whether to keep the joey and mother together – based on severity of burns.

- When possible, weigh the animal – to gauge future losses or gains.

Shock & Dehydration:

Treat for shock and treat for dehydration. Where necessary get to a vet as quickly as possible.

For access to Dr Anne Fowler's paper please access the members' section of the website (www.sydneywildlife.org.au), log into the members only section and go to "online resources" from where you will be able to download this and a number of other papers written by Dr Fowler.

New Brochures

Our new brochure has been available for some time now. Stocks are available in the Wildlife office and some branches have taken larger stocks to ensure brochures are available locally.

If you require larger stocks of brochures (for events etc) or would like some brochure stands for use at displays or to place in vet surgeries, please liaise with Wendy via email wendysmws@gmail.com and arrangements will be made to get a delivery to you.

Leaving a brochure with MOPs after a rescue is good PR. The brochure outlines the work done by Sydney Wildlife; makes suggestions about what MOPs can do to help native wildlife; outlines ways in which MOPs can get involved and also advises how donations can be made. If a MOP is not home when the rescue is conducted, consider popping a brochure under the door.



Member's Minute

This edition we invite Philippa Hoffman from the Northern Districts Branch to tell us about herself. **"I was one of the original members of Sydney Wildlife. I still remember Mary Laws encouraging me to come across to Sydney Wildlife; I went to the inaugural meeting and was convinced. When Sydney Wildlife first formed I was working full time and I did every Saturday morning in the wildlife office. After I stopped working, I changed to Friday mornings and still can be found in the office every Friday morning.**

Working in the office is very educational because you can learn so much from the phone calls you take. At times it can be hair raising too – some members of the public can have very interesting ideas about native wildlife.

I have always enjoyed helping out with displays and speaking to members of the public and especially new-comers to Australia. It can be very rewarding. I've also

been on a number of committees including the Training Committee. I try to help out wherever I can.

In terms of animal care, I tend to mostly care for possums. Originally I mostly cared for ringtails but in the last few years I have developed a love for brush-tails. The two things I enjoy most about being a member of Sydney Wildlife are looking after animals and educating the public."

Summer Heat Affects Us All! by Sonja Elwood

During peak summer periods when temperatures are high, consider providing some sort of water source for any wildlife visiting your garden. This includes those that may fly and those that may visit at ground level.

Reptiles, including snakes, like all of us can suffer from dehydration and heat exposure. They also have a very keen sense of smell and when desperate may approach your home attracted by the smell of water or your pool. A

strategically positioned mini-pond or low tub of water in a shaded spot on your garden perimeter may be just the thing to prevent these animals coming too close to your home.

Another clever innovation for those that own pools are escape ramps for wildlife that may have become trapped in your pool whilst seeking water. Many larger pet stores are now selling these relatively inexpensive ramps as well as a new skimmer which also has an inbuilt escape ramp.



Above: Scamper Ramp



Above: Critter Skimmer with escape ramp (available in square and round designs)

Is it Ethical? asks Lindy Stacker

As a concerned and committed Sydney Wildlife carer, I have noticed that at carers' courses and in some of our printed information, we recommend carnivorous wildlife in our care be fed kangaroo meat. I find this most disturbing. In my view this is uninformed, dispassionate and unethical.

I consider the support of commercial consumption of kangaroo, either by eating it ourselves, or by feeding it to wildlife or our pets, is to endorse the inherent cruelty and other related dogma generated by government and vested interests.

The cruelty argument needs to be explained. When females are shot, their at-foot and in-pouch young die a horrible death. The at-foot young will die without **their mother's protection from predation**, starvation or exposure. In-pouch joeys may be killed by decapitation or having their throats slit.

If not killed outright, some adults face a slow and painful death. Some commercial shooters have told me that a clean head shot is a hard thing to achieve, especially with the first shot. All this pain and misery is inflicted upon wildlife in the name of profit.

In addition to the cruelty argument, please consider the following facts:

- Pet meat and **ESPECIALLY** kangaroo meat is treated with sulphur dioxide to disguise smell and to preserve meat. In some cases, pets have died due to the accumulated affects of sulphur dioxide. Dr Malik (University of Sydney) has written extensively about this in many of his published scientific papers.
- Kangaroos are killed for profit and seen as a mere 'renewable resource' by industry and governments. This should not be accepted any more than the culling of whales, seals, emus or penguins should be accepted.
- If a conservationist approach (being concerned with population numbers) is taken, what happens when academics argue that many species of wildlife have increased in population? Is it then OK to eat those species?

Kangaroo populations **are** declining. In 2001, the kangaroo population was accepted at 57 million; in 2010 it was 25 million. This year's estimates are predicted to have declined further. This suggests that in 10 years more than 50% of the

population has died and not recovered. Quotas have never been higher.

Current research exonerates what animal welfare groups and ecologists have been stating for decades. That is that kangaroos:

- do not destroy habitat.
- do not drink more than sheep!
- do not breed in periods of drought.
- their competition is minimal at worst.
- their ecological importance has been seriously under valued.

In my view, Sydney Wildlife should not be seen as being out of touch with current data or humane and progressive ideologies. Academics are now conceding that the impact of introduced animals and poor farming methods are more problematic than the 'perceived' competition from kangaroos.

I ask that you please consider these facts and the ethics involved. I believe that Sydney Wildlife needs to make a committed statement **NOT** to condone the commercial exploitation of wildlife, which, from my perspective, means it cannot recommend the use of kangaroo meat as food for native animals in its care.

Howard's work recognised!

Many of our members will know or have heard of the wildlife vet Howard Ralph.

As part of Seniors Week celebrations, Howard has been awarded the Seniors Award for Volunteering Achievements at the 2011 Sydney North Volunteer of the Year Award Ceremony.

The Award was given for his extraordinary work and devotion to wildlife and as many of us know, he devotes so much of his time to these animals.

Congratulations Howard!

The Neighbourhood

by Peg Parish

A Heron paused along the verge en route to the little creek

Rosellas gossiped in the tree - I distinctly heard them speak

Magpies scavenged in the lawn for whatever might appeal

While currawongs watched with envy to see what they'd reveal

The Ringtails holed up in the shrub, secure and out of sight

And in the lemon-scented gum there could be bats tonight

I think this is a staging post with signs for all to see

Although I cannot read the code, the guests are fine by me

Attention all members!

Keep on the right track!

The Area Manager, Lane Cove River Area has written to Sydney Wildlife in relation to office volunteers using the service road.

The following is a direct quote from the letter, "Area staff has been observing SMWS Volunteers using the service road that enters the Park at the end of Bradfield Road, West Lindfield. As this access road is only for authorised vehicles I ask that you ensure that all volunteers are aware that **they are not permitted to use this road.**"



Please abide by the request and ensure that you stay on the right track.

What's in a name?

We don't provide public transport or forecast the weather! Our name is Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services or Sydney Wildlife for short.

Increasingly members have been observed to abbreviate our name in all sorts of ways. One increasingly common abbreviation is "Sydney Met" which makes us sound like weather forecasters. Another common abbreviation is "Sydney Metro" which makes us sound like a public transport provider! Some vets refer to us as Sydney Met.

However, to keep our corporate image intact, will members please refer to the organisation they represent as "Sydney Wildlife" and please use SMWS when abbreviating.

Release of wildlife in National Parks

All members are reminded that wildlife can only be released into national parks or reserves with the express permission of the Park Manager. If you do not seek permission you are not allowed to release the animal. This applies even if the animal was rescued from the national park.

Condition 11 of the licence under which Sydney Wildlife operates states,

"11. Approval for the proposed release of fauna into an area that is managed by the Service, even if its original encounter was within the park or reserve concerned, must be sought from the Service's manager of that park or reserve."

Constitutionally speaking.....

At the time that Sydney Wildlife was established a group of dedicated founding members worked hard to put together our current constitution. This provided a good foundation for the establishment of Sydney Wildlife. However, the times they are a changing and the constitution is ready for an overhaul to reflect contemporary thinking and practice. To this end, a working group has been formed to examine the current constitution, identify areas for change and put together recommendations to go before the whole membership.

If you are interested in being a part of the working group, please contact Jann Jeffries who is the Chair of the Inner West branch and the facilitator of the Constitution Working Group.

Scheduled Training Courses

Dates	Course	Location
In Nov/Dec	Reptiles	TBA
Feb 2012	Rescue & Care Course	Northbridge
<i>Further information available from course coordinator below</i>		
Basic Training	Jodi Lewis jodilewis236@bigpond.com	0407 813 149
Flying Fox	Helen Kennedy helen.kennedy@msn.com	0414 319 737
Macropod	Garry Marsh garrymarsh@ozemail.com.au	9456 2102 0404 214 030
Possum	Bev Young ianbevyoung@bigpond.com	9418 9063
Reptile	Helen Kennedy helen.kennedy@msn.com	0414 319 737
Raptor Care	Linda Wilson linda_wilson@bigpond.com	0409 114 100

Closing date for articles to include in newsletter:
January 15



Sydney Wildlife

Wildlife matters

Wildlife Matters is the newsletter of Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services Inc (SMWS); DECC General Licence No 10045; Charitable Fundraising Authority: 15835.

All rights reserved. The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of SMWS Inc.

Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services Inc

PO Box 78
Lindfield
Sydney
NSW 2070

Phone: 02 9413 4300
Fax: 02 9413 4399

Editor: Sue Chatfield Sub-editor: Wendy Williamson
Newsletter items mailto:news.wm@gmail.com but please ensure email subject includes Sydney Wildlife

www.sydneywildlife.org.au