

WINTER 2009 NEWSLETTER

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Coordinator's Report

I think we are all hoping for rain as we leave behind a very dry autumn. Perth has experienced not only its warmest May on record (since record keeping commenced in 1897) but the driest start with no rainfall recorded for the first 20 days of the month.

The dry weather has not been good for our bush land with trees and grasses needing moisture to continue to provide food and homes for our wildlife. It has been a good time to keep our bird baths clean and filled for some of our feathered friends.

Some wildlife have been visiting settled properties for water and green feed. Unfortunately, this can result in issues with land-owners who do not appreciate

the intrusion or with domestics who prey on smaller species. Members need to be aware of the urgent need for wildlife who have been attacked or poisoned to be appropriately treated.

The dry and warm weather also means that some of our wildlife have decided winter is not going to come and so are preparing for spring. Many birds are currently surprising us with their tiny offspring.

The last few months have seen us preparing for the usual large number of bird admissions. A meeting for potential home carers was conducted during May and there was a good amount of interest shown from new and experienced carers. For anyone who might be interested in caring for birds in



their home please refer to the information under the Bird Care section of the DRWS Web Forum or make contact with me.

Planning and construction of rehabilitation facilities is also underway with the new pre-release flight aviary looking like it should and the outdoor bobtail enclosure taking shape.

The Shelter is coming up to its fourth birthday in July. A celebration is planned for all members and their families. Please mark the date in your diary and come along.

Michelle

DRWS Fourth Birthday Celebration



DRWS June 2005

July will see DRWS celebrating its fourth year at the Hillside Farm site. An afternoon tea will be held on Saturday 18th July and all members are invited to come along for the get-together. So much has happened since our relocation in 2005 and many more improvements and developments are being considered. Depending on the weather, the celebration will be conducted either on site or Hillside Farm. Come along from around 2.30pm to say hello. We're looking forward to seeing some new and old faces.



Juvenile Grey enjoying the unseasonably dry and sunny weather

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Spotted Nightjar



During May a Spotted Nightjar was admitted after being found at the Perth Airport. It had experienced a serious attack. The culprit was thought to have been a cat.

The bird had significant feather loss, including its entire tail. Its lower beak was fractured.

As with all attacks by cats, this admission was in need of immediate treatment for potential infection. The saliva of a cat contains many bacteria which enter via puncture sites of the birds' skin. It is extremely difficult to locate and flush out all sites, however, every effort should be made to do this. Once the sites have been thoroughly flushed with a warm solution, cat attack victims must be treated with a complete course of antibiotics – veterinary input is required. The bird should be secured in a hotbox with air temperature of around 32°C for at least the duration of its treatment. The temperature can be lowered if the bird is active and alert.

This Nightjar has been extremely lucky to recover from any possible infection. Its beak has also healed well, requiring at least four weeks of careful monitoring, ensuring that alignment was acceptable for its long term survival.

There is not a great deal of information available about Spotted Nightjars. They can, however, be found throughout mainland Australia except east of the Great Dividing Range and in Tasmania.

They are nocturnal, feeding on flying insects

during the initial and final hours of the evening. By day they roost on bare ground. Their black and tawny speckled feathers provide good camouflage.

Spotted Nightjars do not make a nest and lay a single egg on open, bare ground. They have been observed to lay close to the same 'nesting' site over a period of years. The eggs are reported as incubated by both parents over a period of around 29 to 30 days. Chicks walk within hours of hatching and move further from the nest site each night, crouching flat in the shade during the day. There is no confirmed information about when chicks fledge or post fledging behaviour.

In relation to care during rehabilitation, these birds are similar to the Tawny Frogmouth. They do not typically self-feed in a captive environment, being fed pinkie mice with nutritional supplements. Phil Payne reported that he has been able to encourage some young birds to feed on King Mealworms, with little success offering alternative food options. This admission will feed on some smaller crickets and grasshoppers purchased from specialist reptile shops.

In relation to size this bird is missing his tail so looks a bit like a guinea pig. He would be around 30cm in length. His wings are amazing, being surprisingly lengthy when extended and written information suggests a wing span around 60cm to 69cm. He often spreads his wings and 'coos' when approached and disturbed. He was admitted at 99g and felt quite underweight. He is currently around 130g and his keel feels reasonably covered. I was advised of a healthy bird being weighed in at around 160g whilst the written literature reports average weight for this species as between 80g and 100g. Again, there is limited information available.

Anyway, this bird will be in care for some time. His feathers have a long way to go until they are able to provide good flight and body coverage. His beak has only just regained most of its strength.

Raffle 2009

Tickets for the 2009 Raffle will be available during June. The raffle has come about due to the generosity of our members and supporters.

First prize is a hand-made quilt titled 'At the Beach'. It features nine colourful ladies and has

been generously donated by the Roleystone Friendship Quilters. Second prize is two nights accommodation in a luxury Dunsborough home kindly donated by Lorraine and David from Minter Ellison. David and Lorraine are also responsible for the third prize which is a crate of unwooded Chardonnay from the Olde Eastbrooke winery in Pemberton. We

are extremely grateful for their ongoing support.

The raffle will be drawn at the monthly meeting in September. It would be greatly appreciated if members could once again get behind this fundraising effort to ensure it is a huge success. Tickets are \$1 each.

Many thanks to Andy who is about to complete his five months' placement with us. Everyone is invited to his farewell dinner on Sunday 5th July at the Cosmos Chinese Restaurant, Hamilton St, Cannington. Please RSVP to confirm numbers.

Reptile and Snake Handling Workshop

Recently I joined a brave group of DRWS volunteers who decided to test their bravery and undertake a snake handling course. We met at the Armadale Reptile Centre and Klaus was our instructor. He firstly talked about the difference between legless lizards and snakes. I had no idea the legless lizards grew as big as they do. They look big enough to be snakes and I can see why people would get confused if they found one. Then he talked about first aid before moving on to the serious stuff of snakes.

After the talk finished we all got to hold some non venomous snakes, pythons and a boa constrictors. Now the fun bit was over and it was out with the venomous snakes. We all had to have a go at catching a death adder, a tiger snake and a dugite using a hook or special tongs. It wasn't as scary as we thought but the snakes were getting smart and after they had been caught a few times they

started heading into the capture bag even before the person got the hook onto them. Of the three species it was the dugites that resisted capture the most, not the tiger snakes as I would have expected.

Later that day, having the info still fresh in her mind Maria went to do her shift at the shelter and was confronted with a tiger snake. So with Klaus as moral support and armed with the right gear Maria was able to bag the snake for relocation.

At least one member of the group was so impressed with this snake catching business she has done further training. Me...I'm just happy with my beginner's certificate and the knowledge that I have this person's phone number for when I need her!

Cathy Stuart



The brave group of volunteers



A python handling Nick

Diary Winter 2009

June

Monday 1st

Friday 5th

Saturday 13th

Tuesday 16th

Tuesday 30th

July

Sunday 5th

Saturday 11th & Sunday 12th

Tuesday 14th

Saturday 18th

Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th

Tuesday 28th

August

Saturday 1st

Tuesday 11th

Tuesday 25th

Saturday 29th

Foundation Day Public Holiday

World Environment Day

DEC Advanced Topic – Hand Rearing Orphaned Joeys

Management Meeting

Monthly Meeting

Andy's Farewell Dinner

DEC Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation Course

Management Meeting

DRWS 4th Birthday Celebration

Malubillai Wildlife Carers Network visit

Bunnings Sausage Sizzle Fundraiser

Monthly Meeting

Development Morning & Shift Skipper Meeting

Management Meeting

Monthly Meeting

Practical Skills Development Morning

There will be a presentation on 'Common Conditions in Wildlife' on Saturday 12th (12noon) and Tuesday 15th September (7pm) at DRWS. Come along for another useful educational session.

Volunteer Profile - June Carter



I live locally. Over four years ago now I read about a need for volunteers at the shelter and so suggested my daughter, Denise, become involved. She had done some work experience with domestic pets and loves animals so I thought she might enjoy the experience. I used to drive her to the old site at Cohunu and then return to pick her up. I have always loved animals and so decided to come along with her each fortnight. Now Denise has her driver's licence and own car, has finished her Veterinary Nursing Certificate and is busy with other activities - so isn't able to come to the shelter with me. But I still enjoy coming along and love spending time with all of the wildlife.

I have been doing home care for many years now. I love my birds and also the joeys. I can't think of any particular creature I have loved more than any other - they are all very special to me. I must say that I am particularly fond of the cheeky nature of every Euro I have ever come into contact with. I cared for Tyson most recently. He is definitely a character!

Everyone at home loves caring for the wildlife. I always have someone keen to assist when I am at work or if I am caring for something that is 'high maintenance'. My home care is usually a family affair even though all of my children are adults with their own interests.

For some time Denise and I were pretty much the only regulars on the Saturday afternoon shift. Nowadays I have some really helpful and reliable co-workers. Every now and then I don't feel as though I have done much, given the others on my shift. Probably the only thing I am not that interested in doing is the paperwork - but I do my best!

Bits and Pieces

Members of the Malubillai Wildlife Carers' Network in Victoria Park will be visiting DRWS in July. They will be conducting their regular network meeting and then staying on for afternoon tea and a tour of our facilities. Anyone interested in coming along for our birthday afternoon tea and to greet the visitors are most welcome.

We have again been successful in securing a Learning and Development Grant through the City of Gosnells Community Sponsorship Programme. We would like to encourage members to apply for a partial reimbursement of the cost of the DEC Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation Course of \$100. Members

should have already enrolled to complete the course during 2009 and have been involved with the Shelter for three to six months.

Shelter members who wish to complete the DEC Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation Course are encouraged to let Racheal or another member of the management group know. There are significant savings for members with the cost of the course being reduced from \$195 to \$135! For DRWS members who are also eligible for the reimbursement this is a huge reduction in overall cost.

Membership Fees are now due for the 2009/2010 year. Forms have been left for all shifts and we ask that members complete the Application and leave their fee for Racheal to collect.

The Shelter is now preparing dry food for kangaroos in home care, mixed in the ratio provided to those on site. The bags of feed are available for \$5 each. This should assist further with home care joeys being placed at the Shelter for rehabilitation prior to release.

DRWS currently has 2009/2010 Entertainment Books for sale. Please contact Pam if interested in purchasing any.