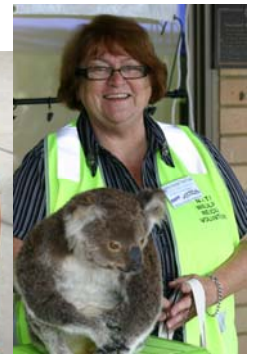


Hunter Wildlife Festival, 2011

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The NATF^{inc} Wildlife Rescue Service, with the sponsorship from the Newcastle City Council, once again held another great *Hunter Wildlife Festival* at the Hunter Wetlands Centre, a wonderful serene back drop to any wildlife festival. This year over 600 people participated – a threefold increase on our inaugural Wildlife Festival held last year.



Once again the NATF^{inc} Wildlife Rescue Service focused on celebrating the Hunter's diverse wildlife by engaging the public in a broad range of activities. As a family day, the children were well catered for with lots of hands-on activities sponsored by BHP Billiton. With a focus on educating as well as entertaining, children had the opportunity to make awesome owls from pinecones, match scats to their owners (after a little detective work related to the contents of a scat), paint pouches for orphan joey possums and help prepare mealworm farms for our volunteers to feed their sick and injured wildlife. There were craft tables, puzzles and who could not be entertained by our puppeteer Leanne Hines. Talented Trudy Fennel and company were non-stop all day with wildlife face painting, set on the idyllic waterfront platform outside the new Environmental Education Centre. For once, standing in a queue was a pleasurable experience as one could watch the swans, magpie geese and other waterbirds go about their daily routines.

Visitors were greeted by Jordan Lowe who welcomed each family with a calico re-usable show bag with the NATF^{inc} Wildlife Rescue Service logo proudly adorning the front. Thanks to Lisa Lowe for spending time to acquire "fillers" for each show bag was quite a feat. Filling and storing two hundred show bags almost engulfed her home after the generous donations from Hunter Water Corporation, Granada Promotions, DPR Printing, BHP Billiton and many more.



Throughout the Hunter Wetlands Centre, a range of photographic displays sponsored by Xstrata/Oceanic Coal from West Wallsend, were available for members of the public to gain an insight into the diverse work done by NATF^{inc} Wildlife Rescue Service volunteers. Photographic displays included *Birds of Prey*, *Thank You to Hunter's Awesome Vets*, *Snapshot of Hunter's Orphaned Wildlife*, *Hunter's Small Marsupials* and *Our Marine Sea Turtles* as well as a photographic record of over 40 separate *Hunter Threatened Species* that have required rehabilitation by

the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service volunteers. Of particular interest were the photographic records that documented NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service's activities in times of disaster:

- The impact of the 2006 storms and flood.
- The 34 pelicans rescued and rehabilitated after an oil spill in Newcastle Harbour 2010.
- The impact of heat stress on the Hunter's vulnerable Flying Fox colonies throughout the Hunter, and of course,
- The horrific bushfires that devastate habitat and wildlife alike, especially our iconic koalas.



Throughout the day, families could find a reprieve in the theatrette where they could stop and enjoy a continuous slide show, sponsored by Port Waratah Coal Service, documenting the broad range of activities conducted by the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service. Here a thirty minute visual presentation recorded an in depth account of the activities of the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service's volunteers and highlighted the incredible diversity of wildlife found locally in the Hunter Region.



The highlight of the Festival would always be the wildlife encounters. This is an opportunity for the public to see up close, why we as volunteer rehabilitators never seem to tire of our wildlife. Besides the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service's well performing flying foxes that hang on cue (thanks Sandra and John Penman), the Education glider "Domino" also made an appearance. However the general public was most captivated in watching how NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service volunteers take responsibility for Hunter's orphans. Feeding times for the several possums, a red neck wallaby and a flying fox was a draw card and opportunity to explain more about the diversity of wildlife

encountered in the Hunter Region and the role the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service takes in raising and releasing these orphans back to the wild.



While the Official Opening Ceremony was unfortunately timed to coincide with a downpour of heavy rain, the Lord Mayor, the Hon John Tate and Lady Mayoress were not hindered by the weather and took the opportunity to help launch the official start to the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service Wildlife Ambulance Appeal. The need to support Hunter's fauna with a wildlife ambulance has become more imperative of late when, during the 2010 oil spill, 34 oiled pelicans needed the assistance of NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service volunteers. That was a lot of pelicans to move to cleaning stations and later to rehabilitate!



This year the Festival was well supported by stall holders with a diverse range of interests from *Trees in Newcastle, Ocean and Coast Care Initiative, Mad for Earth, Breakaway Photography, Herbs and Hives, Pleasantveiv Fibres, natural wool garments* and the *Hunter Bird Observer's Association* to small stall holders like member Anna Jameson's jewellery stall where 100% of Anna's sales were donated to the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service.





- the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service volunteers who came on board to ensure the day was a great success: Fiona Brennan, Trudy Fennell, Jessica Green, Mal St Hill, Judy Hopper, Donna Hucker, Jan Hughes, Kim Jordan, Margaret Morton, Sandra Penman, John Penman, Jeff Sharpe, Judy Valler, Jenny Van Ede, Jamie-Lee Wild, Anne Williams and Ray Williams, as well as the many members who supported the Festival by bringing their families along on the day.

Jill Dean
Festival Organiser

Overall, it was a very successful Festival that really did celebrate the diversity of Hunter's wildlife and the work of the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service volunteers in providing assistance to its sick, injured or orphaned wildlife.

Feeding the family is never a worry with Nourish Café selling fine food but also sponsoring the NATF^{Inc} Wildlife Rescue Service's BBQ. Jan Hughes and her hard working team were kept busy throughout the day as the aroma of fried onions and BBQ sausages drew in the crowds

A special thank you to

- Newcastle City Council for sponsoring the Hunter Wildlife Festival;
- Anna Ryan and her team from the Hunter Wetlands Centre;
- the Event Team who worked tirelessly for months leading up to the Festival: Audrey Koosmen, Lisa Lowe, and Leanne Hines and



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