



Native Animal Trust Fund ^{Inc}

VOLUNTARY WILDLIFE RESCUE AND REHABILITATION

24hr Rescue Hotline: 0418 628 482 OR 0418 NATIVE



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Newsletter Editor

The focus of this newsletter is on rescue and rehab stories of the wonderful variety of wildlife that comes into the care of the NATF ^{Inc}. It will be a great way to share the many ordinary and extraordinary rescues and care stories the NATF ^{Inc} experiences.

The success of this newsletter will rely upon members sending in their stories and pictures of their rescue and rehab experiences. Short stories and articles can be submitted, so to can pictures of your animals with a short blurb on its background.

Pictures and stories needed!!

Send articles to:

newsletter@hunterwildlife.org.au

Upcoming Newsletter Deadlines
30th March 2012
29th June 2012

Some articles and options in this newsletter may not necessarily reflect the views of the NATF ^{Inc}

President's Report

I would like to first wish you all a very Happy New Year and I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas shared with family and friends. To allow the phone operators time to spend with their families and grandchildren on Christmas Day I manned the Rescue phone for around five hours and believe it or not it was busy. A very pleasing result from a rescue on Christmas day was a lovely story about the great service we provided to an injured bird. The article was in the Newcastle Herald thanking NATF from a member of the public. It was rewarding to see thanks given to the NATF rescuer

Theresa who left her family on Christmas Day to assist the bird.

Last year was a very busy year for NATF Wildlife Rescue and looking at the way 2012 has began I am sure we are in for other busy year, with more cars on road, more housing going up, more habitat removal, disasters happening that affect our wildlife which we are now seeing more often. Our task to rescue and care for our native fauna is getting bigger each year.

The battle to save our grey headed flying foxes continues with yet other colony under threat from humans at Lorn. Maitland Council is now looking at a management plan to remove the bats. Talks will take place with Council and NATF with the hope of bringing some sense into this battle to save the bats.

In 2011 we finally won the battle at Morriset Hospital by saving the lives of many eastern grey kangaroo that live free among the beautiful grounds of the hospital and the NPWS grounds. Over the past 5 years NATF members have fought hard to make the hospital management, NPWS, as well as the Police department see something must be done to stop the slaughter of these creatures that were been mowed down my drivers in 4WD in the evenings and with some been slaughtered for body parts. The result of left many joeys motherless and needing our care. Close to 300 kangaroos have been slaughtered in this madness.

We were fronted with another cruel act of someone using a bow and arrow to shoot roos. Through the hard work of NATF and meeting and speaking with Greg Piper from Lake Macquarie Council action was taken to reduce this cruel act. The hospital management have now placed locked gates on main entry areas, the security has been upgraded with police controls and finally a charge was placed on a person caught trying to drive down a mob of roos. A pleasing result but not without great pain and suffering to those beautiful kangaroos down there who I now hope their lives will be much more peaceful.

Special thanks must go the RSPCA Inspectors who worked alongside NATF during this time. Thanks to NATF members David and Donna Smith for their time given and working with me in rescuing and fighting for the roos, and also to NATF Macropod carer Margret Howley for her ongoing care provided to the joeys and adults that come out of Morriset hospital in that terrible time. Margret's caring support still continues with the roos in need of care from the hospital area.

Our story of this terrible act hit media with the ABC running a special session on NATF and raised money to support the rescued roos, as well members of the public opening their hearts by sending in donations. This is a very proud and rewarding success but will still need the actions of NATF to continue lobbying and watching the area for years to come to provide protection for these kangaroos.

Late last year NPWS conducted inspections of NATF members and an audit on the NATF's operational running. This was in line with the new NPWS Policy which will see all wildlife groups in NSW have the same review. The NATF were the first! A meeting between NPWS Officers and the NATF Committee took place to discuss the daily operational running of the group. I would like to thank all the members who were inspected by NPWS, can I say the officers gave praise to you all for your work. The Committee is now awaiting a final written report which we hope to see late January 2012.

In 2011 we conducted Advanced Training courses in animal management and treatment for our members, bringing so much more knowledge and information into our group. This year's Training Course will be held more into winter months allowing more members to attend as in warmer months we all became so busy.

Please keep on caring and thank you to all our members for your ongoing support to our wildlife in Hunter and Great Lakes areas

Audrey Koosmen Chair NATF



The Masked Lapwing, also known as the Masked Plover, Spur-winged Plover or just Plover, is a large, common and conspicuous native bird. It spends most of its time on the ground searching for food such as insects and worms. This species is the largest representative of the family Charadriidae, at 35cms and 370gms.

Masked Lapwings are most common around the edges of wetlands and in other moist, open environments, but are adaptable and can often be found in surprisingly arid areas. They can also be found on beaches and coastlines.

Masked Lapwings are shy and harmless when not breeding, but are best known for their bold nesting habits, nesting on almost any stretch of open ground, even car parks and flat rooftops. The nesting pair defends their territory by calling loudly, spreading their wings, swooping, and where necessary striking with their feet and attacking animals on the ground with their yellow wing spur.



Masked Lapwings

Once the chicks reach 60% of full size, approx. 2–3 months, the chances of this happening decrease. The chicks are fully grown at 4 to 5 months and often stay with the parents for 1 to 2 years, resulting in family groups of 3 to 5 birds nesting in one location over the summer.

The birds have a wide range of calls which can be heard at any time of the day or night: the warning call, a loud defending call, courtship calls, calls to its young, and others. There seems to be some significant use of language to guide chicks during a perceived dangerous situation. Long calls seem to tell the chicks to come closer to the calling bird; a single chirp every few seconds to ask them to move away.



Each year the NATF ^{Inc} receives many calls due to the nesting location and defensive behaviour during breeding. Unfortunately there are times when eggs or chicks may need to be removed and taken into care due to this behaviour, or from danger to the birds from human interference, such as when nesting in sporting parks and school yards. Chicks are often received into care when separated from their parents. If the chick is fit and healthy, it can often be successfully reunited with parent birds if the rescue location is known.

ON THE COVER

Ritchie: the red-necked wallaby

This Red-necked wallaby joey came into care as the result of motor vehicle accident at Dora Creek that killed his mum. This cute little guy was named Ritchie. Ritchie weighed in at 349 grams when he came into the care of Margaret Howley. He remained in Margaret's care until he was 539 grams when he was then transferred to the care of Elizabeth and Chris Neville. At last report Ritchie is doing very well and currently weighs in at 7kgs. He will be released when he is around 11kgs.

Red-necked wallabies live in small herds in lightly wooded eucalypt forests with shrub cover, and open grassy areas nearby for grazing. They rest during the day and feed in the open at dusk.

Its diet is grass and herbaceous plants. They can survive on one drink a day. The enemies of young Red-necked wallabies are dingoes, foxes and eagles. Being hit by cars is the most common reason for these macropods being received into care.

Did you know that the Red-necked wallaby usually has two joeys a year? One in the pouch and the other at heel. The time in pouch is from 269 to 285 days. Often young joeys do not stay beside their mothers' sides in the first month or so after they have left the pouch like other wallaby joeys. Rather, they feed and hide close by in cover while their mother moves around feeding in more open spaces.



The rescue & care of a young Gang-gang

In April Catherine Wroe had the privilege of caring for an immature male Gang-gang for several weeks. He was hit by a car at Martinsville and was found to be concussed, weak and very underweight at 185gms. He was named him Brad after Brad Pitt.

Gang-gangs are listed as vulnerable in NSW and require special care and management because of their diet and tendency to feather pluck. Brad's admission into care was reported to Audrey ASAP so she could inform NPWS and ensure that he received appropriate care. Additionally, because of the special care Gang-gangs need I communicated with Peggy McDonald, an expert on Gang-gang behaviour and rehabilitation, about how best to care for him and prevent him from feather plucking.

The rehabilitation plan for Brad was to improve his overall condition then transfer him to Peggy's place in the Southern Highlands. Peggy had a young female Gang-gang for him to be buddied up with, and is planning to soft-release them together next spring. It was decided not to take the risk of returning Brad to Martinsville, as Gang-gangs can be fed by their parents for up to 4 months after fledging and take many months to become independent. If he was released into the wrong flock of Gang-gangs, or if he could not find his parents he probably would not have survived.

For the first few weeks in care Brad was housed in a hospital cage that was kept covered and warm in a quiet area. Peggy recommended Vetafarm Neocare hand-rearing food as being the best product nutritionally and for

increasing his weight. He was crop fed Neocare 3 times/day and given a variety of natural foods and branches to chew on. Natural foods consisted mainly of a collection of seeds and pods from eucalypts, casurinas, hakeas, grevilleas, leptospermums, and cotoneaster berries (his favourite). Commercial greens, nuts and a small parrot seed mix were also offered but he was not overly interested.

To prevent feather plucking Brad was kept as content and happy as possible. This was mainly achieved by him being kept in a quiet environment to minimise stress and through the provision of natural foods and branches

which allowed him to chew bark and nibbling branches and express normal behaviours. These principles were also applied to the aviary when he was transferred.

In care Brad was very gentle and trusting, and also became quite talkative and playful once he started to feel better. After he had spent almost 2 weeks in the aviary and weighed 280 gm he was well and truly ready to go to his new home. I was initially worried about him being stressed during the 3 ½ hour trip, however this proved to be unnecessary. As long as he could see me and I talked to him he was fine. If I stopped talking to him for too long, usually only a minute or so, he would

promptly remind me he was still there and restart the conversation. Luckily birds don't mind you repeating the same thing over and over, as I was running out of new topics after the first couple of hours.

Brad was put in the aviary on his second day at Peggy's to meet his new female friend. She responded without aggression so it was decided to leave him during the day and take him out at night until they had bonded. This was because Brad wasn't used to the cold nights down there, so once they were roosting together at night and could keep each other warm, he would be left in. This took about a week, and as you can see in the photo they seem very happy together and make quite the handsome couple. Mr and Mrs Pitt – Brad is on the right.

Peggy tells me that Brad gets visited nearly every day by the local wild Gang-gangs down there, getting to know each other and making a racket, practice for when he can be released and fly free again. She also said that other pairs of Gang-gangs she's released there have bred successfully and proudly brought their babies back to show them off to her. So here's hoping that one day they'll be Pitt juniors flying around the Southern Highlands.

Catherine Wroe

Book Review



The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2010

By Garnett, Szabo & Dutson

ISBN: 9780643103689

Publish Date: September 2011

This book analyses the IUCN status of all the species and subspecies of Australia's birds, including those of the offshore territories. For each bird the size and trend in their population and distribution has been analysed using the latest iteration of IUCN Red List Criteria to determine their risk of extinction. The book also provides an account of all those species and subspecies that are or are likely to be extinct. Each categorisation is justified on the basis of the latest research, including much unpublished material that has been made available during workshops conducted with leading ornithologists and conservation biologists around the country. The result is the most authoritative account yet of the status of Australia's birds.

The book contains some surprises – some alarming, some encouraging. The status of some birds has improved over the last two decades, some may not have changed status but at least holding. Many, however, are continuing to decline and a distressing number are new to the list. There are also an increasing number of birds for which captive insurance populations need not only to be considered as a future option but actively pursued before it is too late.

Available from
<http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/18.ht>

Barn Owl Season

It's Boom or Bust for Barn Owls.

Once again, there are a high number of Barn Owls coming into care. This is what I refer to as Barn Owl season... and it happens most years. Every August-September there is a large number of Barn Owls - sometimes a few Boobooks that are rescued by the NATF Inc, Hunter Wildlife Rescue volunteers... one year I had 17 in one month (at 3 mice each per day that was a lot of tucker!)

This year we have had 10 or so, mostly undernourished and requiring feeding up to be strong enough to take their place in natural order. This usually takes three weeks as I find the weight gain in the first two weeks is rather restrictive while they are settling-in and getting stress levels under control. Most are undernourished, some with secondary problems: other birds swooping and attacking, motor vehicle injuries etc. Magpies, noisy minors and butcher birds in particular, hate all owls with a passion.

Barn Owls can be referred to as "Boom or Bust" birds. If the season is right and food plentiful, adult Barn Owls will have several clutches of eggs, breeding right up to late autumn. This means, by August-September, when food is scarce and many of these juveniles have not honed their hunting techniques, it results in the birds becoming a little thin and weak, and getting into trouble hunting. In addition, where they had taken up residence over winter was fine until all the diurnal birds are starting to stake their territories for Spring nesting, so force the Barn Owls to relocate... only to someone else's territory and the process starts again.



However, by November, food is now plentiful, the other birds have begun nesting and we will be lucky to see another owl until August-September next year when "Owl Season" starts again.

Jill Dean
 Raptor Coordinator

FAUNA DATABASE

As of August 2011 Peter Jones is managing the fauna database portfolio.

Please ensure all data is sent in on a monthly basis, regardless of the amount of fauna you have received (unless zero). Use the first or the last day of each month as a reminder to send your forms in.

For email:
faunadata@hunterwildlife.org.au

FOUND A BABY BIRD?



Giving Wildlife a Second Chance: This year, the NATF^{Inc}, Hunter Wildlife Rescue received an *Environment and Sustainability* grant from Lack Macquarie council to design a pamphlet to help the general public respond to “Baby Bird Season” with the message:

A baby bird’s best chance for survival is its parents. Parent birds will teach all the lessons young birds need to survive: how to fly, what food to eat, how to find or catch food, how to avoid predators, how to recognise their own species and lots more.

Each year, over 1500 young and baby birds come into the care of the NATF^{Inc} Hunter Wildlife Rescue. Many are not injured and are picked up by well meaning members of the public. The information is designed to assist the general public to assess each situation and decide whether or not the baby bird needs rescuing. If the baby bird is **not injured**, its best chance of survival is keeping it with its parents. **The information provides some hints on how to keep baby birds with their parents.**

Call the NATF Inc, Hunter Wildlife Rescue if the bird ...

has an **obvious injury**, has a droopy wing or limbs, has been caught by a cat, it will need vet attention has fallen from a tree hollow e.g. parrot or kookaburra or is lying on its side and is floppy.

FLEDGLINGS

...are fully feathered baby birds that have left the nest and are learning to fly. They need parents for feeding and protection. **Spring is the time for baby birds and many fledglings leave the nest to try out their new wings only to find themselves on the ground. They just need a few days to exercise those muscles before they are can fly.**

Unless sick or injured

Step 1: Pick up the bird and put it as high as possible in a nearby tree for safety. The parents are nearby and will find it. Try popping it onto a broom head to give that little extra reach!

Step 2: Keep an eye on the young bird and if it flutters to the ground again, repeat Step 1

NESTLINGS

...are baby birds that still live in the nest. They may be covered in down, have few or no feathers and are totally reliant on their parents for all aspects of survival. If you find a nestling on the ground, look for the nest and try to get the nestling back into the nest. If the nest is too high or has fallen from the tree try making an artificial nest.

4 steps to make a new home			
1		Take an ice-cream container or similar item and put some holes in the bottom for drainage. Put some more holes at the top to make a handle.	
2		Put some leaves or grass in the bottom. Use the original nesting material if the nest has fallen from the tree. Place baby bird in its new home. Mum and dad won't mind that baby has been handled by humans.	
			Secure the container at about head height or higher in a leafy protected area, away from direct sunlight, as close to where you found the baby bird. It does not even have to be the original tree
			Watch from a distance to make sure the parents return to feed baby. This may take several hours so be patient. If the parents have not returned by dark, call the NATF ^{Inc} Hunter Wildlife Rescue.

PRECOCIAL CHICKS

... are born with downy feathers, eyes open able to stand and follow its parents. They can feed themselves e.g. ducklings, plovers. See if you can locate the parents. Leave with the parent birds. Don't put ducklings in water. Without mum and dad, they can get too cold and die. **The brochure was launched on 13th November 2011 by the Mayor of Lake Macquarie Council, Cr Greg Piper.**