

The fisherman and the swan

When our Emergency Response Service received a call about a black swan that had become unconscious after being fed “weird stuff out of a bucket from a local fisherman”, we feared the worst.

A specially trained volunteer rescuer was despatched immediately, and found the swan awake but too ill to stand. After an examination showed no sign of injury or poison, she went in search of the fisherman responsible.

What emerged was an unexpected story of friendship between the fisherman and the swan.

The fisherman had been feeding the swan for as long as anyone could remember. His friends told of how much he loved the swan, and how attached the swan was to him too; he'd taught it to perform tricks and even little dances with him, and it was known to follow him home after his regular fishing expeditions.

What the kind fisherman didn't realise was that his generosity was the cause of the problem: the food he was feeding the swan – bread and rice – was killing it slowly.

Sadly, this is an all-too-common scenario. Well-meaning people love to feed native birds, but often don't understand that feeding them food that is not part of their natural diet can do all kinds of damage. In the swan's case it had become malnourished as it was filling up on food with no nutritional value.



The fisherman was devastated to learn that he was hurting the swan, but fortunately we got there in time. The swan has made a full recovery and he and the fisherman are still fishing happily together – but no longer sharing lunch.

Wildlife Victoria doesn't recommend feeding wild birds as it encourages them to become too familiar with humans, but if you're going to do it please make sure you do some research into their natural



Parrots should never be fed bread.



diet first – and remember, bread is never a naturally occurring food!

Even better, why not think about planting native vegetation in your garden that your favourite birds like to eat so that you can enjoy them from a safe distance?



Karen Masson

A Message from the CEO

Hello to you our most appreciated wildlife lover.

We know how much you admire our iconic species by your constant support of the service we offer as guardians of their welfare.

With unpredictable climate events, habitat reduction and more cars on the road than ever, the number of wildlife emergency calls we have received in the last few years has rapidly increased.

So rather than simply waiting for that next call, we've created this newsletter with advice on what you can do in your own backyard to help prevent Australia's unique wildlife from becoming just another one of our sad statistics.

It's also an opportunity for us to let you know how much we appreciate your support. Wildlife Victoria receives no recurrent government funding, so every single one of the 43,528 animals we've helped this past year has a generous donor like you to thank for its second chance.

I hope that you enjoy reading some of the rescue stories that you have helped to make possible, and that you find the tips and advice useful for the wildlife in your life.

On behalf of all of the animals you've helped, thank you.

Warmest wishes

Karen

Facts and figures

The past 12 months



Number of requests for help

80,000

Number of vets who have assisted

351

MOST COMMON REASONS FOR CALLS

Animal found on the ground
Animal hit by a vehicle

Number of volunteer shelters & foster carers

326

TOP 5 SPECIES

Kangaroos, Ringtail possums, Magpies, Brushtail possums, Ducks

Number of animals helped

43,528

Number of volunteer rescuers & transporters

656



Spring babies

Here are three of the most common wildlife emergency calls we receive in spring, and some tips on how to help if you come across these situations.

1 Ringtail possums

Ringtail possums typically have between 2 and 4 babies, which are called joeys. As the joeys get bigger and outgrow Mum's pouch they start riding around on her back, but if something scares her and she needs to run away quickly they sometimes fall off!

How you can help:

If you find a ringtail joey the best thing to do is try to reunite it with its Mum. If it's daytime, gently pick it up in a towel or beanie and put it in a box in a warm, dark and quiet place.

Young possums cannot regulate their body temperature so if it's cold you may need to fill a hot water bottle or drink bottle with warm (not boiling) tap water and wrap it in a towel next to the joey for it to snuggle up to. Please do NOT try to feed it.

Once it's dark outside, take the joey back to where you found it to see if you can locate Mum. You'll usually find they will call out to each other, which should help you to determine where to put the joey so that its Mum can collect it.

If the joey appears weak or injured when you find it, or you can't find Mum within 2 to 3 hours, please give us a call.



2 Duckling Season

Ducks can nest up to five kilometres from their favourite water source. Once the ducklings hatch, Mum and Dad will march their young family to the safety of water – even if that means walking directly across a highway or two to get there.

How you can help:

Interfering with ducks can do more harm than good so try to avoid getting too close. If you see a family of ducks trying to cross a road, the best thing you can do is to try to safely alert oncoming traffic so that they can continue on their way.

If you're lucky enough to have ducks nesting in your own backyard, you may need to put a little ramp into any pools or ponds so that the ducklings can climb out, and leave your gate ajar after they hatch so that they can get out of your yard.

If a duckling is injured or gets separated from the family and you don't know where to return it to, give us a call.



3 Baby birds on the ground

Flight training begins in spring for most of our native birdlife, which is when we start getting calls about young birds on the ground who are unable to fly or look like they have a broken wing.

How you can help:

If you see a baby bird on the ground, it's most likely its parents are nearby and still looking after it.

The first thing to do is determine if it's a **nestling** or **fledgling**.

Nestlings are fuzzy or have naked skin and don't have their feathers yet. They're too young to survive long out of the nest.

We've all heard about how birds will reject their offspring if humans touch them, right? Well, it turns out that's not true! If you can reach the nest, the best thing you can do is to gently pick up the nestling and put it back in.

If you can't reach the nest, try fashioning a makeshift one out of an old hanging planter – just make sure water can drain out if it rains – and hang it up in the tree high enough to avoid predators.

Fledglings have most of their feathers and it's quite common for them to fall out of their nest and spend several days hopping around on the ground while learning to fly.

Their parents will continue to feed them and distract potential predators by swooping anything that comes near – which can be terrifying if they think you're a predator, but a lot more understandable when you know they're just protecting their babies!

If you see a fledgling on the ground or in low bushes and there isn't any immediate danger then the best thing you can do is leave it alone, keep pets and kids away, and keep an eye on it from a distance.

In either situation, if you think the baby bird is injured or in danger, give us a call.

For more wildlife fact sheets please visit our website:
www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au

Upcoming wildlife events

Wildlife Victoria is excited to announce our new partnership with RACV to present a series of 21 educational events around Victoria about our unique and incredible native wildlife.

Wildbytes: Stories from your backyard backyard are free events, featuring stories, anecdotes and tips from wildlife rescuers, carers and experts from around the state.

The next 2 events will be held at:

Saturday 10th September
2pm at Peninsula Community Theatre, Mornington

Saturday 15th October
2pm at Box Hill Community Arts Centre, Box Hill

Bookings are essential so please visit our website www.wildlifevictoria.org.au to reserve your spot, and feel free to invite your friends, family and neighbours.

Keep an eye on your email for more location announcements in the coming months.

A huge thanks to RACV for making these events possible!



Community fundraiser spotlight

Environmentally minded Year 2 students from Surrey Hills Primary School recently held a Cupcake Day to raise an incredible \$844 to help sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. A big thank you to everyone involved - that must have been a LOT of cupcakes!

Other ways to get involved

Want to do more to help wildlife in trouble? Here are some suggestions:

Fundraise. If you're thinking about doing the Melbourne Marathon or City to Sea, why not fundraise for us at the same time?

Volunteer. It's not for the faint hearted, but if you're interested in becoming a Wildlife Rescuer, we're running a few training courses over the coming months. Visit our website www.wildlifevictoria.org.au to register your interest.

Follow us on Facebook or Twitter. We post regular wildlife alerts and cute pictures of adorable babies.

Spread the word. Share our tips or this newsletter with people you know care about wildlife too.

Make sure you save our Emergency Response number (1300 094 535) in your phone. You never know when you might need our help on a stretch of road with no Google access.

Become a member of our WildFriends Program. By donating monthly you'll help us to plan for the future and reduce admin costs.

Yes, I want to help sick, injured and orphaned native wildlife!

I will give:

\$25 \$50 \$100 My gift of \$ _____

I would like to make this a regular monthly donation

Donations \$2 and over are tax deductible.

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Please post this form to:

Wildlife Victoria, Reply Paid 86041, Abbotsford VIC 3067

or visit www.wildlifevictoria.org.au or call (03) 9445 0310 to make a donation.

Thank you for your support.