



REAL LIFE WILDLIFE CHAMPIONS – BEV



Bev with one of her grey headed flying fox orphans

Volunteer rescuer Bev Brown has helped over 1,000 bats and recently received a Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to grey headed flying foxes! We had a chat to Bev about her work.

How did you start caring for bats?

I'm a wildlife rescuer and run a registered shelter. The first bat I got was Peaches, an orphaned flying fox. I rang someone in Sydney and said 'What do I do?'. I warmed her up, gave her a bottle, looked down and those big brown eyes were looking up at me and she just went right through me. Raising her was just the most amazing experience: the affection, the lovingness, how she bonded with me.

Peaches was really the one that got the ball rolling for Melbourne's flying fox colony. When I started 15 years ago no-one was really doing them here; they needed someone. We needed a crèche, we needed a flight aviary, we needed a soft release cage.

What is bat crèche?

Orphans have to be dehumanised before release so when they're big enough their carers send them to 'crèche' and say goodbye. They spend 2-4 weeks with their little mates then go to the soft release cage at the Melbourne colony. We open it up and support feed them for however long it takes until none of them are coming back for food.

We weren't sure how these babies did but last year I got an injured girl with a numbered band. We found out she was 8 years old and had been raised as an orphan after her mum was electrocuted in NSW, 800km away. They do make it! That was very exciting.

How do bats come into your care?

Getting caught in fruit tree netting is a killer for bats. In summer we can get 8 or 10 rescue calls a day. Barbed wire second, collisions third, orphans fourth.

What's the toughest part of the job?

Euthanising. When flying foxes come in they're so scared and they come to

trust you so much. You're mending this wing, bandaging it, giving them medicine: they open their mouths in the end as if to say "OK, I know what you're doing". You can try so hard, but then after 2 or 3 weeks this wing, which was caught in netting for too long, dies and you know they're never going to recover. I still cry.

I had a rescue where this lovely girl had tried to cut a juvenile bat out of a net and it bit her. You know this beautiful bub is fine, but once it has bitten or scratched someone it has to be euthanised and tested (in case it carries a rare virus that is fatal to humans). If people called Wildlife Victoria first that wouldn't have had to happen. (*Wildlife Victoria's bat rescue volunteers have to be specially vaccinated for the job*)

What's the best part of the job?

The releasing. It's just the most exhilarating experience. You can hear them in their cage as you're getting close to the colony: they know where they are and they're getting excited. Just seeing them take off, gather height. They do a circle over you three times as if to say 'thank you' and up they go. They want to be back out there in the wild.

It seems funny to hear you describe bats as cuddly. Are they really?

Oh yes! When you're raising them and they start to flap you put them on an adapted clothes airer but if you need to go near it you have to do a wide circle because once that wing connects to your clothes they are on you and want a cuddle!

Do you take other species of bats?

I just rehabilitated a beautiful juvenile microbat, I learned a lot from her. She just wanted to snuggle up and sleep in the palm of my hand. Sometimes I'd ask my husband to feed her but she would not have a bar of him, it was me she bonded with. They're lovely, and here for a purpose too, just like flying foxes. We have to care for our wildlife; everything is so important!



WILDLIFE TIPS & ADVICE

Photo: Doug Gimsey



Cars pose one of the greatest threats to wildlife

Cars & Wildlife

Most people know to call us when an animal is hit by a car and injured, but what should you do if the animal seems to be OK?

The 'fight or flight' instinct often allows seriously injured animals to keep moving until they're several metres off the road, which leads onlookers to think they're fine when in fact they need urgent medical assistance. It is very very rare for an animal to survive an incident with a car unscathed.

How you can help

If you see an animal hit by a car please report it to us, even if it hopped away. Note the location as best you can – take a screenshot of the map on your phone or take note of the GPS coordinates or significant landmarks – so that we can send a volunteer rescuer out to check the surrounding areas.

If the animal has been killed, you can call us to request a 'pouch check' to make sure there aren't any surviving babies or one of our experienced phone operators can talk you through how to check.

Slowing down on the roads when wildlife are most active at dawn and dusk will help to prevent accidents from occurring in the first place.

Possums in the Roof

One of the most common questions we're asked is how to get a possum out of the roof. Unlike ringtail possums, brushtail possums are unable to build their own nests. They usually live in tree hollows but if none are available your nice dry roof space makes a great substitute.

Brushtails are highly territorial and a protected species so there are strict laws surrounding their removal.

If trapped, they're required to be released within 50 metres of where they were caught – you'll be lucky if you can outrun them home! Even if that one doesn't return, if you don't take steps to block access to the roof another possum is likely to move in before the month is out.

What you can do

The first step is to offer the possum alternative places to live. Install a possum box in a sheltered spot in your garden and put pieces of fruit by the box to encourage the possum to come over and see how nice it is. Make it harder for possums to reach the roof by cutting back branches or putting bands around any trees that are close to your house.

If your possum still won't move out, try putting a temporary fluorescent light in the roof space, or block all roof access points with one way doors so that the next time it leaves it can't get back in again. A commercial possum controller can help you if you're not sure.

A lot of Aussies have a love/hate relationship with possums, but they're only coming in to urban environments because humans have decimated their natural habitat. The Brushtail's remarkable ability to adapt to urbanisation is the reason they're not facing extinction like their less adaptable cousins, the Leadbeaters possum.



Brushtail possums are common residents of urban roofs

Wildlife Victoria has teamed up with Men's Sheds in Victoria to make affordable possum boxes. Visit our website to order yours, or find instructions to make your own.

A PRINCE OF A FROG



Endangered growling grass frog

This endangered growling grass frog is a ground dwelling tree frog (yes, you read that correctly!). They are known for the loud growling sound they make - and their surprisingly sharp teeth.

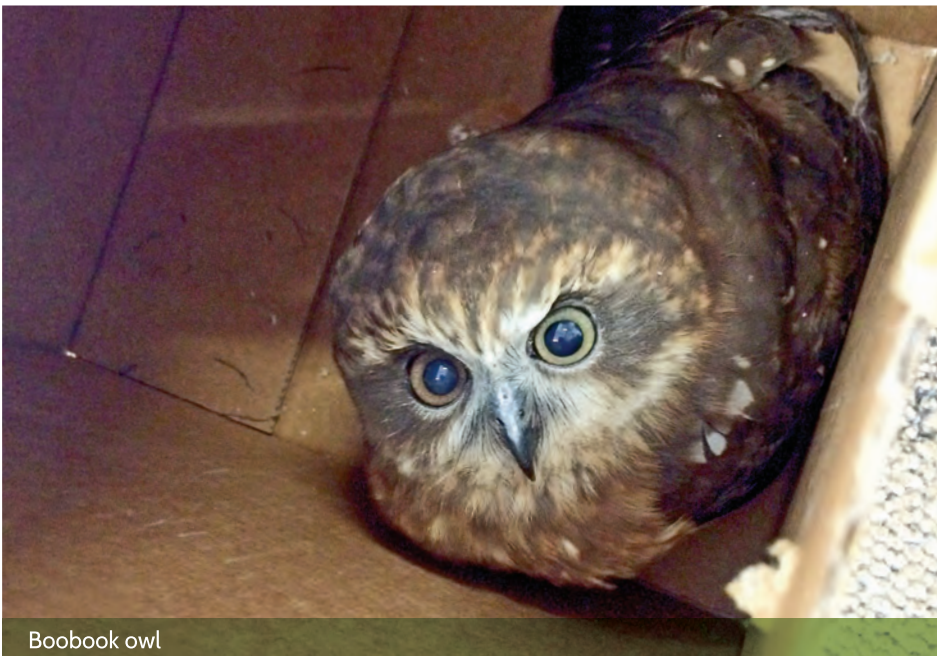
This wart covered beauty was found on the ground by a frog enthusiast who noticed some suspicious looking black marks on his back and gave our Wildlife Emergency Response Service a call.

Concerned that he might have a deadly fungus, our emergency operators immediately contacted the Amphibian Research Centre, Victorian Frog Group, the Zoo and a specialist reptile vet for their expert advice, and reported the find to DELWP (a requirement for endangered species).

After a few days of R & R he was given the all clear for release back into the wild.

This is the third growling grass frog we've assisted in the last 12 months!

OWLS, OWLS, OWLS



Boobook owl

We've received a record number of calls about owls this winter due to plagues of mice earlier in the year in parts of Victoria, as well as rodents coming in to residential areas over the colder winter months for food and warmth. Owls are particularly prone to secondary poisoning from eating rodents affected by rat bait.

If you see an owl close to the ground that seems lethargic or doesn't attempt to move away when approached please give us a call.

Your support helped 194 owls in June/July, several of them critically endangered!



Barn owl

CARING FOR WILD ANIMALS



An orphaned wombat joey

Last month we had a call from a man wanting instructions on how to care for a tiny orphaned wombat he'd rescued after its mother was killed by a car. These calls are surprisingly common.

In Victoria there are very strict rules about caring for wildlife: all wildlife shelters and foster carers must be licensed with DELWP. There's a very good reason for this - Australian wildlife are notoriously difficult to hand raise. Each species needs highly specialised food, equipment and care, which is why even experienced foster carers tend to specialise in just one or two species.

When an orphaned animal goes into care, it has already been through an incredibly traumatic experience: it has just lost its mum and survived several hours or even days in the cold without food. It may also have injuries from the same accident that killed its mother.

When the man refused to give the orphan up we were forced to report it to DELWP but it still took nine days of pressure for him to hand over the joey. A registered foster carer battled to save it's life but he's doing OK now.

If you find an orphan, ensuring it gets appropriate care as quickly as possible is vital to its chances of survival. Please call our Emergency Response Service or take it to your nearest vet immediately.

SWIFT PARROT UPDATE

You may have read in our most recent letter about the critically endangered swift parrot that was reported to our Wildlife Emergency Service last month. These lively little birds are the fastest parrots in the world and fly from Tassie to the mainland each winter for food.

We're pleased to be able to update you about the fledgling that we rescued: he had a pin break to his wing and was

transferred to Healesville for specialist care and rehabilitation. They're hoping he will make a full recovery for release, but if not he'll go into a breeding program to help assure the future of his species.

There are only around 2,000 swift parrots left in the wild but our volunteers rescued two of them last month!



The critically endangered swift parrot

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER



A proud Lachlan at the WV offices and the poster that he made with his friends



A big thanks and happy birthday to Lachlan, who raised \$250 by asking his friends to donate to Wildlife Victoria instead of giving him presents for his 8th birthday this year!

OTHER WAYS TO HELP

Volunteer! With the busy Spring season on the way, we're going to need all the volunteer wildlife rescuers and transporters we can get. Visit our website for more info.

Workplace Giving The new financial year is a great time to set up pre-tax donations through your workplace – some workplaces will even match your

donations! If your workplace doesn't offer Wildlife Victoria in their list of charities, ask them to get in touch with us.

Fundraise With loads of great public events like the Melbourne Marathon coming up there are lots of opportunities to challenge yourself, have some fun and fundraise for us at the same time.

Save our number (03 8400 7300) in your phone in case you need our help.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Emergency Appeal to assist bushfire affected wildlife shelters in Victoria. With your help we were able to assist with vet bills and send medical supplies to treat wildlife affected by the Victorian fires.

Number of threatened species we've assisted recently
118!



Thanks for helping bushfire victims

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.

ABN 27 753 478 012

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

I will give by:

Credit card: Visa Mastercard Amex

Card number

Expiry date ____ / ____ CVV ____

Cardholder's name _____

Signature _____

Please post this form to:

Wildlife Victoria, Reply Paid 86041, Abbotsford VIC 3067
or call (03) 9445 0310 to make a donation. *Thank you for your support.*

Donate online at www.wildlifestvictoria.org.au/donations