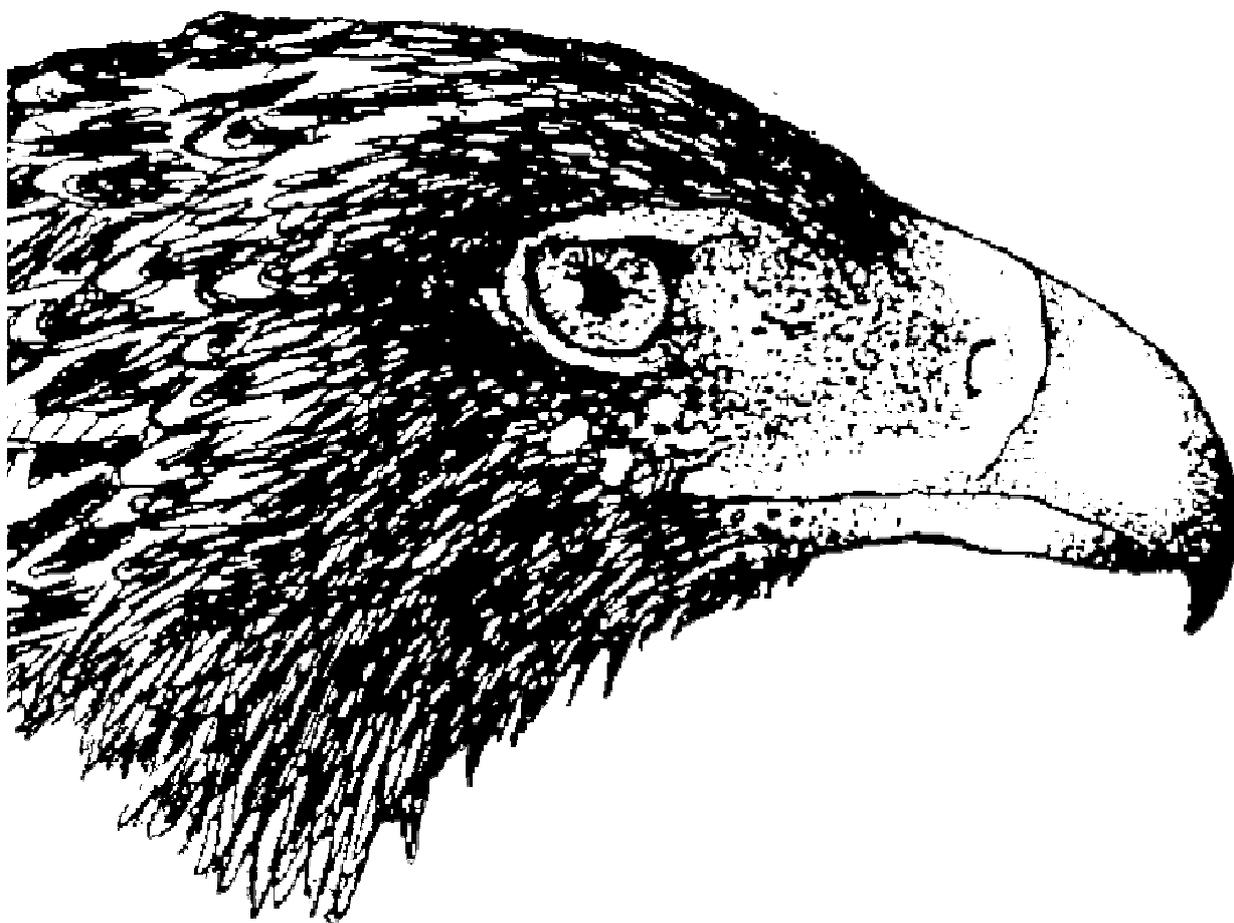


• REHABILITATION • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION •

SOCIETY for the PRESERVATION of RAPTORS (Inc.)



NEWSLETTER

April 2009

www.raptor.org.au

EDITORIAL

It would seem that people prefer getting newsletters via e-mail rather than downloading PDFs from the web, so we now have a select group of members and friends who receive the newsletter as soft copy, thus saving paper, landfill, trees and carbon emissions. Bouquets to everyone who is going for e-Newsletters!

On the subject of communication, we also have a new Post Office box in Forrestfield. Check out our contact section for details. Also, thanks to the unrelenting efforts of spammers we have had to change our e-mail address. The old address no longer works. You can still e-mail us from the website.

Our sympathies have been extended to our colleagues in Victoria who have been dealing with the aftermath of the Black Saturday fires. The horrific Victorian bush fires must give us all pause whether we live in the city, the suburbs or the country. Do you have an emergency management plan? Everyone needs one, no matter our circumstances. Nobody is immune to fire and other emergencies.

If you have any Avian Pox cases in, this request has arrived via the Australian Wildlife Health Network:

“The Australian Registry of Wildlife Health is collaborating with Drs. Gerry Dorrestein, Diagnostisch Pathologie Laboratorium, The Netherlands and Miklós Gyuranecz, Faculty of Veterinary Science, Szent István University, Budapest to characterise avian pox viruses in Australia. We are seeking frozen, or formalin fixed paraffin embedded tissue samples containing suspected avian pox lesions - from native or feral species. If you think that you may have some suitable case material and are interested in collaborating please contact Karrie Rose or Jane Hall, Australian Registry of Wildlife Health, Taronga Conservation Society Australia T 02 9978 4749 E jjhall@zoo.nsw.gov.au or krose@zoo.nsw.gov.au”

Wildlife rehabilitators in our north should also be aware that the NT Government has issued a warning regarding Murray Valley Encephalitis (MVE). This disease is a mosquito-borne virus so anyone working or travelling in our north is advised to take appropriate precautions.

As you may be aware, the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference has now switched from being an annual event to a biennial one, which puts the next conference on schedule for 2010. There's no confirmation as yet as to which state will be hosting the 2010 conference but watch this space for details.

DEC BASIC WILDLIFE REHABILITATION COURSES

Proposed dates for DEC Basic Wildlife Rehabilitation courses are as follows:

May 9, 16, 17;

July 4, 11, 12; and

September 5, 12, 13.

To book a place, contact DEC Kensington on (08) 9219 8000 and ask for Community Involvement. Marg or Judith will be able to help you.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be hosted by Marra and Dion.

When – Saturday, 2nd May 2009 at 1pm

Where – Perth Raptor Care, 17 Wellaton Street, Midvale

RSVP – 0403 164 748 or marra@raptor.id.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL TERMS and HOLIDAYS

Term 2 2009

Wednesday 29 April - Friday 3 July 2009

Break

Saturday 4 July – Monday 20 July 2009

Term 4 2009

Tuesday 13 October - Thursday 17 December 2009

Break

Friday 18 December 2009 – Sunday 31 January 2010

Term 3 2009

Tuesday 21 July - Friday 25 September

Break

Saturday 26 September – Monday 12 October 2009

Term 1 2010

Monday 1 February - Thursday 1 April 2010

Break

Friday 2 April - Sunday 18 April 2010

Information obtained from the Western Australian Education Department website.

THE WORST WAREHOUSE EVER

In March, Caleb Delamare and Marra Apgar teamed up to try to rescue a Barn Owl trapped in a warehouse. Unfortunately, the outcome wasn't a happy ending, but some valuable lessons were learnt.

Background:

In the past, we've been relatively successful at getting things out of warehouses- eventually at least. The call for this one came in on a Thursday morning, and I was able to go out and look at the situation that afternoon. The owl had been seen on Tuesday, when someone saw it chased in by "crows" (Australian Ravens). It hadn't been seen on Wednesday so they had assumed it had left.

The equipment:

Standard warehouse equipment consists of the usual cardboard box and towel, a net on a pole and a raptor trap. For large warehouses, I also take binoculars so I can get a good look at the bird.

I was too busy to search the pet shops for bait so I caught a couple of my smaller (rat size) free range cavies (guinea pigs) to put in a bal chatri (BC) noose trap. BC's consist of a bait cage with a set of mono-filament (fishing line) nooses on top that catch the raptor's toes.

The BC's I have made are "catch as catch can" models. The one I use is large, suited to a couple of cavies or rats. The older one was passed on to Caleb, who goes out to a lot more warehouses than I do. His is a smaller size well suited to large mice.

On site:

The warehouse is Coventrys' main warehouse and it is huge. Employees drive around in little machines that take them up and down shelves that are probably 10m high. The roof of the place is the usual trussed forest, with millions of possible perching places. I was given a 'hi viz' vest (high visibility- to stop forklift operators from running you over) and shown where the owl had settled. It took one look at me and left. We were then unable to relocate it. Not a good start. The BC with cavies was put in place and checked often while I spent a couple of hours looking for the owl.

I decided to leave the BC in the charge of a couple of employees. I gave a demo on how to remove the owl and place it in the cardboard box. The cavies were given lettuce and carrot donated by the canteen, and I left them to it. Unfortunately the owl did not come down to the trap. The same scenario was repeated over the next few days, with both Caleb and myself attending and attempting to get the owl interested in our BC's.

Night shift:

On Wednesday night, we were able to get permission from a manager to come in late. Being after dark with no people and noise, the owl was more active. Because of the size of the place, I had called and got permission for the Society to purchase walkie talkies. These came in handy in searching when the owl moved from point to point.

Two employees, Caleb and myself attended from 8pm until 11pm. Two each of mice, cavies and canaries were brought along. These tempting morsels were placed in their cages in the doorways of three big open roller doors. The idea was to entice the owl to fly out the door.

Caleb tried a mouse in his BC. We had located the owl and the trap was placed on the ground within view. We all sat quietly at a distance. It did not take long before the owl parachuted silently to the trap. We waited for it to become entangled in the nooses. After a few moments, the owl flew off again. We figured it would be back for another try, but we were wrong. When the trap was retrieved, our bait mouse was discovered missing. Unfortunately, the wire mesh on this BC is large enough for a small mouse to squeeze through. Another try with the second mouse showed that the owl was no longer interested in food- it had indeed eaten the first mouse.

Our next plan of attack was to wear the owl out. This is a very successful tactic in most warehouses, where the bird can be kept moving until too tired to fly. Alternatively, we wanted it to head towards the doors so that it would see the remaining bait and go out. Aided by our walkie talkies, we tried to keep the owl moving. It had landed on the top of one of the roller doors at one stage and, frustratingly, flew back into the forest of shelves after a minute. It never came closer to being saved again. It found hiding spots for half an hour at a time, and would not budge despite an air horn, clanging things against shelves and an acme whistle.

The end

Both Caleb and I had commitments that stopped us from going in on Thursday. I got the call at 8am Friday- the owl has been caught and is in the box. I dropped everything and sped down Roe Highway and back. The barn owl weighed 203g on admit and was put on fluids and heat straight away. She was tube fed amino acid and pre-digested chicken liquid diet through the day and late into the evening. At lunch time she improved,

she struggled weakly. In the evening, she passed food that was essentially unchanged. She died the next morning, weight 200g. Her normal weight would have been around 300g. Likely cause of death - organ failure due to starvation.

Lessons learnt:

One thing that was highlighted during this episode is the importance of having the right equipment, well maintained and ready to go. The nooses on my BC are a mess and the mesh on Caleb's won't hold a smaller mouse, which is not good enough. In this case, we missed an opportunity to save a life and give some workers a happy ending for "their" owl.

I have realised that we need to stop chasing as soon as we know the animal isn't moving constantly. This is a situation where "keep trying" is not going to work. Considerable amounts of volunteer time and petrol were wasted on this case as well. In all, 5 or 6 visits lasting between 1 and 4 hours each. In future, I won't be coming back to try trapping an owl during the day in a warehouse if the first trip doesn't get it done. The bosses will have to organise opening up after hours when the owl is active and the place is quiet.

Preparations:

I will be building new mouse proof BC's. Wire mesh smaller than 1/2 inch / 10mm is very hard to find, but I have located some. The nooses will be spaced to prevent tangles and cover the entire trap.. These BC's will go to members who have a DEC trapping licences. They are by far the most versatile trap, and everyone should have one ready and waiting. They can work on all raptor species, as long as appropriate bait animals are used.

I have an alternative idea for trapping warehouse birds. This is to hang an inviting roost box in the rafters and leave it there until the bird goes in, at which time a trap door will prevent it leaving again. It will look the part with inviting cut foliage and comfy roost perches. If this trap design works, we will be able to set it up and leave it until it has been occupied- most likely overnight.

In closing:

We can improve our trapping success rate by upgrading and maintaining our equipment. I'm going to build us some better BC's! These traps do require someone to watch them constantly. In cases where we can't get an owl into a trap on the first visit, we should insist on someone opening up for us after hours when it is dark and owls are active. This will save us time and petrol. I will draw up plans for a 'no watch' roost box trap. If it works, it will free us up to set it and go.

Got a trap idea or some spare materials? (eg. ply wood, perspex plastic, wire mesh, bits of metal angle or channel) Want a BC of your own? Call Marra on 0403 164 748.

HOW TO CONTACT THE SOCIETY

General inquiries

- e-Mail: via the website
- Post: PO Box 415, Forrestfield WA 6058
- Website: www.raptor.org.au

Coordinator – Philip Pain

- Telephone: (08) 9757 2960 (Margaret River)
- Fax: (08) 9757 2964
- Post: PO Box 415, Forrestfield WA 6058

Emergency assistance

- Marra Apgar and Dion Mendel – Perth Raptor Care, Midvale Ph: 0403 164 748
- Caleb Delamare – Raptor Centre, Shenton Park Ph: 0412 622 176
- Yvonne Sitko – Western Australian Bird of Prey Centre, Herne Hill Ph: 0438 388 383
- Philip Pain – Co-ordinator SPR, Eagles Heritage, Margaret River Ph: (08) 9757 2960
- Brian Mawby-Brown and Nancy Tang – EarthWings, Nannup Ph: (08) 9756 0669
- Janelle and Glenn Ende – Just Raptors, Geraldton Ph: (08) 9938 1447