



NEWSLETTER

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• REHABILITATION • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION •

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EDITORIAL – FIRE!

Fire. It's a word that strikes fear into the hearts of most sensible people. For most of us, a fire plan involves grabbing family members, pets and possessions (in that order) and getting everyone and everything to safety.

For wildlife rehabilitators, fire response is somewhat more complex. Not only do we have family, possibly pets and possessions that need to be preserved, but we also have other animals, many of which are not trained to come when called and cooperate with our evacuation efforts.

We should all have a fire plan, regardless of whether we are by ourselves, in a family home or running a rehabilitation centre. In an emergency, good planning can be the key to survival.

Your editor recently found that flexibility in planning is also important. The fire plan at EarthWings was one involving two people, two vehicles and a prioritised list of individuals (of varying species) documents and other items to be removed. What the plan failed to take into account, however, was what happened if one half of EarthWings was away on a fire truck, actually fighting the fire in question.

When a prescribed burn in nearby national park got out of control and became a potential threat, the EarthWings fire plan needed some adjustment. I'd been in Perth with our dog when the fire became a threat, so the dog was left behind with family members and I returned home to see to the wildlife, the house and the property in general. Our local vet nurse was a godsend. She cleared out a room in the clinic so that we and the Black Cockatoo rehabilitators around the corner could send birds into town where they'd be safe. The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) and the local Shire conducted a community briefing and based on the information provided, I was able to modify the fire plan so that I could carry it out alone: the five birds in residence at the time were packed up and evacuated to the vet clinic while the area remained at Bushfire Alert. I then returned to the property, packed up what we needed for our "survival box," loaded the vehicle and waited.

Fortunately, the fire was brought under control and there was no need to execute the third stage of the fire plan where the order to evacuate was issued.

The decision to leave early rather than to stay and defend was made on the basis of information provided by the authorities managing the fire. It was decided that the risk was too great given the behaviour of the fire and the conditions on the day. Under other circumstances, a different decision might have been made. There are times when staying to defend is appropriate. At other times, staying to defend may not be survivable and you still need to include emergency evacuation in your plan.

The Black Cockatoo rehabilitators had planned to stay and defend because they had 65 birds at their facility. DEC's Nature Protection Branch sent five Wildlife Officers with a vehicle and 70 cages to assist with evacuation. Their assistance was greatly appreciated.

EDITORIAL – FIRE! (continued)

It is vital to make informed decisions. Good decisions will always be based on good knowledge. Know your enemy: learn about fire. Understand how fire will behave on your property. Identify dangers. Minimise risks. Plan escape routes and potential containment lines. Ask yourself: what would happen if a fire came from this direction or that? What would happen if a fire started on the property? What would you take? What would you leave behind? From experience, it's amazing how little is actually irreplaceable once people and animals are safe.

If you are going to stay and defend, training and equipment are essential. Attend one of the many fire fighting courses run by FESA and register as a volunteer with your local brigade. If you have a rural or semi-rural property, consider purchasing either a small portable fire fighting engine or a slip-on (trailer or ute-mounted) unit. Prepare your property for fire. There are a number of free publications available from FESA to help you do this, whether you are in the bush or in a town or city.

The better prepared you are for fire, the better your chances of survival.

Society member Yvonne Sitko of the WA Birds of Prey Centre has been through several fire emergencies, largely thanks to her proximity to Whiteman Park, and can speak from experience on the subject. Here are Yvonne's top tips:

- Have your pet packs/transport boxes to hand, ready to go at a moment's notice.
- Include basic bird equipment – glove, blocks, leashes, swivels etc – in your survival kit.
- Have an evacuation point organised, well away from danger.
- Organise a list of people who can help you well in advance and familiarise them with your evacuation plan so that they know what to do if called upon to help in an emergency.
- Check that your neighbours are aware that a fire is approaching. They might not know that they are in danger. They may also be able to assist with your evacuation.

FESA have a number of publications designed to assist you in planning to survive fire and other emergencies. These may be found on line at the FESA website: www.fesa.wa.gov.au/internet/default.aspx?MenuID=243 . Alternatively, talk to your local Fire Brigade or the Community Emergency Services Coordinator at your Shire or Council.

One final thing to be aware of is that animals are not permitted at official evacuation centres. The Department of Child Protection is responsible for organising evacuation services in WA and they will not allow animals to accompany their owners, so while you should always register with officials when evacuating in an emergency, you may wish to have an alternative venue organised for yourself and your animals. Just make sure you tell someone where you'll be so that they don't go searching for you if you miss a roll call or head-count.

VOLUNTEERS FEATURED IN LANDSCOPE MAGAZINE

The Spring 2010 edition of *Landscape* has a special feature on DEC volunteers and includes a rather nice photo of the late and sadly missed Caleb Delamare, a much loved and valued member of the Society who passed away earlier this year. *Landscape* is available for purchase at newsagents, some Post Offices and on line at the DEC website.

CARRY OFF CARRION

Many of our members and friends are familiar with our *Carry off Carrion* fact sheet, which encourages road users to move fresh road kill off roads where it is possible to do so safely. Removal of road kill has the potential to reduce the number of scavengers – especially Wedge Tailed Eagles – struck by vehicles while feeding from carcasses.

We'd just like to clarify that we do not expect truck drivers, especially those in charge of heavy articulated vehicles, to stop on highways. The caveat throughout the *Carry off Carrion* campaign has been safety. It is not safe for a heavy articulated vehicle to stop in a short distance or to park on the road shoulder. For a truck driver to attempt this would be to introduce the potential for danger to him or herself, the vehicle and other road users. *Carry off Carrion* is aimed at the drivers of vehicles such as cars, four wheel drives, vans and light trucks which may, under the right circumstances, be able to be stopped and pulled over safely to allow for the removal of road kill carcasses.

EYELID DISTENSION IN OWLS – From the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health

Article reproduced from the newsletter of the Australian Wildlife Health Network. Thank you to Karrie Rose and Karen Magee for granting permission for us to include a copy of the article in our newsletter.



This Barking Owl and Southern Boobook were brought to the attention of the Registry by a veterinarian in a wildlife park on Hamilton Island. A wild southern boobook was taken into care for hand raising and developed profoundly distended eyelids over the period of a few weeks. The animal was taken to a vet at Airlie Beach where 'worms' were removed from the eyelids. Approx 1-2 weeks later a wild barking owl was presented with the same lesions.

Both animals were euthanased upon advice from the environment department.

The Registry only received images of the affected animals. If you have any ideas of what might have caused these lesions or have seen similar cases, please contact us at the Registry (arwh@zoo.nsw.gov.au).

Photos courtesy of Matt Taylor

DEC COURSES IN WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Tentative dates for next year's courses in Wildlife Rehabilitation have been determined.

Metropolitan courses in 2011 will be held at the new Western Australian Conservation Science Centre on the DEC campus.

- March 26/27 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Kensington
- April 9 – Advanced Topic (to be confirmed) – Kensington, videoconferenced to Regional Offices
- May 21/22 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Kensington
- June 18/19 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Busselton
- June 25 – Advanced Topic (to be confirmed) – Kensington, videoconferenced to Regional Offices
- July 30/31 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Kensington
- August 13 – Advanced Topic (to be confirmed) – Kensington, videoconferenced to Regional Offices
- August 20/21 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Pilbara/North-West (location/venue to be confirmed)
- September 10/11 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Kensington

Attendance at the Basic course is important for anyone wishing to volunteer as a wildlife rehabilitator and will be an essential requirement in the new accreditation process. If you would like to attend either for the first time or as a refresher, you can contact Judith Holmes at the DEC Community Involvement Unit on (08) 9334 0251 to book your place.

NOTICE OF MEETING

The next General Meeting of the Society will be held at the Eagles Heritage Raptor Wildlife Centre in Margaret River on Saturday, 29 January 2011 at 5 pm. Make a day (or a weekend) of it with the family!

RSVP to Noelene Jenkins, Secretary on (08) 9453 6567.

END OF YEAR SOCIAL

The Society's end of year social will be a picnic held at Mussel Pool, Whiteman Park on Sunday, 5 December 2010. Members are welcome to bring family and friends to meet up at the WA Birds of Prey Centre display for the 11:00 am show. From there we will adjourn to the picnic area. Bring a plate of something to share.

HOW TO CONTACT THE SOCIETY

General inquiries (including membership and newsletters)

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

Coordinator – Philip Pain

- Telephone: (08) 9757 2960 (Margaret River)
- Fax: (08) 9757 2964

Emergency assistance

Perth Metropolitan Area

- Marra Apgar and Dion Mendel – Perth Raptor Care, Midvale Ph: (08) 6369 0705
- Yvonne Sitko – Western Australian Birds of Prey Centre, Herne Hill Ph: 0438 388 383
- Warren and Vienessa Goodwin – Canning Vale Ph: 0448 055 020 (Warren) or 0417 753 597 (Vienessa)
- John and Lyn Frings – Fur and Feathers Wildlife Rescue and Release Inc. Ph: 0419 395 114

Country WA

- Philip Pain – Co-ordinator SPR, Eagles Heritage Raptor Wildlife Centre, Margaret River Ph: (08) 9757 2960
- Brian Mawby-Brown and Nancy Tang – EarthWings, Nannup Ph: (08) 9756 0669
- Rose Best – Pilbara Wildlife Carers Association Inc, Karratha Ph: 0438 924 842

