



# NEWSLETTER

March 2011

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to all members, both new and established, to 2011. Last year had some highlights and some lowlights, the most notable being the sad loss of stalwart rehabilitator Caleb Delamare to a tragic accident. We hope that 2011 is treating everyone with more kindness than 2010 and look forward to a better year this time around.

One of last year's highlights was the sheer amount of medical equipment and consumables donated by kind-hearted people around Western Australia. Of course we couldn't use everything that was donated, but we did discover that if you remove the sharps from the little plastic sheaths in the winged infusion kits, you get a great Quenda-feeding tube, and that those big foam swabs with the plastic handles, while too large for most raptors, are ideal for Pelicans! That's right, if you donate medical equipment to us, we will pass on anything we can't use or don't need to other wildlife rehabilitators who can use it for their animals. Just because we're raptor specialists doesn't mean we work in isolation. We're plugged into State and National networks of hard-working volunteers who all have the same aims in mind: making life better for our native fauna.

Forward planning for 2011 is well under way, with plans already going ahead for the Perth Royal Show and the Balingup Small Farm Field Day.

Members are also reminded that applications for funding through the Environmental Community Grants close on Thursday, 7 April 2011. If you wish to lodge an application either through the Society or with the Society as a project partner, please discuss the details with our Coordinator, Philip Pain.

## BALINGUP SMALL FARM FIELD DAY

The Balingup Small Farm Field Day will be held on Saturday, April 16. The Society will be cooperating with DEC Blackwood Division, WAWRC and FAWNA to set up and run a combined informational display featuring the precious native fauna of WA's South West. Last year, our combined efforts won the award for Best Informational Display on Ground, so we're hoping we can equal that effort again this year.

## DONATION FROM NEWCREST MINING

Newcrest Mining have kindly donated \$5,000 to the Society in February of this year following discussions with Society member Marra Apgar of Perth Raptor Care and Raptor Presentations. Marra liaised with Newcrest staff to organise the logistics of placement, care and rehabilitation for several raptors sent to Perth by Newcrest from the Telfer gold mine. Thank you, Marra, Warren and Vienessa for taking on the birds, and thank you to Newcrest for your generosity.

## DEC COURSES IN WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Dates for this year's courses in Wildlife Rehabilitation are as follows:

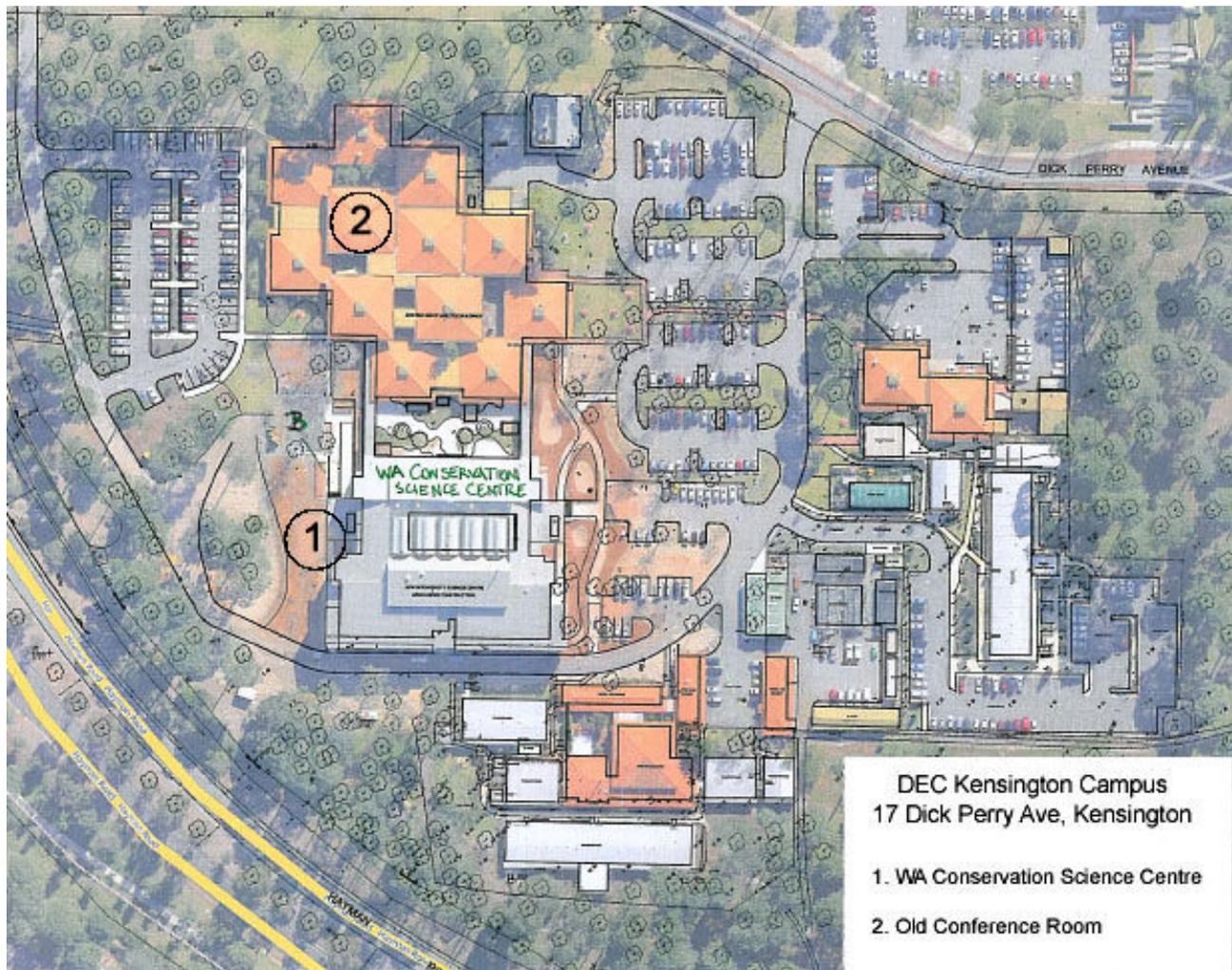
- March 26/27 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Kensington
- April 9 – Advanced Topic (to be confirmed) – Kensington, videoconferenced to Regional Offices
- May 21/22 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Kensington
- June 18/19 – Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation – Busselton
- 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.

As always, members wishing to help with the presentation of the raptor module should give us a call.

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

A map showing the new venue in relation to the old training rooms is shown below:



## WILD ADOPTION

In early October 2010, a call came in to Eagles Heritage from a Busselton resident to say that he had a young Wedge Tailed Eagle in his care that required collection. Society coordinator Philip Pain drove to Busselton to retrieve the young bird and find out how it came to be in its present circumstances.

Philip was told that the young bird's nest tree had been bulldozed as part of an illegal clearing operation in the Wheatbelt. The tree, complete with nest and occupants, had been bulldozed into a pile of debris and set alight.

The next morning, the bulldozer operator returned to tidy up the smouldering pile and found the six-week-old bird perched on the end of a branch with its feathers singed. It is not known how many chicks were in the nest when the tree was felled, but Wedge Tailed Eagles usually lay two eggs.

The eaglet was sent to Busselton (thus avoiding contact with the local wildlife officer) and contact was made.

Since the young bird was feathered (but not hard-penned) and able to regulate her own body temperature, she did not require brooding. This meant that Philip could install her in a nest he built in one of the large flight aviaries at Eagles Heritage with a derelict adult as a companion. In this way, the eaglet would not become socially imprinted on humans and would hopefully learn and copy the normal, healthy fear of humans exhibited by the adult bird.

Within a day of the eaglet taking up residence in her new nest, the resident wild pair of Wedge Tailed Eagles discovered her.

The two wild birds began spending time at the aviary, calling to the youngster, behaving defensively when staff arrived to clean, feed and replenish the water supply, and even attempting on occasion to deliver food to the nest.

The wild female's behaviour was perhaps the most dramatic: when the aviary was cleaned or food brought in, she would perch atop one of the aviary poles and scream defensively at the staff member, just as if she were defending her own nest with young.

Whilst it might have been poetic to simply remove the netting from the top of the aviary and let the wild parents move in and take over the care of the youngster, this would have entailed bringing in ladders, workers and possibly even a cherry-picker to reach the highest points where the netting was attached to the poles. This might have frightened the wild birds away and left the youngster alone and vulnerable to feral cats and other potential predators, so the decision was made to allow the situation to continue and hope that the wild birds would not lose patience.

After some weeks, the eaglet fledged and began flying the length of the aviary. The wild birds were no longer constant visitors but called in on a fairly regular basis, especially when the strong sea breeze was blowing in off the Cape.

It was time to release the fledgling and hope that the wild adults would continue to accept her. A Golden West Network news crew was invited to videotape the release, and one breezy Friday morning, the young bird had her pre-release assessment. Her feathers were strong, her musculature was sound, and she was deemed ready for freedom.

The bird was placed in a suitable transport crate, which was positioned on the "runway," a wide open space where there would be ample room for a large bird to manoeuvre and gain height.

The cameras rolled, the door of the crate was opened, and the eaglet powered her way into a waiting sky.

She perched in a big eucalypt overlooking her nest and took her bearings. She then began to preen and regarded the humans watching from below with an air of unconcern.

She later took off from the tree and disappeared from view.

Three days later she was seen in the company of the wild male and female with the group behaving like a family unit. They appear to be staying together within the vicinity of Eagles Heritage and Voyager Estate. Typically, the male appears to scout ahead while the females follow flying in close formation with one another.

Nobody consulted in the matter had ever heard of this happening before. Regional DEC Wildlife Officer Pia Courtis recounted a case where a wild Wedge Tailed Eagle had accepted an orphaned baby placed in her own nest, but we could not find a documented case where wild birds had adopted an orphaned baby in a brand new man-made nest, albeit within their home territory. If anyone has a similar story of eagle adoptions, we'd love to hear from you.



## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

The previously advised General Meeting (29 January) was cancelled due to the alerts posted by the Fire and Emergency Services Authority and the Bureau of Meteorology concerning Tropical Cyclone Bianca. The next General Meeting of the Society will be held at the Eagles Heritage Raptor Wildlife Centre, Boodjidup Road, Margaret River on Saturday, 12 March 2011 at 5 pm.

Please advise Society Secretary Noelene Jenkins of your attendance, apologies and agenda items on (08) 9453 6567.

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS**

Members are reminded that annual subscriptions are due for renewal on July 1. A renewal form will be included in the next newsletter, and those who wish to renew early may download a form from the Society's website.

## **HOW CAN I HELP?**

Not all wildlife rehabilitation is about getting scratched, bitten, beaten about the head or pooped on by a variety of native species. Sometimes people who want to help but don't feel confident in doing hands-on care and rehabilitation can assist by doing things like taxi runs to pick up animals in boxes from vets or rehab facilities for transfer, helping with educational sessions, picking up food from suppliers, carrying out repairs and maintenance on equipment or scrounging gear from various sources. You never know just when a particular skill-set will come in handy. If you'd like to help but you aren't sure what you can do, give us a call and talk it over.

## **HOW TO CONTACT THE SOCIETY**

### **General inquiries (including membership and newsletters)**

- e-Mail: via the website
- Website: [www.raptor.org.au](http://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, West Swan 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, Martin 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