



NEWSLETTER

July 2013

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• REHABILITATION • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION •

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EDITORIAL

It's July already and here is our mid-year newsletter for 2013. We have several new members who have joined us this year. Welcome to you all. We hope you will enjoy being a part of our raptorial little group.

We have come through a very hot, dry summer and for most of us, winter comes as a relief. Whenever there is a cyclone in the north west, weather across the state of Western Australia goes a bit monsoonal, even in the traditionally cooler areas of the south west forests. The Bureau of Meteorology is predicting that hotter, drier summers are going to become the norm from now on, and this has implications for everyone involved in wildlife rescue, care and rehabilitation. One of the first things we need to think about (and one of the things we are all inclined to overlook) is taking care of ourselves. Your editor quite clearly remembers having to sit down quietly to avoid fainting from dehydration and overheating during the Margaret River fires. That was entirely my own fault for rushing about after the birds and not stopping to ensure that I was properly hydrated. It could have proven disastrous as we did have to evacuate Eagles Heritage and if Phil had been busy having to see to me because I'd become incapacitated, that would have been two rescuers taken out of the equation, not just one.

Last season a significant fire event in Bullsbrook started perilously close to member Dominic's place but fortunately the prevailing winds carried the fire front away from him rather than toward his property, family and animals. Society member Brian was one of over 200 firefighters who were on the scene fighting the fire.

One of the wonderful things about being part of a big network is that when danger threatens, you always have someone at your back. When a fire was started in my area by lightning strikes (it eventually became the Greenbushes fire which destroyed historic Southampton Homestead) I had several phone calls and text messages – in amongst all the other communication as I was running Logistics support at the time – from other rehabilitators checking to see if I was okay and offering help should it be needed. What wonderful members we have!

The change of weather has seen the usual admissions with fledglings getting in to trouble and secondary poisoning cases. In all cases, prompt and appropriate fluid therapy is vitally important. We offer on-going training to our members in fluid therapy. Please remember, if you need a refresher or are unsure about anything, your network is here to help you! Get in touch with someone and arrange to keep your skills bright and shiny. Remember too that we do stock supplies for your rehydration kits so if you are running low on anything, call or e-mail to see if we can get it to you for free or at the lowest possible cost.

Over the March long weekend, Marg Lerner of WA Seabird Rescue collaborated with FAWNA Inc (based in Busselton) to offer a two day course on Bushfires and Burns Management, presented by wildlife specialist vet Dr Howard Ralph and Tania Duratovic, vet nurse and environmental scientist from Southern Cross Wildlife Care and Tree of Compassion Inc. A lot of teaching and learning was carried out over two packed days. Although the Society generally only has one big training weekend per year when we can get everyone together from all over the place, other organisations such as WAWRC, Kanyana and FAWNA do offer training opportunities and it's important to take advantage of what's on offer whenever possible. It is only by constantly learning and upskilling that we can offer the best care to the animals which rely on us for a second chance at life.

Lastly, I saw an article in *The West* recently about Perth vet Dr Paul Davey being awarded an Order of Australia for his work looking after other vets. It was a bit of an eye-opener to me to learn that vets can be particularly prone to stress and mental illness, and it occurred to me that we can do our bit to support them, too. I have issued an open invitation to my vets to come along to any and all wildlife releases, one that I will reissue at each release. Releases are such a buzz, and our vets deserve to see the end result of our combined efforts and hard work. Read the full article at –

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/breaking/17540076/caring-for-more-than-pets/>

So it looks like the theme of this editorial is that we need to look after ourselves and each other if we want to be able to look after our wildlife.

MITIGATING STRESS MYOPATHY IN SUSCEPTIBLE ANIMALS

At a recent workshop in Busselton, Dr Howard Ralph presented a very informative session on the management of burns. One of the important things discussed in the session was the minimisation and mitigation of stress and all its associated issues.

Whilst the session was primarily about burns management, there are some valuable lessons which can be applied to raptors being admitted to care.

Pain management is something that we have been focussing on in recent years. Pain contributes to stress, and this is particularly true in birds. An important part of mitigating stress and stress myopathy in raptors is effective pain management. The old ideas that “animals don’t feel pain the way we do” or that “pain is nature’s way of restricting activity” are no longer considered acceptable in today’s clinical environment. Animals *do* experience pain (albeit not always exactly the same way we do) and we have a responsibility to manage and mitigate pain wherever possible.

While mammal carers have the option of using things like paracetamol preparations for infants and children, bird carers are slightly more restricted in the substances we can use, simply because paracetamol is not effective or appropriate for use in birds.

The drug of choice for birds is usually Meloxicam/Metacam, but this should always be used with caution as it can contribute to renal complications and must be given with extra fluids.

Other preparations such as Tramadol are extremely effective but Tramadol is a Schedule 4 drug and can only be prescribed by a veterinarian. Other Schedule 8 drugs are also extremely effective for pain management in birds but can only be administered under veterinary supervision and should only be dispensed in small doses sufficient for each individual patient. It is not appropriate for wildlife rehabilitators to keep Schedule 8 drugs on hand. Apart from all the legal ramifications, it makes you a target for criminals if anyone thinks you are keeping such drugs in your house. It is vital, therefore, that each patient have a vet visit and that we ask the question every time, “How will we manage this animal’s pain?” You may have to take a seriously injured animal back to the vet several times over the course of its treatment to have its pain management reassessed, but this is a necessary step in providing effective pain control.

Another way that stress can be mitigated in those animals susceptible to stress myopathy is through the judicious use of sedatives under veterinary supervision. Dr Howard recommends that if the patient presents in such a way that the use of sedatives is not contraindicated, that in species such as the stress-prone Black Shouldered Kite, your vet may wish to consider administering diazepam at 25% of the normal dose rate. This usually has the effect of reducing anxiety and lowering the risk of losing the bird to stress myopathy.

Not all vets will offer pain management and stress management. These are issues we need to raise with our vets in a constructive and respectful way in order to arrive at an effective programme for each patient. Dr Howard Ralph is available for our vets to consult at Southern Cross Wildlife Care in Dee Why, NSW. As a wildlife specialist, Dr Howard takes calls from vets all over Australia and is more than happy to talk to ours if they need him.

Visit the website at <http://southerncrosswildlifecare.org.au>

HOW CAN I HELP?

Many Society members are with us because they want to help our wildlife, but not everyone is in a position to be a hands-on rehabilitator. Those who can take on rehabilitation birds sometimes need a bit of help and support though, with things like:

- Collection and/or transport of birds between centres and/or veterinary facilities
- Collection and/or transport of frozen food
- Collection and/or transport of other items (eg: equipment)
- Provision of freezer space for bird food
- Breeding crickets for birds to eat.

The Society reimburses members for petrol costs on submission of original receipts and mileage information. If you can help out now and then, please let us know.

PUSHING THE POINT by Noelene Jenkins

Some of our members may recall a report on Channel Ten's six o'clock news in May featuring our member Yvonne Sitko, DEC Senior Wildlife Officer Rick Dawson and a very beautiful Little Eagle which had been found fully jessed and dangling from a barbed wire fence in Kenwick. It was a great news story with emphasis on the fact that Australian raptors are protected species and cannot be kept as pets or used to hunt other animals (ie: falconry.)

The Little Eagle's story began for the Society when I received a telephone call at 9:00 am on Friday 19 April from a gentleman who said that his wife had picked up an eagle the previous afternoon on Brook Road in Kenwick, and that the bird had a chain attached to its legs. As it happened I was all but ready to depart for Nancy and Brian's place in the south west to attend the Society's display with DEC and FAWNA Inc at the Balingup Small Farm Field Day, but having heard that this bird was chained in some fashion I was anxious to see what had befallen it. My caller said he would bring the bird around straight away and within 45 minutes was knocking at the front door. I asked where the bird was, thinking he would have it in a box of some type, only to be told that his wife was holding it on her lap in the front seat of the car! I began to think that if the bird was small enough to sit in someone's lap, it was most likely a Kestrel or a Kite, but lo and behold, there was a mature male Little Eagle! The lady, tiny though she was, had stopped her car by the side of the road and bravely disentangled the Eagle from the barbed wire fence before taking it home. After obtaining contact details and all the relevant information I could think of, I thanked the rescuers for their care and concern, then got on the phone to member Marra Apgar to see if she could take it since I still had to head away for the weekend.

Fortunately, Marra and Dion were happy to take the bird, so I put the Eagle in a pet pack and drove to Midvale. On arrival, the bird jumped straight from the box to Marra's glove. Marra confirmed that the bird was a male and gave it an examination. It was in excellent condition, so it had probably not been entangled in the fence for very long. It was wearing well-made leather anklets around which nylon rope had been encircled to form the jess straps which were in turn attached to U-shaped metal swivels and then a store-bought chain leash designed for a dog.

Dion took some video footage of the bird and they followed this up with a call to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to inform them of the bird's arrival and its circumstances. In the week that followed, DEC began an investigation which included following up with the couple who had found the bird to confirm the details they had given me.

Since that time, the Little Eagle was transferred to Yvonne's WA Bird of Prey Centre. Yvonne observed that the bird's talons appeared to have been clipped and/or filed down which suggests that it had been kept as a pet rather than a falconry bird. Yvonne has the space and time to study and observe the bird. She has put it through its paces to see how well it flies, determine the level of imprinting it has undergone and its level of dependency on humans for food. She will assess its chances of being successfully rehabilitated and returned to the wild.

Ultimately, the bird's final disposition will be determined in consultation with DEC. We can but hope for a positive outcome for this magnificent creature. Yvonne has been promised a copy of the news story by Channel Ten, so hopefully those of you who missed it may be able to see it at a later date.

CALENDAR for 2013

Saturday 6 July – Sunday 21 July – School holidays

July 27-28 – DEC Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation

August 20-21 – DEC Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation

September 7-8 – DEC Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation

September 14 – Society for the Preservation of Raptors Inc Annual General Meeting

Saturday 28 September – Saturday 5 October 2013 – Perth Royal Show – Society display (to be confirmed)

Saturday 28 September – Sunday 13 October 2013 – School holidays

Monday 30 September – Queen's Birthday public holiday observed

Friday 20 December 2013 – Sunday 2 February 2014 – School holidays

If you would like to help out at any of the Society displays, please let us know. Our displays are the main way we work toward conservation of raptors and other native fauna – through grass roots community education. Displays are generally a great day out, you get to meet people and you get to spend quality time with our very special education birds.

NEXT MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Raptors Inc. will be held on Saturday 14 September 2013 at the Eagles Heritage Margaret River Raptor Wildlife Centre, 341 Boodjidup Road, Margaret River at 4:30 pm.

Everyone is welcome, and please remember that only members in good standing are eligible to stand for office or vote, so please make sure your membership is up to date.

We will provide more information on our usual Sunday morning training session as details are confirmed. At present we are looking at conducting a session on raptor necropsy.

Please direct queries to Nancy (see below for contact details.)

HOW TO CONTACT THE SOCIETY

General inquiries

- e-mail: via the website
- Website: www.raptor.org.au
- Post: PO Box 415, Forrestfield WA 6058
- facebook: www.facebook.com/raptor.org.au
- **Coordinator:** Philip Pain – Ph: (08) 9757 2960 (Margaret River)
- **Secretary:** Noelene Jenkins – Ph: (08) 9453 6567 (Perth)
- **Treasurer / Webmaster / Newsletter Editor:** Nancy Tang – Ph: (08) 9756 0669 (Nannup)

Education Programmes and Displays

- Philip Pain – Co-ordinator SPR, Eagles Heritage Raptor Wildlife Centre, Margaret River Ph: (08) 9757 2960
- Marra Apgar and Dion Mendel – Perth Raptor Care, Midvale Ph: (08) 6369 0705
- Yvonne Sitko – Western Australian Bird of Prey Centre, West Swan Ph: 0438 388 383
- Brian Mawby-Brown and Nancy Tang – EarthWings, Nannup Ph: (08) 9756 0669
- Janelle and Glenn Ende – Just Raptors, Geraldton Ph: (08) 9938 1447
- Rose Best – Pilbara Wildlife Carers Association Inc, Karratha Ph: 0438 924 842

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

Country WA

- 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
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