



NEWSLETTER

March 2017

• REHABILITATION • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION •

Society for the Preservation of Raptors Incorporated

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The Leap of Faith

Recently I had occasion to take on a human-imprinted Whistling Kite. He had been handed in at GEOvet Capel on a blustery Friday afternoon, where Dr Samantha Sexton took him in. Sam and I discussed the case over the phone, then on the Sunday, Sam drove him all the way from Busselton. I estimated his age at about twelve weeks. He was a screamer, his pectoral muscles had no tone to them, he grabbed at fingers and he lacked the strength to tear up mice.

Human-imprinted Whistling Kites do not do well if released. They tend to seek out humans and their begging and piratical behavior nearly always gets them into trouble. I jessed the bird and contacted Regional Wildlife Officer Pia to bring her into the loop. I named him Djandoo, which is Wardandi for Whistling Kite, and he has now been approved to go on to an education license.

Teaching Djandoo to fly was a challenge. It seemed that the bird had never really used his wings for flying other than having been blown by the wind into the orchard where he was found. He appeared to have missed important developmental milestones. I focused on teaching the bird to look to the glove for his food (rather than my fingers) and to develop his neck muscles by encouraging him to tear up his own dinner. It took a while, but he eventually got the hang of what I call 'Hawk 101' and I transferred him to a flight aviary.

Djandoo walked everywhere. He used his ladder perch. He didn't mind the high perches but he showed no inclination to kick off and try his wings. Empty air seemed to intimidate him. By now he was fourteen weeks old and he should have been soaring.

It was, I realised, a matter of trust. The bird needed to trust his wings and he needed to trust me. It was time for 'Hawk 102: Introduction to Aerodynamics.' I took Djandoo for walks around the property on the glove, talking to him and feeding him, strolling along the firebreaks, startling the Kangaroos and watching the Black Cockies. As we walked, I would encourage Djandoo to 'winnow,' to lean back and flap, to feel the way his wings made the air move. I would turn him and face him into the wind so that he could feel the breeze flowing over his body.

After about a week of this, Djandoo made his first jump to the glove. He shuffled around on the perch, screamed, then gathered himself, trembling, focused on the glove and launched himself forward. It was only a short jump, but he made it, bound to the glove and devoured the mouse that was on offer. It was a literal leap of faith on his part. I praised him and gave him a big meal as a reward.

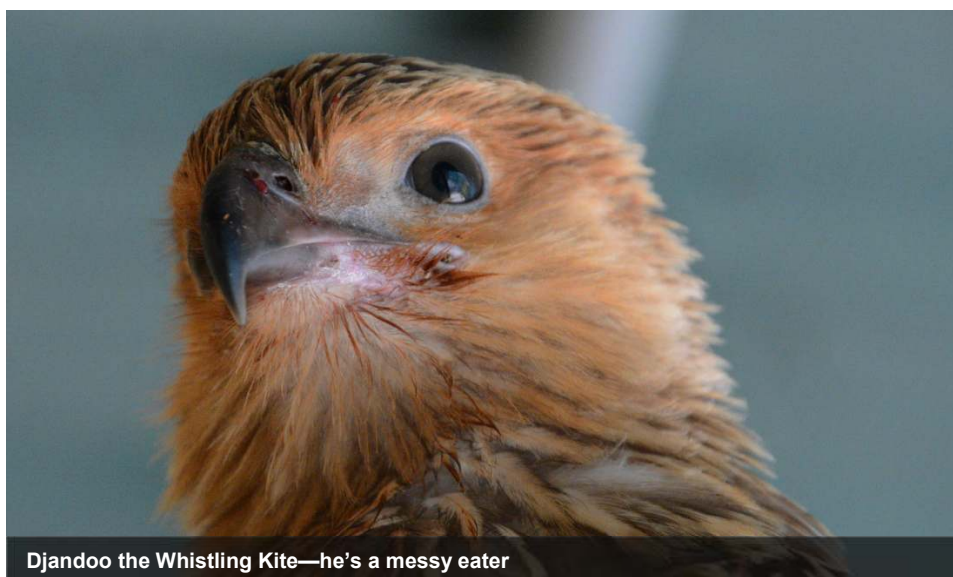
He is flying quite well now. I have hand-reared quite a lot of birds over the years and never dealt with one that exhibited so much anxiety about flight. They usually just reach a point where they want to fly and then they do it! Conditioning this bird to the point where he was willing to trust his own body to carry him and me to catch him was a great privilege.

It is always a pity when we cannot release a bird back into the wild, especially when the reason is that well-intentioned humans got it wrong somewhere along the line. Djandoo is destined to be an ambassador for wildlife and will join the Eagles Heritage flight team once his training is complete. It's the next best thing.

*"Not a single bird
makes its first leap*

*From a tree
without faith."*

*- Suzy Kassem
Rise up and Salute the Sun*



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Djandoo the Whistling Kite—he's a messy eater

General Meeting

Our next General Meeting will be a barbecue at the WA Bird of Prey Centre, 92 Dulwich Street, Bennett Springs, hosted by Yvonne Sitko on Friday 31st March 2017.

Join your fellow members for a BYOE* barbecue from 5 pm followed by the meeting at 7 pm, where matters of import will be discussed (literally) among other things.

If you have a topic you would like discussed, or to RSVP for the meeting, please contact the Society's Secretary Noelene Jenkins on 08 9453 6567.

*BYOE—Bring Your Own Everything

DPaW Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation

The next DPaW Basic Course in Wildlife Rehabilitation will be held at DPaW Kensington on the weekend of 29/30 April 2017. The raptor module will be on the Sunday morning, first thing. For course bookings, contact the Community Involvement Unit at DPaW Kensington on 08 9334 0251 or e-mail community.involvement@dpaw.wa.gov.au. There will only be two metropolitan courses for 2017 after the April weekend: one on 29/30 July and the last one on 21/22 October. In addition, one regional course will be run in Kalgoorlie over the weekend of 20/21 May.

Additional Training

Last month we had a half-day workshop on perch-making. Thank you to Marra and Anna for organising it. The Society can provide training on a number of different topics and is always open to meeting the training needs of members. If there is a topic you would like covered at a Society training event, please contact Nancy on 08 9756 0669 .

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Thoughtful: a juvenile Grey Falcon considers the camera

