

National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference Adelaide June 2010 Synopsis
by Jacqui Webb



Wendy Adams and myself were the lucky delegates from Fauna Rescue Whitsundays (FRW) who were able to attend the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference in Adelaide, funded by a grant from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. The Conference (NWRC) was well worth attending and we both thoroughly enjoyed it. We got to network with a lot of people involved in Wildlife Rehabilitation, learn more and for me, it was a chance to catch up with people in the wildlife field who I either hadn't seen for ages or have just been voices on the other end of the phone. There were many highlights, one of which was finally meeting Helen George, one of the first people to put together a comprehensive manual on Macropod Caring, which proved to be my bible for many years. Congratulations go to the organizing committee which consisted of members from Fauna Rescue SA (FRSA), Australian Marine Wildlife Research & Rescue Organisation (AMROW) & RSPCA SA. The committee organized an excellent conference with a diverse range of speakers. The venue at the Sebel Hotel was ideal and food delicious. The staff were extremely helpful and catered to everyone's needs. The Monarto trip was also good, despite the typical Adelaide weather and the fact that we didn't get to do the behind the scenes tour as the Tasmanian Devils had decided it was time to breed, with the highlight being the presentation on the recovery programme for the Warru or Black-footed Rock Wallaby, *Petrogale lateralis* (photo above).

I am so proud of my sister Sue and nephew Matt who were on the committee and helped organize the event. I know the committee spent a huge amount of time and effort on putting this conference together and considering there were a few hiccups along the way, I have been told by others who attended that it was the best conference yet. I am also amazed at the growth and achievements of FRSA, founded in 1988 (then known as Friends of Humbug Scrub), as when I joined in 1989 we were only a small bunch of like-minded people trying to achieve our best to help the wildlife in SA. Who would think then that FRSA would have been able to assist in pulling off such a huge and successful event?

Most of the papers are now available on the website www.nwrc.com.au, just click on the timetable link for access. The next NWRC will be held in Townsville in 2012 and we will keep you informed of details as the time gets closer. I have written a brief synopsis on each of the speakers below to give you an idea of content.

Animal Welfare: Ethics: Science: Conservation what are they and what is their relevance to wildlife rehabilitation? And why should we care?

Presented by Ian Robison BVSc Cert SHP ZooMed FRCVS

Emergency Relief Program Director

International Fund for Animal Welfare.

Ian gave an interesting and thought provoking presentation on how rehabilitation has now become a large activity which attracts the interests of scientists, wildlife officials and conservationists. rehabilitation practices and explained how these days carers now work closely with these people on ethical, animal welfare and scientific issues facing our wildlife and the impact of these issues on rehabilitation.

Wombat Mitigation Program

Presented By Brigitte Stevens, Founding Director, Wombat Awareness Organisation (WAO)

WAO is a rescue organization for sick, orphaned and injured wombats in SA. The Wombat Mitigation Programme aims to assist the farming community to coexist with wombats by developing and implementing viable alternatives to wombat culling. WAO is hoping to eliminate the need for destruction permits by providing this free service with ongoing support to the farming community, developing a better understanding of needs and concerns and how they can be overcome in a positive nature.

Current Impact of Global Warming on Australian Wildlife

Presented by Dr Anne Fowler, BSc(Vet) (Hons) BVSC, MACVSc(Avian Health, Wildlife Health)

Anne gave yet another informative, entertaining yet frightening presentation on Climate Change and the effects we are already seeing in our native wildlife. Anne pointed out that there are so many opportunities for action with wildlife carers being an army of environmental educators, having the ability to educate the public through their interaction with an individual wild animal. How you can help:

- Support wildlife through threatened species programs and habitat purchase by government or private companies.
- Habitat interconnectivity (wildlife corridors) allowing wildlife to move between habitats. Restoring cleared, fragmented and degraded habitat through programmes such as Land for Wildlife and Landcare.
- Continue to lobby the government for a capping of carbon emissions and development of alternative renewable natural energy sources.
- Conserve water in our homes and workplaces.
- Lobby the government for better control of invasive weed and pest species.
- Lobby the government to put a value on biodiversity and the environment and have this accounted for in new developments and carbon reduction schemes.
- Educate the wider community on appropriate domestic pet care

Final tip from Anne:

If 10,000 households used recycled or Eco toilet paper we could save 6 million trees!!

The Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill

Presented by Aaron Machado from Australian Marine Wildlife Rescue & Research Organisation (AMWRROW)

Aaron shared with us his sad experience in America after his trip to offer assistance with the oiled wildlife.

Unfortunately Aaron was presented with a pile of red tape, which prevented him from providing assistance to the animals at the time, however he was planning to undergo the training required by BP, which would thus enable him to work on site. I think most of us reached for the tissues in this presentation.

Wombaroo Food Preparation & Storage

Presented by Samantha Rich

Samantha gave an informative talk on the wombaroo food products history as well as the value of using the milk feeding techniques and hints on correct preparation and storage techniques. I know many carers use different storage techniques so the main points to consider are storing milk powder in a cool, dry place, preferably under 30 degrees, NOT in fridge or freezer as condensation and ice crystals can form which may affect the reconstitution of the milk.

Subtle But Devastating Causes of Failure to Thrive

Presented by Dr Howard Ralph

Howard talked about the common 'Failure to thrive' syndrome seen by many wildlife carers and shared with us some case studies on uncommon 'Failure to thrive' causes he has seen. This really made me sit back and think whether we really should continue to try with such animals as they obviously were suffering to varying degrees from injuries not evident until either surgery or euthanasia was pursued.

A Web Framework for Wildlife Information Sharing

Presented by Greg Rogers, Professional Software Engineer

Greg talked about some software he is currently developing for the Australian Frozen Zoo. He feels that to develop an integrated information sharing system, to be used by all people working with wildlife, would assist in improving disaster responses and tracking emerging trends in wildlife health such as disease outbreaks.

Caring for Animals in Remote Locations

Presented by Joanne Waterstrom Muller, Kangaroo Co-ordinator for Pilbara Wildlife Carers Association

Joanne discussed the many challenges faced by carers living in remote areas of the country with no access to close vets and supplies.

The Value of Post Mortem Examinations and Histopathology in Diagnosing Diseases Affecting and Threatening Australian Native Animals

Presented by Dr Derek Spielman

This was a very interesting presentation on disease, the value of post mortem and histopathology collection. Derek also shared some case studies with us.

Kangaroo Translocation: Program effectiveness and welfare goals

Presented by Professor Steve Garlick PhD, FAUCEA & Rosemary Austen PhD, MBBS, FRACGP

Rosemary and Steve produced this paper in response to the well known 2008 herding and brutal slaughter of at least 514 kangaroos in Canberra. This paper demonstrates that, with thorough planning and control, orphaned and wild large Eastern Grey Kangaroos can be successfully translocated with a high success rate.

Possum Rehabilitation, Natural vs Supplemental Diets

Presented by Michelle Thomas, Wildlife Victoria

Michelle talked about the benefits and necessities of natural diets for rehabilitating wildlife.

Informal Discussion State Councils

Representatives from current State Councils as well as those states wanting to set up a state body discussed the formation of a National Body.

Tolga Bat Hospital

Presented by Jan Virgo

Unfortunately Eleanor and I missed this one as in meeting with one Victor from Brisbane City Council but was told that Jan gave a good presentation about the Tolga Bat Hospital, one place I am hoping to get to visit soon!

RSPCA SA and Wildlife: past present and future plans

Presented by Russell Jarman

Russell talked about their involvement with wildlife from an RSPCA perspective, some of the large scale emergencies they have been involved in and their working relationship with Fauna Rescue SA and Australian Marine Wildlife Rescue & Research Organisation (AMWRROW). It really is inspiring to see several different organizations working together to effectively assist our wildlife.

Legal Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Release

Presented by Jed Goodfellow BA/LLB (Hons), GDLP

Legal Officer RSPCA SA

Jed explained the legal framework, of the Animal Welfare Act, Animal Welfare Regulations and of Codes of Practice in relation to wildlife rehabilitation and explained some of the differences between our states.

Forum on Avian Pox

This discussion was initialized as this problem is seen right around Australia in a variety of avian species. Kanyana Wildlife is currently conducting a survey in view of developing a National perspective on this disease.

Australian Marine Wildlife Research & Rescue Organisation Inc. (AMWRRO)

Presented by Aaron Machado

Aaron gave us an informative overview on AMWRRO, their beginnings as a result of the 1998 killing of six Port River Dolphins, their invaluable work in habitat restoration on the Port River, establishment of their Natural Wetland Rehabilitation Facility and the rescue of marine animals.

Wildlife Victoria's Response to the 2009 Victoria Bushfire Season

Presented by Sandra Fernee BA(Hons), Ceo, Wildlife Victoria

This presentation revolved around those 2009 bushfires, highlighting many of the problems encountered by rescuers and the animals they cared for. Many of the rescuers lost property and homes or had family that were affected by the disaster. I don't think there was a dry eye in the room. Those rescuers and carers deserve a medal for their hard work and perseverance under such terrible and traumatic conditions.

Kangaroo Release Research

Presented by Lynette Masters

Lynette gave an overview of her extensive research into kangaroo health, injury disease, captive care and rehabilitation. Lynette is currently collating data for her kangaroo release research and is seeking participation from carers.

How To Use Natural Therapies for Wildlife Care

Presented by Dr Sarah Brett, Kimbelry Wildlife Rescue Inc

Sarah is a Vet in Kununurra WA and her practice provides all the wildlife rescue and care for the East Kimberley region. Alongside traditional Veterinary Medicine Sarah also uses natural therapies to assist in the recovery process. Sarah's paper is definitely worth a read. Note from Sarah:

"If every wildlife carer just added on remedy, ARNICA, to their toolbox, then I would be a very happy Vet, your patients would benefit enormously."

Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics

Presented by Judith Hopper, wildlife Assistance & Information Foundation Inc

Judith a bat carer at heart, concerned at the number of flying-foxes routinely euthanased and a lack of knowledge about treatments. Judith's presentation was stressed the importance of accurate data collection and reporting and the usefulness of accurate statistics and the value of knowledge collected by rehabilitators.

Flying-fox in South Australia

Presented by Linda Collins

Linda gave an informative presentation on these lovely animals, their behaviour as they are interacting more closely with humans these days as they food and roosting supplies are diminishing. Linda's presentation was quite timely for SA as a couple of colonies of Grey-headed flying foxes have shown up in Adelaide recently.

Lost Possum Babies – An alternative to hand rearing

Presented by Dr med vet Ulrike Beckmann

Ulrike related her experiences of being successful in reuniting lost possum joeys with their mothers, techniques used and success of her attempts. Definitely a read for all those possum carers out there who are not using this method at the moment.

Wildlife as Pets in Qld

Presented by Janet Gamble, State Wildlife Co-ordinator RSPCA QLD

Janet presented an overview of the RSPCA and the term "pocket pets" such as rats, mice, guinea pigs and also includes birds, reptiles, fish, crabs and invertebrates. Janet also explained that wild animals are not allowed to be taken or kept as pets in QLD. Recently there has been discussion in possibly allowing the Qld public to keep wildlife as pets. Janet pointed out that wildlife has specific housing, feeding and care needs which may not be met by the majority of pet owners, which is evident with some of the domestic pets that RSPCA see every year. Many of these pets present as lost or strays, subsequently needing to be rehomed.

The Australian Animal Welfare Strategy – An Opportunity for National Consistency

Presented by Dr Deb Kelly, Dept for Environment & Heritage

Deb presented a brief overview into the development, aims, achievements and potential of the Australian animal Welfare Strategy with a focus on the Animals in the Wild Sector which seeks to improve the welfare of both feral and native fauna.

Wildlife Land Trust

Presented by Evan Quartermain

Evan talked about the Trust, the importance of private land conservation, sanctuary profiles and international sanctuaries. Definitely worth reading this if you are a private land owner interested in habitat conservation.

Echidnas, the Different Mammal

Presented by Dr Peggy Rismiller OAM

As most of you know, Peggy has been doing Echidna research at Pelican Lagoon, Kangaroo Island, SA since 1988. Peggy gave a great presentation on Echidnas, their biology and physiology as gleaned from hers years of research into these “Enigmatic” animals.

Herbivore Nutrition Supplements – Helping Wildlife in Care

Presented by Beverley Young, OAM, Sydney Wildlife

Beverley provided us with some interesting information and results of using the products Critical Care and Oxbowl in effectively treating problematic young possums.

Fluid Therapy

Presented by Michelle Thomas

Michelle talked about fluid therapy and the benefits of it's use in treating wildlife. Michelle also presented explanations of the different products available and their recommended use in different situations.

Observations about Myopathy in Macropods

Presented by Dr Howard Ralph & Dr Rosemary Austen

Howard presented a very informative talk on myopathy and the circumstances of it's occurrence, recognition and treatment.

RSPCA and QWRCs Relationship

Presented by Leonie Rickard, Senior Wildlife Manager, RSPCA QLD

Leonie offered a comprehensive explanation on RSPCA and QWRC's working relationship since early 2003, including the original steering committee, Memorandum of Understanding, Ex-officio position, glovebox guide, the 1300 Animal number

Treatment of Burns

Presented by Dr Anne Fowler

Another entertaining and informative presentation by Anne on treatment of burns.

Fundraising Tips for the Wildlife Industry

Presented by Amy Amato, Marketing and fundraising Manager at Wildlife Victoria

Amy discussed efficient fundraising techniques and effective awareness and marketing tips.

Restoring Connections: We are all ONE

Presented by Adriana Simmonds

Adriana shared her, and I think, a very important message to wildlife carers: *“The wildlife we are trying to help belongs and depends entirely on the environment; therefore, protecting, enhancing and restoring natural habitats is imperative for its survival”*.

Black Saturday – Help for Wildlife

Presented by Denise Garrett, President, Help for Wildlife Inc

Another moving account of the generous assistance of volunteers helping our wildlife and other domestic pets in the wake of the Black Saturday Bushfires.

The Past, Present and Future Problems, Solutions and Hope

Presented by Liz MacGuinness, Fauna Rescue of SA

Liz covered the journey of Fauna Rescue from it's humble beginnings in 1988 to present day, the work they do alongside other organizations and the different laws in SA pertaining to wildlife.

Pygmy Blue Tongue

Presented by Terry Morley

Terry talks on the rediscovery and subsequent full scale research and recovery program of the Pygmy Blue Tongue, the last of which was collected in the 1950's.

Free Flight Training Raptors for Release.

Presented by Frank Mikula

Frank discussed his work of training raptors for release using Free Flighting Techniques. This is food for thought for all raptor rehabilitators.