



Wildlife Rescue South Coast

Registered in NSW: Y1612344 ABN: 49616307526

P.O. Box 666, Nowra, NSW 2541

Thank you for your interest in the Wildlife Rescue South Coast. Our organisation is licensed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to rehabilitate wildlife on the NSW south coast. Our primary aims are to rescue injured and orphaned wildlife, rehabilitate them and release them back into the wild. We have been rescuing wildlife in the region since the late 1980's.

Members and prospective members are encouraged to attend our monthly general meetings. These are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except January) at 7:00 pm at the Nowra Library meeting room. This room is located in under the main library in Berry Street, and the entry is via the car-park access road on the north side of the building (on the North Street side).

The following pages tell you about our group, and what is involved in becoming a member. Not all of our members are involved in hands-on wildlife care, but their support is essential to us. Read on to learn about the different roles available, and what you could expect if you are interested in getting involved in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. It is not for everybody – just for the very special!

Other information, including our constitution, by-laws and recent newsletters, is available from our website www.wildlife-rescue.org.au. Wildlife Rescue South Coast members are expected to comply with the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Code of Ethics and the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Code of Practice.

Please contact us if you have any questions. We hope that this information is of interest and will help you in your decision to become a member of Wildlife Rescue South Coast. If you wish to proceed, please fill out the membership application form and send this, together with the appropriate fees (see details on the application form) to the address above. This will be submitted to the next committee meeting and you will be informed soon afterwards of your acceptance. If for any reason your membership application is not accepted, all of your fees will be returned to you.

Yours Truly,

Membership Officer

Encl: Volunteering in wildlife care
Membership Application



WILDLIFE CARE VOLUNTEERING

Is It What You Want To Do?

Introduction

Over the next couple of pages, we hope to answer some commonly asked questions about volunteering with a wildlife rescue organisation such as Wildlife Rescue South Coast.

1. What do our volunteers do?
2. What is Wildlife Care?
3. What skills and experience are needed?
4. Why do volunteers need to train in each animal group?
5. What if I have pets?
6. What if I have a reptile or bird-keepers licence?
7. What sort of things will I have to do?
8. What equipment will I need?
9. What costs might I incur?
10. What else do I need to know?
11. What are the best and worst things about being a wildlife volunteer?

1. What do our Volunteers Do?

Wildlife groups like ours need people to help with a wide range of activities. There are many options, from hands-on wildlife rescue to running information stalls. Every one of these is essential to keeping the association functioning.

- a) Rescuing wildlife
- b) Feeding and Caring for injured wildlife
- c) Breeding food (mealworms, crickets, mice etc)
- d) Fundraising (organisation, manning stalls, applying for grants, etc)
- e) Answering the 'Rescue Hotline' phone
- f) Publicity (Writing newsletter, website, and media articles)
- g) Building nest boxes, cages or aviaries
- h) Education & Training (for OUR members and the public)
- i) Administration (accounting, secretarial, membership management etc)

You could be involved in one or more of these activities. It's up to you.

2. What is Wildlife Care?

As residential development continues, there are more and more interactions between humans and wildlife. These sometimes end up with individual animals being killed, injured, or orphaned. The key role of those involved in wildlife care is to rescue these animals and prepare them for release back into the wild.

This may involve first aid, veterinary treatment, therapy, medication, feeding and housing for the animals in care. In NSW only authorised carers over the age of 18 are allowed to do this work.

We are also involved in preventative action, lobbying for sustainable development, protection of habitat, training, and educating people about wildlife. Wildlife Rescue South Coast is licensed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to rehabilitate wildlife on the NSW South Coast, from Kiama to the Victorian border, and west to the Southern Highlands.

3. What skills and experience do I need?

It depends on the role you want to play in our association. You may already have skills that are valuable to us in certain roles. (E.G. experience as a book-keeper or accountant would be very helpful to us in managing our finances or fundraising efforts).

To rescue or care for wildlife, you will need specific knowledge. Being 'good with animals' is a good start, but you must either undertake appropriate training, or prove that you already have experience.

Most training courses are two days or less, and are heavily subsidised – some are even free! Plus, you only need to do the training you currently require.



4. Why do volunteers need to train in each animal group?

Volunteers start with a basic rescue course, which allows them to go out on wildlife rescues. Basic and advanced courses on various species are available. Each one is mandatory before a member can adequately care for that species. When you have successfully undertaken the appropriate training, you may be issued with an authority card, which allows you to rescue and care for the animals you have been trained for.

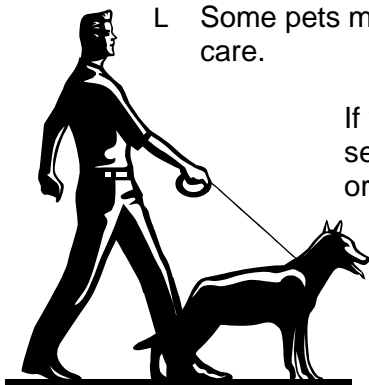
We do this because each species has specific needs. Some are more complex, and some need longer time in care. We initially encourage volunteers to gain experience with animals that are more robust, simpler to care for, and in care for a shorter time.

Animals such as orphaned kangaroos or wombats may require a large investment of time. When you take on such an animal, it may need to be in care for over 12 months – and then it must be released. We want volunteers to have time to decide for themselves whether this is what they really want to do, before making such a big commitment.

5. What if I have pets?

Many people who want to help wildlife, have a natural affinity with animals, and are likely to have pets. In some cases, this can create potential problems:

- L Dogs and cats are known to prey on many of the species that come into care. It is important that wildlife in our care does not learn to think of dogs and cats as 'friends'. They must learn to flee from these potential predators.
- L Some pets are susceptible to diseases that wildlife might have – and there is the potential for pets to be harmed as a result.
- L Some pets may be carriers of diseases that may transmit to wildlife in care.



If wildlife carers have pets, they must keep them completely separate from wildlife at all times. Pets must not be allowed in or near the areas where native animals are being held.

We also insist that all members with pets be responsible pet owners, and must comply with all requirements of the Companion Animals Act.

6. What if I have a reptile or bird-keepers licence?

We are often approached by people who have a separate licence to keep or breed reptiles or birds. Some of these people have extensive expertise, which can be applied to wildlife in need. However there are some very specific issues, which relate to the potential for diseases to spread between captive birds and reptiles (whether native or exotic) and wildlife in care.



In the past, unethical breeders have kept animals brought in for care, and added them to their collection. While most licensed reptile and bird keepers operate ethically and honestly it is important to know that keeping native animals from the wild as pets or for breeding purposes is expressly forbidden. Any breach of this rule would be treated with the utmost seriousness.

Generally, people with reptile or bird licences will not be allowed to hold (in care) animals which are the same species as those which they keep or breed as a hobby. Our rules specify that wildlife must be held and accounted for quite separately to any pets, predators or livestock, and this applies to any captive animals held as a hobby or for breeding purposes.

7. What sort of things will I have to do?

People have different limitations on their time, health, money, and availability, and we will always work within these limits.

Maybe you don't have the time to rehabilitate or raise animals, but you can help with rescues on weekends, or help with fundraisers or other administration duties. We try to be flexible, so that you can help us in a way that suits your commitments.



Whatever roles you would like to play, if you don't already have experience, we encourage you to undertake training.

Rescuing wildlife sometimes requires little more than picking up an injured or orphaned animal that is already wrapped up, or in a box. On other occasions, it may be more challenging, so we take advantage of our network of carers to support and advise our new volunteers.

You may need to take rescued animals to a vet or to an experienced carer. Coordinators decide who will care for animals that need to be kept in care. You do not automatically get to care for the animal you rescue.

You may have to do a bit of driving around to pick up and deliver animals, and many of our members get involved in our fundraising activities.

Spring and summer are our busiest times, and we rescue about 75% of the animals during these months. Things can get a bit hectic. Those who take on the care of wildlife can be busy through the summer months.

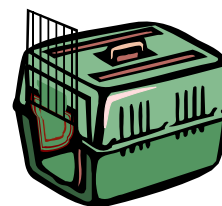
If you do raise or rehabilitate an animal, you will be expected to provide the appropriate housing, food, and medical needs for that animal. In addition to training, new members will generally refer to more experienced carers to help and advise you.

We strive to provide the absolute best outcome for wildlife, and so volunteers who rehabilitate wildlife must retain the animals and all facilities in a condition that meets or exceeds the minimum standards of care. We will provide you with the knowledge and guidance to assist you.

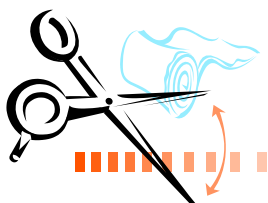
8. What equipment will I need?

Initially you will not need very much. You will be given a list of items we like volunteers to have in their kits. Most are commonly available items.

Most people get basics, like a pet carrier, and small cages at first. Then, as their experience grows, they gradually increase their collection of equipment to suit their level of activity and specialty (if any).



Many items can be bought second hand through the local papers and garage sales. Quite often, experienced carers will lend, or even give new carers some of their spare equipment to help them get started. We also encourage members of the public to donate old cages and aviaries.



Wildlife carers have become quite adept at bargaining, getting discounts, and seeing odds and ends that can be re-used to house or feed wildlife. Existing members have many tips to help build up your equipment without incurring too much expense.

If facilities are donated or loaned to you to look after wildlife, you must return them to Wildlife Rescue if you later leave the group, or if you are asked to do so by our committee – for example, to help out a newer member).

9. What Costs might I incur?

Membership fees are relatively inexpensive, but are very important. Without a current membership in a wildlife group, you will not be authorised to capture or hold wildlife. Significant fines can apply for illegally holding wildlife in NSW.

As a financial member, you are protected by our insurance whenever you act on our behalf.

We meet all vet bills for wildlife, although you will need to get approval if the fee is over a certain amount. That includes any medicines issued by the vet for wildlife in your care.



Generally, volunteers are expected to pay for feeding wildlife in their care. We subsidise some foods, but arrangements change from time to time, and you should check the current arrangements by going to meetings, reading the newsletter, or checking with the local coordinator.

Generally, wildlife volunteers are expected to pay for cages, housing, heating equipment, books, and incidentals like pouches, bandages etc. However, as mentioned before, some of these items are often donated or lent to new members (especially cages and pouches). Most volunteers just go with what they can afford, and learn to beg and borrow much of the rest!

If at any time the costs seem to be too much, you can approach the committee or coordinator –to reduce the number of animals you might have in care.

You only need to spend as much as you feel comfortable with, but costs will vary according to the species of wildlife you decide to care for.

10. What else do I need to Know?

Members are expected to work within our rules and regulations, and abide by the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitators code of ethics. All of our rules are included in our constitution, which is available for download from our website.

You are expected to read our newsletter. As well as many interesting stories, hints and tips, we use the newsletter to advise of issues which affect our members.

If you are considering being a hands-on wildlife carer, there are items worth noting:

- All decisions about the care and placement of wildlife may be reviewed by experienced specialist coordinators. Their decisions are made in the best interest of the wildlife, and the safety of our volunteers, and are binding.
- Our standards require animals to be cared for in an appropriate environment. Animals may not be put on display, and should not be subject to unnecessary stress such as proximity to loud noises, pets, or children at play. They should not be handed from person to person, taken into hostile environments, or left in cars.
- Facilities for animals vary, from small cages to large enclosures depending on the species. Large pens and high fences are required for larger Kangaroos.
- Committee members and/or coordinators may inspect your property and facilities to ensure that they are appropriate for the care of wildlife. No animal may be kept or housed in facilities that do not meet minimum specifications.

11. What are the best and worst things about wildlife care?

Every animal comes into care because it is sick, injured or orphaned. In most cases these animals would have died had they not found their way into our care. Despite our best efforts, some of them will not make it.

The reality is, every wild animal needs a certain fitness level to survive in the wild – and this will depend very much on the individual species. What sometimes seems to be a 'mild' injury may well prevent an animal from finding food, or from avoiding predators in the wild. The worst thing about wildlife care is making the decision to have an animal 'put down' because it can't survive in the wild.

These animals are not pets, and part of our job is to ensure that they are not 'humanised'. We have to keep them wild, and that means creating distance between ourselves and our charges – the consequences of getting it wrong are a matter of life and death for these animals after they are released.

On the other hand there are many good things about wildlife care. Being one of the relatively few people to work with, handle, and help Australia's unique wildlife is a privilege that has to be earned, but is something very special. Working so close to nature, and the feeling of 'giving something back' is very rewarding.

In the end, there is nothing like the moment an animal you have saved, hops, runs, or flies back into the wild. That is without doubt, the best thing about wildlife care.



12. The next step

The next step is up to you. You can help us in many different ways, as we mentioned on the very first page.

If you want to help with wildlife rescue and care, and you have read this paper, you know that you will need to think about this seriously. Consider the checklist below.

- L Do you have a love of wildlife
- L Are you prepared to put in the hours
- L Are you at least 18 years old
- L Are you prepared to spend some of your own money to buy food & equipment
- L Do you understand that hard decisions are sometimes needed
- L Do you understand there will be times of sadness and disappointment
- L Are you prepared to attend necessary training courses
- L Do you understand that these are not pets, and that success comes when an animal is capable of living independently in the wild, and is released
- L Can you appreciate that it is worth all of the hard work and difficult times, just to release a healthy native animal back into the wild

If this is you, and you have what it takes, the next step is to let us know at the address below, that you would like to become a member.

Wildlife Rescue South Coast

PO Box 666

Nowra NSW 2541

Ph: 02 4423-1635

or 02 4446-0042

or 02 4441-8102

Email info@wildlife-rescue.org.au

