

WILD DAYS WILDLIFE SHELTER

SUPPORTER UPDATE / 2017 REVIEW



We are so lucky that we have so many beautiful bird species in Australia. We are able to enjoy many of those brightly coloured birds in our gardens and parks. Over recent years Wild Days Wildlife Shelter has seen an increase in lorikeets, eastern rosellas, crimson rosellas, wattlebirds, and honeyeaters of all sorts. The extreme weather is creating a problem for our nectar eaters as the heavy downpours are removing the volume of nectar and pollen available to these birds. The birds are coming in weak and skinny and in that state, are often victims of attack as they are on the ground too weak to fly, most likely due to a reduction in food availability.

Wild Days has also seen an increase in water birds over the last few years. In this area of increasing development, there is a tendency to include lifestyle areas in all estates, lakes and wetlands are on the rise. While these areas are beautiful and necessary, they are being built with public walkways too close to the water's edge. People enjoying walking their dogs along these paths experience their dogs being able to reach birds such as swans at water's edge waiting to be fed. It also means that many wetlands are too close to roads resulting in many water birds needing care after being hit by cars. While most birds are too fragile to survive road trauma, those who make it usually have broken bones or serious head trauma needing intensive caring.

As you can see, the need for care and rehabilitation is an ever increasing one and your support is more valuable than ever.

Now for some of the good stories...



One of the amazing benefits of being a wildlife carer is being able to experience so many different species up close, having the chance to interact with them and learn how incredible they are. Recently, a call came from a local vet who had received a Great Egret that had road trauma. Having seen these birds from a distance while doing bird surveys, I knew I needed a large carrier to get this bird home and into care. I collected the Egret in my largest carrier and it still had to duck!

The bird had swelling to one side of its head, one eye was full of blood and the other was too swollen to see what was happening. Unfortunately, if the eyes of a bird are not perfect, they are unable to

hunt for food and will starve. Knowing that the Egret would be stressed in a situation where it was unable to see what predators were around, the best option is to house the bird in a confined space where it knew it was protected and nothing else could see it. My bathroom seemed a good option. With lots of bedding and water available, the Egret seemed to settle, tucked its head in and slept. What a headache it must have had.



Being a fish-eating bird, a piscivore, these magnificent birds must be force fed as they do not recognize dead fish. Holding the Egret's beak open with the neck extended fully, it reached my shoulder height! Incredible. It only took a couple of days force feeding, for the Egret to take the fish one at a time from my hand. It was "right handed" as I found that if I did not pass the fish to it with the head facing to the right, it would flick it around the wrong way, go down tail first and get stuck. This resulted in fish coming back up again. Feeding time was also a source of comedy as with the eye damage, the Egret could not properly focus on where I was holding the fish and we would comically try and coordinate the beak grabbing with the fish holding until we met at the same point. Many a quiet laugh, which I am sure it was joining me in the moment. The trusting nature of the Egret in allowing me to check and treat both eyes every day, will always make me feel honoured.

As time went on, the eye that was repeatedly filling with blood slowly improved and cleared, the head swelling subsided however the other eye had different problems. The second eye had swelling issues in the iris and would take a lot longer to improve. I am pleased to say that it did, and I had the pleasure of releasing the Great Egret back to the wild. What a moment!

Squashed again into the big carrier, we travelled to the wetland and out it got, a quick glance to say thanks, and off it went. Beautiful and majestic. Up to the top of the trees to check out the company before flying off.



The Egret was in care at Wild Days for several weeks and during that time consumed around 30 to 40 fish a day. It was necessary to purchase a specific size of fish. The cost of this one bird was around \$20 per day for food alone, \$140 per week. Often one animal or bird will require specific food or medicine that create an immediate need for funds. Many of the more common foods and medicines are kept on hand, but it is impossible to do this in all situations.

And there's more...

Berwick Vet Hospital contacted me to collect some "baby birds", they were not sure what they were. They were White Faced Heron chicks. They had been brought in by the tree loppers for the council who had removed the tree they were nesting in. Unfortunately, apparently the distressed parents were flying around helpless, as the whole row of trees was being removed so there was no option of moving the nest to a nearby tree. There were three helpless chicks. Unfortunately, only two of them would survive. They had hit the ground hard from a height and the smallest chick died after a few days.

I have noticed that White Faced Herons have become more common in our area over recent years, they are the skinny tall grey birds that you can often see standing roadside or in paddocks. They nest high in trees and graze on the ground around wetter areas.

These precious chicks required crop feeding on a regular basis as their parents would have been doing. A funny time is feeding time. They would be sitting quietly calmly waiting and then as soon as they would see me coming, they would explode into a screeching demand for food, competing against each other. Quite like a horror film!



They were progressing well and growing at a pleasing rate. It is always difficult to know how very young birds will go without their parents. A special thanks to Jacqui who helped feed these little ones in the early days during the period after I had been incapacitated by an injury. My thoughts in the emergency ward went straight to the little ones! White Faced Herons typically perch off the ground. It was interesting that without their parents, these little ones knew they had to get up high. As they grew they looked for something a little higher, and higher. It was a challenge to find suitable structures for them to learn perching as they grew, which became a project of volunteers to be creative with different materials I had around the shelter. The winner was an art paper drying frame with three levels to perch on. Thanks to Cassie for her creativity.

Then came diving for fish lessons, which the herons picked up on quickly. Although it took various types and sizes of fish to get onto the right ones the herons were happy with, we got there in the end.

The herons grew and grew, they moved outside into the weather and a bigger pool, where their fish diving skills were increased, their wing strengthening exercises took place daily in unison, and they were turning into beautiful mature birds.

On the day of final release, they gave a squawk and both flew off down the waterway with ease. Freedom to fly as high and far as they wish!

The others

Of course there are many other species that came through Wild Days throughout 2017. The year started with around 70 animals in care and ended with around 110 animals in care. Through the middle the year saw an intake of just under 500 animals. Sadly some of those were saved the pain of their injuries by being put to sleep, some where in care only a few days while they recovered from a small incident, others spent many months recovering from their ordeal. The orphans are the ones who spend the most time in care, needing to be raised and then prepared for a life in the wild.



Being a suburban wildlife shelter, the range of species that need help is enormous, from echidnas to turtles, lizards to fruit bats, microbats to feather gliders, ringtails and brushtails, kangaroos and wallabies, tiny pardalottes to majestic raptors, ducks to butcherbirds. Many many bird species. Each has their own story and personality.



Those more injured touch our hearts with the trust given to help them recover.

This Swamp Harrier juvenile was picked up by a passer by on the side of Princes Highway. It had been hit by a car and was suffering. It was taken to the emergency vet who did not give it much chance of survival.

Once at Wild Days it was clear that, as it was suffering head trauma and bruising and could not fly, it deployed the next best defence, to play dead! If you made eye contact with it, it would fall to the floor, wings splayed and head to the side, sometimes even with tongue hanging out. It would peek to see if you were still watching and continue the game.

Slowly it got to know me and trusted me to care for it. This beautiful creature recovered fully and was released to it's home and flew high above me before flying off. Amazing animal.

The help...

Wild Days Wildlife Shelter is only able to operate with the help of volunteer shelter helpers, donors of foods and other goods, financial donors, and the support of local vet clinics.

Wild Days' current foster carer Lisa assists by caring for some animals while she is training and Wild Days' junior volunteers help with drey making, seed bells and assisting around the shelter. Local schools and kindergardens have also provided some help raising awareness and collecting items that assisted Wild Days in 2017.

One off and regular financial donors to Wild Days enable the purchase of specialised foods and medicines essential to providing the best care to the animals that spend time with us.

Personally, after an injury to start the year, I was humbled by the number of volunteers who came to help out while I was unable to do what was needed on a daily basis. Some for a few hours, others on many occasions, and with a special thanks to Jacq who pulled it all together.

My heartfelt thanks to you all.

Some of the other delightful birds and animals in care at Wild Days in 2017:



From Kay Taranto, Wildlife Carer and the feathered and furred at
Wild Days Wildlife Shelter, THANK YOU!

www.wilddaysws.org