

# ACT Wildlife

Rescue • Rehabilitate • Release



## Fall 2021 Newsletter

### **A Message from our New President, Lindy Butcher** *regarding the Annual General Meeting on March 14th*

Thank you to everyone who braved the cool Autumn day to attend the AGM at Duffy on Sunday. A new committee was elected with some returning members and some new faces making up our new committee. Thank you for placing your confidence in me to be your new President, I'm excited and more than a little nervous. Marg has left big boots for me to fill.



Marg Peachey has been President of ACT Wildlife since we began 7 years ago, but many won't be aware that she has had a key leadership role in ACT Wildlife since its early days as the Wildlife Foundation over 20 years ago and then as RSPCA Wildlife. Thank you, Marg, you have been an inspiration to me and to many others with your passion and commitment for the welfare of wildlife in the ACT. I'm very pleased that you will be staying on as Vice President.

We look forward to working with and for our volunteers and members to continue to grow ACT Wildlife over the next 12 months and into the future.

### **Executives**

Lindy Butcher *President*  
Marg Peachey *Vice President*  
Don McLeod *Treasurer (new Executive member)*  
Dorothy Brown *Secretary*

### **Committee**

Helen Hardy  
Hange Sloan  
Kate Morioka *(new Committee member)*  
Mark Jenkin *(new Committee member)*  
Heather Sommariva *(new Committee member)*  
Luke Robbie  
Sarah James  
Corin Pennock

## **A Farewell from our Past President, Marg Peachey**

I am really pleased that Lindy Butcher is taking over from me as President. I needed to step back as I was getting tired after 8 years in the job. It took me a little while to convince Lindy. She will be a fantastic President and is already full of fresh ideas and getting well and truly stuck into the role. I wish her all the best and I am sure ACT Wildlife will blossom in her care.



It is amazing how quickly the time has gone, from when we decided to start ACT Wildlife when the RSPCA was no longer taking in wildlife in early 2013. From a friendly BBQ in our backyard with the solid wildlife carers from RSPCA Wildlife the decision was made to start a group. That involved so much effort - licenses, website, setting up WildMan and the phone system, creating a charity and making contacts within the ACT Government; by November we were taking in animals. Our growth was exponential and continues like a whirlwind. From small beginnings setting up a business with no money we have finally hit the road running. Time for me to step back.

## **AGM Welcome Speech**

*by Genevieve Jacobs*

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. It's such a pleasure to be here again with all of you who do such incredibly valuable work for Wildlife Rescue.

So, to begin, thank you – thank you to all of you who work so hard and with so much love for the animals around us whose place this was first, and who are so often under immense pressure. Your work is valued. Your help of all kinds is critically important. Your dedication – and your love for what you do - does not go unnoticed.

As I'm standing here today on this easy, gentle, early autumn day, I'm reminded of how very different it all is from the Black Summer of 2019-20.

Surely one of the worst if not the very worst natural disasters we have ever encountered on this continent, certainly the worst of our lifetime in terms of its impact, its horror and the devastation it wreaked.

It could truly be said that an apocalypse was visited upon us here in the South East, as the fires – and the weather systems they created – defied all norms of management, of received wisdom, as they went on and on and on.

I would have said to you that this was the longest emergency ever if not for the fact that COVID came straight afterwards.

And without wishing to minimise the terrible toll the virus has taken for a moment, we're fortunate that the virus hasn't really been a major problem for us. But the world seems to have somewhat

forgotten just what we all went through because not only did people lose their lives and homes, but unbearably, so many millions of animals did too.

I think a lot of you feel the way I did: that what happened to the animals was the hardest thing of all to take, both during and after the fires.

There was the loss of places like the Two Thumbs koala sanctuary, already full of injured animals. The devastation wrought on the bush –one of our journalists from Moruya who is a wildlife volunteer went out shooting injured animals for days afterwards because the suffering was so great. They paid the shooter and bought the ammunition themselves. Here in the ACT, we just don't know what happened after the Orroral Valley fire roared through because there was little or no access to extensively damaged sites in Namadgi.

But wherever our region was touched, there was the silencing of the bush, the places that will never come back. The first time I ventured down the coast I cried all the way from Braidwood on, looking at those devastated valleys over the Clyde where nothing will ever be the same again.

And even those animals who weren't in the fire's path suffered as we choked through days and days of smoke. Even at home at Wallendbeen, 200kms from the fire in every direction, the air was yellow and dense, and many animals suffered from the heat, the stress and the pollution.

This year of rain has been a true blessing. I don't think we could have coped physically, emotionally, without that gentle, cleansing, healing rain.

But could we have done better? That's the question I want to pose to you today.

I had an interesting conversation with Mike Kelly, the member for Eden Monaro, before he retired. We talked about how nobody had really thought through a wildlife response to the fires that could, and should, have been as central to the emergency response as the RFS, emergency services and the like.

There has been a \$200million allocation overall to wildlife and habitat recovery, and threatened species commissioner Dr Sally Box is leading an expert panel on prioritising recovery actions.

Many good things will come of this, including the money allocated to preventing extinction and species decline and supporting community work on the ground

But I think we need to think that one through – because while many people worked their hearts out for the animals using every resource they could find, the need could have been so much better recognised and planned before this terrible disaster. We must never again forget the animals when the fires come.

There was, from all kinds of ordinary people, a wonderfully generous response. I was speaking to an American fundraiser who had just moved here, and she said she had never seen such open hearted, unquestioning generosity. You just all opened your wallets without even stopping to think, she said to me.

Among the donations this past year, Wildlife Rescue received several grants that were used to improve facilities for caring for native animals, and World Wildlife Fund have provide the new flying fox aviary for at the Jerrabombera Wetlands that has just been opened.

What does this say to us? It says that many people care deeply about wildlife and rescue and are prepared to put their money where their mouth is. I think that's hopeful.

It says that wildlife and care for the environment has been dramatized unforgettably for many by the scale of the disaster we've seen although that is, of course, at the cost of millions of animal lives and habitats that may never recover.

But can we perhaps have some hope that this awful event has produced something of value?

I think there is hope. That hope is embedded in the everyday care that happens at ACT Wildlife. Every time someone signs up to learn more about caring for bats or birds, possums, reptiles or wombats, they are growing hope that animals are not alone.

We've seen, everywhere, significant spikes in people wanting to re-connect with the natural world, whether it's as simple as someone getting a pet or growing vegetables, or joining their local bushcare group, or becoming a wildlife carer.

ACT Wildlife's vision is that the welfare and biodiversity of wildlife in the ACT is maintained. That won't happen by accident in this fast-growing city. It will take all the hope, all the new interest to turn into ongoing action.

It doesn't matter if that's through wildlife care, donations, volunteering or advocacy, to each their own. You are the foot soldiers of this revolution in hope, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart – all our hearts - for everything you do.



*Genevieve with a baby wombat*

## **Coordinators Turn Around**

Several coordinators are taking a break and passing the baton.

This is effective immediately:

**Possums Southside:** Michelle has been possum coordinator since 2013 and now grandparent duties are taking over. Thanks Michelle, you and Richard have contributed so much to ACT Wildlife initially with setting up the phone, training possum carers and mentoring many, helping with releases and assessment of possums and gliders. Cheryle will be aided by Corin Pennock in an assistant capacity for Southside.

**Reptiles:** Thanks to Hange, she has started studying and has handed reptile coordinating to Luke Robbie.

**Birds Northside:** Helen has been Northside bird coordinator for some time and has trained bird carers and conducts orientation training. Sara Lo has picked up the baton.

**Flying Foxes:** Denise is taking a break after several years in the position and Marg Peachey will be taking over

Thank you to the outgoing coordinators and welcome to the new people. All coordinators are experienced in their species and have at least 3 years experience with ACT Wildlife.

Coordinators are experienced and can assess new animals and train you to assess animals thoroughly. If no coordinators are available talk to Angie at Jerrabomberra Wetlands. She is eminently qualified to assess all animals. This alleviates our dependence on vets.

## **More Training for 2021**

This is the calendar for the year. We are gradually getting it onto Eventbrite and these will be listed on the website.

Basic Birds: 6th June, 26th Sept, 27th November

Advanced Birds: 22nd August

Baby Birds: 10th October

Possum Care: 15th August

Reptile Care: 25th July

Wombat Care: 21st August

Orientation: 16th May, 11th July, 11th Sep, 14th November

Phone and Transport: 29th May, 18th July, 25 Sept, 28th Nov

Bats: 18-19 September

## **Committee Meetings are Free to Join for all Members**

All members are welcome to come to committee meetings which are held on the first Monday of each month. If you have something to contribute, suggest, or complain about please express an interest to Dorothy at [info@actwildlife.net](mailto:info@actwildlife.net) We welcome member contributions.

## **Artist Akka's Generous Donation**

Local artist Akka Ballenger Constantin has shared her beautiful leaf paintings to help raise money for both ACT Wildlife and Wildtalk. The exhibition ended on March 20<sup>th</sup> but we still want to give her a special thanks for all that she did for us.

More about her exhibition and her artwork: <https://canberraweekly.com.au/emerging-artist-illustrates-connection-to-nature-at-craft-act-exhibition/>



*Image (C) Canberra Weekly*

## **We are now set up with the ACT Container Deposit Scheme**

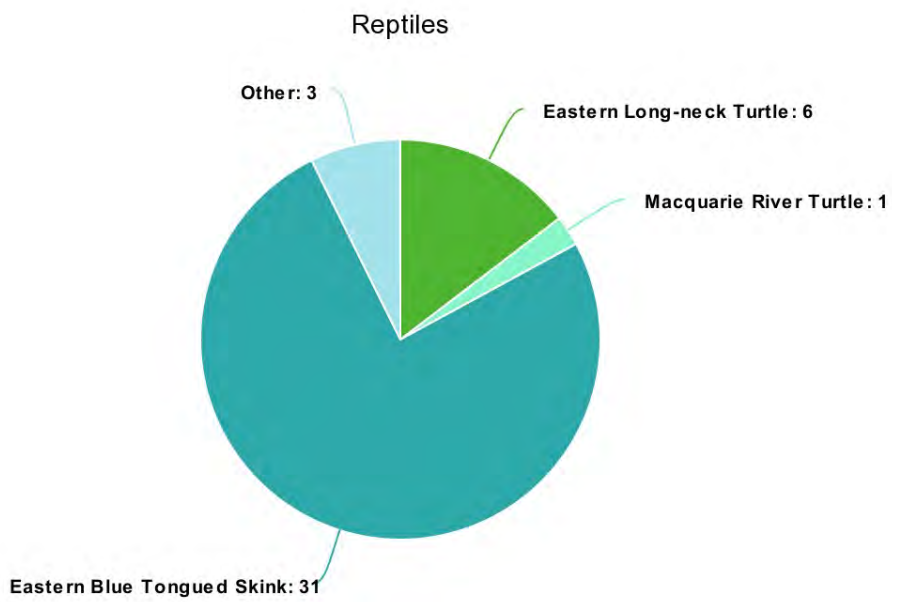
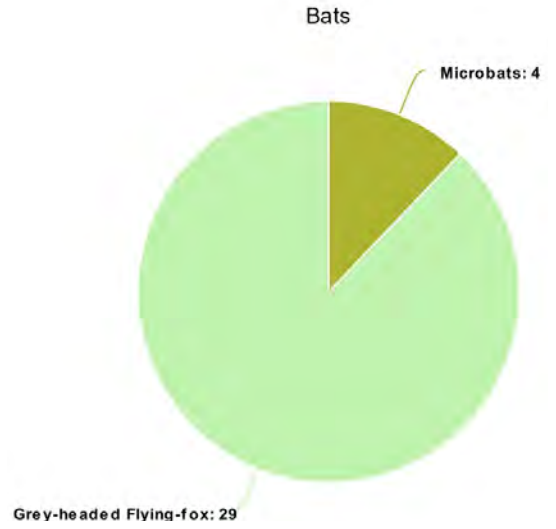
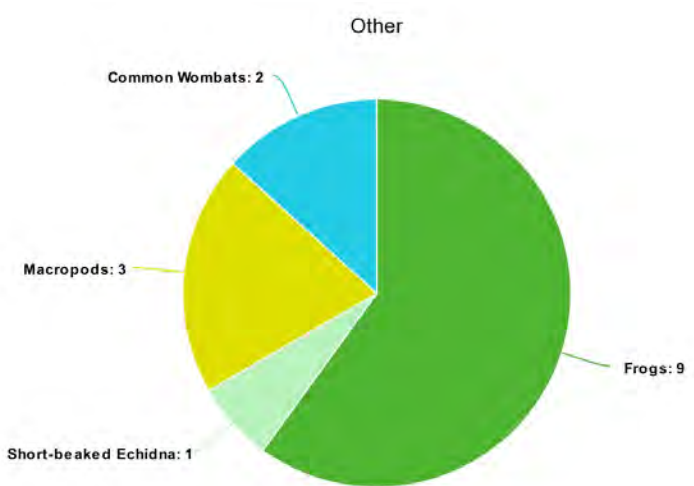
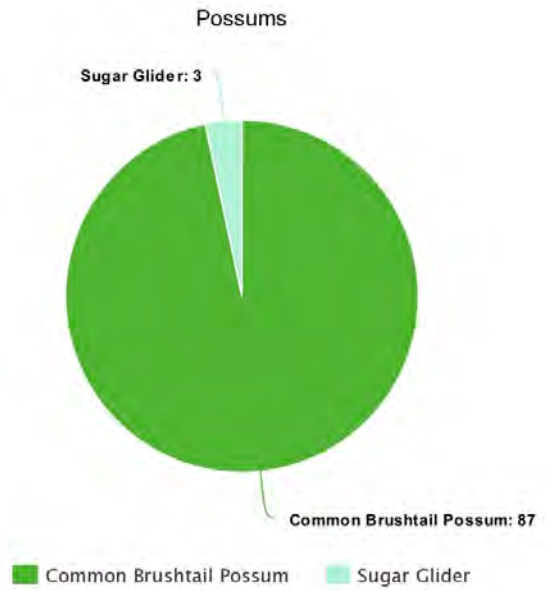
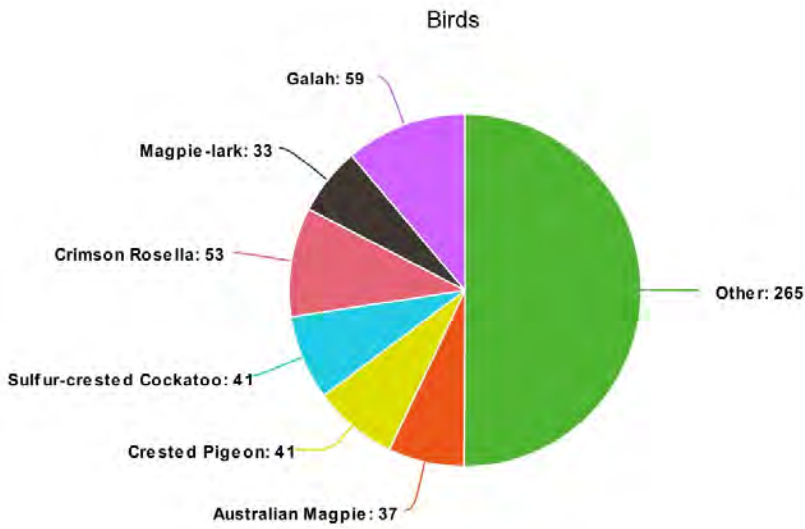
To donate to ACT Wildlife you need to use the drop off code **E012893** and our phone number is **0432 300 033**. There are more details on this page: <https://actcds.com.au/how-to-participate/>

To donate to a charity - You can return eligible drink containers to three different types of return points: Drop & Go Point, Drop & Go Pod and Cash-back Depot. There are a number of return points located across the ACT – there is one near you!





# Animal Intake from December 1<sup>st</sup> to February 28<sup>th</sup>



## ACT Wildlife Sponsor a Species

The Sponsor a Species program allows ACT Wildlife supporters to sponsor birds, bats, reptiles, wombats and possums. Three different levels of support are available-- Fledgling, Wild Thing and Wildlife Warrior -- with three levels of rewards in return. Monthly donations really help care for our birds and animals, buying food, medicine and more.

Check it out: <https://actwildlife.net/sponsor-a-species/>

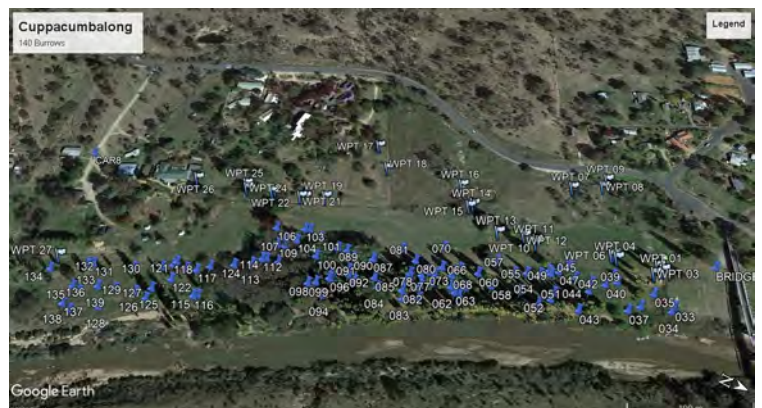


## Mange Treatment Program

The mange treatment program has started again at Cuppacumalong.

After being stalled due to hazardous smoke from last summer's bushfires and then the constraints imposed by COVID-19 measures, the Mange Treatment team is back in business.

On Sunday 28 March 11 volunteers braved the soggy conditions left behind by the flooded Gudgenby to carry out a GPS





mapping exercise to locate burrows in preparation for a population treatment beginning the week after Easter.

We located about 150 burrows, many of them showing evidence of very recent renovations following the localised flooding around the area after last week's torrential rains. In some places the flood debris was in the lower branches of trees by the river.

After Easter the team will put a "burrow flap" in the entrance to each burrow and place the first doses of Cydectin into the dispensing cup of each flap. They will do this weekly for 16 weeks, collecting video records along the way of the health of wombats in the area.

If you'd like to be part of this team please email [lindy@bigblue.net.au](mailto:lindy@bigblue.net.au) and we will add your name to our list and provide you with a link to the Google doc sheet where you can let us know your availability. Most weeks the work is completed within 2 hours, and ideally we would have about 12 people each week to carry out the treatments. You need to be a financial member of ACT Wildlife and the necessary training will be provided on site. You need to wear sturdy clothes and boots and bring a drink and snack. Gloves and secateurs are useful.



It's a great opportunity to spend some time outdoors in our lovely bush, only a short drive out of Canberra, whilst being part of a really important animal welfare program.

### **New Aviary at Jerrabomberra Site**

The new bat aviary at Jerrabomberra headquarters is now complete. Barbara Mabbott has this to say about the aviary;

The aviary is 12 metres long, 4 metres wide and 4 metres high. There's a special "release box" at one end where the bats ready for release can be placed to fly off when-ever they want. Nigel from CBC Metal Fabrications was hard working and capable throughout the project. He helped us find the Builder to apply their license when we needed one. He also secured an engineer to prepare drawings for the slab when we were told we had to have them. He absorbed this cost himself.

The Aviary has a double stainless steel mesh construction to prevent a person putting their fingers through the cage and getting bitten. In consideration of the extreme temperatures in Canberra, there are some insulated panels on the north-west side of the Aviary and on part of the roof.



At the end facing Jerrabomberra Wetlands we are in the process of building a mini "wetland" to process water runoff from cleaning the Aviary.

The ACT Wildlife duo of Denise Kay and Marg Peachey were the decision makers on the project, with input from many other flying fox carers.

Funding for the Aviary was donated by WWF Australia, but others have also donated. Firstly of course is ACT Government who donated the site for us to use. We want to thank Dom Gallagher, from Landscape Architect firm Garden space who prepared the design and drawings for a nominal fee, saving us thousands of dollars. We also want to thank Capital Certifiers, who managed the Certification process for free in exchange for naming a bat "Bonnie". This also saved us thousands of dollars. Finally we had the generous support of nearby Canberra City Farm who decided in favour of supporting our plan to have the Aviary adjacent to their garden plots in Fyshwick. Some pics of progress on the Bat Aviary at Jerra. The structure was built by @CBCmetalFabrication.



## **Help Needed for Aviary Relocation**

*Lindy Butcher*

People may think that being a wildlife volunteer is mostly about rescuing and caring for our wildlife in need. But there is an army of people behind the scenes making sure that carers can do their caring with the equipment they need.

On Saturday over the Easter break a team of people relocated an aviary from a carer who was no longer using it to someone who needed it and others were moved back into storage at our Duffy premises. The job was made vastly easier by the fact that the volunteers who no longer needed the aviaries had dismantled them ready for removal. Thank you, Hanlie, Hange and Missy.

The aviary movers usually hire a large trailer, but on this occasion a trailer was unavailable and they hired a truck instead, which bird coordinator Sara Lo said "was perfect for the job and heaps easier to reverse!" Thank you to the aviary moving team, Whitney, Patrick and Adam and the carers who put our aviaries to such good use.



If you'd like to help out with relocating aviaries the team are always in need of some able bodies with hand tools and some basic problem solving skills. The aviaries are used by our bird and possum carers and need moving from time to time as peoples' situations change and the numbers of birds and possums needing aviaries change. If you'd like to help let Sara know on [sara.lo@iinet.net.au](mailto:sara.lo@iinet.net.au)

## **Possums the Star at Amaroo School**

*Sharon Woodward*

On March 5th a few of our special little marsupials were the star attraction at a presentation to a group of students studying zoology at Amaroo School. Lindy talked about marsupial development and discussed many of the features which make these animals so unique, and Sharon was able to share her experience caring for Archer wombat. Sylvie wombat and two gorgeous little possums provided the wow factor and helped generate some interest in volunteering with ACT Wildlife in the future. At the end of the discussion Lindy was presented with a small donation from the students which has gone towards wildlife care.



## **Flying Fox Season So Far...**

*Sandra Corbett*

Every flying fox season is different, and this season is no exception to that rule.

It started late October early November with an unusual number of mothers with pups coming into care and also saw the first birth in care. A mother rescued from the steps of the National Library gave birth the day after coming into care. Mark Fraser, a vaccinated carer who got to see part of the birth said that 'it was all over within 10 minutes'. As is often the case the pup was premature but both mother and pup survived the experience and are doing well.

We then had a spate of power line electrocutions with some successful rescues of pups thanks to our enthusiastic rescuers and the Firefighting services and power companies.

Sadly, at 7:30pm on Christmas day an alert went out on What's App group "ACT Wildlife Bat Group". A roosting tree in the colony at Commonwealth Park had come down. In response 8 of our vaccinated members gave up time on Christmas day and Boxing day to rescue flying foxes trapped and injured. As a result, 15 pups were rescued and taken into care, with 35 flying foxes dead or euthanized.



A big thank you to everyone who gave up time on Christmas day and Boxing day on the rescue effort.

The next few months are likely to see an increase in netting rescues as the fruit trees ripen. Please take this opportunity to remind friends, family and neighbors with fruit trees to use wildlife friendly netting options like fruit netting bags to protect individual fruit, or completely enclosing the whole tree with wildlife friendly netting (you cant poke a finger through the netting). For more information visit [www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com](http://www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com) and look for the link to the netting page.

Sandra Corbett  
ACT Wildlife Assistant Flying Fox Coordinator



*Kosta, a pup rescued on Christmas day. Named after Freddy Frapples, a regularly supplier of food for wildlife in care.*

## **A Fond Goodbye with a Warning on the Shores of Burley Griffin**

*By Panduka Senanayake*



*Picture by Panduka Senanayake*

`Goodbye' and `watch out for the fishing lines' were the final words of Susan Wishart and husband Steve Styles to this black swan saved from a slow and painful death either by a fish hook it had swallowed or from strangulation by the trailing fishing line entangling it.

Alerted from calls by several members of the public about the swan in distress near Blundell's Cottage on the shore of Lake Burley Griffin, Susan and Steve, volunteers of ACT Wildlife rescued the enmeshed swan which was one of a family inhabiting the area.

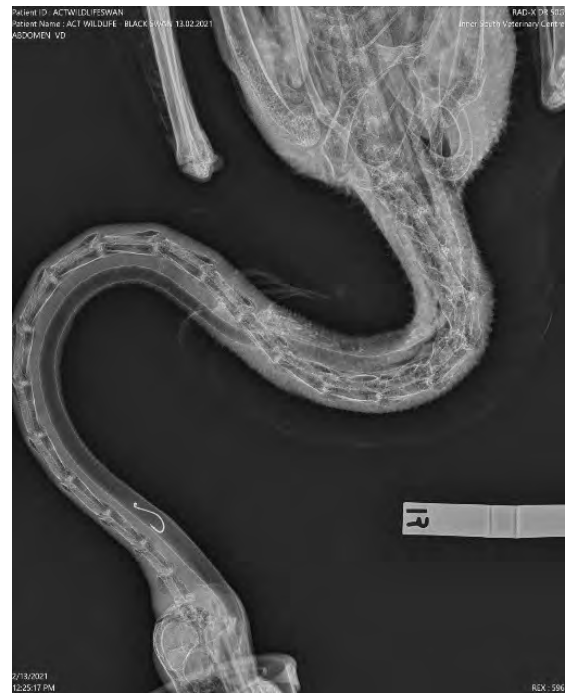
Upon cutting the entrapping line wrapped around its neck, feet and wings, an X-ray at the Inner South Veterinary Centre had revealed the hook in the swan's gullet. Following a difficult surgery at the Animal referral Hospital in Fishwick involving the cutting and removal of the barbed end of the fishhook through an incision made on the neck, the swan was taken to Susan and Steve's home for care and recovery.

The swan had made a surprising recovery for one who was nearly on its way to the 'big lake of the endemic Aussie black swans in the sky.'  
It was released on Wednesday morning, a day earlier than planned by Susan and Steve who lugged a big box containing the swan to the canal near Blundell's Cottage.



As it ‘honked’ for its mates, a couple of fledglings from the mob joined the feisty swan which was fare-welled by Susan with a handful of corn and Steve with a warning against fishing lines.

However, the couple’s job would only end later in the day once ‘thank you messages’ had been written and sent to the caring members of the public who rang ACT Wildlife on 0432300033.



*The fishhook is visible on the bottom left of the x-ray. Picture supplied by Susan Wishart; taken by Inner South Vet*

### **‘Good luck fella, stay safe’: a snake catcher explains why our fear of brown snakes is misplaced**

*By Gavin JD Smith, Associate Professor in Sociology  
Australian National University*

Sun, sea ... snakes: all three are synonymous with the Australian summer, but only the first two are broadly welcomed. Of all Australia’s snake species, brown snakes are among the most feared.

To some degree, this is understandable. Brown snakes are alert, nervy and lightning fast over short distances. When threatened, they put on a spectacular (and intimidating) defensive display, lifting the front half of their body vertically, ready to strike. They are also fairly common and well adapted to suburban life – especially the eastern brown species. Plus of course, certain species have a highly toxic venom designed to immobilize the mammals they prey on.

Besides my work as a sociologist, I’m also a professional snake catcher and handle scores of venomous snakes during the warmer months. I don’t expect people to love



*image courtesy of theconversation.com*

snakes, but I do believe greater knowledge about them will help with their being respected more as keystone ecological creatures. Not just wicked serpents, around two Australians die each year from snake bites, and the brown snake family causes the most human – and likely pet -fatalities. But compare that figure with the annual road toll (1,188 deaths in 2019) or the 77 people killed by horses and cows in Australia between 2008 and 2017. You can see why many herpetologists – or snake experts – feel Australians’ fear of snakes is somewhat misplaced.

Where does this fear come from, then? It partly arises from the representation of snakes throughout human history as menacing. The fact that snakes are coldblooded, with an unblinking stare, means humans have often depicted them as callous and cold-hearted. Examples include the serpent who corrupts Eve in the Book of Genesis, and monstrous mythological characters such as Medusa. Partly because of these and other depictions, snakes are often considered something to be feared. When they slither into our manicured back yards, they are seen as a “problem” that has transgressed our sanitized domestic lives. And this fear is often transferred down the generations. In my snake-catching work, I have extricated snakes from backyards and homes, a shopping center, parks and school classrooms. I’ve even removed snakes from a woman’s boot, under a soccer team’s kit bag and inside a weapons bunker! About 85% of the snakes I work with on call outs are eastern browns. Many callers wanting a snake removed experience intense emotions, from shock and hostility to awe and reverence. Most want the snake taken as far away from their property as possible.

After catching a snake, I release it into a suitable non-residential environment. I always wonder what happens to it next. Snakes face numerous threats. They can be harmed or killed by humans, pets, feral animals or predators. They are also threatened by habitat loss, climate events and contaminated prey items. I release each with the departing words: “Good luck fella, stay safe, stay out of trouble.”



If you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, unsupported or even bullied talk, in confidence, to a Wildtalk counselor.

**1300 307 111**

This is a 24/7 service for anyone working with Australian wildlife. There are a lot of resources. Check out <https://wildtalk.org.au/resources/>



### **A message from the Editor**

Hello everyone, thank you for continuing to show your support for the Act Wildlife newsletter. I am using a new program for this letter, so the format has been changed up a bit. I think I prefer Apple's "Pages" over Microsoft "Office Trio", but this was still an edit that I'm happy with.

If you would like to submit an entry for the next newsletter, please send the document to [jabbersart@gmail.com](mailto:jabbersart@gmail.com) by the 30th of May, 2021.

Thank you,  
-Hange Sloan