

## ACT WILDLIFE NEWSLETTER

### Spring 2019

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**ACT Wildlife**  
Rescue • Rehabilitate • Release



## A note from the President

Apologies for the lack of a newsletter late last year and this year. Time got away again and we were busier than ever with phone calls and animals.

This year we have a great new committee with heaps of enthusiasm to move ACT Wildlife forward in terms of organisation and improved service to the public of Canberra.

We have applied for several grants and secured \$20,000 for our wombat mange work.

Over the last Spring and Summer (6 months) we had 945 animals, numbers were slightly down from the year before, perhaps because of the drought. Another reason could be our phone operators being able to divert more animals to veterinary practices or other agencies. Nevertheless all our carers were very busy. It will be interesting to see what happens this year with continuing drought conditions.

We reached two milestones in September: 10,000 animals since we started 6 years ago, and over 40,000 phone calls taken! Great work everyone.

Heather has produced our Annual Report for 2018 and it can be found on the website at <http://www.actwildlife.net/annual-reports.html> . Thank you Heather for spending so much time gathering the statistics and presenting them well.

We have revitalised the phone manual which is now an easy-to-use document. You just need to open to the first page and there are links there to every species and many scenarios. I hope this helps our phone and transport people. It can be found in the Carer tab on the [website](#).

Because most people are using social media, such as Facebook and Twitter,

and be aware of not breaking out and saying what you personally think, that anything you say on social media is ACT Wildlife policy. If you are unsure call a committee member.

Earlier in the year, the same day as our AGM, we had an official opening of our Jerrabomberra facility. Article below.... It was used for several months over the busy time as a hub for some volunteers and Tabitha who was answering the phone. The building has been closed over winter except for some phone training exercises. We hope to get it up and running fairly soon for the big spring rush.

Yours in caring,  
Marg



A group of Grey Headed Flying-Foxes in care. The alert appearance is an encouraging sign with these animals. They are by nature alert and inquisitive.

### **Grey Headed Flying Foxes (GFFs) - Season 2019**

by Denise Kay and Mark Fraser

It would be an understatement to say it has been a very big year for Flying-fox carers and volunteers.

We had an early start when a juvenile with frost bite to his ears come into care in early August . His rehabilitation was slow and painful.

November saw the first orphans, 2 from electrocuted mothers and one from a mother caught on barbed wire . There were two late babies in January ( Mark and Jono ) .In late February once they were weaned and happily eating fruit

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their support every year. Weekend visitors are welcome with prior arrangements & fruit offerings.

Then we get to December and the country seems to be burning from extreme heat, Flying-foxes of all species are dying by the thousands, tens of thousands. Temperatures of 40 degrees plus on successive days resulted in massive losses.

Canberra is known for it's hot summers and cold winters but the forecasts were predicting some unknown climatic conditions which galvanised ACT Wildlife to establish The Bat Team, a team of volunteers dedicated to monitoring and responding to a heat stress event if it should occur in Commonwealth Park.

Caroline Hennessy painstakingly adapted the Flying-fox Heat Event Response Guidelines South East Queensland ( with the blessing of authors Bishop & Lyons ) to what we were expecting to experience in the ACT, whatever that might be?... None of us had experienced a heat event before.

**We now have our own heat event plan.**

Thank you to everyone who volunteered time to monitor the colony during the heat wave. Sandra & Mark, Karen, Jono, Marg & Heather, Kristie & Cass, Emma & Tabitha, Katia, Nikki, John & Kate ,Olivia & Babs. A formidable team.

The population exploded in Commonwealth Park the highest count was 8190 early March . The last count was 1136 on 4th May. This of course followed through into Canberra Gardens and GFF's caught in fruit tree netting.

We took 120 flying foxes into care since early January. 13 were transferred to Sydney by Caroline on the 8<sup>th</sup> May; 13 Died; 2 Escaped; 18 Euthanised; 63 Released , 4 juveniles were sent to warmer Climes in Nelson Bay. An interesting fact that most of these GFF's were male and underweight, reflecting conditions out in the wider Flying-fox community.

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This Grey Headed Flying-Fox was caught in fruit netting. The risk of damage to the wings, the thumbs and limbs is readily apparent. Less obvious is the risk of dehydration. Encouraging gardeners to use flying fox friendly mesh will help reduce the risk of such incidents.

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### **JERRABOMBERRA WETLANDS FACILITY OPENING - 17th February, 2019**

It was quite some time after we were given the use of the building that we had an official opening. Our three Patrons, Ian Fraser, Genevieve Jacobs and Karen Viggers, were there to support ACT Wildlife.

We held a BBQ under our brand new gazebo, bought with an ACT Environment Grant.

Mick Gentleman officially cut the ribbon and declared the building open. He then proceeded to check out the inside of the building which was set up as an office/clinic then mixed with the pouched animals and a couple of birds in the aviary.

We are most grateful to the ACT Government for the building. It had been refurbished and painted before we moved in. Thanks also to Air Master for providing and installing two air conditioner units.

Thanks to Anita Entriiken for being our official photographer.



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There are a few topics that divide the marsupial carers in the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation community – the type of milk replacement used to raise orphaned marsupials, ideal age/stage at which to release a hand raised orphan and whether to use a hard or soft release.

For many carers of wombats and macropods, a soft release takes place on the property on which the orphan was raised, giving it the opportunity to return at any time it chooses. This requires a large enough property that overcrowding and its subsequent problems don't occur. Regular access to these released animals gives plenty of anecdotal evidence that soft releasing is successful. What we don't have is evidence that hard releasing is successful, not because it isn't, but because there is so little research into the topic.

In the ACT we don't have access to properties on which to release our hand raised wombats and macropods so need to rely on hard releasing.

For wombats this requires:

- An established empty burrow
- A small density of resident wombat population
- Permanent water within 100 – 200 m
- Good grazing close to the burrow
- Plenty of large shade trees
- Mange free population
- No sealed or heavy traffic roads nearby

Where possible we also provide supplementary food for several days after release, monitor burrow activity and the condition of droppings by the burrow.

Since it is difficult and expensive to track the outcomes of these wombats I have looked to formal scientific studies to see if there is any recorded differences between outcomes of hard released vs soft release of wombats in particular, and other species in general.

There were very few easy to access studies, but those I found are summarised below. Electronic links to each article is provided.

The general consensus appears to be that soft releasing (in these studies this varied between 6 days and approximately 2 weeks) did not confer any increased survival and growth outcomes over hard releasing for the species

Journal / year	Authors	Species and number	Topic	Findings
<i>Pacific Conservation Biology</i> 17(4) 310-319 2011	K A Saran, G Parker, R Parker and C R Dickman	Bare nosed Wombat. (n=44 released)	Rehabilitation as a conservation tool; a case study using the common wombat	2 of the 44 wombats released died within 42 days after release. A further 8 died of dog attacks, burrow collapse, mange, wombat attacks and unknown causes. Deaths (causes and number) during rehabilitation and after release were similar to those in the wild population. (77% survival) Release weights were between 12kg and 19.2 kg All wombats were released on the same property. No mention of any variation – hard or soft release. Rehabilitation factors made no difference to survival rates. This included reason for coming into care, type of injury, time in care, raising with or without a buddy. Release age, weight and body condition had no effect on survival rates. Nor did season of release, or supplemental feeding. Reduced human contact after weaning increased survival rates.
<i>Wildlife Research</i> , 43(1):1-12 (2016) 11-Mar-16	Jasmine de Milliano, Julian Di Stefano, Peter Courtney, Peter Temple-Smith, Graeme Coulson	Eastern Barred Bandicoots. (n=12)	Soft-release versus hard-release for reintroduction of an endangered species: an experimental comparison using eastern barred bandicoots ( <i>Perameles gunnii</i> )	Soft release = 7 days of on site acclimatisation and supplementary food. Hard release = no acclimatisation and no supplementary food. Release site was predator free. Outcome: no detectable difference between weight change, habitat selection and survival
Conference: Veterinary Conservation Biology, Wildlife Health and Management in Australasia. Veterinary Conservation Biology, Wildlife Health and Management in Australasia. Jan-01	Lynette Campbell BSc Hons, Dip Ed. Dr David B Croft, BSc Hons, PhD	Eastern Grey Kangaroos. (n=21)	Comparison of hard and soft release of hand-reared eastern grey kangaroos.	Soft release = acclimatisation yard with food water and shelter for 5 days (n=10). Hard release - Kangaroos were released at the release site (n=11). Animals ranged from <18 months to >18 months of age. Raising and rehabilitation styles varied from large grazing and treed areas to smaller enclosures, with varying amounts of carer contact. Release site included established mob. Shooting was not allowed. Kangaroos were monitored for between 6 months and 2 years. There was no discernible differences between weight and ranges with small differences in fidelity to release group, possibly attributable to larger numbers of females in that group. All animals survived.
PLOS 1. 2014; 9(6): e99753. Published online 2014 Jun 25.	Katherine E. Moseby, <sup>1,2,*</sup> Brydie M. Hill, <sup>2</sup> and Tyrone H. Lavery <sup>3</sup>		Tailoring Release Protocols to Individual Species and Sites: One Size Does Not Fit All	Developed a table to assist decision making, taking into account, social habits, range size, whether a burrowing or wide ranging, predation risk, release site. <b>Table attached</b>
<i>Biological Conservation</i> , 128 (3): 403-411. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2005.10.006">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2005.10.006</a>	Hardman, Blair; Moro, Dorian.	hare-wallaby, mala ( <i>Lagorchestes hirsutus</i> ) and merrimine ( <i>Lagostrophus fasciatus</i> ). (n=35)	Optimising reintroduction success by delayed dispersal: Is the release protocol important for hare-wallabies	Soft v hard release (details not stated in abstract but total study took 4 weeks). Soft release did not necessarily confer an advantage to establishment or survival in the short term in this species

1 <http://www.publish.csiro.au/PC/PC110310>

2 <https://bioone.org/journals/wildlife-research/volume-43/issue-1/WR14257/Soft-release-versus-hard-release-for-reintroduction-of-an-endangered/10.1071/WR14257.short>

3 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235973698\\_Comparison\\_of\\_hard\\_and\\_soft\\_release\\_of\\_hand-reared\\_eastern\\_grey\\_kangaroos](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235973698_Comparison_of_hard_and_soft_release_of_hand-reared_eastern_grey_kangaroos)

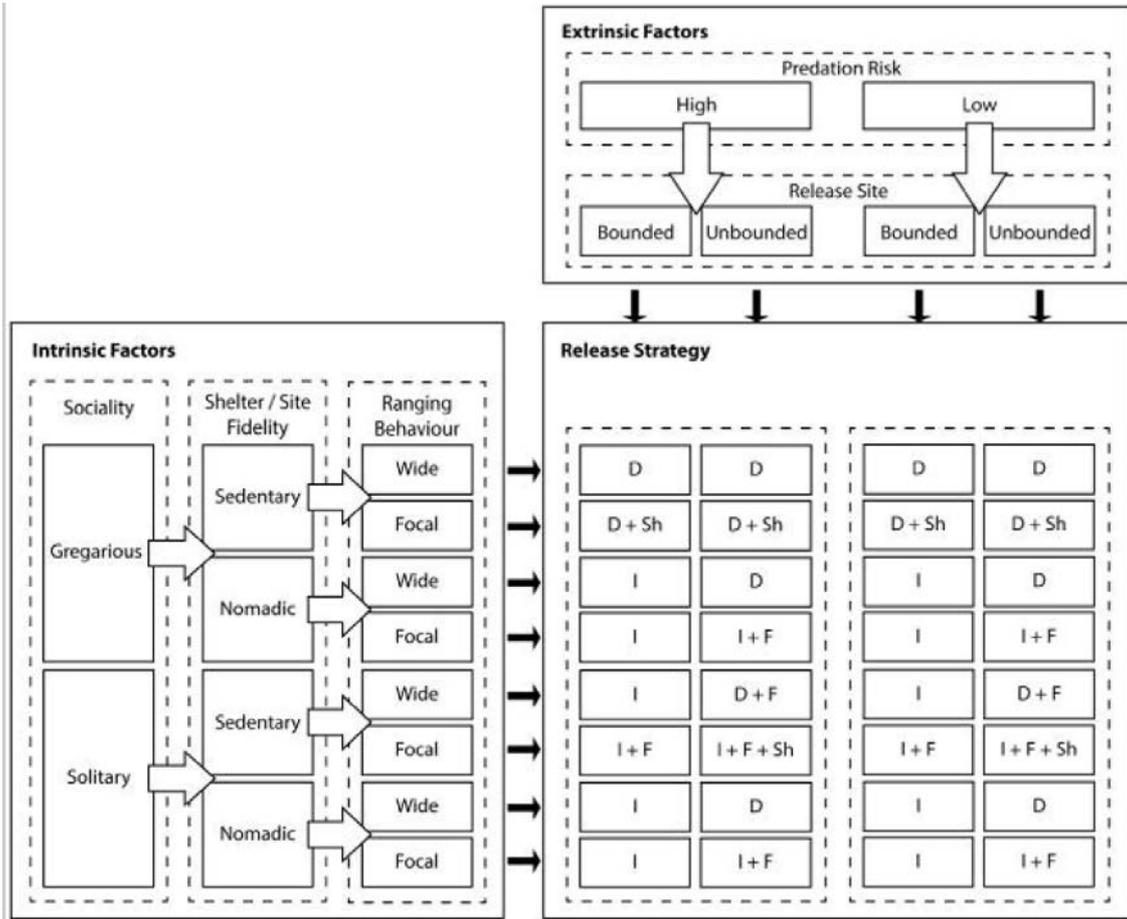
4 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4070893/>

5 <http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/id/eprint/354/>

**A predictive model based on current and previous studies which could be used as a basis for hypothesis testing regarding which release strategies are the most suitable for a given species reintroduction, depending on the site characteristics.**

The model could be tested against both captive-bred, and wild groups of release animals. Key to release strategies: I=immediate release, D=delayed release, F=supplementary food, Sh=supplementary shelter.

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## Meet the Editor

Mark Fraser, a newish member of ACT Wildlife. I am interested in wildlife, and have an especial fondness for reptiles and bats. A former public servant and current orchid enthusiast, I am probably best regarded as a dilettante, cheerfully dabbling in a broad range of interests, most of which I will cheerfully talk at length on....

Publish your interesting stories or facts, please email me, [editor@actwildlife.net](mailto:editor@actwildlife.net)

### **VOLUNTEER POSITIONS VACANT**

We require an EVENTS MANAGER.

There are several times a year that we are asked to conduct a stall within the community and also some regular stalls. The person suited to this position needs to be organised, able to liaise with the event organisers, maintain our supplies of brochures and display boards and materials. Also to recruit members to help at the stall/display and be able to setup and take down the displays including organising to get the equipment to the venue.

[Please apply to Dorothy at info@actwildlife.net](mailto:info@actwildlife.net)

## CAR MAGNETS

We have a number of ACT Wildlife car magnets that were distributed to transport people over the last few years. If you have one or two and are no longer helping could you please return them.

**POSSUMS - SUNDAY 22nd September**

**BASIC BIRD CARE - Saturday 12th October**

**BABY BIRD CARE - Sunday 13th October**

**BASIC BATS - Saturday 19th October**

**ADVANCED BATS - Sunday 20th October**

**PHONE AND TRANSPORT TRAINING - Wednesday 23rd October**

**ORIENTATION - Saturday 23rd November**

Training has been revamped and peer reviewed. Sessions are available for new members and non-members. Carers needing to upgrade training are encouraged to come along to one or more sessions. Carers from other wildlife groups are welcome. Orientation is free, all other courses \$35 for members, \$40 for members of other wildlife groups

Go to [Eventbrite](#) to register.

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## **Annual General Meeting and the Election of Officers**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Election of Officers took place on 17 February, 2019. Through a fortunate piece of planning we were able to combine the meeting and elections with the official opening of the new office and facilities at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

The AGM included a brief report from the President, Marg Peachey, as much of what she had said at the opening of the new building constituted a large part of her report. Reports from the Treasurer indicated the healthy state of ACT Wildlife's finances.

The election of Office bearers took up a significant part of the meeting. The results were a mixture of familiar faces together with some newer ones. There was some surprise at the announcement of the decision of Jim Peachey to retire from the position of Treasurer, however there was also a strong endorsement of the new occupant of the position.

The committee members are:

President - Marg Peachey

Vice President - Martin Lind

Secretary - Dorothy Brown

Treasurer - Nikki Scholes

Public Officer - Jim Peachey



This is a new app for echidna sightings to help an echidna study.  
 Go to their Facebook page to find out about it.  
 Facebook page name is EchidnaCSI

## FUNDRAISING

### SEWING GROUP

Anyone who would like to lend a hand sewing, knitting, crocheting or more: the sewing group meets fairly regularly. It is called Stitch and Bitch. This is a nice social gathering and you are able to help with making articles for carers to use and occasionally items for ACT Wildlife to sell at stalls.

It is free to attend but please register at [Eventrite](#) so we know the numbers that are expected.

Call Jane Halsey if you would like to know a bit more about it. there is knitting, crochet and sewing. If you have your own sewing machine bring it with

### Cadbury chocolate FUNDRAISER

Heather is again holding chocolates for those of you who would like to sell chocolates on behalf of ACT Wildlife. Give her a call if you have chocoholics at your workplace or interest group.

Heather 0407 494 680

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Go to  
[www.goodwillwine.com.au](http://www.goodwillwine.com.au)  
select ACT Wildlife as your charity  
and choose your wine.

So far we have been given **about \$800** by Goodwill Wines, a donation from wine sales where our charity is chosen.

The Peachey family has probably contributed to this in a big way. The wine is very drinkable!

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## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

We cannot do it without you!

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ACT Wildlife Inc is a charity with DGR status. Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

Your donation will go directly to help orphaned, injured and sick wildlife in our care

**Donate**

keeping in touch



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For newsletter contributions: [editor@actwildlife.net](mailto:editor@actwildlife.net)

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