

ACT Wildlife

Autumn 2024

NEWSLETTER

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Message from the President

The days are definitely getting shorter and there's a chill in the night air. Autumn is here.

The AGM took place and I think many members were surprised at the large attendance. Thank you so much to everyone who attended, you ensured the meeting could proceed as we reached the quorum of 50 people.

For those that could not attend, you missed out on a very interesting and educational presentation by our snake ecologist Associate Professor, Gavin Smith.

A special thanks to Mark Jenkin, Dorothy Brown and her partner in crime, Martin Lind, for their efforts in making the day successful and efficient.

I would like to thank the outgoing committee members and hope their efforts on the Committee has not left them exhausted. Special thanks to Amanda Topaz, Ben Rawson, Stephen Bartos, and Vanessa Barrett for taking on extra work during their tenure – it was very much appreciated. Please welcome the new Management Committee for 2024 who are listed on [page 2](#).

I think the heaters will go on before ANZAC day, but we still need to slow down for our reptiles, who might be getting those last seasonal rays – the sun is wonderful this time of year. It's great to see the last of the fledglings become independent and now the empty nesters are busily fattening up or evicting the late seasonal juveniles. We also wish a safe journey back north to our flying fox bats over the coming weeks, you gave us a run for our money this year.

I really hope to meet and encourage as many of you to participate in the various opportunities this organisation has. We could really do with more volunteers, and as John Heywood once wrote, 'many hands make light work'.

Yana del Valle

President



Acknowledgement of Country

ACT Wildlife acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the ACT, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they and their Elders, past, present and emerging, make to the life of this city and this region.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on 17 March at the Duffy property and over 50 members attended.

Both the Financial Statements, presented by Treasurer Mark Jenkin, and the Annual Report were accepted and can be read on the ACTW website <https://actwildlife.net/annual-reports/>

A quorum of members attended so the following positions were filled:

President: Yana del Valle

Vice President: Adam Coppard

Secretary: Katie Love

Treasurer: Mark Jenkin

Committee members:

John Bosch

Dorothy Brown

Lindy Butcher

Denise Kay

Rebecca Marks

Tracey McNicol

Deb Thomas

Tara Ward

Welcome 2024 committee! The committee can be contacted by email at secretary@actwildlife.net

Committee meetings are held each month and financial members are welcome to attend but must advise the Committee ahead of time that they will attend and not contribute during the meeting. Financial members can also submit items for discussion to the Committee and be invited to speak to the items.

The Executive members meet monthly prior to the Committee meetings.

The guest speaker at the AGM was one of our members, Gavin Smith who owns and operates ACT Snake Removals.

Gavin is highly respected in Canberra and 'provides a friendly, responsive and effective snake catching service'. Gavin's goal is to 'help people live more harmoniously and respectfully with snakes and other reptiles'.

Find out more about Gavin and his services on his website actsnakeremovals.com/



Above: Gavin Smith, addressing the AGM.

Events

by Deb Thomas

Canberra Show

After a busy season of ACT Wildlife events through September to December, our first event of the year was the Canberra Show. For 4 days in February our volunteers spoke to hundreds of members of the public about the amazing work of ACT Wildlife and we sold over a \$1,000 of soft toys and merchandise.

Gala ball

On 1 March we held our first ever major fundraising ball, the ACT Wildlife Galah Ball to mark our 10-year anniversary. The purpose of the gala was to increase our visibility in the community, raise funds and awareness and build new relationships. It succeeded on all of those. We raised close to \$20,000 and made a lot of new friends in the Canberra Community. See [next page](#) for photos.

We had 174 guests at the National Museum of Australia. Our guest list included Rebecca Vassarotti MLA (Minister for the Environment, Parks, and Land Management), Elizabeth Lee MLA (ACT Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Energy and Emissions Reduction) together with several Liberals attending, Minister Tara Cheyne (Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy), Emma Davidson MLA (Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans), Jo Clay MLA (Spokesperson for Transport, Active Travel, and Road Safety) and Laura Nutall MLA (Spokesperson for Animal Welfare). We also had our wonderful supporters at the National Zoo and Aquarium and ACT Fire & Rescue, along with KPMG, the Business Council of Australia and our key sponsor, Icon Water. Andrew Barr, Chief Minister ACT, was unable to attend but he sent a letter ([see next page](#)).

We had some amazing items donated for the auction including a night at Jamala Wildlife Lodge, a \$500 Fiji Airways Voucher from Canberra Airport, \$2,500 Amplify advertising voucher, a \$895 photography package from Heartstory Photography and some incredible artworks from Eggpicnic and our very own volunteers, Joan McKay, Liz Faul and Jill Mail. Real estate auctioneer, Frank Walmsley, helped us to raise around \$10,000 on donated auction items. The Canberra Symphony Orchestra donated a harp player to welcome our guests.

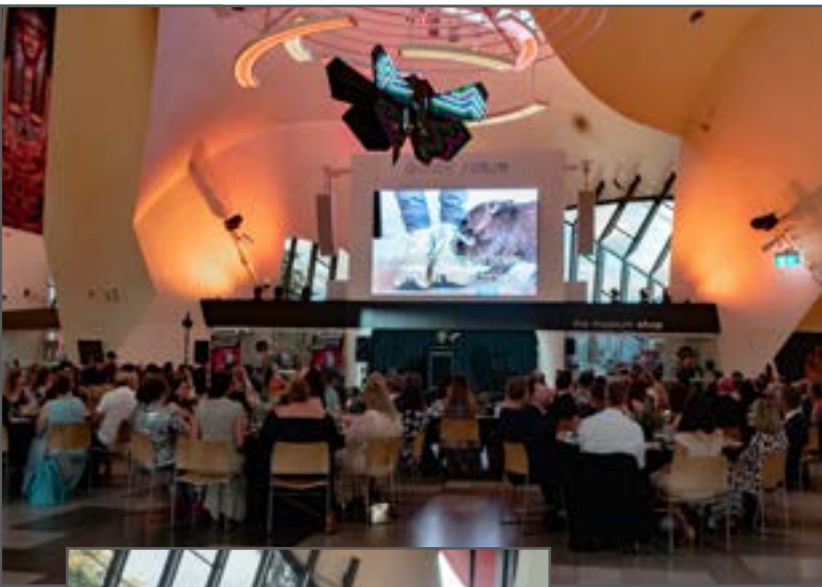
One of my highlights of the night, was hearing stories from Angus Campbell, not as the Chief of Defence, but how he supports the incredible Stephanie Copus-Campbell as an ACT Wildlife volunteer.

Next major event

Coming up next year: ACT Wildlife will be hosting a national biennial conference in 2025, the Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference. We will be seeking volunteers to help organise this event, which will be in partnership with other wildlife organisations and supporters in the ACT and surrounding areas. This event allows wildlife organisations from around the country to meet, learn and share their experience with wildlife.

After 14 events, my time as the Event Coordinator is over, and it has been an amazing experience, but it's time for me to hand it over to someone new and spend more time as a possum carer. Thank you to all the events volunteers, you've been wonderful. If you would like to play a major part in promoting ACT Wildlife, I'd encourage you to apply for this position. Contact ACTW secretary at secretary@actwildlife.net for the job description if you would like to apply.

Clockwise from below: Tracey McNicol and Andrew; the Zoo table; letter from Andrew Barr; Anne, Karen Lucy and Marg; Corin and Tim; Kim and Cindy; Ben and Jane; wombat cake; Galah Ballroom.



Andrew Barr MLA
 Chief Minister
 Treasurer
 Minister for Climate Action
 Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development
 Minister for Tourism
 Member for Kurrajong

24/185736

Tracey McNicol
 ACT Wildlife
iactforwildlife@gmail.com

Dear Tracey

Thank you for your invitation of 24 January 2024 to attend ACT Wildlife's 10 Year Galah Ball. I regret that I was unavailable to attend due other commitments. I am sorry that it has taken a little time for me to reply to you, I sincerely hope that the event was a success.

I would like to congratulate the staff and volunteers of ACT Wildlife on your 10-year anniversary of supporting Canberra's wildlife and our community. The decade of care and compassion shown to our wildlife through the rescue, rehabilitation and release by your dedicated volunteers is a wonderful achievement.

On behalf of the ACT Government, thank you again for your tireless work that occurs around the clock. I look forward to hearing about the important ongoing work of the ACT Wildlife to care for the ACT's fauna in their time of need.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Barr
 Andrew Barr MLA
 Chief Minister

12 March 2024

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A Rare Rescue of a Puggle

Recently, a young platypus was rescued by Louise, ACTW staff member from the artificial ponds near Yarralumla Play Station. A member of public spotted him and called ACTW as his mum was nowhere to be seen. He had managed to get into the tiny 0.5m by 0.5m shallow pond where the water starts to flow into the ponds from the pump. He was trapped by the steep rocks and struggling as he was exhausted and waterlogged with no land to rest on, as well as in full sunlight and heavy flowing water trying to push him under.

After rescuing him, Louise made a few calls within ACTW and to some local vets who were all scratching their heads a little. Meanwhile Liz, ACTW volunteer, and Bonnie, ACTW staff, got his initial care sorted, dried him off and got him comfy. Cheryle, ACTW possum coordinator, suggested the local zoo and Tidbinbilla. Louise also found a resource stating that Taronga Zoo had experts working with platypus. All three were contacted and between Ari (Tidbinbilla vet), the National Zoo vet and staff, Shelly (Taronga Zoo vet nurse) and Kimberly (senior vet at Taronga Zoo), his initial vet checks and overnight care with the National Zoo were arranged.

After his overnight care with the National Zoo he was transported by Liz to Taronga Zoo wildlife clinic, Sydney, to be raised in care for a few more months as he is still likely dependent on mum given his size.

Sadly, we received the news that he didn't survive. This highlights the need for our waterways to be clean and safe for all our wildlife.

Thank you to all the organisations involved. See ACTW website actwildlife.net/ for the video of the platypus being cared for overnight by National Zoo staff before being transferred to Taronga Zoo.

Possum Joeys in Distress

Over the last few months, many of the joey possums that have come into care have presented with diarrhoea that seems to be resistant to some treatments.

The numbers that are presenting are very concerning and Louise, staff member at ACTW Jerrabomberra Wetlands office, contacted the ACT Government vet Dr Harry Roach to ask for assistance. Samples have been given to Dr Harry to try and get to the source of the problem. At the time of publishing, tests are still being conducted to find the problem and solution.



Various treatments have been tried by carers including antibiotics, anti-fungal treatment and pro-biotics. As Joeys are so tiny, they dehydrate very quickly with diarrhoea so it's vital that they are kept hydrated. This is extra work for our carers but necessary to keep them alive. The hope is that their gut will get back into balance.

Possums are the second most common species that come into care after birds. They are wonderful creatures all with their own personalities. If you are interested in caring for possums, head to the [Training Calendar](#) on our website for the next training session. There is always a need for more carers.

New Look Website

Last year the out-going Committee approved out-sourcing the upkeep of our website. Three quotes were obtained and the decision to contract [Chillibeau Media](#) from the three quotes was made.

Chillibeau Media have already performed some work for us so it was an easy decision to accept their quote. Chillibeau Media have already commenced work designing a new look website and will also be looking at digital fundraising through the website to increase our donations base and also provide a much more donor friendly experience.

The current committee will decide on the new design and how to go forward with online fundraising. Heather Sommatriva will liaise with Chillibeau Media during the transition.

Recently Chillibeau Media began a series of free workshops on Digital Fundraising for not-for-profit organisations. This is a great opportunity to learn from their expertise and network with other not-for-profits.

We look forward to seeing what Chillibeau Media present as their ideas for us to move forward with the website.

Social Media

by Evan Croker

Social media coordinator Evan swung by carer Denise's backyard to see 28 (!) orphan ducklings in care. The little fellas were a bit uncertain of the camera at first, but in time they were OK and the nice, soft lighting of a cloudy day brought out their best. There are wood ducks and black ducks in care, and they will be released when they've learnt to fly.

Follow ACT Wildlife on social media:

www.facebook.com/ACT.Wildlife

www.instagram.com/act_wildlife/



If you have a story about wildlife in your care that you would like to share in the next newsletter, forward it with photos, to newsletters@actwildlife.net

Flying-foxes

by Clare Wynter

This spring and summer flying fox season in Canberra has been exceptionally busy with large numbers coming into care. Many have been very underweight, partly because of native food shortages in NSW and SE Qld.



We've had an incredibly busy pup season, with 49 orphaned pups being rescued in the ACT and taken into care. Sadly 15 of the pups were rescued after their mothers were electrocuted on powerlines.

In past years, we've often helped NSW groups in caring for some of their orphaned pups, but this November it was our turn to ask for help and ARC on the central NSW coast took 10 of our orphans to raise, at a time when we were rescuing 2 pups every day.

Many of our pups were less than 3 weeks of age, requiring 5 milk bottles a day and most were very underweight, some at only a bit over half of the normal weight for age. The time, skill, and generosity of our 9 carer households has been immense and we can now celebrate in knowing that some 40 of our pups and older juveniles progressed to creche and some have now graduated from creche, moving to flight aviaries where they are honing their flight skills ready for release.

Sadly our work hasn't stopped with the raising of orphan pups. The number of adult flying-foxes being rescued has been very high too.

The season is still underway and 75 adults and subadults have been rescued thus far. 43 were entangled in fruit tree netting and another 3 rescued from barbed wire. There seem to be fewer native trees flowering this season, which may be part of the reason for such high numbers. In comparison, only 28 adult fruit bats were rescued in the summer of 2022/23.

We had hoped with more residents using wildlife safe netting, following the free Net Swap program this year, that the number of entanglements would have been fewer. Unfortunately, entanglements have still been high. This is likely due to large numbers of flying foxes seeking food from backyard fruit trees because of a shortage of their preferred food, eucalypt blossom. The number entangled would however have been even higher without the net swap, and the work of ACTW volunteers on that program has been very important.

The next step is for the ACT Government to implement the unsafe netting ban very soon – the legislation has been passed and all that remains is for it to be put into effect. This should reduce the deaths and serious injuries to our flying-foxes as well as other native species, including birds and reptiles.

If you are interested in caring for flying foxes, head to our [Training Calendar](#) for the next flying-fox training.

Sponsors

Ziggys Fresh 10% Discount



[Ziggys Fresh](#) are providing a 10% discount on fruit and vegetable purchases for our wildlife. When you shop at Ziggys Fresh, show your membership card and you will be given the discount.

Ziggys Fresh is one of Canberra's oldest fruit market stores and the longest-running fruit and veg shop at the Fyshwick Fresh Food Markets.

Goodwill Wines

When you order wine from Goodwill Wines, 50% of the profits from your order will go to your selected charity. You can select ACT Wildlife as your selected charity.

Goodwill Wines have raised \$504,822 for Australian charities so far.

Orders can be placed here goodwillwine.com.au/

Kindpeople

The vision of Kindpeople is to create garments that deliver kindness around the world. Their guiding principles are kindness, generosity and love for all.

They pledge to donate \$5 from every garment sold to a charity and have generously included ACT Wildlife as one of their charities.

Visit their website www.kindpeople.au/

ACTW Container Deposit Scheme

ACT Wildlife is now a preferred charity for the ACT Container Deposit Scheme. You can now drop a bag of 10c bottles or cans at depots across Canberra and donate directly and easily to ACTW. Just use the touch screen to select "Donate" and then select the ACTW logo. It is as simple as that! Spread the word!



The Day an Animal Determined How a Release Should Really Be Done

OR

Is Adam in the Gang-Gang Gang?

by Adam Coppard

The day the animals ruled. It started out with what I thought would be a simple release. One where you open the transporter's crate and the bird would fly away without even a backward glance. After all, this was where the Gang-Gang was found and there were others in the area. Of course, I was the human, I'm supposed to be smarter than a bird. What is that saying 'when you ASSUME; you make an ASS out of U and ME'.

The Gang-Gang soon let me know who was leading this release. And who was the ASS. I opened the crate and it just simply decided to sit on the edge turning it into a comfortable perch where it could survey its surroundings. As a human I still hadn't cottoned on that I knew nothing. I thought if I offered it a stick to sit on and allow it to survey from a higher position, it would then take flight. Yeh right!!!!

The Gang-Gang still felt comfortable guiding me through its release. I walked from one tree to another, to another and so on. At this point people travelling past in their cars were giving me strange looks. Perhaps they were concerned that I was letting the human race down and was being controlled by the Gang-Gang or was it more 'what is this human doing'. Nice looking bird there, shame about the human.

After introducing the Gang-Gang to a selection of trees over a 10 minute period it finally condescended to take up a roosting position in one of the multitude of trees it was introduced to. All of this was on its own terms and eventually led to accepting me place it in the tree of choice. None of this flying away stuff. Place me carefully in that tree, and then I'll let you go, human.

Release scores. Gang-Gang 10/10, Adam lucky to score 5/10.



Yeh this is nice, but I want a more commanding view.



Okay walk me around and then I will decide.



Nah!! What about the tree over there. Why are the humans in the car staring at you???



*Yeh this tree will do!
You can go now Adam.
I'll probably fly off after he's gone.
Seriously, who is responsible for the training of these people in ACTW?*