

Wildcare not WIRES

Once upon a time there was a single volunteer wildlife rescue service in NSW – WIRES (NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service). But since the early 1990s there have been many other groups start up. There are now 27 individual wildlife groups throughout NSW all with dedicated operational areas. The New South Wales Parks & Wildlife Service licences groups to handle and care for native animals with the aim of rescuing and rehabilitating injured or orphaned wildlife back into the wild. NPWS also provides an authority to euthanase animals if that is necessary. It is illegal for members of the public to capture, raise or kill wildlife unless they have a licence or are authorised through a wildlife group. Wildcare is your local volunteer wildlife rescue group and it covers an area stretching from Bredbo to the south, through Burra, Bungendore, Tarago, Queanbeyan, Yass, Gundaroo, Gunning, Crookwell and all the way to Young.

With more than 3,000 calls for help coming in via the 24/7 helpline each year, it is a busy organisation and more than 2,000 animal incidents are dealt with. There are about 200 volunteers, but there is room for a few more recruits. Some volunteers rescue and rehabilitate all the species of animals (except for snakes that need special training and care). But often people specialise into reptiles; mammals such as kangaroo, wombat, possum, koala and flying fox; snakes; or birds. Wildcare also has a number of licenced 'shooters'. Calls for help range from coping with roadside accidents at the dead of night involving injured animals, rescuing snakes from patios, water tanks, and gardens, picking up wandering baby wombats, and taking charge of a Kookaburra catching a ride on long distant truck! And caring for inter-State travellers that sometimes appear unwanted on a Supermarket shelf.

Volunteers pay their way and cover most costs, but there is a need to fundraise to pay for large veterinary bills, telephone cost and for specific equipment. Wildcare is a not for profit organisation and it has 'charity' status, so tax deductible donations can now be made. If you would like to support Wildcare with an end of the financial year donation just visit their website (www.wildcare.com.au) and follow the links.

If you come across injured or orphaned native wildlife, or want information about joining up, contact Wildcare on their helpline – 6299 1966.

By the way, at this time of year, the best way to reduce the risk of hitting a kangaroo, and give yourself more reaction time, is to slow down and be more vigilant in wildlife-rich areas at dawn & dusk and through the night. And if you see one kangaroo crossing the road ahead of you, there will probably be another following close behind.

Philip Machin
6238 3717

Photo: Boobok Owl in care recovering from a barbed wire injury