



# TWEED VALLEY WILDLIFE CARERS INC. NEWSLETTER

Winter 2007

## *The Case for Dissolving Hooks... by Mary Grant*



*If fisherpeople would use hooks that are biodegradable, life would be a lot more enjoyable for sea birds & water birds in the Tweed.*

*If fisherpeople would take a bit more time to reel in an injured bird and remove the hooks, line, tracers from their mouths, wings, legs and body, life would be a lot more enjoyable for Wildlife Carers.*

### **In the past month:**

**Case 1:** Silver Gull in Tweed Boat Harbour, hook down throat, 80 lb breaking strain line protruding from his beak. Rescued, treated and released.

**Case 2:** Silver Gull, Jack Evans Boat Harbour, line, tracer, drink sealer, and hook attached to legs and foot. Hook digs in with every step. Rescued and Released.

**Case 3:** Silver Gull, Hastings

Point, with a series of “ganged” hooks through jaw, and stuck in leg. Three metres of line and tracer trailing out the back, Rescued, treated and Released.

**Case 4:** Silver Gull (Qld) in care TVWC with hook down throat. Rescued, treated and Released.

**Case 5:** Silver Gull from Hastings Point, with ganged hooks holding head in a backward position. Rescued treated and Released.

**Case 6:** Silver Gull with line encircling legs, hobbling bird, hook down throat. This bird is currently in Currumbin Wildlife Hospital for surgery.

**Case 7:** Silver Gull, Chinderah. Large weeping wound to neck from a hook injury. Bird could not cope with stress, massive weight loss, and infection. Died in care.

**Case 8:** Pelican from Oxley Cove.

Large stainless steel hook deeply embedded in right wing with line trailing. Rescued treated (5 days antibiotics) and released.

**Case 9:** Pelican from Hastings Point. With hook and line down throat, Ganged hooks in back of body. Rescued treated and Released.

**ON GOING CASES:** three Pelicans, still not rescued, are out there with line, hooks and injuries. Silver Gulls sighted but not found with line around legs. Three Ibis with severe line entanglement, still not rescued.

HOW MANY MORE ARE OUT THERE INJURED AND HELPLESS DUE TO THE CARELESS OF MAN?

## Chair Chat ... by Ilona Roberts

The Annual General Meeting looms – it will be upon us in a couple of months. We will be sending out nomination forms for the executive positions ie president, secretary, treasurer, committee, etc. Please start thinking about this now – you can nominate yourself, if you think you have the required skills. Even if you aren't so skilled, but are willing to give things a try, the present office bearers will help you to learn how things are done.

Also this issue contains membership renewals; membership expires on June 30. If you have joined since March 31, you need not rejoin – your membership will carry over until June 2008.

For one weekend – 21/22 April, we had the benefit of Anne Fowler's considerable experience as a wildlife vet. Anne has a gift for imparting knowledge and her workshops are always informative and inspiring, also fun. People I later spoke to felt that what had been presented to them would be of great value once they started caring for birds.

The dinner at the Kathmandu restaurant after the Saturday session wasn't too bad, either; good food, good company, a bit of a reward for all the hard work that had gone into organizing the event.

Speaking of which, (the workshop, not the night out) it really does take considerable effort and time to get one of these up and running, to say nothing of the expense. The group has an obligation to its members to provide appropriate training. This we have fulfilled by bringing here one of the best trainers on the Eastern seaboard, if not all Australia. Volunteers of any group also have an obligation to participate in training.

When people who are booked in to attend do not show up, and neither have the courtesy to contact the organizers

beforehand nor to apologize for their absence afterward, it is a slap in the face of those who have worked hard to make the workshop a success.

Dare I say this for fear of jinxing us all – we are presently enjoying some quieter times – most of the birds and all of the flying-foxes have raised their young; the cooler weather means fewer people are demanding the removal of snakes.

Our next general meeting is June 2nd. It should be an interesting one. Someone from Currumbin will speak about the new wildlife hospital to be built – there have been some dramas with the planning of it, but I will leave that to whoever comes, to give details. I don't know for sure who it will be, because Mike Pyne, the head vet, has only just returned from China, visiting a zoo in which Koalas have been on loan from Currumbin. Said Koalas have reportedly had babies – in one instance, twins. I am hoping also to hear from Carol Booth (presently incommunicado on Fraser Island), the fearless wildlife warrior who has successfully challenged the right to kill thousands of Flying-foxes in Queensland by electrocution. She is now challenging the right to shoot Flying-foxes in orchards in Queensland, which will have huge repercussions for the rest of Australia should she succeed.

Keep your eyes peeled to Prime Television for the next couple of months – there will be an ad running appealing for members and sponsors.



### **Wildcare moves..**

***The Wildcare office has moved to premises in the Volunteer Room at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.***

***Some courses will still be conducted at Narrowleaf, so please check when making course bookings.***

### **Keen on koalas?**

#### **Friends Of The Koala Basic Training**

**30 June, from 9am - 1.30  
Cost \$5 (for morning tea & notes)**

**Rifle Range Rd, Lismore**

**Includes: rescue techniques, basic assesment, handling & transportation, leaf identification and what is involved in becoming a volunteer at the Koala Care Centre.**

**To book; phone Ilona on  
(02) 6676 6259**

#### **Inside this Issue**

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| <i>The Case for</i>         |       |
| <i>Dissolving Hooks</i>     | pg. 1 |
| <i>Chair Chat</i>           | pg 2  |
| <i>Friends of the Koala</i> | pg 3  |
| <i>Kill or Cure?</i>        | pg 4  |
| <i>There and Back Again</i> | pg 5  |
| <i>Speed Kills</i>          | pg 6  |
| <i>Waterbird Release</i>    | pg 6  |
| <i>Flying - fox Manual</i>  | pg 7  |
| <i>Upcoming Courses</i>     | pg 7  |

# *Friends of the Koala ...*

## *Voluntary agreement for the Tweed Valley*

---

---

*Pursuant to discussions between FOK and TVWC regarding responsible management of the rescue, rehabilitation and release of koalas in the Tweed Valley, it has been agreed that the following arrangements will apply until such time that the Committee of one or the other parties requests them to be reviewed:*



- Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers (TVWC) will relinquish responsibility for rehabilitating koalas requiring human intervention brought in from the group's area of operation, described as being that part of Tweed Shire east of Kunghur;
- TVWC members who wish to rehabilitate koalas will apply for membership of Friends of the Koala (FOK) and will be required to abide by FOK policies and procedures;
- All calls regarding koalas received through the TVWC hotline will be directed to the FOK hotline;
- FOK will assign the nearest member who is an experienced/trained rescuer. If a member is not available assistance may be asked of TVWC or other local groups.
- FOK will participate in TVWC basic training so that new members are trained in koala assessment and rescue and the role of FOK is well understood;
- FOK will assume responsibility for record keeping and statistics regarding koalas. Over time, TVWC koala records (and the 15 years of koala sightings collected by Rhonda James if she is willing) will be made available to FOK and will be integrated into FOK's database to extend its coverage to include the whole Northern Rivers region.
- FOK will make available statistical data on request from TVWC;
- FOK will supply TVWC with FOK record sheets for use in taking information over the phone;.
- FOK will extend its activities related to koala habitat repair and extension, monitoring and lobbying, education, research, etc. into Tweed Shire;
- FOK and TVWC will prepare a joint media release and other notifications deemed necessary to ensure that the arrangements regarding responsibility for the rescue, rehabilitation and release and release of koalas in the Tweed Valley are understood by the community, partners, stakeholders and relevant authorities.

---

**\*\* Members please note:**

**Due to the new agreement, TVWC will no longer be responsible for reimbursements for the care or transport of koalas. Contact Friends of the Koala for information regarding these matters.**

Friends of the Koala: Ph: (02)6622 1233. [www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org)  
email: [info@friendsofthekoala.org](mailto:info@friendsofthekoala.org)

# Kookaburras - Kill or Cure? by Peter Foster

from the Autumn Newsletter 2007 Hello Possums - WIRES Blue Mountains Branch



Birds can be the subject of many myths. In ancient times (and Harry Potter stories) it could have been the story of the phoenix or the man - carrying roc of Middle Eastern legend. But these birds were mythical. Even in modern times some facts about commonly seen birds can remain elusive until disclosed by patient observation.

Even though kookaburras are one of our most common and easily observed birds the nature of their society remained unknown until the 1960s. In the early twentieth century a group of kookaburras could be seen as 'several pairs'(1). The pioneering work of American biologist Veronica Parry (2) showed that their social grouping was made up of one family in a territory consisting of a breeding pair and the offspring from previous years staying and feeding their younger siblings. More recently Sarah Legge described how the young, in the nest are fiercely competitive and will eagerly kill each other (3).

When I joined WIRES I was informed, with confidence, that any kookaburra in care for more than 2 weeks was unable to be released

because after that period it would certainly be attacked and killed - even by its own family. The only solution seen was "euthanase it now or it will die a horrible death in the wild". This was apparently a common practice and possibly still is.

At the first National Wildlife Conference in Werribee in 2003 people from Healesville Sanctuary gave a presentation on rehabilitation of birds. There they receive injured birds from the public and after they heal, release them with radio-tracking.

Post release monitoring has shown that no kookaburra in the study has been killed even after prolonged periods in care. In discussions out of session I was told there was no scientific evidence for this belief. This contrasts sharply with the belief of several wildlife carers. (At the second NWCC at Penrith one carer I spoke to even started to get upset that it was even being challenged!).

It is essential to understand that, unlike the English royal family, kookaburras do not often inherit their territory from their parents. They stay in their parents' territory for a couple of years and then, when breeding age, can wander off to establish their own territory. Thus kookaburras can disappear from a study site and new ones appear (recruitment). Sarah Legge's book "Kookaburra: King of the Bush" Chapter 8 describes the mortality of kookaburras. Table 8.1 shows the recruitment and mortality of kookaburras in a study around Canberra. Of these birds 11% died annually, 16% of helpers became breeders and 33% of helpers disappeared. Legge comments "Although their fate is unknown, if we assume the population is stable, then the number of those dispersed that attained a breeding position is about the same as the number of unbanded helpers that dispersed into the study

area to take up breeding positions (16%)... we can assume that the remainder died". In summary, about one third of breeding kookaburras leave their parents territory and about half of those become successful breeders.

So, even if a bird were released after a long period of time its chance of surviving - even if outside its own territory - would be at least 50:50. As there is no evidence of a family forgetting its own members after only a few weeks, or even several months, then its chances of survival are better.

- (1) In 1970. Quoted in "Kookaburra: King of the Bush" page 24
- (2) Parry, V. (1968) s, territoriality and breeding biology of the Kookaburra, *Dacelo gigas*. Monash University
- (3) Described in "Kookaburra: King of the Bush" Chapter 7  
ISBN 0 643 09063 0 Published by CSIRO Publishing 2004

## Current TVWC Office Bearers

*President :*

Ilona Roberts - 02 6676 6259

*Secretary:*

Chato Page - 02 6679 7151

*Treasurer:*

Suzanne Raabe - 02 6679 1445

*Committee:* Barbara Thompson,

Tony Seto, Sybil Primrose.

*Phone Co-ordinator:*

Ilona Roberts - 02 6676 6259

*Records Officers:*

Sue McCorkell - 02 6676 3997

Annette Jones - 02 6674 3451

Tony Seto - 02 6679 1455

*Membership Officer:*

Karen Bishop - 07 5524 9127

*Website:*

Dave Pinson - 02 6672 5858

*Newsletter Editor:*

Karen Bishop - 07 5524 9127

## There and back again... by Jan Bishop



*Mum Melomys looking for an escape route*

I received a call - would I take on some antechinus that had arrived from northern Queensland in a bunch of bananas? They were to be returned home. "No worries" I said.

Barbara Thompson kindly transported them from Murwillumbah. Expecting small bodies we were both surprised when Mum hurtled out and ran off. Mum had run off and I was left holding two beautiful babies.

At least we knew they weren't antechinus. This would never do, so off into action. Barbara corralled one part of the room while I managed to catch mum under the table and returned her to her babies which had been placed into our "rodent cage".

In the meantime Ilona was arranging their ticket back home. I called to tell her that they were some sort of rat. Not *rattus rattus* as mum was a lovely colour and aren't all babies cute?

I checked through all the books to I.D. them and decided on either Fawn-footed Melomys or Grassland Melomys.

Well, in the meantime Mum Melomys had chewed her way out of our supposedly safe cage and taking a baby with her made off. I assume the other baby was accidentally knocked off her teat as she escaped as both babies cling on to mum's teat.

In the early hours of the morning I could hear busy gnawing behind our large cupboard as she made a nest. Too heavy to move, we couldn't do much about it. Our main aim was for mum to come back and get her last baby, which she did.

Their ticket home was postponed for the time being. We borrowed a small mammal trap and caught Mum but no babies. We let her go as we couldn't find the babies and didn't want them to come to harm. We would wait until they became more independent.

The Melomys made themselves at home. I left food out in the trap that wasn't set, lady finger bananas were a favourite, with meal worms, cockroaches, mushrooms, carnivore mix, fruit and seed all being accepted happily.

They galloped about at night so sleep was hard to come by. Melomys hadn't heard the expression "quiet as a mouse".

Finally we reset the trap and caught mum and one baby. I reset the trap but the bub was too little to set the trap off. One evening I put the cage with mum and the one baby in a bedroom into which we had seen the other baby run. We set the trap on top of the cage. Using string we made a kind of cobweb effect to get the baby to spring the trap and caught the little one at last.

Two days without mum meant for a happy reunion as the bub suckled. Mind you the bub had knocked over banana and other bits and pieces in the meantime.

In the morning I gazed happily at the family 'safe' in their cage. I picked it up to move somewhere quieter for the moment and the bottom came off. "Argghh!" They had pulled one of the covering towels through the bars so far that the thickness of the towel actually caused the catches to pop open. Happily they hadn't noticed the gap. We did a quick count just to be sure and it came to three. Phew.

Well I couldn't wait to start them on their journey home. Phone calls made and Fleay's Fauna Sanctuary were ready to receive them.

Fleay's made the I.D of Grassland Melomys and were delighted to see them in excellent condition after their adventures. One baby made a quick dash before being placed in a secure cage (hopefully secure, I did warn them).

What impressed me so much was what a wonderful mum she was. The way she looked after her babies over thousands of kilometres.



*The towel that was nearly our downfall.*

*Melomys burtoni (Grassland) are largely arboreal in tropical forests. Their tails are partly prehensile with a mosaic pattern. Breeding occurs mostly autumn & winter. Nocturnal. They are also found in woodland, and in grassy patches in forests. Diet consists of plant stems, seed, fruit & insects. Making nests of shredded leaves, bark or finding hollows.*

## *Speed Kills... by Ilona Roberts*

When I lived on Mt Tamborine, I used to work nights nursing, in Beaudesert. Starting work at 11pm meant I had to drive. One night I hit a kangaroo. I'd seen one about 25 metres ahead and must have begun to slow down. Suddenly another one was in front of me. I hadn't been driving fast, but fast enough to be unable to take evasive action – only hitting the brakes as hard as I could. I clipped him with the front right corner, pulled over, shaking, and went back to see what I had done to him. No kangaroo. I thought maybe he had been further back so I turned around and drove back. Got out, no kangaroo. Maybe he was even further back? Drove back further; still no kangaroo.

When I was about to go back further still, I realized that I was shocked and wasn't going to find him – he'd taken off.

When I arrived at work, I pulled into the light to see how much damage had been done to my car. Apart from the front headlight being slightly off-centre, and the smallest depression in the front side, there was nothing. I fervently prayed that the roo's injuries were as slight. Next morning I stopped where I had hit him and searched the area – no blood on the road, no body for at least a few hundred metres through the paddock into which he must have fled.

I decided then, that at night I would only drive at a speed which would allow me to stop in time to avoid hitting anything else. This meant around 60 kph and that I would have to allow more traveling time. But oh, it was so worth it! Over the next few months, adhering strictly to my new rules, I was able to stop to allow a possum to waddle across

the road, the most beautiful big green snake crossed my path unharmed, a Tawny Frogmouth contemplating the universe in the middle of the road was shoed out of the way. One night there were two horses wandering down the road towards me. I pulled over and coaxed them onto the verge, called the police from work and gave their location. Both were safely returned to their relieved owner. Another time there were three donkeys, which I enticed back to their home with an apple. Countless frogs weren't squashed after the rain.

I still do this – it takes me ages to get to and from anywhere at night. I pull over to let other cars pass, not wishing to invite road rage. I don't care if I am the only person in the world to do this – I'm the one who has to live with the memory of that kangaroo.

## *A Waterbird Release... by Mary Grant*



Mary Grant

Royal Spoonbill enjoys the love, care, attention and what's more ... the food is great!

He grows up strong and at last Carer decides it's "time to go."

Feeling a bit heavy hearted and worried about his safety; Carer packs Spoonbill (protesting loudly), into carry cage and sets off for the notorious Vintage Lakes.

Carer decides in an act of unprecedented kindness, to forge a path through the lantana, mangroves, ti trees and mud to a safe release site on an island in the middle of Vintage Lakes. This entails walking, carrying, straining and smashing through jungle type environment.

At release site, Carer is suffering numerous cuts, abrasions, muddy feet, and with very heavy breathing sets cage down on the Ibis roost.

Out stalks Royal Spoonbill and after some close examination of surrounds, picks up his wings and effortlessly "glides" to a more conducive area ... on the other side, near the Carer's car, with all the other white water birds.

Carer trudges all the way back through the thorny thickets, swearing a lot .... realising that release could have been a LOT easier if the bird had been set free ANYWHERE on Vintage Lake!

# The flying - fox manual 2007... Handbook

by TVWC's Dave Pinson

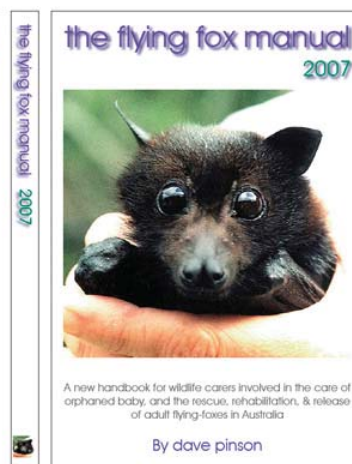
*"A new handbook for wildlife carers involved in the care of orphaned baby, and the rescue, rehabilitation, & release of adult flying-foxes in Australia"*

Believed to be the most comprehensive native animal care manual ever produced, and printing out to the equivalent of nearly 700 pages, this lavishly illustrated work, with a wealth of nearly 400 photos and illustrations (many of which are interactive), the purpose of this manual is to provide an up to the minute and comprehensive reference guide for flying-fox carers, veterinarians, and field workers interested in the rehabilitation, conservation, and welfare of flying-foxes in Australia. Written over a two-year period, in consultation with over 30 highly experienced and respected flying-fox carers, veterinarians (such as Dr. Anne Fowler and Marcus Holdsworth), and much scientific input, this work is written to cater for both the first season novice, as well as the 25-year "seasoned" veteran. This work is divided into five main sections: introduction; hand-rearing orphans; adult flying-fox care; health and treatment; and appendices. The introduction section comprises some 20 subjects; covering species, anatomy, reproduction, behaviour, ecology, public health, and ABLV vaccinations. Orphaned babies is divided into 42 sections; offering a full and comprehensive guide to hand-rearing orphans: equipment, stabilizing, housing, hygiene, feeding, feeding problems, detailed stages of development, creching,

and releasing - it's all here. Adult care is divided into 31 sections; covering rescue guidelines, specific rescue situations, examination, stabilizing, housing, feeding, rehabilitation, and releasing - right through to permanent care. Health and treatment has 46 sections; ranging from assessment, and medical guidelines, to a full A to Z of injuries and conditions; topics from abrasions through to worms, with each section including signs, treatment, dose rates, contra-indications, special considerations, and nursing techniques. Lastly, an appendices section covers subjects not easily categorized into preceding sections such as ethics and objectivity, euthanasia, backyard netting, food trees, a complete glossary of terms, and further suggested reading.

as and when collective knowledge advances and dictates. It is planned that a new revised and updated manual will be available every second year. Since the launch, this book has now been reviewed in Europe, and apart from wildlife carers in Australia, is now selling to museums and university libraries in places such as Australia, France, the USA, Switzerland, Italy, and the UK. ISBN number pending.

This e-book is normally priced at \$26.95, but is available to TVWC members for a group price of \$20.00 (a saving of \$6.95).



With Nearly 9000 internal links, and at least 3 navigational methods on every page, this electronic book is both easy to read and navigate, meaning that all information is simply accessed with the click of a mouse. This manual is, and will be, an ongoing work, with regular updates, changes, and additions planned

*For more information, and to view sample pages, visit the website at [www.stickeeatz.com](http://www.stickeeatz.com) or contact Dave direct on 02 6672 5858 or mobile 043 955 4907*

## **Upcoming Training Courses (NRWC)**

**Please phone Ilona Roberts (02) 6676 6259 if you wish to attend.**

### **- Introduction to possums, gliders and small marsupials**

Course for new carers and rescuers. Learn how to identify different species and the principles of rescue and first aid. Workshop includes interactive activities.

Location: Wollongbar near Lismore **Date: Saturday 16 June (9am to 4pm)**

### **- Echidna Course**

Update on the latest advances in assessment, care and treatment of Echidnas.

Location: Wollongbar near Lismore **Date: Saturday 21 July (9am to 4pm)**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- June 2** - **General Meeting** - CWA Hall, Murwillumbah - 1.00pm
- June 3** - **World Environment Day** - Knox Park, Murwillumbah - 9.00am
- June 10** - **Advanced Possum Workshop** - Wildcare- 10.00am - 4.00pm
- June 16** - **Introduction to Possums, Gliders & Small Marsupials** - Northern Rivers- 9.00am - 4.00pm
- June 17** - **Adult Koala Workshop** - Wildcare - 10.00am - 3.00pm
- June 30** - **Koala Workshop** - FOK, Lismore - 9.00am - 1.30pm
- July 21** - **Echidna Care** - Northern Rivers - 9.00am - 4.00pm
- Aug 4** - **Annual General Meeting.** - CWA Hall, Murwillumbah - 1.00pm
- July 29** - **Orphaned Mammals** - Northern Rivers
- Sept 29** - **Advanced Macropods** - Northern Rivers

*Contact Ilona Roberts for any course information. At time of publishing Wildcare had not finalised courses after July. Please check the Wildcare website for upcoming courses.*



Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers  
P.O.Box 898  
Murwillumbah NSW 2484  
Phone: (02) 6672 4789  
Email: [wildlife@tvwc.org](mailto:wildlife@tvwc.org)  
Web: [www.tvwc.org](http://www.tvwc.org)

NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service General Licence No. 10051

### *Would you like our TVWC Newsletter in full colour ?*

Due to increasing costs TVWC would like to offer members the option of receiving quarterly newsletters by email.

If you choose this option, either fill out the section on your membership renewal form or send an email to TVWC nominating the email address you would like the newsletter forwarded to.

As well as the cost saving you will have the benefit of full colour reproduction.