

Wildlife Rehabilitation Training Programs

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What are the skills needed to be a successful wildlife rehabilitator? Is training all you need, or is a good rapport with, and a love of animals enough?

Formal training programs for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation have in the last 10 or so years gained prominence amongst wildlife care groups. However, not that long ago (and possibly still today), training consisted only of the passing on of information from one carer to the next. This often occurred over the phone and in many instances only when there was a problem. This system is basically a mentor training system where, in theory, a senior and more experienced carer mentors a “junior” carer. This is fine, if the senior carer is well trained and experienced. The dangers of this system are that inadequate knowledge and out of date information can be passed down, then perpetuated from carer to carer.

Currently in Victoria, there is no need to undertake formal training prior to obtaining a permit to rehabilitate wildlife. There is no requirement to prove that you have the necessary husbandry and rehabilitation knowledge to care for wildlife in captivity. The current Victorian system is based on a mentor system with wildlife shelter permit holders able to have three foster carers on their permit. The concept of mentoring is a good one however, there needs to be some assurances that the mentors are adequately trained themselves.

Having thus identified the void in training in Victoria, Wildlife Victoria has over a number of years provided high quality seminars and workshops across the state. More recently, it has partnered with the Victoria University to develop and present the Wildlife Husbandry and Rehabilitation course. This is an 80-hour face-to-face course and has received keen interest from a broad spectrum of people. Recognising a need to present the course across the state and nationally, Victoria University has developed the course for an on-line audience. National accreditation of the course is anticipated in the near future once accreditation standards are finalised by the organising body.

Wildlife Victoria strongly advocates a standard and formalised approach to the training of wildlife rehabilitators across Australia.