

## USE OF FLOWER ESSENCES IN WILDLIFE – Darwin Wildlife Conference Aug 2006

Wildlife carers told me about flower essences when I was at university, and I have been using them since, for about 14 years. They said that Bach's Rescue Remedy has a calming, sedative effect on sick and injured wildlife that otherwise might die from the shock of it all.

There are many types of flower essences, including Australian Bush Flower Essences and Bach's Flower Essences. The Australian Bush Flower Essences are based on Aboriginal uses of flowers, and the Bach Flower Essences were formulated by a homoeopath in the UK. Both of these have combination essences which are to be used in times of stress: Emergency Essence or Rescue Remedy. These have 5 to 7 flower essences, to stop panic attacks and calm the individual down.

Flower essences are made by putting flowers in distilled water in the sun for a few hours. This water is the stock essence and 7 drops of this is then placed in a bottle, of two parts distilled water, to one part brandy or vinegar, as a preservative. There is no pharmacologically demonstrative component of the flower in this essence, so as with homoeopathic medicines, the energy of the flower has been transferred to the water. When we talk about the essence of flowers we are talking about the energy field.

If using brandy as a preservative these drops are about 13% alcohol. In tiny birds or sick birds, especially with potential liver pathology, vinegar would be a safer preservative than brandy.

The dose for larger animals is 3-4 drops in the mouth: 3 times daily, or every half hour if really scared, or 7 drops placed once a day in a water bowl. Seven drops in the mouth in one particular dog sedated it, but 3-4 drops worked well.

In my experience with birds, one drop or droplet per crop feed, or 3-4 drops per water dish, has had no ill effects.

The flower essences have been used for various emotional issues in adults, children and animals. The most dramatic effects are reportedly seen in children and animals, which may eliminate the placebo effect.

I have used Emergency Essence and Rescue Remedy mostly for injured bush rats and rabbits that my flatmate's cat brought in; thunderstorm phobia, travel and other causes of anxiety in dogs, and post traumatic stress in animals that have ended up at the RSPCA. The results can range from a dramatic about-face in a perceived panic situation, to a more subtle regaining of lost confidence, over a few days, weeks or months, to no obvious change.

Research which has been done so far has not proven anything scientifically, with some researchers labelling them as nothing but placebos. Other successful tests need to be repeated with double blind trials or with larger groups, to be acceptable. Some of these

have involved electrodes measuring brain waves and muscle tension in response to potent stressors, and the results have been encouraging.

In my experience, the proof of its efficacy has been from word of mouth from some of the people who have used it, which is not very scientific. I have spoken to naturopathy students who have study flower essences extensively in people. All of them have witnessed responses, some of them very profound. I used Rescue Remedy on myself during exams, which gave me more control over the intense fear I was prone to experiencing, and since then have used many other essences, which have convinced me that they work well.

At an International conference on the Australian Bush Flower essences, the feedback from various practitioners in other parts of the world was that these essences do not just address emotional issues, but have beneficial effects on physical diseases as well. Future scientific research could be very interesting.

The beneficial effects have made me think that it is better to use it than to not use it.

Joanna Mansson BVSc