



Department of Environment and Conservation
Government of Western Australia

THE WILDLIFE REHABILITATION PROGRAM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA



By Margaret Buckland
Community Involvement Coordinator
Department of Environment and Conservation



The ACT:

The Wildlife Conservation Act and regulations in Western Australia allow anyone to care for sick, injured and orphaned wildlife until such time it can be released back into the wild.

The Agency:

Wildlife rehabilitation in Western Australia has been a volunteer program since 1990/91 with the former Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and now Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) previously rehabilitation of native fauna was on an ad hoc basis.

Volunteer Program:

The DEC volunteer policy covers all registered volunteers with personal accident and public liability insurance once they are registered on the volunteer database.

Anyone caring for wildlife is encouraged to register as a volunteer with wildlife caring/rehabilitation as their interest, to ensure they were covered by insurance for personal accident and public liability, and at this stage they are called a volunteer carer.

The CALM wildlife rehabilitation program started with approximately 21 registered wildlife rehabilitators, on the Wildlife Carers list and provided the public with advice and the names of one of those 21 or so people who would take in sick, injured or orphaned wildlife.



Wildlife Rehabilitation:

Over the next 7 years the “list” grew to approximately 190 people throughout Western Australia who were registered wildlife carers.

Unfortunately, during this time people who were interested in caring for native wildlife were placed on the registered wildlife carers list just by phoning up and saying they would like to do so.

The steps to registered wildlife rehabilitator status:

Changes have also been made to ensure the standard of care and information for registered wildlife rehabilitators has improved and there is a process in place,

(a) they must have attended a DEC approved wildlife rehabilitation course,

(b) work with a mentor or rehabilitation centre, understand and accept the policies and how the system works, and network with other like minded people.

© a Wildlife officer assesses the're capability and facility. Wildlife officers have a check list, which includes questions regarding euthanasia, husbandry, release which must be completed and sent in with the WO recommendation.

Basic Wildlife Rehabilitators course:

In 2002 the basic wildlife rehabilitators course, change dramatically from a previous course of the same name, and provided DEC an opportunity to update the course material and find another anchor presenter. The Perth Zoo staff were very interested in becoming part of the course and provide the first day presentation on caring for wildlife in the intensive care/hospital situation.

These days 4 basic wildlife rehabilitation courses are held in Perth and one in the regional areas, per year.



Wildlife Rehabilitators Consultation Group:

In 1999/2000, all wildlife stakeholders were invited to attend meeting with CALM staff for their input on two areas, One was the setting up of a Wildlife Rehabilitators Consultation Group where registered wildlife rehabilitators and volunteers rehabilitators, the senior veterinarian from Perth Zoo and Executive Officers of the major rehabilitation centres would meet with senior CALM staff and discuss any issues or problems arising in the rehabilitation of wildlife, from this a newsletter would be published for everyone on the volunteer database with wildlife as their interest would receive. The membership is just about to be advertised for the third time since the group's inauguration, and continues to provide a forum, in which everyone has a voice.

Photographic Wildlife Rehabilitators Identity Card

This is available for all registered wildlife rehabilitators and provides a proof of identity when accessing airports, government properties or challenged by members of the public, then when going about their wildlife rehabilitation.

The WILDCARE helpline:

The other program was the implementation of the WILDCARE helpline, a central telephone referral service, using the wildlife carers list, and providing the one stop shop, for members of the public to find help as quickly as possible for sick orphaned and injured wildlife. This is a 24 hour seven day per week service, manned by volunteers, supported by wildlife officers and the community involvement staff, volunteer reptile removers, animal control agents and veterinarians, and is supported by the Department of Environment and Conservation.



The Wildlife Rehabilitators Directory:

Since 1991 when it had approximately 21 names on the list, this one page list has grown into a very compact booklet with a substantial amount of information with 73 pages. With approximately 235 rehabilitators, veterinarians, reptile removers and regional wildlife officers information included. The information in the booklet is updated and reprinted each year.

Volunteer Reward System:

The volunteer reward system covers all volunteers, who sent in their timesheets.

Letter of gratitude from the Director General, for under 50 hours,

Letter and Volunteer Pass for 50 hour or more,

Letter, Volunteer Pass and Landscape subscription for 500 hours or more,

Conservation Newsletter on registration on volunteer database

Each volunteer is entitled to 20% staff discount from registration.

Conservation Grants

The basic wildlife rehabilitators course is offered to registered wildlife rehabilitators free of charge as recognition of their efforts on behalf of wildlife.

Conservation Grants:

Annual grants of up to \$1500 per person is advertised each year and available for rehabilitators with two years experience.

Special topics:

This year has seen the start of the special topics sessions, bi-monthly, in June Dr Sarah Wyllie, spoke on the Avian “Bird” flu, and the next topic for discussion is insectivorous bats.



Advanced topics:

In November an Advanced topic will be held and this will be wound care management, treatment and bandaging.

Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation:

Currently working on a Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation, this has been a direct request from the Wildlife Rehabilitators themselves, and has had substantial consultation among the rehabilitators and specialist groups, other States and Commonwealth agencies

It is currently in draft form, and was placed on the Agency website for comment. Hard copies were sent out to anyone who requested them.

During the consultation period approximately 40 feedback forms were received.

The most controversial area was raptor housing.

The Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation currently is not an enforcement document, however, the wildlife officers will be using it as a guideline in their day to day inspections, and it will be incorporated into the Wildlife Regulations in due course.

This has been a quick review over the wildlife rehabilitation program in WA.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the wonderful work wildlife rehabilitators provide to the Department and for their truly inspiring support of our beautiful and unique wildlife and those of us who work with them.

Thank you