

## When you're on the road ... watch for wildlife

*This wildlife friendly information is sourced from members of Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers, members of other groups, independent advice, and research. We hope you find the information below useful, and it helps to answer your questions on this subject. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us by clicking this link: <http://www.tvwc.org.au/contact.php>*

### 7,000 deaths a day!

7,000 native animals are killed every day on our roads in New South Wales alone – a truly frightening statistic by itself. Add to that the countless others that are injured, maimed, and left to die, often suffering a long, lingering and painful death.

Many of our natives are particularly vulnerable, including low-flying birds such as magpies, doves and lorikeets, slow-moving animals like echidnas, headlight-stunned wallabies, and animals that are slow to rise off the roads, such as tawny frogmouths and owls.

We should be particularly aware when on the roads in late autumn and winter, especially at dusk and throughout the night. Many of our native mammals are nocturnal and start to become active at this time. so particular care needs to be taken when driving at night.

In addition, during holiday seasons, with more family trips and an increase in holiday-makers in the region, unfamiliar with our windy and often narrow roads, the number of native animals hit by cars also increases.

Wildlife rescuers and rehabilitators see so many animals with horrific and needless injuries come into care. If we could all slow down on our roads just a bit, particularly on corners, we really could reduce so much pain, suffering, and death.

### Stop and check ...

If you hit a native animal, please do not just keep driving. Stop and check it. If it is not dead, call Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers' 24 hour hotline immediately for help, or your local wildlife group.

Even if you suspect an animal you have hit is dead, or if you see an animal that has been hit by another car, laying on the side of the road, instead of driving by, stop and investigate. It may not be dead and/or it may have young nearby.

### Checking marsupials

It is particularly important that you check marsupials, eg possums, wallabies or bandicoots. Marsupial joeys, cocooned in their mother's pouch, often survive when their mother has been hit by a car. Check the pouch of any female marsupials and, if there is a joey, do not remove it, especially if not furred, but call the TVWC hotline immediately for advice.

If there is no joey in the pouch, look for evidence of lactation, eg an elongated teat or swollen mammary glands. Check the vicinity of the accident as the joey may have been thrown out of the pouch by the impact. Also, a female possum may have back young or a wallaby may have a joey at foot, too big for the pouch; these babies are still dependent upon their mum. A joey that has survived the accident may be hiding in the bush not far from its mother. In fact, joeys will stay near their mother's bodies for several days.

### Moving the animal off the road

After an animal and the area has been checked, move the dead body away from the road. This will prevent others stopping unnecessarily and may also spare other animals that come to feed on the carcass, including owls and other birds, from being killed.



*Although her mother was killed, this Swamp Wallaby joey was safe inside her dead mother's pouch – lucky someone checked!*

The carcass does not need to be buried or taken away as it will also provide food for other animals, even foxes, which may mean that other native animals are spared.

### **While waiting for help**

Any injured or orphaned animal that has been found must be kept warm, dark and quiet. It is a good idea to always have a secure cardboard box and towels in the car for emergencies. The animal can be wrapped in the towel and placed in the box, making sure it is securely closed.

In the case of orphaned marsupials, warmth is particularly important as they would normally be in their mum's pouch, snug at over 30 degrees.

Keep the animal you have rescued away from noise, your children and pets, and do not feed it and do not give it water. Wait for the trained wildlife carer to assess and take care of the animal or, if you are asked and are able to, take it to the carer or the TVWC's preferred vets, who have experience with native animals.

### **Don't try caring for it yourself**

The faster that an injured or orphaned animal can be attended to by experienced and trained people, the better the chance of survival.

Please, don't try to care for the animal yourself. Many well meaning people "have a go", and then call the wildlife group when things are not going well. Unfortunately at this stage it can often either be too late or it makes the task of restoring the animal to health much more difficult.

All Australian native animals in care require a specialised and intensive feeding program – exact diets, amounts, and frequency. A lot will need urgent veterinary attention, even if not immediately obvious, and many require specialised housing with thermostatically-controlled heating, pouching, perching, and humidity. All may require a complex rehabilitation program.

The best you can do for any animal you find on the roads is to call your local wildlife rehabilitation group, keeping the animal warm, dark and quiet while help arrives.

### **Taking care on the roads**

TVWC urges you all to take responsibility for our native wildlife and suggests the following tips, especially when on the roads in the holiday season:

- Drive slowly and carefully, especially at night.
- Be aware that wildlife may run or fly out in front of you as you drive.
- Stop when you hit or see an injured or dead animal on the road.
- Check the pouch and vicinity of female marsupials.
- Move dead wildlife away from the road.
- Call TVWC on 02 6672 4789 immediately if the animal is injured or has a joey.

### **Wildlife carers don't take holidays**

The TVWC hotline and the group's carers and rescuers do not go on holidays; even on Christmas day, someone will be attending the emergency phone. Please call and report any injured wildlife you find on the roads, or anywhere else for that matter, immediately – don't wait until the next day.