

## COVID-19 UPDATE 5

11<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2020



Hi Everybody,

I would like to wish you all a very Happy Easter.

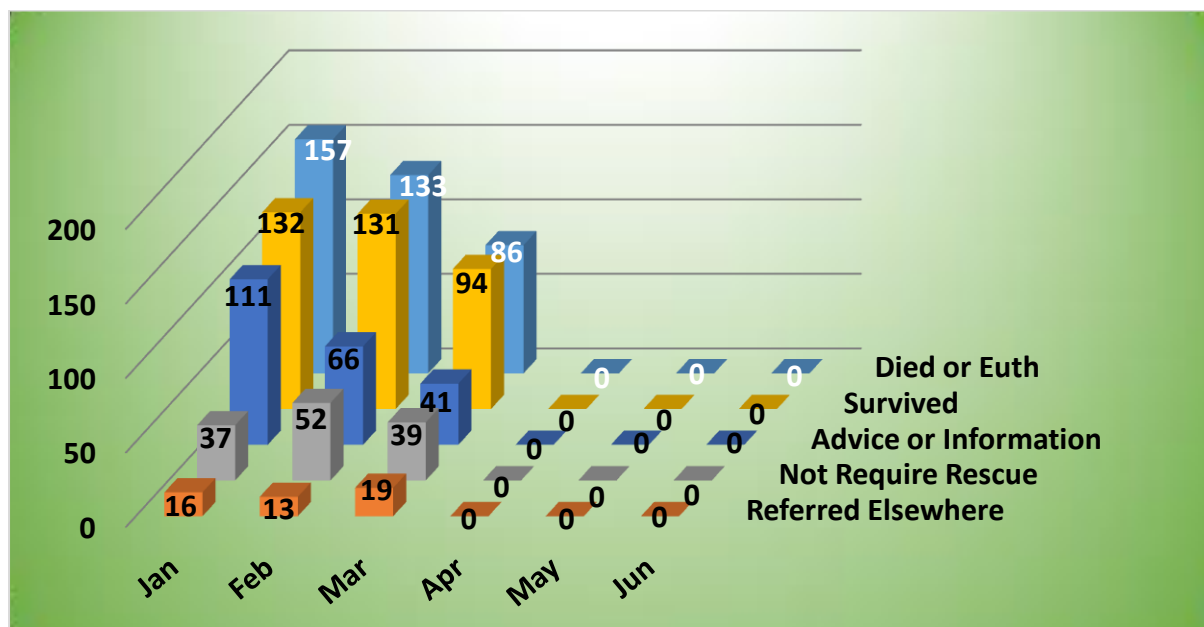
The good news is that we have safety measures in place, a series of contingency plans should the situation worsen, and our wildlife has a breathing space in which to get healthy. We have cancelled our meetings, orientation and

training and many of our active volunteers over 70, or those with chronic health conditions or loved ones they need to protect, are staying at home.

Our hotline is working well, and we would like to welcome the new phonies, Mary Lou and Tricia. Thanks so much for your help.

As you can see from the chart supplied by Robyn at the end of March, our calls have tapered off in March and I am sure they are even lower now.

#### HOTLINE CALLS JANUARY-MARCH 2020



We will provide e-newsletters periodically. Our committee meetings are continuing next month on Zoom.

I have also attached a valuable resource document for all wildlife carers put out by the [NWC](#). If you are struggling at all during this difficult time, please take the time to read it as it is full of great information and suggestions about how to care for yourself while being a wildlife carer. As well, the government Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service offers online wellbeing tips and self-help tools, phone counselling from trained mental health professionals

and peer-to-peer support. You can access it at [bb.org.au/3c1shzD](https://bb.org.au/3c1shzD). Also, there is some really great information on the website <https://twogreenthreads.org/>. Please stay safe, that is your first priority.

It is also important that all active rescuers, transporters and carers read the information that Wildlife Health Australia has produced and become familiar with it. In particular please note, that it is recommended that anyone testing positive for COVID-19 does not have contact with wildlife, particularly flying foxes. See also the bat section in this newsletter.

<https://www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/>

**\*\*\*\*\*IMPORTANT UPDATE ON QUEENSLAND BORDER PASSES\*\*\*\*\***

You will need to reapply for a Queensland entry pass if you already have one. All existing green Queensland Entry Passes and Queensland Resident Vehicle Passes were void at 12:01am on Saturday, 11th April 2020.

A separate application is required for each individual, including children, and all travellers in your party must be eligible for an exemption.

For more information and to apply go to:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/border-pass>

Dr Michael Pyne, the CEO of Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, has written us a letter explaining why we need to cross the border to obtain vet care for our wildlife. Nobody has had any problems so far but just in case and, given the size of the fines, it is a good idea to get a letter with your name on it from me (Jan Pilgrim email [janpilgrim@bigpond.com](mailto:janpilgrim@bigpond.com)) if you need to cross the border. Always take your TVWC card and it definitely helps if you have car signs.

As the lockdown gains momentum, it is difficult to make decisions about rescuing and transporting. Wildcare groups in Queensland have received a notice from their Department of the Environment which includes the following:

*The Department of Environment and Science has been advised (at the time of writing) that in Queensland, small animal veterinary surgeons will remain open and operate as normal. In addition, while zoos and wildlife centres are closed to visitors they have been provided with an exemption that enables them to continue operations to care for sick and injured wildlife including receiving, caring for and rehoming injured animals.*

*We trust that this advice will enable you to feel confident in carrying out your usual activities lawfully while complying with restrictions and safety advice related to COVID-19.*

*If you have any further questions, please email [Wildlife.Management@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:Wildlife.Management@des.qld.gov.au)*

***Kirstin Kenyon***

***Executive Director, Wildlife and Threatened Species Operations Branch***

***Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships***

***Department of Environment and Science***

This means that once you are in Queensland, your role as wildlife rescuer has been accepted as an essential service.

In NSW, the situation is still unclear, despite the RSPCA writing to the Federal Health Minister “seeking urgent confirmation that vital animal care services will be able to continue under increasing pandemic control measures” citing “disastrous consequences for human welfare if people are unable to care for and are forced to abandon animals that depend on them for survival”. I do not see why wildlife should be exempt from these considerations.

I am now seeking advice from pro bono lawyers in case any of our members are fined while carrying out activities related to the welfare of wildlife. If this happens to you, contact me immediately. I am querying whether what we do is an essential service given that 1 billion animals have recently perished in the bushfires and more have died as a consequence of the drought, and the maintenance of habitat depends on wildlife. Furthermore, as carers of marsupials, birds and bats, we are constantly dealing with the dangers of infection. Nobody knows more about this than we do.

## RECAP OF SAFETY GUIDELINES

The NSW Department of Health has provided [these guidelines](#) to protect you from COVID-19. The simple steps include:

- clean your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol.
- cover your sneeze or cough with your elbow or with a tissue.
- avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- stay home if you are sick.

### Should you continue to do rescues?

You ***must not*** undertake rescues if you have been confirmed as being infected with COVID-19, or if you suspect that you might be infected. In most other cases, it will be up to you to decide whether you want to attend rescues.

### Are you high risk?

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies those most at risk of infection as including:

- Older adults
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like:
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
  - Lung disease

If you are in the high risk category, CDC recommends you should:

- Take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often.

## Everyday Precautions for Wildlife Carers

As a wildlife carer, you should already be practising good hygiene protocols, such as washing your hands thoroughly, and wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). NSW Health does not recommend the use of face masks unless you are infected, a health care professional, or someone in close contact with an infected person (e.g. a carer for an infected person).

For new members and long-term members wanting to update their knowledge of good hygiene protocols, please read chapter 5 (*General approaches to reduce biosecurity risks in wildlife*) of the Wildlife Health Australia "[National Wildlife Biosecurity Guidelines](#)" available by clicking on that link.

## REGENERATION OF HABITAT AFTER BUSHFIRES WITH FRIENDS OF THE KOALA AND LANDCARE GRANTS

Friends of the Koala includes as 'core business' protecting and enhancing koala habitat. FOK would like to invite expressions of interest from members in the Northern Rivers region of NSW to provide an opportunity to benefit from the competitive grants process to restore koala habitat in areas that have been impacted by fire.

If you are a land owner who has koalas on their property and habitat that has been impacted by the recent devastating bushfires, send a brief summary (one paragraph) with contact details and location, to the email address below.

Eligible properties will be listed and priority sites included in a competitive grant to be submitted by FOK. If successful with the proposal, preference would be given to landowners who are prepared to maintain the work that would be undertaken. It is proposed that work will be mainly weed control to assist natural regeneration and planting to enhance existing habitat and create wildlife corridor connection.



**Julie Reid**

**Environmental Project Co-ordinator**

**Friends of the Koala**

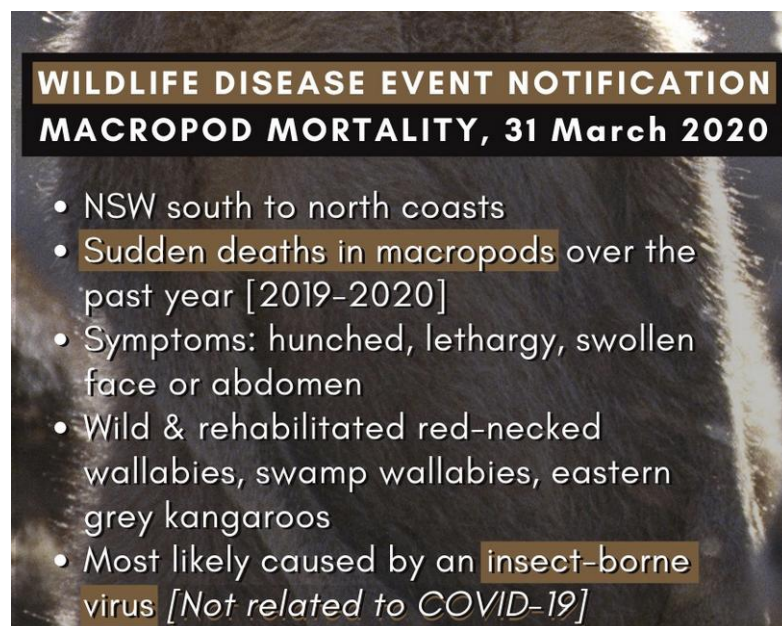
Phone 02 66888320

Email: [taulangau13@gmail.com](mailto:taulangau13@gmail.com)

TVWC is also partnering with our local Landcare group to apply for funds for nestboxes.

## **WILDLIFE**

### **MACROPODS**



**WILDLIFE DISEASE EVENT NOTIFICATION**  
**MACROPOD MORTALITY, 31 March 2020**

- NSW south to north coasts
- Sudden deaths in macropods over the past year [2019-2020]
- Symptoms: hunched, lethargy, swollen face or abdomen
- Wild & rehabilitated red-necked wallabies, swamp wallabies, eastern grey kangaroos
- Most likely caused by an insect-borne virus [Not related to COVID-19]

The Australian Registry of Wildlife Health is asking to be contacted if wildlife rescuers find "unexplained cases of acute mortality and oedema" in macropods. Please keep eye out for symptoms, and report to the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health ([www.arwh.org](http://www.arwh.org)).

## REPTILES



Crowned Marsh Snake. Photo sent in by Elaina Fraser from Uki. Such a beautiful reptile.



There are lots of turtles and reptiles around at the moment.



## BIRDS



Juvenile Australasian Gannet rescued from Black Rocks by Mary and taken to CWH.

Following on from the last article on Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome, we have received the following notification from Wild Health Australia:

Wildlife disease experts have been investigating this syndrome and a wide range of tests have been done. The current investigation has found no evidence of an infectious disease as the cause of this syndrome. The possibility of an environmental or plant toxin is being investigated.

Members of the public who see a sick lorikeet should:

- In NSW: call a licensed wildlife rehabilitation group or local veterinarian. See the [NSW DPIE](#) website for further advice.
- In Queensland: call the RSPCA on 1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 625). See the [Qld DES](#) website for further advice.

NPWS is also asking for information about brush turkeys. They have received reports of 5 dead / dying brush turkeys from the Suffolk Park area. The birds

were taken to the local vet and samples have been sent for further testing including toxicology.

Just wondering if you have received any similar reports from other areas and if so, could you please provide details.

**Gina Hart**

Project Officer – Wildlife Coordination,  
Conservation Recovery (Wildlife and Land)  
EES Bushfire Recovery

49 Victoria Street, Grafton, NSW 2460  
T 02 66 411 530  
M 0459 845 387  
W [nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](http://nationalparks.nsw.gov.au)

**Please contact Michelle if you have noticed anything unusual with the brush turkeys in your area.**

Here are some bird-related activities you can do while socially isolating:

- Take part in the [Birds in Backyards Autumn survey](#). By letting us know the birds you see at your place, you'll help us track their responses to the recent bushfires as well as their seasonal movements.
- Take some time to catch up with a few of the fascinating and informative articles in the most recent issue of [Australian Birdlife](#) magazine, or [past issues](#).
- Be inspired — browse the gallery of winners of the [BirdLife Australia Photography Awards](#).
- And to occupy the kids — here are pages of [pictures to colour in](#) (they're the attachments in the box on the right).

## POSSUMS

Our possum training was a great success and I am looking forward to the next one. Thanks to all who attended. The feedback was amazing.

We will need to step up our training within the group as Wildcare and other training will be even harder to attend after this. We have such great knowledge, talent and experience in the group that I have no doubt that we will not have any trouble doing this at all.

I am pleased to announce that I will be stepping down as possum co-ordinator soon as Sarah Jantos has agreed to step up. Thanks so much Sarah.



Gizmo, a common possum in care with Natalie.

## **PLATYPUS RELEASE**

Following on from the platypus release that we discussed at the last general meeting. Here is a video of that magical event, thanks to Yvonne.

[!\[\]\(cbe2492b119e39e02a1dab2af4a4b296\_img.jpg\) jarrah.avi](#)



## BATS

We have put together the attached information on COVID-19 for bat carers and others working with bats. It is based on the information in the WHA COVID-19 factsheet: [https://www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Portals/0/Documents/FactSheets/Public%20health/Novel\\_coronavirus-2019.pdf](https://www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Portals/0/Documents/FactSheets/Public%20health/Novel_coronavirus-2019.pdf).

### Wildlife Health Australia

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**Keren Cox-Witton BVSc**

Senior Project Officer

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**Fax:** +61 2 9960 3386

[Become a member](#)

We have successfully raised and creched around 40 baby bats at the new creche with Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers. Over the last few months, our wonderful carers, Shayne, Daen and Robyn and their supporters who have chopped about a ton of fruit, have been working around the clock. Thanks to Corrina for making it all happen. We have now purchased new fridges and chopping machines to make the job easier in the future.



Endangered baby greys.

Photo Corrina

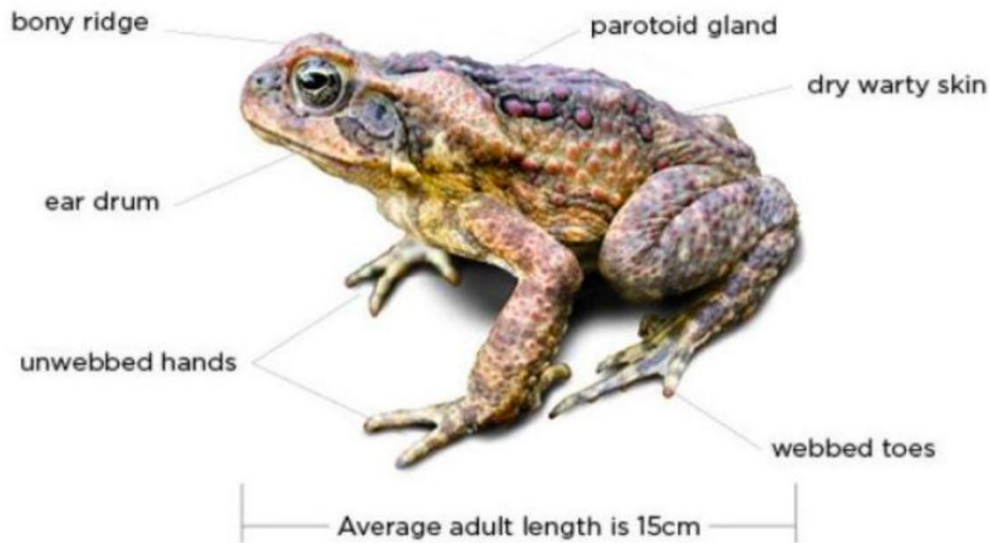


## AMPHIBIANS

While you are at home, please do not kill cane toads, as 95% of all cane toads handed in to the frog facility on the Central Coast turned out to be native. Here are some of the common species mistaken for cane toads.



Here is a cane toad photo to help you discriminate.



Instead of killing cane toads, here are some other things you might like to try. These apps are really fun and colouring-in has become very trendy.

**INATURALIST:** Take a pic and iNaturalist will help you identify plants and animals – plus the data feeds into the Atlas Of Living Australia, a collaboration between the CSIRO, museums, universities and the government that collects information about different species, helping scientists further understand and protect nature. You can also record signs of bushfire recovery.

**FROGID:** This app from the Australian Museum will identify frogs if you upload a recording of their croaking. It then uses that info to track changes in their habitat, which helps monitor the health of particular environments.

**CLIMATEWATCH:** From Earthwatch, this app tracks the effects of climate change over time, thanks to its users recording animal and plant observations.

**QUESTAGAME:** Turn animal- and plant-spotting into a competition by playing this game, with challenges, quests and correct identifications gaining you points and adding to scientific knowledge. As the tagline puts it: “Your mission: saving life on earth.” ■

For those of you with littlies at home, the Kids' Korner at <https://www.friendsofthekoala.org/kids-corner/>, which has some activities that might be of interest to parents for their children.