



October 2011 Newsletter

A New Team

(By Philip Machin NARG)

Thirteen wildlife groups were represented at this year's NWC AGM held in Sydney on 28 August. A new committee was elected and a special resolution agreed to increase the number of committee members by two to help spread the workload. The new committee is as follows:

| | |
|------------|------------------------|
| Chair | Lorraine Vass FOK |
| Vice Chair | Caroline Enfield WIRES |
| Secretary | Rochelle Ferris ASR |
| Treasurer | Shirley Lack NARG |
| Media | James Fitzgerald LAOKO |
| Member | Ilona Roberts TVWC |
| Member | Audrey Koosmen NATF |

Other NWC positions are as follows:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| Revenue | Vacant |
| Webmaster | Greg Tarlinton WILDCARE |
| Insurance | Shirley Lack NARG |
| NCC NSW | Lorraine Vass FOK |
| Newsletter | Philip Machin NARG |
| Education | Caroline Enfield WIRES |
| Public Officer | Meredith Ryan FAWNA |

As many readers will appreciate, it is a big commitment to take on a leadership role in a voluntary organisation. Many are active in their own groups and other organisations too.

Council Reps Move On

(By Lorraine Vass FOK)



After nearly a quarter of a century of devoted service and activism, koala carer and conservationist Jill Taylor, has announced her retirement.

President of the Hunter Koala Preservation Society, Jill has been the group's representative on the NWC

since its formation. She attended meetings regularly, in person or by telephone hook-up, always willing to participate in discussion as well as offering a helping hand in setting-up or cleaning-up after meetings.

Wildlife ARC, Wildlife Aid, ORRCA, Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers, Wildlife Rescue South Coast and Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers have all appointed new representatives to the NWC recently.

As well as Jill Taylor, we thank Gwen Parry-Jones, Andrew Burton, Shona Lorigan, Georgie Whaley, John Meany and Brian Chetwynd for their contributions to the Council's work, and welcome Geoff Bartlett (Hunter Koala Preservation Society), Jan Brazel (Wildlife ARC), Joanne Kelly (Wildlife Aid), Alison Cooper (ORRCA), Sam Kendal (Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers), Jane Mills (Wildlife Rescue South Coast) and Jacqueline Maisy (Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers).

I encourage incoming representatives to familiarise themselves with the business currently before the Council as well as catching up on its journey over the past six years. The website is a great place to start but if further explanation or clarification is required, please don't hesitate to contact me.

The Seventh Council's First 30 Days

(By Lorraine Vass, FOK)

The NWC is in its seventh year and moving in to a new phase of organisational development and consolidating its credentials in representing the interests of wildlife rehabilitators across the State to further the protection and conservation of native fauna and its habitats.

I congratulate past councils and in particular their office-bearers for their commitment to addressing the many challenges associated with establishing a peak body aspiring to represent such a disparate mix of groups and individual licensees. I am only too aware that relatively few have stepped forward to share the considerable workload.

Thus, a special thank you to Audrey Koosmen (NATF) who carried the weight as Chair for six years and also to Julia McConnell (IGLs) whose more recent contribution to progressing the Council's business has far exceeded the portfolio of Treasurer.

In taking up the reins, the incoming Executive pledges to work for the following goals:

- (a) Promote a responsible concern for native animals and the welfare of the environment, based on sound

ecological principles, appropriate conservation ethics and an attitude of stewardship;

- (b) Identify and support where appropriate key interests and needs of members;
- (c) Continue to develop the organisational entity, which is the NSW Wildlife Council.

The '4Ps': people, purpose, process and performance, are important to us. Less than a month into our term of office we have:

- Circulated draft minutes of the 21st General Meeting and 6th AGM
- Lodged and had registered a change to the constitution that introduces two general members into the Executive
- Prepared and forwarded a submission drafted by Phil Machin on the *Draft NSW Commercial Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan 2012-2016*
- Persuaded Andrew Burton to remain engaged in leading the shared database investigations
- Accepted with appreciation the offer from Meredith Ryan and Phil Machin to review the Constitution in light of the requirements of the *Incorporated Associations Act 2009*
- Changed signatories on the NWC bank account
- Distributed a media release and letter to the editor on *The koala - saving our national icon*, the report of the Senate Inquiry into the Status, Health and Sustainability of the Koala
- Arranged updating of the NWC website to include all minutes since May 2010 and the media release
- Prepared a position description for the Executive (general member)
- Prepared and lodged two motions for consideration at the Nature Conservation Council of NSW's Annual Conference
- Written to the CEO, Office of Environment & Heritage, expressing concern about the Royal Botanic Garden & Domain Trust's application to replace the Grey-headed Flying-fox Relocation Steering Committee with a Commonwealth Expert Panel

At its first meeting held in October 2005 the Council adopted the motto "Together we'll make a difference". The incoming Executive's ability to renew, extend and to harness collective commitment to furthering the Council's work will determine the success of our term.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Reform

(By Loraine Vass FOK)

The move from annual licensing to triennial licensing announced by the Wildlife Licensing and Management Unit (WLMU) in June is a very welcome part of the

most recent bundle of reforms in the program that has been underway over the past few years. The other part, a fuller and consistent reporting regime, while involving both negotiation and patience between WLMU and Council members, is also welcomed by the Council.

Ron Haering, WLMU's Manager, addressed the August meeting on progress, reporting on the feedback received on the draft data sheets to date and distributing copies of the revised mandatory fields and standardised terms.

OEH acknowledges that groups require a period of transition, however the intention is to achieve full, standardised electronic reporting within 2 to 3 years. Ron is hopeful of presenting comprehensive statewide data in 2012.

Ron advised that the *Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas* has been finalised and will soon be available on the OEH website. The Animal Welfare Advisory Council has reviewed the draft Flying Fox Code and he expects it to be released at the end of the year. Work on the codes for reptiles, macropods and wombats are delayed until early 2012.

Ron also distributed printed copies of the *Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Protected Fauna* (2011) for circulation in groups (nb minor



changes have been made to licences to take account of the Code).

The Council acknowledges the concerted effort that WLMU is making to reach out and support the voluntary wildlife rehabilitation sector. The Codes already mentioned have been a very welcome output of that support; as has the payment of public liability, volunteer risk and protector liability insurance coverage. Progressing development of a statewide online database by first negotiating as we are at present, standard fields and descriptors is progressing well. We are very pleased to see that OEH has become more appreciative of the potentially valuable contribution that wildlife rehabilitation groups have to make to conservation science across New South Wales.

Database for All

(By Philip Machin NARG – in discussion with Andrew Burton Wildlife Aid)

Both the NWC and OEH staff are keen to work towards a common wildlife rehabilitation database that can be used across all licensed wildlife groups and IGLs. Over the last few months, Andrew Burton (Wildlife Aid), has been gathering information on behalf of the NWC, to see what people prefer. A working group has been formed and will investigate the successful WIRES database, Longgrass and other options which may be drawn to the working group's attention.

Once the NWC has decided the best way ahead, discussions will take place with OEH to put in place a common database that can be used by everyone. A start has been made, but it may take two or more years to get something off the ground.

RTA Reducing Roadkill

(By Josie Stokes, RTA)

The RTA has released a special report on options for reducing wildlife roadkill on three arterial RTA-managed roads in Sydney's Northern Beaches.

Three roads under investigation are Mona Vale Road; McCarrs Creek Road; and Wakehurst Parkway.

The report details a range of options for reducing roadkill for consideration by the RTA in conjunction with NPWS and the local councils.

The recommendations in the report are based on field investigations, research by SMEC and input from the Northern Beaches Roadkill Prevention Committee.

There are a number of short and long-term recommendations, including the seasonal use of Variable Message Signs; the use of fauna fencing in strategic locations; and introducing speed calming devices & speed cameras. A population movement and genetic study is also recommended to determine movement patterns, barriers to movement and linkages required for their long-term survival. This would provide baseline data for future monitoring of mitigation measures.

Longer-term options consider the use of additional fauna fencing, speed calming devices and speed cameras; the use of fauna underpass structures; and the management of roadside vegetation.

Four temporary variable message signs have already been put in place to warn of the possible presence of wildlife.

Flying Fox Debate

(By Iona Roberts TVWC)

At this time there is not much good news to report. The persecution of flying foxes has ramped up recently, as a result of the Hendra outbreaks this year.

Some irresponsible journalism has generated fear and hatred of these animals with headlines which describe flying-foxes as vermin and pests. Reports appear of so-called "attacks" by flying-foxes unfortunate enough to find themselves in the vicinity of humans; calls abound for culling and dispersal as do complaints about their noise and smell.

While flying foxes are implicated in the Hendra disease cycle, the exact pathway is still not known.

Approvals have been given to disperse flying foxes from several campsites in NSW and SE Qld.

One dispersal at Barcaldine in Qld resulted in flying-foxes doing a U-turn back to an inappropriate site (in someone's garden) whence they had been driven from yet another site, because they were shot at as they flew overhead en route to an area which would have been satisfactory to both animals and humans. Regrettably firing into the streams of flying foxes continued for around 2 ½ hours. RSPCA couldn't get access because the gates to the property were locked. No one was or will be prosecuted in case the situation causes division in the community.



The Botanic Gardens Trust (Sydney) is taking steps to replace the Steering Committee convened to advise regarding the proposed dispersal of flying foxes from the Royal Botanic Gardens with the "Expert" panel, required under the *EPBC Act*. The NWC has written to the CEO, Office of Environment & Heritage, requesting refusal of the application.

The NWC has also written to the Federal Environment Minister to suggest a moratorium of all flying fox dispersals until the science of Hendra is better understood and/or an effective vaccine is developed. We still await his response.

With the onset of the commercial fruit picking season, shooting of flying-foxes in orchards is about to re-start. The NSW government is phasing out the licence system which allows orchardists to apply to shoot a maximum of 25 animals with the right to re-apply if their crops are still being damaged. However the scheme will not cease until July 2014.

In summary, we need to keep up with progress on the development of the Hev vaccine; continue to advocate for the retention of the Steering Committee's involvement with the dispersal plans of the BGT and generate as much support as we can for extending the government's subsidised netting program beyond the Sydney Basin and Central Coast.

I believe that there has been an appalling failure of communicating the information about flying foxes; public ignorance remains solidly embedded. We have a real challenge facing us to change this.

Roos Fight Back

(By Philip Machin NARG)

The NWC took the opportunity to comment on the draft NSW Commercial Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan 2012-16. There are a lot of assumptions in this plan and a lack of underlying scientific rigour to support the ongoing killing off of our kangaroos.

Topics raised in the NWC submission include the need to clarify the extent that national parks provide a refuge as claimed; better understanding of the conservation issues and ensuring the kangaroo species is not being adversely affected (including the impact on family groups and mob structures); identification in the plan of areas and regions where kangaroos have been largely eradicated; permitting neighbouring property owners to have a say; accounting for the environmental impact on kangaroo numbers due to floods, bushfires etc; and establishing a more convincing compliance system.

Let us hope the NSW Government take account of the comments provided. To sanction the present level of kangaroo harvesting in some localities is simply unacceptable.

Blown Away

(By Meredith Ryan FAWNA)



This Juvenile Red-tailed Tropicbird got blown all the way inland to Gloucester, NSW. Storm-battered (and confused) this youngster was cared for by FAWNA on the mid north coast and will be sent out to Lord Howe Island when it is ready for release.

Snippets

(By Philip Machin NARG)

- To improve governance, the NWC has introduced Declarations of Interest as a standing agenda item.
- As an efficiency measure, the Treasurer now has a delegation of \$4,000 to meet costs associated with holding meetings required by the Council.
- The NWC is investigating options for secretariat assistance .
- The NWC has reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of overall management by 'the whole'.
- The NWC is considering setting up a modest grant program to support wildlife projects.

- Thanks to Greg Tarlinton (Wildcare), the NWC website has been updated. Check it out: www.nwc.org.au
- Get onboard and send in a contribution for the next NWC newsletter. Or just send in an idea that you want covered – to Philip Machin machin4@bigpond.com.

Next NWC Meeting

The next NWC meeting is on Tuesday 29 November, 2011 at NPWS Bridge Street,, Hurstville.

NWC's response to The Koala – saving our national icon, report of the Senate Committee, 22 September 2011

Letter to the editor

Wildlife Carers Care

The Senate Committee's surprise at the complexity surrounding the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koalas and at the level of community commitment and passion that is invested in koalas may serve as a wake-up call for Minister Burke.

Over 70% of submissions received were from community-based koala conservation groups and from interested individuals; many of them voluntary licensed carers working at the pointy-end of koala conservation.

The public galleries at each of the Committee's three public hearings were full and the Committee extended its reporting timeframe on four occasions. The deep-felt concerns of the Australian community about the Koala's survival have at last had a fair hearing and have been found valid.

Minister Burke, NSW's 4,500 licensed wildlife carers call on you to list the Koala as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act in areas where numbers have significantly declined.

*Lorraine Vass
Chair
NSW Wildlife Council Inc*

(This newsletter is compiled by Philip Machin (machin4@bigpond.com)). Please distribute this newsletter widely.)