

NSW Wildlife Council Inc.

Achieving Optimal Outcomes for Australian wildlife

September 2009 Newsletter



From the Chair.....

The development and progress of the NSW Wildlife Council (NWC) is pleasing. We now have 25 wildlife groups, including WIRES and 37 individual general licence holders signed up as members. This is the vast majority of the licensed wildlife organizations in NSW and it means the NWC can truly claim to be the peak representative body for licensed wildlife rehabilitators.

Whilst it has been some time since the NWC published a newsletter, the NWC has been busy contributing at the strategic level to many contentious issues and working with the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) in reviewing policy and developing minimum standards for the rehabilitation of wildlife. This newsletter will bring you up to date on some of the issues, which are being dealt with.

This year two meetings have had less than the number of members needed for a quorum. It would be good if member groups could ensure they send a representative to each meeting. However it is acknowledged that the NWC relies on volunteers and there are other pressures. For many the tyranny of distance does not help. Don't forget, airfares / travel and accommodation can be reimbursed to attend meetings. At the next NWC meeting in November, which coincides with the AGM, we will discuss ways to reduce the load, but at the same time become more effective.

SONA – What's That?

Saving Our Native Animals (SONA) is the latest wildlife group to be established and granted a licence to operate by DECC. SONA operates in the South West Slopes and foothills of the Snowy Mountains. At the NWC August meeting, it was agreed to accept SONA's application to become a member. Welcome SONA!

Emergency Response Planning

The NWC has known for some time it needs to work more closely with the Department of Primary Industry to respond to a major NSW wildlife incident / disaster. This year's dreadful bush fires in Victoria, have kick started the development of a NWC Major Incident Response Plan. John Gorham (For Australian Wildlife Needing Aid) has led the way in drafting a plan of action. Much more work is needed and the NWC will discuss the best approach with the Department of Primary Industry soon. Having a plan is one thing, ensuring we have trained personnel equipped with the right gear is also vital.

Stop Killing Wombats

It was distressing to read in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and other newspapers in December 2008 that DECC had issued 200 licenses to rural landowners to kill off wombats on their properties. It was even more worrying when DECC staff were quoted as saying "wombat numbers go up at an extremely high rate". This is simply not the case.

The NWC wrote to DECC and the Minister about this matter. There is clearly something wrong when a large number of culling licences are issued without any evidence-based research underpinning that decision.

Sally Barnes the Head Parks & Wildlife Group and Deputy Director-General for DECC addressed the NWC at their August meeting. She noted that the 'complaints' over wombat culling had hit home and there was an urgent need to review DECC policies and principles with regard to managing our wildlife – starting with wombats. Sally readily listened to the views of the NWC, which included the unknown impact of mangle and road-kill on the wombat population; land development impinging on wombat habitat; and the impact of legal and illegal shooting. Non-lethal methods for controlling wombats were discussed, as well as the need to 'educate' property owners to coexist with wildlife. The NWC also suggested quality assurance of the whole process leaves much to be desired.

The NWC looks forward to seeing changes to the DECC wildlife management policies. The NWC feels it is time the NSW Government stopped issuing licenses to kill wombats, and indeed other animals, without fundamental scientific research in place to support that course of action. In this case, the impact of continuing to sanction the killing of wombats is simply not known.

Sally was very interested in the knowledge and experience of the NWC and asked to attend another meeting to consult with NWC over other issues.

Flying Foxes

Flying-foxes are faring no better than wombats in NSW. Apart from ongoing habitat destruction, plans are afoot to evict them from their roosting sites in various parts of NSW; the most widely publicised being the Botanic Gardens Trust's (BGT) intention to disperse the maternity camp in the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG). Efforts by the NWC and affiliated groups and concerned individuals have so far succeeded in causing the BGT to delay their plans until next year. NWC has

sent several submissions about this to both DECC and DEWHA. It will depend in the end on the Federal Minister's decision.

Unfortunately, despite the findings of the Licensing Review Panel commissioned to investigate orchard shootings of flying-foxes that such shooting is indefensible legally or ethically, licences will be issued again this year by DECC to orchardists. This decision has aroused strong criticism from many quarters, including the NWC.

Minimum Standards Review

Following on from the great work carried out in 2007 by DECC and the NWC to develop a 'framework' for minimum standards, at the start of the 2009, DECC initiated a Steering Committee to tease out the actual minimum standards needed for the rescue, rehabilitation and release of wildlife. The NWC has three members on this Steering Committee: Shirley Lack (Native Animal Rescue Group), Audrey Koosman (Native Animal Trust Fund) and Scott Vamvakaris (Looking After Our Kosciusko Orphans). A significant amount of work has been done and a draft document is expected to be ready for review towards the end of the year.

Rehabbers should not be unduly concerned about the adoption of minimum standards. The standards put in place will be reasonable and they will provide good guidance to rehabilitation.

NWC Funding

Over the last few years, the NWC has been grateful for the financial support of both DECC and the RTA. Modest funding allows for the payment of insurance for all wildlife groups that wish to take up the offer. Funds are also used for basic NWC administration, such as reimbursing members for travel to NWC meetings.

Elena Guarracino (Looking After our Kosciuszko Orphans) has the difficult task in identifying ongoing funding sources and sending letters to government and non government organisations. A start has been made, but as everyone knows the economy is on the rocks and funding possibilities have dried up all around.

Elena would like to be able to quantify the work that our member groups do - how many animals are rescued each year, the number of rescues and kilometres travelled, the number of phone calls received and the cost of member groups telephones etc. this would show the how much is being done for the welfare of our wildlife – on a voluntary basis. Elena would like to be able to ask for more money towards those costs, but needs the information to be able to write stronger letters! This is the purpose of the Impact Statement that Philip Machin (Native Animal Rescue Group) has been trying to coordinate.

Kangaroos

The commercial and non commercial culling of kangaroos in NSW remains a contentious issue. The NWC worries that the killing off of kangaroos is out of control. One initiative is challenging DECC to reconsider firearm safety and associated policies for the culling of kangaroos in rural-residential areas. Allowing for weapon safety arcs, it is often not safe to shoot animals in rural residential areas and yet licences continue to be issued. Because of local complaints, NPWS Queanbeyan has tightened the rules for the issue of culling licenses for properties of less than 25 hectares in rural-residential areas. Hopefully this will just be the start of a wider review as to the damage being done to macropods over the longer term.

DECC Rehabilitation Policy Review

DECC currently has a wide-ranging rehabilitation policy review underway. The minimum standards work is included in this work. But there has also been NWC input into general licensing issues – including commenting on people's freedom to choose which group they can belong to and the criteria for granting operating licenses. The NWC has yet to see the outcome of this review and it will continue to liaise with DECC on these matters.

Next Meeting & AGM

The annual weekend get-together to hold the next routine meeting and the AGM will be at The Centre, Randwick, on 28/29 November 2009. It is hoped that all member groups will be represented. It would be good if members could consider taking on one of the committee positions to give others a break.

NWC Committee & Key Positions

Position	Who
Chair	Audrey Koosman
Vice Chair	Stan Wood
Secretary	Shirley Lack
Treasurer	Julia McConnell
Media	Marny Bonner
Public Officer	Lorraine Vass
Insurance Officer	Shirley Lack
Education Officer	John Donnelly
E-mail Admin	Coralie Tarlinton
Webmaster	Greg Tarlinton
Fundraising Coord	Elena Guarracino

This newsletter is primarily aimed at NWC members (wildlife groups) and can be further distributed. Comments can be forwarded to the secretary@nwc.org.au