

May 2010 Newsletter

Introduction

The last newsletter was published in February – see the NWC website www.nwc.org.au. Since then there have been some important meetings with DECCW and RTA staff to discuss ongoing funding arrangements; an Annual & Special General Meeting and the first General Meeting since August last year. In this newsletter you will read more about the discussions that have taken place and changes that have been made.

The Good News

Elena Guarracino (SONA rep), the NWC Revenue Officer, has been busy over the last few months. Her efforts, supported by Audrey Koosmen (NATF & NWC Chair), culminated in meetings with DECCW and the RTA to arrange ongoing funding.

At the DECCW meeting, the Deputy Director General and Head of NPWS, Sally Barnes, confirmed her support for wildlife rehabbers of NSW and the NWC. She not only agreed to fund the NWC members' Public Liability Insurance for the next three years, but also to extend the grant to cover Director Protection too. This is most generous - amounting to \$25,000 per year over the next three years. This is a huge saving to wildlife groups and the IGLs.



Picture: NWC Treasurer, Julia McConnell (IGLs' rep), Revenue Officer & Media Officer Elena Guarracino (SONA rep), Chair, Audrey Koosmen (NATF rep), and Sally Barnes, Deputy Director General DECCW / Head NPWS

At the meeting with the RTA, the Senior Environmental Specialist Biodiversity – Kevin Roberts, presented the Executive with the 3rd year administrative funding round of \$20,000 to assist

the NWC over the next 12 months. Audrey Koosmen raised the issue of possible future funding during the 2011 -2013 period and there was discussion of an increased annual amount of \$45,000, which is needed to provide administrative support to the Council. Several other important matters were discussed, including the need to develop a strong partnership between the NWC and the RTA; maintenance of wildlife mitigation strategies, including groups advising the RTA of any problems with floppy fencing in their areas and providing the RTA with photos if possible; a driver education program 'campaign' with a focus on driver awareness in relation to wildlife; the consideration of a common helpline telephone number across the State; future funding possibilities and the need to develop an RTA/NWC Memorandum of Understanding.

The RTA would like to hear from wildlife groups and individuals if they notice damage to floppy fences (including any associated vegetation), in their area, which might be affecting wildlife. The RTA is keen to get photographs and other evidence of the damage.



Picture: back - Revenue Officer & Media Officer Elena Guarracino (SONA rep), RTA - Senior Environmental Specialist Biodiversity Kevin Roberts, Chair, Audrey Koosmen (NATF rep), Secretary & Insurance Officer Shirley Lack (NARG rep), Vice-Chair Stan Woods (WIRES rep), RTA - Environment Officer Biodiversity Josie Stokes, Treasurer Julia McConnell (IGL rep)

The NWC owes Elena a big 'thank you' for getting the NWC submissions together.

Stats Can Work

The NWC has been trying to collect statistics over the last 16 months to find out the extent of our collective wildlife volunteer effort in NSW. This information supports bids for grants and sponsorship. Whilst not everyone has helped with this project, sufficient information has been obtained to give a good idea as to what we do. For instance (annual figures):

- Over 75,000 animals are rescued, rehabilitated and released each year.
- There are 6,000 snake calls.
- 7,000 animals injured by motor vehicles are humanely euthanased.
- Much of NSW is covered by a largely volunteer-manned 24 hr emergency telephone service. The number of calls made is not known.
- Many endangered animals are saved, including Flying Foxes (1,300) and Koalas (1,000)

Allowing for a very conservative estimate, NSW wildlife volunteers save Government between \$40-50M per year. However the impact is likely to be much more impressive, particularly in terms of saving Ranger, Police and other emergency service time, resources and effort. The gathering of statistics has been put on hold for the time being.

NWC Annual & Special General Meetings

We have a new committee. 24 people, including some alternate reps, attended the AGM and Jill Taylor (HKPS) joined in by telephone. Here are the new Office Bearers:

Chair	Audrey Koosmen NATF
Vice Chair	Stan Wood WIRES
Secretary	Shirley Lack NARG
Treasurer	Julia McConnell IGL
Media	Elena Guarracino SONA

There are also some non-executive positions:

Revenue	Elena Guarracino SONA
Minute Sec	Lorraine Vass FOK
Webmaster	Greg Tarlinton WILDCARE
Insurance	Shirley Lack NARG
Nature Conservation	Lorraine Vass FOK
Newsletter	Philip Machin NARG
Education	Deferred

Lorraine volunteered to continue on as the Public Officer. Congratulations to everyone who put their hand up and thanks to those office bearers who have stepped down. As many will appreciate it's a big effort to take on a committee role and to do it successfully.

The Council agreed to change the NWC Constitution to conduct business if only seven members (including three office bearers) attend a meeting. This will allow the NWC to conduct business if only a few members come to meetings. A smaller quorum does not mean anyone has lost voting rights. Voting can also be done by teleconferencing.

The NWC decided to shelve an idea to introduce membership fees to encourage greater engagement.

DECCW Policy Reviews

The opportunity to comment on DECCW's draft Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Protected Fauna closed on 31 March 2010. Some NWC members were involved with the working group that prepared the minimum standards. The need to establish minimum standards for rehabilitation is supported by the NWC.

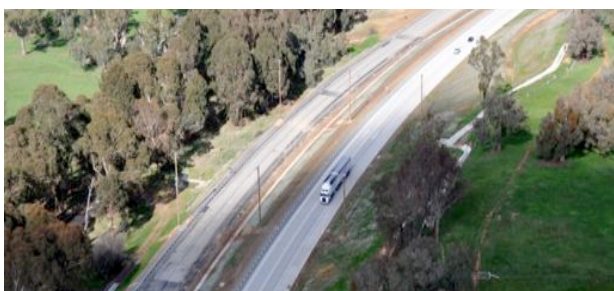
DECCW has also released their draft Rehabilitation of Protected Fauna Policy (mid March) and asked for feedback by 4 May 2010. At the NWC meeting on 20 May 2010, DECCW briefed the Council on the submissions that had been sent in. Only eight wildlife groups and a small number of individual submissions had been made. The draft policy contains many new clauses, which could significantly affect some volunteer wildlife rehabbers and wildlife groups. There is concern from several NWC members about the likely impact and they could not see that the changes would help to enhance and expand wildlife rehabilitation in NSW. Time will tell.

Hume Highway Duplication: Fauna Crossing Structures & Monitoring

(Written by the RTA)

Roads are a hazard for Australian wildlife. This can be reduced however, by carefully designing new roads. The RTA works closely with environmental specialists to provide safe passage for wildlife under or over roads by installing measures such as fauna underpasses, rope bridges, glider poles and land bridges. If you have driven along the upgrade

Hume Highway or Pacific Highway recently, you may have noticed some of these measures.



Glider poles along the Hume Highway

The current upgrade of the Hume Highway to a four lane divided carriageway will improve this vital transport link between Sydney and Melbourne for communities, industry and freight. While the alignment generally avoids most areas of recognised conservation significance; it traverses habitat for threatened species of Woodland Birds such as Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*), Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) and Speckled Warbler (*Pyrrholaemus sagittatus*), and Squirrel Gliders (*Petaurus norfolcensis*).

The RTA has been working closely with fauna specialists to design fauna crossing features into the Hume Highway Duplication to reduce the potential impacts on these species. For example, there are 19 culverts that have been designed as fauna and fish underpasses. Nineteen glider pole crossings and 3 rope crossings have also been installed in locations that will maintain connectivity between Squirrel Glider habitats and a total of 971 nest boxes have been erected in to compensate for losses in hollow bearing trees.



Squirrel Glider photographed using a rope bridge crossing the Hume Highway

The Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology (ARCUE) has been monitoring the size and distribution of the Squirrel Glider population at sites along the Hume Highway as well as at control

sites. Preliminary results indicate that Squirrel Gliders are using the poles to cross the road and that populations have not been significantly impacted. Monitoring will continue to help the RTA improve the biodiversity measures it uses when building new roads.

New NWC Member

Welcome to the Corrective Services (NSW) Wildlife Care Centre - the latest new member of the NWC. The Centre is situated south of Windsor.

Native reptiles to be sold as pets?

There is a proposal before Minister Frank Sartor to allow NSW pet shops to sell native reptiles. The NWC can only see danger in making our native reptiles freely available over the retail counter. Whilst there are many conscientious animal carers, a significant number are not. The thought of native reptile pets escaping or being dumped in the wild, as no longer required, beggars belief. Wildlife rehabbers often come across 'damaged' native animals that have been kept by well-meaning, but inexperienced people. The NWC has written to the Minister on this matter to encourage him to think again.

National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference

The National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference is being held in Adelaide between 22-24 June 2010. It has a southern hairy nosed wombat as the official conference mascot!

Please distribute this newsletter widely. Forward comments and contributions for the next newsletter to Philip Machin - machin4@bigpond.com.