

Wildlife Meetings 18th September 2011

- Rescue coordinators meeting 10.30
- Fund Raising Meeting Meeting 11.15
- Lunch 12 noon BYO
- 1.00 pm AGM
- Followed by:
- General Meeting , Time 1.30pm'

Come along and support your organisation

Venue: Armidale Tree Group Woodland centre , East Mann St. Armidale.

Talk on Indian Mynahs' about 2pm

The Indian Mynah was originally introduced to Australia in order to control locust plagues. It is considered the worst species of pest birds and breeds at very high rates in city areas of the eastern states. It has been listed in the

World Conservation Union's worst one hundred invasive species of bird). The main concerns are due to miles and disease. This pest has been seen to force native birds and also their eggs from out of their nests.



Telstra country Wide and New England Mutual are proud to be sponsors of NT Wildlife Carers...Local people working together.

Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers

PO Box 550 Armidale 2350

www.ntwc.org.au



Rescue
Rehabilitate *new england mutual*

Release 

Newsletter of The Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers Issue No 90 September 2011
Phone - 1800-008290 www.ntwc.org.au

Chilli's Story ~ A Happy Ending

You may remember

Chilli in the

November

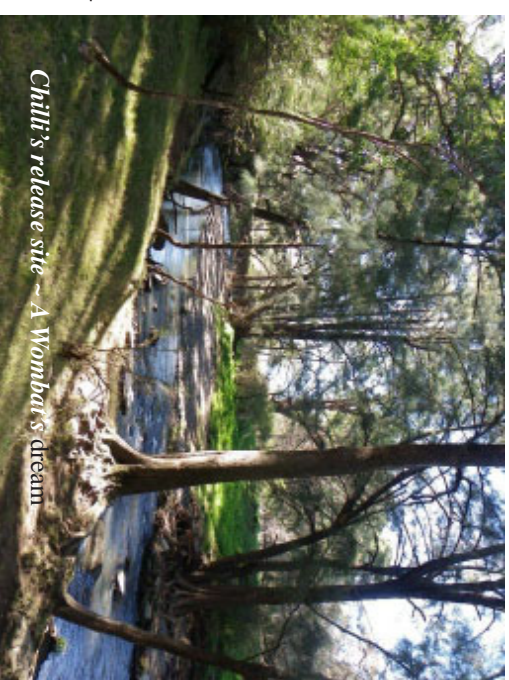
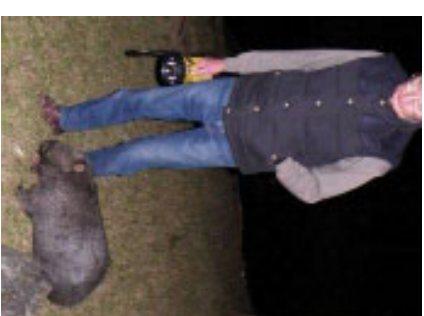
issue in 2009

When Chilli was rescued and came into care, at about the 1kg mark, she had been beside her dead mum on the side of the road for a couple of days. She was lucky to be alive. The poor little girl had received bad frost bite to her ears, back of the feet, above the eyes and on her cloaca. (She had been pretty chilly!). The little Bare-Nosed Wombat also had parasite

wounds literally from head to toe and a couple dings to her head and back also. Chilli was a very distressed little wombat, initially...as you could well imagine with so many injuries. She had deep stress hollows on her temples, indicating severe distress. We put her on a heat pad as she was so frail and we knew that she wouldn't be able to regulate her own temperature. Well Chilli has progressed from then to now she has been released

wombat.

Chilli, one cool



Chilli's release site ~ A Wombat's dream

Contacts for Northern Tableland Wildlife Carers (NTWC)

- oChairman - Colin Wood 0438013500
 - oVice Chairman - Tony Karasulas 6772 7469
 - oSecretary - Debbie Maclean67750202
 - oMinutes Secretary: Wendy Beresford 67753747
 - oTreasurer - Julia Rose - 1800-008290
 - oTraining Officer - Julie-Anne Willis 6733 5384
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 - oSnake Co-ord - Richard Biffin - 6772-3657
 - Write to NTWC PO Box 550Armidale 2350
- Northern Tableland Wildlife Carers is a network of trained volunteers licensed by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. We rescue, rehabilitate and release injured, sick, orphaned & unwanted native fauna. Any assistance please call the above numbers in your area.
- Membership \$20 single and \$25 family year for authorised and support members. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.
- This Newsletter is designed by Colin Wood and printed by New England Credit Union.
- Telstra Country Wide are also proud to be a sponsor of NTWC



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Training day at Inverell

Our training day at Inverell went very well with 4 new members and 2 refreshers. 2 new members Cathy and Jill already have their new babies and are managing well with another 2 ready to start very soon.

Delicious morning tea, lunch and after noon tea where provided by Ann Cox of Wires.

We had an informative and fun day thanks to our trainers Julie and Kelly



Continued from page 13

area of native forest becomes established? Our hope is that we can prepare notes and pictures that provide a guide to the birds that walkers can look out for as the young trees develop and the area changes.

The Pine Forest Committee has recently been successful in a funding application through the Dahl Trust to develop resources to help the community better appreciate this new area of eucalypt forest. We will be asking some of the botanists in the community to describe the trees

and related vegetation. A parallel description of the birds would provide a well rounded guide for the community in general and also for school groups.

Through the Dahl Trust grant we would be able to assist with printing information sheets and perhaps constructing some information boards along the walking tracks. We are being asked if any of our group would be interested in working with us on this project.

James Rowe is suggesting the third weekend of the month. Either Saturday or Sunday. Early morning is the best time to do surveys, but any time of the day is OK. You may wish to do a survey at any time, if any member is interested in helping with this survey contact James Rowe's email jrowe@une.edu.au or Shirley Cook (Armidale Birdwatching group) shirleycook1@bigpond.com > 21 August 2011

birds sited on cleared site:

- Eastern Rosella
- Superb Fairy-wren
- Yellow-rumped Thornbill
- Red Wattlebird
- Hooded Robin (2 male 1 female)
- Grey Shrike Thrush
- Grey Butcherbird
- Australian Magpie
- Pied Currawong
- Corvid sp.
- Welcome Swallow

Snake Brumation

brumation time but will eat less or refuse food as the temperature drops. However, they do need to drink water. The brumation period is anywhere from one to eight

months depending on the air temperature and the size, age, and health of the reptile. During the first year of life, many small reptiles do not fully brumate, but rather slow down and eat less often. Brumation should not be confused with hibernation; when mammals hibernate, they are actually asleep; when reptiles brumate, they are less active, and their metabolism slows down so they just do not need to eat as often. Reptiles can often go through the whole winter without eating. Brumation is triggered by cold weather, lack of heat, and the decrease in the amount of hours of daylight in the winter.

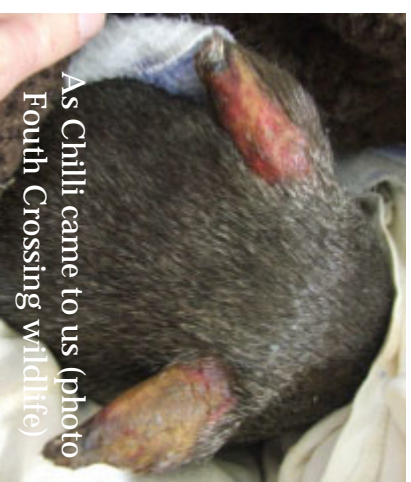


A Brumation site for Black snakes

Brumation is an example of dormancy in reptiles that is similar to hibernation. It differs from hibernation in the metabolic processes involved. Reptiles generally begin brumation in late autumn (more specific times depend on the species). They will often wake up to drink water and return to "Sleep". They can go months without food. Reptiles may want to eat more than usual before the



Our "friendly" Scrub python



As Chillli came to us (photo Fouth Crossing wildlife)

holiday for us was the best test when she suddenly objected to visitors. Chillli had shown some signs of that hormone rush around full moon time and was beginning to increase her home range so we knew release was close. As soon as we returned home plans were put in place to release her back near Niangla but then near disaster. A call came asking if we had lost a wombat with short ears, we imagined the worst but



Chillli on the mend (photo Fouth Crossing wildlife)

amazingly apart from a possible bruise she was fine. We were so lucky and so was Chillli, she was found unharmed beside Gara Road turn off about 2km from home. After 2 nights in close confinement we loaded her up in her big box, collected a bag of her favorite artichokes, hooked up the campervan and headed south to wombat land.

Once there we did a track to see where the active burrows were and to select a vacant site for Chillli. What a surprise to find several wombat homes along the river and we hoped it was Suzie who was the resident. We selected a campsite

nearby which also had the best view of a very pretty valley and the wombat box was lowered onto a site close to shrubs and off the stock track. After a while we all set off for the evening walk and last goodbyes as it turned out, leaving her digging happily and sniffing the air. Once during the night she came by and camped for a bit under our camper bed then she was gone. In the morning we walked the area again (we didn't call) to make sure she wasn't a distressed bundle somewhere. Not a sound or sighting so we packed up the campervan, lingered a little longer by the river under Casurnas then drove away feeling sad but positive. Release can be so emotional!

Once again we thank our friends who welcomed her to their lovely property and we wish Chillli, the nicest short eared wombat, love, luck and happiness!

Julia and Phillip Rose

New England Mutual's generosity

As the New England Mutual Credit Union is so generous in help us in many things including printing all our brochures and our quarterly



newsletter we have been presenting them a print of a native animal by several artists including one of our own members Natasha Crook (see <http://www.natashacrookart.org/>)

Do you utilise Our Website as much as you could? www.ntwc.org.au

Main advantages of using the website

- You can print out your
 - Membership form
 - Foster Care report
 - Milk request form
 - Animal transfer form
 - Animal report form
 - You can have access to most carer organisation throughout Australia
 - Have access to lots of useful links for education and help for native animals
 - Read the latest and older issues of you newsletter
 - See lots of photos of animals in care and those that have been released
 - Lots of stuff to help you care for our native animals
 - Check out the snakes in our area and see which are non; partly or very venomous
 - Leave a message for our committee
- The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of NTWC, but are put forward to promote comment and debate.

Is There a Koala In Danger Near You?

www.savehthekoala.com/fundraiseforkoalas.html

What can you do?

Meaningful legislation is the only way to protect koalas.

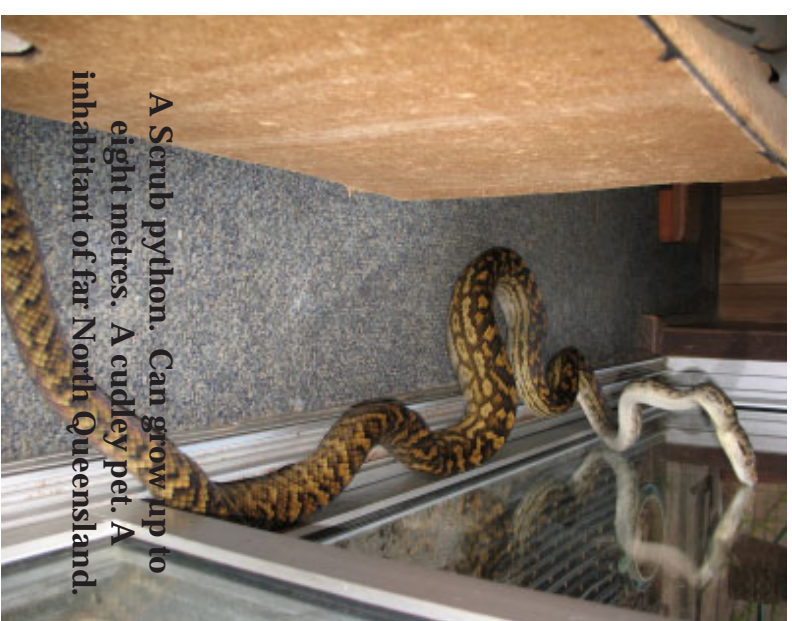
The AKF are calling on the Federal Government to list the koala as vulnerable under the EPBC Act



and legislate true protection of koala habitat. By the time you read this page the bulldozers may already be working, but it is not too late to take action. Below we have listed some of the things that might make a difference.

Media attention can help. Contact your local newspaper. Often they will have an environmental reporter who may be interested in the plight of your koalas. Write letters to the editor of your local and national newspapers.

Local and State Governments have been unable to make the difference in saving koalas and their trees. It is the considered view of the Australian Koala Foundation that best thing you can do for the koalas in your area is to **write to Australia's Environment Minister**, The Hon Tony Burke MP. Don't allow your story to be lost in the bulldozer of State and Local Government process.



Scrubie habitat) prior to arrival in Guyra. Euthenasia was looking like a real possibility at this stage. Enter the good people from Nat Parks and a decision to include this snake in a "ballot" of suitably licenced reptile keepers. As no one locally could be sourced, I'm pleased to say the snake is now, officially, in my keeping and powering along. Less pleased with the decision, however, is my old mum, with whom I currently live

regular haunt under a tropical sun. Thankfully, within a short time, I was able to get it into appropriately heated accommodation and have it feeding thereafter, thus avoiding any common, often fatal complications such as R.I.S. Following a fecal float and subsequent "worming out", the animal was in the

the Guyra Tomato Farm python, found by workers while unpacking a Cairns based truck

best of health and ready to return from whence it came, or so I thought. According to The Powers That Be, release for this particular Scrubie was not an option, as an initial embarkation point was impossible to pinpoint, partly due to a stop over in Townsville en route (also in know



and who now shares her house with a pair of Lace monitors (Tree Goannas), assorted venomous snakes and Australia's largest python. I'm yet to break the news that Scrubbies have been known to grow to 8 metres and weigh over 30 kilos (and consume small, wandering children, if the mood takes them), but I'll let the initial shock wear off before that bombshell!

A Scrub in the Tub?!

By *Richard Biffin*

It's been a long wait for a snake-o-holic, but we're finally on the cusp of another "snake season" following on from a somewhat lacklustre year this past season, certainly in terms of numbers. Thankfully, for some, not in terms of variety, however!

Although Brown and Black snake numbers have been down on past seasons, perhaps due to a relatively wet Spring/Summer, the smaller, cooler climate species such as Marsh snakes appear to have enjoyed a "bumper year". The majority of "brown" snake callouts have turned out to be Marsh snakes and an occasional Dwyer's snake, both of which

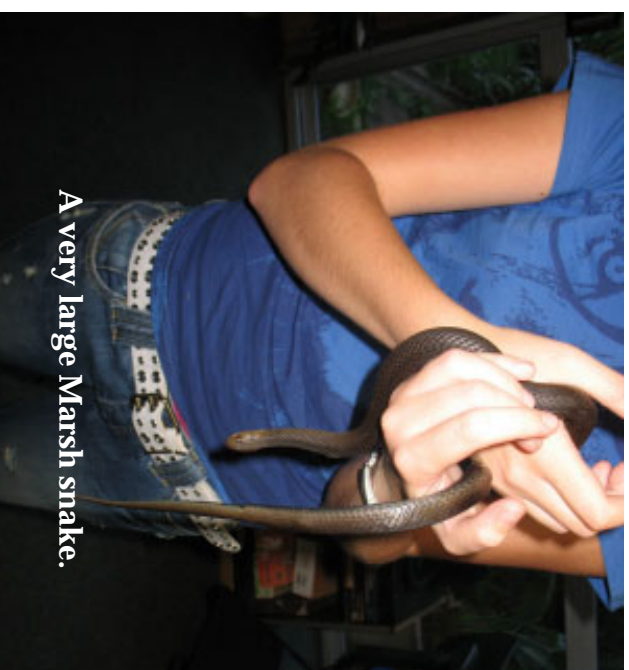
are, thankfully, regarded as being only "mildly venomous" (no worse than a Wasp/ Bee sting) and very reluctant to bite in any event. This past season, I have relocated a record sized Marsh snake, certainly the largest individual I have ever seen, at close to the 1000mm mark, when most specimens top out at 600mm. He was living happily in some-



A brown and 'food'

one's compost and probably had done for years, given his size, most likely feeding on the Garden skinks and frogs attracted to the rotting compost by a host of accompanying insects.

Without doubt, my most unexpected callout this past season has been from the Guyra Tomato Farm for a "python", found by workers while unpacking a Cairns based truck late one chilly, windy Guyra afternoon. On arrival, I was presently surprised to find it was indeed a python and not the carpet python I had expected, but Australia's largest Python species, the Scrub Python, an inhabitant of Far North Queensland's Wet Tropical/ Monsoon Rainforest. On arrival, the animal appeared in very poor condition, not surprising given it's seven day road trip and the ordeal of alighting at it's destination of sub-zero temperatures from it's



A very large Marsh snake.

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Sample letter

The Hon Tony Burke MP Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, PO Box 6022 House of Representatives Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

Date: Dear Mr Burke I am writing on the recommendation of the Australian Koala Foundation to tell you about the issues facing our local koala population and request your help. I am appealing to you directly as State and Local Government legislation seems unable to protect koalas and their habitat. I insert information here regarding your particular problem. It is not only these koalas that are in trouble: the koala is threatened throughout the east coast of Australia. As Federal Environment Minister, I ask you to immediately list the koala under the EPBC Act and to ensure that legislation is enacted to protect this vulnerable species and its habitat.

Yours sincerely <Your name>

What You Can do to Prevent Road Kill

Slow down when driving at dawn and dusk as many animals are most active at this time. If you hit



an animal or find one injured, keep it warm, dark and quiet. Call Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers on 1800008290 or your nearest Wildlife rescue group or take it to your nearest vet (they usually treat native wildlife free of charge). Remove any carcasses well away from the roadside. Native scavengers such as the Wedge-tailed Eagle won't leave their food until the last minute and with a wingspan of up to 2.8 metres it can take them a few minutes to escape. In this instance, one road kill victim can cause a second death. Check the pouches of animals as there may be young inside. If there is a baby inside, leave them in the pouch and place the mother's body in a cardboard box. If the young are out of the pouch, or if the mother's body cannot be transported, wrap the animal snugly in a soft, warm cloth. Placing the animal under your shirt is the best way to do this. PLEASE DO NOT try to feed native, injured animals. Animals in shock are not interested in food and incorrect feeding can be detrimental to their health. For example, cows milk can be harmful to marsupials.



Koala at UNE

AGM and general meeting 18th September. Yes, we had an AGM earlier in the year but because of the new constitution and new rules we have to have another. We hope to have a speaker about the incursion of Indian Mynah's in the New England Tablelands. Come along and support your group.

Take care out there

It's spring soon and many of the native animals we care for will be having their babies. Most of us are aware that even dead animals may have young in their pouches or with them. If we see animals on the road we are often keen to assist.



2. Stop your car well away from the traffic if you can and use the hazard warning lights. Look over your shoulder before opening your door, or get out through the passenger door. On busy roads traffic will be passing at high speeds! Other drivers will not know what you are doing.

3. Buy A Reflective Jacket & Carry it in the Car.

The standard now is for a lime-green colour, which stands out in daylight, with silver reflective patches that are more effective at night. Using one of these jackets also makes other drivers think that you are an official.

7. Carry a torch.

Sometimes in our rush to help we forget to think of ourselves and other road users. At least one person is known to have been killed whilst stopping their car to attend to an injured animal. The driver had stopped after passing the animal only to be fatally injured by a passing truck, whilst his child, strapped in her seat witnessed the disaster. We do not want this to happen to any Sydney Wildlife people. Please consider the situation carefully before acting. Think about the following points.

1. **Be sure that where you stop is safe and legal** (difficult on Motorways and Freeways). Make sure that you give following drivers time to react before stopping, even though this may mean a long walk back to the injured animal. Consider continuing on and then turning, in safety, to return to the animal. This will save walking which is also a high risk on a busy road. If you have to walk, keep well over to the side of the road and walk towards the traffic. Then you can see and be seen by other drivers.

8. Get a reflective triangle -

required for truck drivers and law in many European countries. Call the police (but not 000) if an animal is injured and you can't get to in safety for yourself or others. Plan what you are going to do with the animal before you drive away, rather than making a phone call and thinking about where you are going once you start driving. A selfish thought - If you are injured then we still have to get someone out for the injured animal and we'll have one less rescuer.

Len Woodman - Sydney Wildlife Member and Road Safety Officer, City of Sydney



Fred & Ginger



Allina ~ rest time



Just a few of our native friends in for repair



How to hold a prickly situation

Dr Austin with lorikeet in for repair top left ready for release

some research into what we know about this deadly HeV virus, how much of a real risk it is to me and my horses and now also my dogs, how I can minimise that risk and what is the likely outcome if one or more of my horses should become infected. I was stunned to learn that not a lot is known about HeV and more scientific research is desperately needed.

to reduce the risk of Hendra virus infection in horses and people.

• Attempts to cull flying foxes could make the problem worse by further stressing them and causing increased excretion of Hendra virus. For more information about flying foxes, contact the Department of Environment and Resource Management on 1 300 1 30 372 or visit www.derm.qld.gov.au

Transmission of HeV by other animals

It is possible that other animals such as possums for example could also be Hendra virus hosts and this is currently being researched by scientists though initial tests have shown to be negative further research is required. The Hendra virus is one of five new zoonotic viruses discovered in Pteropid fruit bats since 1994, the others being the Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV), the Nipah virus, the Menangle virus and the Melaka virus. Of these, ABLV which is closely related to the rabies virus is the only virus known to be transmissible to humans directly from bats without an intermediate host and so far there have only been two recorded cases both on the East coast of Australia where people were either scratched or bitten by fruit bats carrying ABLV.

How HeV is transmitted

It is thought that the Hendra virus can be transmitted from flying fox to horse, horse to horse, horse to human and now for the first time this week either from horse to dog or flying fox to dog but probably not the latter. There is no evidence yet of Hendra virus spreading from person to person, from flying fox to human or from dog to human. The

exact way that it is transmitted is not yet fully understood but it is thought that horses are infected by somehow ingesting flying fox body fluids and excretions such as their saliva either in water or on half-eaten fruits and flowers, or from their urine, faeces and afterbirth, which drop from bats that are either flying overhead, roosting and/or feeding in trees above horse paddocks and potentially contaminating the horses' grazing grass, water holes and any feed and water in containers below.

Geographical distribution of outbreaks

As of 24 July 2011, a total of twenty-six events of Hendra virus have occurred, all involving infection of horses. Four of these outbreaks have spread to humans as a result of direct contact with infected horses. On 26 July 2011 a dog living on the Mt Afford property was found to have HeV antibodies, the first time an animal other than a flying fox, horse, or human has tested positive outside an experimental situation.

These HeV events have all been on the east coast of Australia, with the most northern case at Cairns, Queensland and the event furthest south at Macksville, NSW. Until the outbreak at Chinchilla, Queensland in July 2011, all outbreak sites had been within the distribution of at least two of the four mainland flying-foxes (fruit bats): Little red flying-fox, (Pteropus scapulatus), black flying-fox, (Pteropus alecto), grey-headed flying-fox, (Pteropus poliocephalus) and spectacled flying-fox, (Pteropus conspicillatus). Chinchilla is within the range of Little red flying-fox and it is west of the Great Dividing Range. This is the furthest west that the infection has ever been known to occur in horses. The timing of incidents indicates a seasonal pattern of outbreaks, possibly related to the seasonal habits of the grey-headed flying-fox, and the black flying-fox and the spectacled flying-fox birthing.

Zoonotic Diseases

Q: What the hell is a "zoonotic disease"?

A: Any disease that is transferred to man from animals (vertebrates) or vice-versa.

Campylobacter Infection (Vibriosis)

of antibiotics.

Benign Lymphoreticulosis

(Cat scratch fever) Source: Mainly from cats but other animals are suspect.

Transmission: Infection can be conveyed to humans by scratches, bites and even licking. Cats are asymptomatic carriers.

Incubation: Average is 3 to 10 days from time of injury to appearance of skin lesions, 5 to 21 days to detectable adenopathy and 5 to 14 days from onset of lesions to adenopathy.

Clinical identification: A primary lesion occurs at the site of injury followed by localised swelling of the lymph nodes (in armpits etc) often tender or painful. Often a temperature of varying degrees possibility of malaise and chills. The illness is mild and of short duration in most cases.

Treatment: There is no treatment other than washing the lesions. Antibiotics are ineffective in treating the primary lesions.

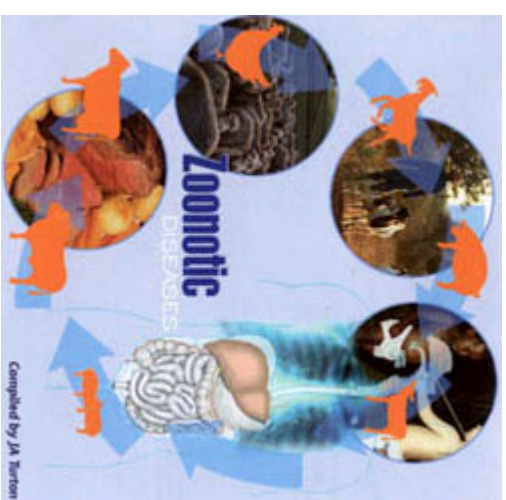
Cryptococcosis (Torulosis)

Source: Commonly found in the excreta of pigeons and starlings and is ubiquitous in soil.

Transmission: Usually by inhalation of contaminated dust. Incubation: Unfortunately it is unknown at this time.

Clinical identification: Cryptococcosis is primarily an infection of the lungs, but the central nervous system is the predominant clinical manifestation. Symptoms comprise of cough with low grade fever possibly malaise and weight loss. Meningoencephalitis is usually insidious but may be acute. Frequent symptoms are headache, giddiness and visual impairment. Other disseminated forms are in the skin, and less commonly in the bone, kidney, prostate, adrenals and endocardium.

Treatment: The preferred treatment is a combination of



Source: Includes several species, including wild and domestic birds, cattle, sheep, dogs, rodents, and man.

Transmission: Probably by ingestion of food and water contaminated by the faeces of birds, animals and man. Commonly found in the intestine of birds and animals.

Incubation: Time is variable but is commonly 2 to 10 days.

Clinical identification: In man it is commonly associated with diarrhoea which may be gradual or explosive and may include colicky abdominal pain. Fever or malaise often accompanied by headache and nausea lasting up to 24hrs or longer. Faeces become very fluid with an offensive odour and may be bloody.

Treatment: The organism is sensitive to a range of

Newsletter of The Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers
nation of drugs but a resistant strain may emerge so sensitivity tests are essential. Therapy should be continued for several weeks and possibly months. Relapses are not uncommon in treated cases. Surgery may be necessary for localised lung lesions.

Erysipeloid (Erysipelothrix)

Zoonotic Disease Transmission



Incubation: From 1 to 5 days.

Clinical identification: The commonest presentation is cutaneous eruptions on fingers or hands, lesion is only slightly tender, with burning, tingling and sometimes intense itchiness. Occasionally a mild arthritis of the finger joints occurs. There may be fever, malaise, headache, rarely endocarditis and central nervous system involvement. The lesion is self-limiting unless secondarily infected and healing takes about 2 weeks. Relapses may occur unless treated correctly.

Treatment: Antibiotics are the drugs of choice in treating this bacteria.

Pasteurellosis

Source: A wide range of domestic and wild animals especially cats and dogs.

Transmission: Commonly transmitted to man by animal bites and scratches, usually from dogs and cats, but inhalation of the organisms in close contact with infected animals is also possible.

Incubation: A few hours following an animal bite but days or months in the inhalation form.

Clinical identification: A few hours after bitten or scratched a swelling will develop at the wound site with severe pain out of proportion to the appearance of the lesion, temperature is often normal. Infection may invade the tendon sheaths and, in untreated cases can possibly progress to osteomyelitis. A variety of clinical manifestations may follow introduction of the organism other than by the skin, these include pneumonia, meningitis, brain abscess, cystitis and appendicitis.

Treatment: Antibiotic treatment is the only way to deal with this infection.



doors open if you land on the step! This month I wish to thank Richard who has not only relieved me for weekends on the 1800 number but adopted a joeey and also been chief rescuer. Tony is in Turkey with family problems and we hope he can make it back for Spring. Also thank you to Jane who has managed to keep the wornbaroo available as well as having 3 in care and relocating to a new address. We do need some more help with urban rescues please and if you have recently completed some external or NTWC training courses let us know so we can keep you busy.

Many thanks.....Julia

The Armidale Pine Forest Bird Survey

The Armidale Pine Forest Committee operates under the Armidale Dumaresq Council 'umbrella' to coordinate management and development of the Pine Forest in conjunction with Forests NSW. It is



group of volunteers that has already achieved a lot. We have worked with Forests NSW to replant the clear felled area of the Pine Forest, as well as developing walking tracks, mountain bike cycling paths and areas for horse riding.

Around 17 ha on the western side of the Pine Forest, adjacent to the main entrance, has recently been replanted with native species - mainly eucalypts. It is likely that as these trees grow they will attract birds to the area that are different to those living amongst the pines. We (NTWC) are being asked if we would be interested in documenting some of the changes likely to occur as the new

Continued on page 19

Australia's Deadly Hendra Virus By Helen Barratt

Right now on the east coast of Australia where I live, we have an outbreak of the deadly Hendra Virus (HeV) which kills horses and humans and even infects dogs and I have to admit that I'm scared, especially as I own 3 horses and 3 dogs. Over the last month of July 2011, 14 horses have died and have potentially infected 55 people who are being tested for HeV and remain under observation along with any horses, dogs and cats



that also came into contact with the sick horses. This is required even when that contact occurred before the infected horses started to exhibit any symptoms of the virus, as they were potentially infectious for at least 2 days beforehand while they were still outwardly symptom free.

There is no cure for the HeV virus, and it usually kills people and horses. It is hoped that an HeV vaccine currently being developed by the CSIRO will be available in 2013 because of the seven people known to have ever contracted HeV since 1994, four have died from the virus and approximately 70% of horses that contract the virus have also died and even those that survive are usually then euthanised as part of a Government health policy.

As a horse owner living in a district where 2 horses have died in nearby Lismore and Mullumbimby in the last 2 weeks and many more are quarantined, I decided that it was time to do

Co-ordinators Winter report ; Armidale.

Winter is generally a quiet time so is ideal for holidays to revitalise for another spring.

I hope many of you have been away to warmer temperatures and escaped the winter bugs.



Magpies have been keeping us on the job, the recent bird which had an arrow through its leg was

uncatchable as it could fly and it all became such a circus with RSPCA inspectors requesting results. It was NTWC and NPWS trying to catch it , not wires

It was NTWC and NPWS trying to catch it , not WIRES as was reported in paper.

You may be happy to know we applied and were granted another 3 year

NPWS licence for NTWC. This time our licence also come with added requirements of carers which we are told in bold letters we **must** comply with. The license came with a hard copy of the Code of Practice for Injured , Sick and Orphaned protected fauna. It's available on line www.environment.nsw.gov.au and hopefully we will soon add to our web site with a direct link. For those of you who are not on computers we have requested hard copies from NPWS. There are far too many MUSTS in this document which personally think are very off putting for us volunteers and is something I originally requested be deleted. So now we will have to do our best to record the



requested extra information which will require even more hours at the computer inputting . This is not good news as there are a lot of changes to be made. Firstly NTWC main data recording system requires updating and there will be changes to our Call and Foster Care forms. It is the request to take GPS readings or map readings for the encounter and release sites which I have asked Brian as our council rep to request it be made 'not compulsory'. For those animals which get dropped off at vets in boxes it will be a nightmare. I am presently working on the 2010-2011 call data so expect some calls as I try



and find fates of those animals which have been cared for. This is needed asap as I would like to have as much paperwork done before busy time.

Onto the main reason all of us do what we do we care for the native animals! Mind you there was a request to help with an escaped cow and feral goat kid which we declined. There have been many calls for macropods , orphaned and road victims. Then there were the Magpies in the Coles shopping complex which learnt the automatic

Flying Foxes may not be endangered

Flying foxes are simultaneously described as adorable, annoying, threatened, and vermin. But even the experts can't agree which is true.

THE TREES ARE BARE and the grass has yellowed. Just south of Helensburgh, NSW's Glenburnie Farm with its charming white corrugated sheds and 27 hectares of cultivated soil that promise apples, peaches and nectarines.

It's winter, the quietest time for the farm. Under the weak sun, the orchards have nothing but long, spidery shadows to keep them company. But in the coming summer, up to 500 flying foxes will break shoots, drop waste, and steal the harvest within just a few weeks. Sometimes, they will damage new buds and risk the loss of next year's crops also.

Thirty-eight year old Glenn Fahy has been a horticulturalist since 1986 and look over his family's farm in 1999. He's tall and built strong with weathered hands and a grey-black beard that belies his age. But his voice is youthful.

"Even when I was a young boy I remember my father commenting that there were flying foxes around. We might get them once every season but over recent years, the numbers have been built up and up to the point it's pretty much guaranteed that you're going to suffer a lot of damage every season. Mostly, we're getting damage each night," he says.

Since 1995 he has spent \$900,000 on netting in an attempt to protect two-thirds of his crops from flying foxes. But it only takes 20 to 30 per cent of his



(EPBC Act) and the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 and Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act in Victoria.

But for many people, these vegetarian megabats are not considered threatened so much as pests and 'urban terrorists' that destroy native trees in botanic gardens, and carry potential viruses such as the Hendra and the rare bat lyssavirus.

Every year, debates rage in the media amongst

farmers, ecologists and conservationists about the status of this species, with highly questionable population figures batted back and forth.

Even the president of The Australasian Bat Society Michael Pennay says it's difficult to make an assessment either way. He believes studies support the idea of declining bats but any reassessment of its listing should be based on a new census.

"Recent counts have suggested that the population has dropped quite dramatically and people believe that they're declining," he says. "But I think that to be confident about the status of the species we really need to have quite an accurate count."

Wildlife ecologist Dr Louise Shilton who has worked on counts of spectacled flying foxes, a related species, agrees. She says that currently, without a census, science is not robust enough to suggest grey-headed flying foxes are in decline

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crop to be damaged before he starts losing profits.

Short of more netting, there's not much Fahy can do. Currently the grey-headed flying fox (Pteropus poliocephalus) is listed as vulnerable species under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 because of the mobile nature of these creatures.

"If you're only looking at one site or a handful of sites, they can move away from those sites and simply be roosting elsewhere because of better foraging," she says. "And if you're only looking at those few sites, I think what's tended to happen is that people go 'They're in decline. They've gone. Numbers are going down'."

'Millions' of bats

The moves to list the grey-headed flying fox as vulnerable were based on evidence its population had declined by 30 per cent between 1989 and 1998, and had dropped sharply from the "many millions" estimated by zoologist Francis Ratcliffe in 1932.

A lot of scientific literature on flying foxes references Ratcliffe's work to assert a decline of flying foxes. But zoologist Dr John Nelson, who is an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Biological Sciences at Monash University, says he knew Ratcliffe personally, and the "millions" were rough indications rather than accurate estimations.

"I spoke to him about that and he said 'No it wasn't millions. In retrospect, I shouldn't have written that,'" Nelson says. "He said there were so many of them that's what you would just say. But he never counted them."

Wildlife ecologist Dr Chris Tidemann, who specialises in wildlife monitoring, conservation and management in urban areas, believes there are certainly millions now. "Over the last few years, there's been a steady increase in the presence of grey-headed flying foxes all over the place. Animals are not just camping [in new places] but

dropping young [there]. And that's been happening all over the place and that's a sign of an expanding population."

But bat expert Dr Kerryn Parry-Jones from the Institute of Wildlife Research of the University of Sydney insists that grey-headed flying foxes are vulnerable even today.

"Population models have been done on the



grey-headed flying fox, based on the age structure of their population and these show that currently the population is decreasing sharply, actually it is apparently halving every 6.7 years," she says.

These population models have only taken place in the coastal regions of NSW. But Parry-Jones believes that if high death rates amongst adults continue as they have, the grey-headed flying foxes as a whole are likely to be extinct in 50 years time.

"This species has a relatively low birth rate balanced by a long life, so the premature death of breeding females has a serious effect on the population growth rate," she says. In the last couple of years particularly, Parry-Jones says that large numbers of flying-foxes have been admitted to rehabilitators in Queensland and New South Wales due to the La Niña event and lack of food re-

sources.

At a national level, the most recent count was done six years ago. Run by the Commonwealth Government across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, the eleventh national census of the grey-headed flying fox in 2005 estimated that there were 674,000, at least double the figure of April 2004.

However the 2005 count has been dismissed as inaccurate because of volunteer shortage, fatigue and an error in the methodology. Consequently, the national census was stopped.

Shilton says generally, accuracy in counting is 20 per cent either way. "If we were counting them in every single site they roosted, well then in theory your data should only be fluctuating by the accuracy [of the counting volunteers]. But the fact that they're fluctuating three to four fold, means you're not counting them everywhere they are."

Shilton recommends multiple censuses throughout the year to capture seasonal variations.

To list or not to list?

In April this year, the New South Wales Primary Industries Minister Katrina Hodgkinson called for a federal reassessment of the listing of the grey-headed flying foxes as vulnerable species.

Currently the New South Wales government is hoping to collaborate with the Commonwealth to gain a better understanding of the conservation status of this species.

Chris Tidemann doesn't believe they should be listed as vulnerable. "It's resulting in a lot of misspent funds, public and otherwise," he says. "And there are all these other complications of moving bats out of the Sydney Botanic Gardens. If they weren't [vulnerable], it would be a much simpler matter."

Recently, the NSW government announced \$5 million in funding to help orchardists in the Sydney

Basin and Central Coast regions install exclusion netting, a non-lethal method to control flying foxes. Later, shooting licences will also be phased out in NSW.

Despite these measures, the grey-headed flying foxes still face natural challenges such as weather variations and competition from the mainly northern tropical species, the black flying foxes.



Whether from competition or overcrowding, over recent years, they have been leaving their traditional coastal regions of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria, moving south and inland into farming areas such as Young, Orange, Bathurst and Tumut.

"There was a big camp at Albury Wodonga on the Murray River this year and that's well outside the sort of traditionally known range of grey-headed flying foxes," says Pennay.

They're even spreading into other states. Last year in May, it was reported that at least 1,200 grey-headed flying foxes settled in a woman's backyard in Fullarton, a suburb of Adelaide.

As bats widen their habitats, it's inevitable that they will come into contact with humans a lot more and conflict will arise. But flying foxes play an important ecological role in pollinating and dispersing seeds of many trees across long distances, particularly eucalypts, melaleucas, and banksias.

Michael Pennay says it's worth remembering that they are as much native animals as their better loved marsupial counterparts. "It's important to acknowledge that they can be problematic," he