



Hepburn Wildlife

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Dear Friends and Supporters

It was 9 months ago that we sent you news of the shelter and since then we have had a number of significant changes and challenges. Firstly, the good news is that we have just achieved status in our own right as an animal welfare charity. Although it still does not gain us any government support, we welcome the recognition of the work we do. It should, however, bring numerous advantages to us in terms of raising funds, not the least being the ability to accept tax deductible donations.

The darker side of things is the number of animals which have been into trouble and come in care completely unrelated to bush fires: 83 Kangaroos, 11 Wallabies, 10 Wombats, 15 Koalas, 3 Echidna, 150 assorted birds, 6 Feathertail gliders, 7 Brushtail Possums and 8 Ringtail Possums, 5 Blue Tongue Lizards and a Goat. So we are still busy but have returned to a more 'normal' state since the bush fires last year.

We feel very fortunate indeed to have had a mild bush fire season. As you can imagine, we were very nervous about our bush fire preparedness. We feel that evacuation during a bush fire is not a realistic option for us. It would effectively mean having to leave animals behind to face the fire. This is because we have no means of transporting 80 + animals to other shelters safe from the threat of bush fire. We cannot imagine having to abandon the animals to perish and besides evacuating the animals from our large shelter would easily fill 10 smaller shelters! That means that those shelters would not be as available to assist burnt animals, and we would be completely shut down for an indefinite period during the most critical post-fire rescues.

For us to be able to stay at the shelter we need to build a large fire bunker to house the animals, including Tahini the Emu and our two guard Alpacas: Trinidad and Tobago. We have plans drawn up now, and we even have our planning permit from the council. The bunker will be built into the side of the hill behind the house and then covered back over with soil. To move the animals into the shelter and to care for them while they are in there, we need to train and provide fire protection equipment for at least eight people (including Jon and myself). We then need to equip the bunker with water, food and all sorts of supplies.

Although we requested help from Wildlife Victoria, which gathered more than \$3.5 million donations during the Black Saturday fires, they felt that our fire bunker project was not a legitimate bush fire expense. I guess we have to burn down first! In January and February this year, our local community, under the wonderful management and direction of Jason Becks, took up the challenge to protect the lives at the shelter from bush fire, and raised \$10 000 to help build the bunker. Our aim is to have it in place before the next fire season. It is encouraging to know how much our community has come to value the wildlife shelter.

Unfortunately, our plans for a wildlife treatment centre have ground to halt as the new committee of management of Wildlife Victoria decided to withdraw and redirect the grant money from Newman's Own which was awarded specifically for this project at the Hepburn Wildlife Shelter. As I write this letter they apparently have still not found a new project for the funding. Jon and I were devastated but not defeated. We have just gained our own Detectable Gift Reciprocity from the tax department which means that we will be

able to access grant funds with out the risk associated with asking Wildlife Victoria to auspice grants. It also means that our donors no longer need to donate through Wildlife Victoria (another administrative hurdle) as we can now issue tax deductible receipts for your donations.

The loss of the wildlife treatment centre has in some ways been a blessing as we have redesigned the concept and will now be developing a truly mobile treatment unit much along the lines of wildlife Paramedics. We will have a highly trained group of people who will be able to travel to the animal in the field or to any shelter in our region, and provide much needed critical care and diagnostic support. The key to this program is the acquisition of mobile digital x-ray. These x-ray machines are very expensive (\$80 000 new). But not only will this save wildlife carers across Central Victoria time and money it will mean that animals will not have to travel long distances and wait for days sometimes to see a vet. The animal welfare advantages are enormous. If you would like more information please visit our web site.

The last nine months has been a little rocky for us, but the shelter continues to thrive. We are very optimistic about the steps we have taken to ensure its future long term survival. We have rewritten our constitution, and we are now accepting memberships. A copy of our constitution is available on our web site. We have three tiers of membership:

- Foundation members who have voting rights at the AGM and who can elect other foundation members. They form the committee of management and will ensure the continued operation of the shelter beyond the lifetime of Jon and myself;
- Donor members who pay a membership fee of \$30 per annum and although you receive no voting rights your support as a donor is essential to the shelter;
- Volunteer members who are eligible for this membership by donating 200 hours per annum of their time to the shelter. These members are largely made up from our bank of regular helpers at the shelter. We recognise the invaluable support and efforts of our volunteers.

Finally, I would like to remind you all that you no longer need to donate to us through Wildlife Victoria, but can donate directly to us using direct deposit or cheque. Details are on our website: www.hepburnwildlifeshelter.com. If you have recently made a donation through Wildlife Victoria that was intended for us, please let us know so that we can ensure that your donation has actually been directed to us. Our shelter receives no assistance from Wildlife Victoria at all as we are no longer members. Unlike Wildlife Victoria we are entirely voluntary and do not have an administration budget that runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars you can be assured that your donation will go directly towards helping wildlife.

Warmest regards

Gayle Chappell & Jon Rowdon

Founders of the Hepburn Wildlife Shelter Inc.



This fabulous looking critter is a Kookaburra chick. We have rescued dozens of Kookaburras over the years but this was our first very young chick. She did a wonderful job of becoming a Kookaburra and was released with two other youngsters on our property.

This Spring we had 25 small Rosella hatchlings come into the shelter. Feeding one chick was a very calm and neat affair, but feeding 8 desperately hungry chicks was a tactical challenge. They would climb out of their baskets, leap at you and end up everywhere, as would their dinner. All but 1 chick survived and two of our noisy brood still visit us.



The elegant looking bird below is Heronicus Gonk, a White Faced Heron. We rescued him when his nest fell with a large branch during a storm. He was still a nestling, his mum was dead and he had a broken wing. Heronicus can not fly but he is a forceful character. He likes to patrol about the back porch and bites the little roo joeys on the backside if they get in his way.



This Wedge Tailed Eagle (Santor) was rescued on Christmas Night. A dog found the eagle in the forest while he was walking his people. Santor had wrenched his shoulder. He is a young bird and had probably not built up his wing strength enough for the strong wind he encountered. In order to house Santor properly we have built an enormous raptor aviary but that is only the first stage; the second stage is a 50m flight run!

The Magpie to the left was stuck to sticky insect paper. It was a bit of a mess but eventually recovered well and went back home. We have also had small bats caught on this dreadful stuff and it is very distressing for them.





We've had a few of these little beauties in this year.

This is a full grown Feathertail Glider. They are mostly nectarivorous and very communal. This little boy ate so well during recovery that we had to put him on a diet before we released him.

Can you tell how many wombats are in this basket? The two large sooks have moved back in with the 3 young ones for the winter. We don't think they have done a very good job making their burrows winter proof and now it seems they will wait for spring to try again. In the meantime the young wombats are being taught really good social skills as bigger definitely gets its way.



We have a second hand reared female wombat with a joey in the pouch. The one to the right is Lollie, the first female to breed on the property, and we saw her 10kg joey for the first time the other night. Of course it is completely wild.



We had one scare with our youngest joey Morph. At about 2kgs Morph still had a tendency to drink his milk too fast and inhale some along the way. We would have to stop his drinking regularly so he could catch up with himself. One evening though he managed to inhale enough milk to essentially drown himself. He started heaving trying to gain a breath and we watched in growing horror as he stumbled about in horrible panic until he fell over and passed out. I am not sure how Jon and I managed to respond to the emergency at all through all the dreadful panic and fear of the situation. We lay the poor little wombat on his back, not breathing and with no measurable heartbeat, and we did the only thing we could think of - gave him mouth to mouth resuscitation with cardiac massage.



After what seemed 15 mins but must have only been one or two, the little chap took a big gasp of air and we had a live wombat. Morph has been raised from 300g and is now a wonderful 10kgs. The picture to the right shows little Morph as he was rescued from the pouch of his dead mother.



Of course our biggest customer remains the completely delightful and gentle Kangaroos. Even though they are easily stressed they sure know how to relax when given half a chance. I can no longer imagine a life without these creatures seemingly inhabiting every space about our home! A friend recently described arriving at our front door recently; Jon and I were not about but he swears a Kangaroo opened the door for him! There are a couple who have learnt to let themselves in and out of the front door! We're hoping they keep the technique to themselves.



Tahini the emu keeps a close eye on everything. He must know everybody's business but even Tahini needs a break from the relentless shelter routines now and then, and he goes walkabout.

He never goes more than a couple of kms but I do have to walk him home again. Believe me when I say that an emu must feel like he is making all the decisions. I have now learnt the subtle art of directing an emu along bush tracks whilst following at a suitable yet very companionable distance. Sometimes I think Tahini plans these outings when he thinks I need some time out and practice in restraint and patience.

Walking with an emu, such as Tahini, is indeed an exercise in other worldly thinking. If one is able to relax beyond the unbearable frustration of emu decision making, then it is actually an absolute delight and quite the meditation to step out with an emu.

