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# POSSUM TALES

**FEBRUARY 2009**

**Newsletter of**

**Far North Queensland Wildlife Rescue Inc.**

**ABN 28 336 727 588**



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**Copies of newsletter courtesy of MP Steve Wettenhall's office.**

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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<b>Website Manager:</b>	John Hungerford 0401 984 553 <a href="mailto:wallaroo@westnet.com.au">wallaroo@westnet.com.au</a>
<b>Vice President and Meeting Syllabus:</b>	Robyn Taske (07) 4045 2679 neirobske@bigpond.com
<b>Treasurer and Phone</b>	Sheila Cleaver (07) 4057 8362
<b>Coordinator:</b>	bszb1@bigpond.com
<b>Secretary:</b>	Position Vacant

## **SUB-COMMITTEE**

<b>Centre Manager and Flying Fox Coordinator:</b>	Renee Croft (07) 4038 2436 renee.croft@bigpond.com
<b>Editorial:</b>	Gunda Paul 0447 197 256 riverdolphinspirit@hotmail.com
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<b>Memberships:</b>	Fiona Bergman (07) 4041 1558 reefrats@bigpond.com.au
<b>Member Liaison:</b>	Position Vacant
<b>Records Keeper and Workshops:</b>	FNQWR Centre (07) 4053 4467 fnqwr@bigpond.com

## **EDITORIAL**

Hi everyone,

A few major things have happened since the last newsletter. FNQWR has been granted tax deductibility status, and through the efforts of many dedicated volunteers, a large amount of money has been raised at fundraising events, and a large quantity of animals (especially birds) have been taken into care during the wet weather.

In this newsletter, the above activities and events are discussed, and a few articles written by wildlife carers have been included.

Best wishes,

Gunda.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

### **THANKYOU ALL**

I am grateful to all members of FNQ Wildlife Rescue for the work they do throughout the year. However, I would like to give my sincere thanks to all those who helped in any way to organize, transport, treat and take into care, any of the multiple numbers of animals, mainly birds that came into the organization during the past wet weather. I know there were many members that had their own problems during the peak of the rains, however some put them aside and still went out of their way to help the wildlife in need. As the wet weather continues throughout our region there will undoubtedly be even more animals needing our assistance, please if you are able to assist in any way, transport, overnight care, aviary, anything, please contact either the centre or a committee member.

Thank you to all our tireless, dedicated carers.

Jo Green  
President

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## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

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Hi Everyone,

Well what a Christmas and start to the New Year. I hope this first newsletter finds all our members well and ready for action. As many of you are all to aware the start of this year came with many new challenges, mainly birds, affected by the heavy rains and follow up winds. I am sincerely grateful and appreciative to all members involved in the care of these animals. Not only to the carer who takes animals in for rehabilitation, but all involved from the first contact, through transport, assessment and so on. All too often the carer is recognized, as duly they should, however there are often many other links in the wildlife chain that are just as essential, but all too often over looked. My thanks to all the behind the scenes carers too. FNQ Wildlife Rescue had the fortune of receiving some money applied for in a grant application. This grant was applied for, and the money will be for the use of, the Tablelands section of FNQ Wildlife Rescue. Although we are all one united group, the Tablelands members saw this grant opportunity and took the opportunity to apply with the consent of the executive committee. We received a cheque for \$4802.00, congratulations and my thanks to those who put in the effort and application. FNQ Wildlife Rescue still has a couple more grant applications and wish lists we are awaiting approval for, we are keeping our fingers crossed for these. I am very pleased to announce that after several years FNQ Wildlife Rescue has received tax deductibility status. Thank you so very much Fiona Bergmann, if not for your very hard, dedicated, frustrating, and what must have seemed fruitless work this would not have been achieved. On a different note, the committee is still seeking members wanting to actively participate in the running of the organization. We have a lot of work that needs to be done and too few people willing to put up their hand. I appreciate that a lot of members join a wildlife care group to care for the animals, however the actual hands on animal work is only half of the job. There is a lot of organizing, promotions, fundraising, phone operations, fauna food ordering, and so on that is essential. If the Organization itself stopped running the behind the scenes work, then all the carers would be on their own. There would be no 24-hour phone access for members of the public to contact carers on. No centre to provide discounted fauna food. No blanket permit to cover all the carers, they would all have to get their own permit for each animal. A lot of wildlife would go uncared for due to lack of infrastructure and networking. Please contact the centre or a committee member to offer assistance, staff a market stall, write an article for the newsletter, approach a business and ask for a donation as a raffle prize, there is a lot you can do in small ways!

Thank you to all, happy caring, and I hope to see as many of you as possible at the next meeting.  
Jo Green

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## **VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

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Hello to all members, sponsors and supporters of our wildlife group.

Well, it seems the years continue to hurry on, no matter how I try to slow things down and treasure each day and special event. Of special note when it comes to events is just how much of an impact the weather has on our wildlife. On Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009 the far north experienced a fairly minor monsoon event. The downpour from the Cyclone Charlotte rain depression combined with high tides created a significant water and drainage problem. In the immediate Cairns precinct the drains did not cope with this combination and resulted in even the FNQWR centre in Hoare Street being under threat from rising water. Renee Croft and I were rostered as volunteers on this day but we could not access the rescue centre due to the height of the water. The decision was made to handle the calls from our respective homes. The influx of calls almost brought us both to a standstill as not only were we managing telephone calls for assistance and advice, but attending rescues and collecting wildlife for assessment and transfer to the group's wildlife carer network. We also both had a full house of wildlife creatures in care which needed the usual devotion and care. On reflection, one of the critical aspects of our activities in times of stress and climatic events is the importance of our area coordinators and suburb network of carers and rescuers. With the onset of the northern cyclone and wet season we can expect more of the same conditions that presented to us on Monday 12<sup>th</sup>. I would like to ask all our members to consider what extra involvement they could offer

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## *VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE*

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when the pressure is on and wildlife creatures are struggling for their survival. Unfortunately, the horrid concept of euthanasia was almost a consideration when it became nearly impossible to find carers and rescuers in a short time frame. Please consider contacting your area coordinator to ensure your contact details are known, your availability depending on family and work commitments etc., are up to date, and any extra help you may be able to provide when things go crazy. Even short-term help with rescues, pick-up and delivery, or temporary care would be a tremendous boost to those carers who devote their lives on a daily basis to Australia's precious wildlife. I have long been thinking of hosting a simple morning tea at my home to invite all members and carers from my immediate suburban areas to come along and network with each other. Perhaps you might consider doing something the similar for your area, or support your area coordinator in having a get-together. I have had the pleasure of talking with and meeting many members in recent times and look forward to continuing this enjoyable aspect of being involved with a special group of people. Thank you to those of you who had the questionable task of helping me with rescues and such on Monday 12<sup>th</sup>. I smile each time I recall one particular carer who agreed to help (thank you Heather Owen). She drove to my home in Edmonton to collect 2 metallic starlings that had survived from the large number that had come down in their nests in the Edmonton colony and I had collected earlier that day. As I was completely overwhelmed with calls, I asked her to check the colony again on her way back home. Heather then proceeded to check other colonies that she was aware of and ended up back at home with about two dozen birds requiring urgent first aid. I had not imagined for one minute that two fledglings could turn in to so many in the space of an hour! Again, thank you for your help and support. Each small act of assistance is a great morale boost to everyone who is at the receiving end of emergency calls.

Kind regards,  
Robyn Taske

## **WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS**

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Whether you have joined to become a much needed active carer, a volunteer helping to keep our group running, or to just support us financially, we are very happy to have you with us. **MEMBERSHIP CARDS:** If you have not already done so, you will receive your Membership ID Card with your member number in the mail shortly. You should take this card with you when you attend any workshops and have the facilitator sign the back on completion. It will also assist in identifying you when picking up animals from the general public. **WEBSITE:** Please take the time to visit our website if you have access to the internet and register on the 'Members Area' by entering your email address and a password of your choice. You'll then receive a reply granting you access. There is a lot of information to assist you in caring for animals as well as a list of workshops currently running which you can register for. You will also find copies of previous newsletters and much more. **WORKSHOPS:** We do require new carers to attend workshops to receive training before taking care of animals, especially those living in the Cairns area. We know this is not always possible for those in outlying areas so we will do our best to put you in touch with an experienced carer or coordinator in your area to receive one-on-one training. Workshops are generally run on a Saturday afternoon from 1-5pm. **CENTRE:** The Wildlife Rescue centre on Hoare St (entrance off Cominos Pl) is the hub of our association and the quickest and easiest way to become involved is to make yourself known in there. The Centre Manager is Renee Croft and she will be very happy indeed to know you're out there ready and waiting! Feel free to drop in any time between 9am and 4pm M-Fr. **MEMBER LIAISON:** Unless you choose to be a financial member only, our Member Liaison Officer will contact you within the first few weeks of joining by phone or email. If they are unable to contact you directly in the first instance, please phone them or send them an email.

Thank you for taking the time to care.  
Fiona Bergmann (Membership Secretary)

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## **REGIONAL AREA COORDINATORS**

<b>THE REGION AND ITS COORDINATOR/S</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
<b>Northern Area - Chillagoe</b> Caroline Bondeson	07 4094 7206
<b>Northern Area – Jullaten</b> Helen Bochow	07 4094 1278
<b>Northern Area - Port Douglas including Mossman &amp; Wangetti</b> Lindsay Dorian Danielle Pait	07 4094 4772 or 0407 969 373 07 4099 3700
<b>Northern Area - Area Weipa</b> Lynette Masters	07 4069 8005 or 0427 603 131
<b>Northern Tablelands - Dimbulah</b> Marjory Adkins	07 4094 4124 or 0438 382 149
<b>Southern Area - Babinda including Bartle Frere</b> Harry Potyondy	07 4067 6054 or 0428 699 246
<b>Southern Area - Innisfail including Mourilyan &amp; Mirriwinni</b> Sue Sadler	07 4061 7635 or 0407 648 852
<b>Southern Area - Tully &amp; North to Innisfail</b> Maria Williamson	07 4068 0286
<b>Southern Tablelands - Mareeba:</b> John and Trish Aspinall <b>Yungaburra:</b> Lee Curtis	07 4093 3455 or 0402 026 950 07 4095 3155
<b>Southern Tablelands - Mt Surprise</b> Patricia Wallace	07 4062 3153

**The role of your Regional Area Coordinator is to:**

1. Be a contact person for new members in the area.
2. Be a contact person for wildlife phone calls from the centre and distribute the calls and/or animals to the appropriate carers in their area.
3. Liaise with the management committee with regard to accessing the educational permit/s for animals being displayed in their area.
4. Arrange any group functions in their area – ie meetings, workshops, fundraising, advertising etc.

### **ATTENTION CARERS**

Whenever picking an animal up from a vet please ask for and pay any associated bills. FNQWR does not pay the vets directly. Reimbursement forms are available from the centre or on the website. Any financial member can submit receipts (with veterinary details of the treatment) for reimbursement.

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## **BABY KESTRELS by BRONWYN ROBERTSON**

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I received a phone call a couple of months ago from a farmer to say he'd found 2 hawk chicks. I set off with a range of boxes, cages, blankets and towels, not entirely sure what I would find. When I arrived at the farm, I was surprised and delighted to find two fledgling kestrel chicks. The farmer had noticed them on the ground near his shed and, after several hours with no sign of the parents, he rang Wildlife Rescue. By the time I arrived, he'd caught them and placed them in a bucket. Although slightly thin, the kestrels appeared healthy enough with no injuries. Feathers were just starting to appear, but they were still too young to be practicing flying. There were no storms around, although there had been some wind. With no sign of the parents or a nest, I made the decision to take the birds' home. Although I'd raised other birds before, I'd never had birds of prey. After some great advice from a range of Wildlife Rescue members and a bird of prey specialist, I started the job of raising the 2 kestrels. I watched them carefully during their first day, dangling insectivore-covered steak strips in front of each to ensure they were eating. Once I saw how ravenously they devoured their feeds, I placed them in a cockatoo cage and fed them by dropping food in the top, making sure half the cage was covered with a sheet so they couldn't see me and become imprinted. Knowing they needed whole animals, including fur, feathers and bones to form pellets, I first bought several frozen mice from the pet shop. The birds ripped these apart in no time and, at \$2.50 each, I realized I would need a cheaper option. I experimented with road kill, heading out early each morning to collect fresh animals before they had a chance to turn putrid in the hot sun. Since my ungrateful birds refused almost all my road kill offerings, I quickly tired of butchering festering animals. It was also surprisingly difficult to find sufficient fresh kills of a small enough size, so again I searched for another source of food. I had a supply of steak, roo tails, roo chunks and chicken necks, to which I added small tufts of cotton wool for roughage. I also had a dedicated horde of mouse trappers across the Tablelands regularly providing me with live and dead mice. No small animals were safe at my house for a few weeks. I set mouse traps, stalked geckos and caught grasshoppers, crickets and moths. As one of the smaller birds of prey, a large proportion of a kestrel's natural diet consists of insects and small reptiles. The birds were growing rapidly and after a couple of weeks I moved them into my aviary, which gave them room to practice their flying. After 4 weeks in care, the birds were flying well, had a full set of feathers and were eating a range of prey. I opened the door one day and within 20 minutes, both birds had taken their first flight outside. Half an hour later, I was delighted to hear them both calling in the trees beside my veranda. They settled themselves in here for the first few days, giving me an excellent opportunity to observe their flying skills improving and to continue supplementing their food supply. I spent many hours watching them soaring about and started each day with a search of nearby trees until I was sure they were both safe. Each day they spent more time away from the house, returning to feed in the mornings and afternoons. Their hunting skills were gradually honed. Initially I would see them scampering along the ground chasing beetles and bugs. I continued supplementing their feeds for some time until I was confident they were hunting their own prey. I still see them occasionally and am pleased I had the opportunity to take the birds on and more importantly, to see them successfully released.



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**TIPS by LISA WHITE**

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**TIP 1. FEEDING STARLINGS/ FIG BIRDS**

I use baby food jars to put my feed mixes into for birds. For Starlings, I use 1 new (170ml) jar of baby banana and mango or pear and banana and tip 1/2 into a reused jar, I add my insectivore mix, baby rice cereal, polyvet and boiling water (don't shake with the lid on until cold), I stir with a spoon and store in the fridge for use for the next feed or feeds, depending on how many birds I have. I also chop up little pieces of fruit and cover them in insectivore mix and use those great plastic tweezers (free at the centre) to pop them into an open mouth. I also have found that starlings and fig birds thrive on mealworms (cheapest at 'Pet Cafe' on Anderson St, \$8.00 for 100g at Wildlife Rescue), if they are looking a little down or flat, mealworms may be the answer (ruling out any infections, etc). To keep throat infections away I make sure I rinse everything in boiling water, I even keep a jug of boiling water to dip the syringe in before taking the next lot of feed into the syringe. I separate birds into small nesting groups, as they will poo all over each other. Pick them up and hold them over their old bedding to poo after every feed and transfer them to a new bed, it will take a few days, but they will learn to aim their bottoms out of the container, if the walls are low enough.



### **TIP 2. MAKING A FEEDING SPOON**

Don't pay money for a feeding spoon. Make one yourself. Use a pair of pliers and an old spoon and fold into the shape desired.

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## **FNQWR NEWS**

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### **FNQWR IS TAX DEDUCTABLE**

On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2008, FNQWR was entered onto the Environmental Organizations Register and was granted tax deductibility status by MP Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. Congratulations FNQWR.

### **RECEIVED FINANCIAL GRANT**

FNQWR has received funding through the Volunteers Grants Program 2008. \$4802 will be granted. Thank you Lee Curtis for applying for the grant. Items suggested to be purchased are: 1 x fridge freezer, 4 x weighted catch nets, 1 x "see-snake" flexible camera, 1 x spring-loaded trap, 1 x snake tongs and the purchase of several flight aviary materials.

### **XMAS RAFFLE WINNERS**

Congratulations Toni Jabke of Mourilyan for winning the first prize of the Christmas basket raffle. Rachelle Reason of Trinity Park won the second prize of the Hot Air Balloon flight. Raffle tickets were sold by Gunda and Aline Sheehan at various market stalls around Cairns, and by FNQWR members. Thank you to everyone who bought and sold tickets and thanks to Aline for organizing the raffle. \$838 was raised and approximately 419 tickets were sold.

### **BUNNINGS BBQ'S**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> December, a sausage sizzle was held at Bunnings Warehouse in Cairns to raise money for FNQWR. \$932 was raised. On the 28<sup>th</sup> December, another sausage sizzle took place, but this time it was held at Bunnings Warehouse Smithfield. \$311 was raised. Thank you Fiona Bergmann, Merrill Molloy, Fred Howles, Amanda Linnemann, Sheila Cleaver and family, Robyn Taske, Cathie Archer, Gunda and Dianne Gordon for helping out. (Sorry to anyone that was left off the list).

### **NEW LOOK WEBSITE**

John Hungerford has updated FNQWR'S website with extra information on how to care for and rescue wildlife. Visit [www.fnqwildliferescue.org.au](http://www.fnqwildliferescue.org.au)

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## **FNQWR NOTICEBOARD**

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### **BOXES AND CONTAINERS NEEDED**

The Wildlife Rescue centre needs cardboard boxes and plastic containers of all sizes, for animals that come into the centre. If you have any of each item, please drop them into the centre.

### **PICTURES WANTED**

If you are a carer that has pictures of a nestling or juvenile of any common bird in Far North Queensland, please bring them in to the centre or email them to Fred Howles at [freddlesh@bigpond.com](mailto:freddlesh@bigpond.com). Wildlife Rescue is setting up a display of pictures of common birds and their offspring to help volunteers with identification. Photos of adult birds are easy to come by, but pictures of baby birds are difficult to find. Identification is one of the most important aspects of rehabilitation. Photos will be returned if necessary. Please write the name of the bird on the email or photograph. Photos of nestlings and juveniles of non-native birds would also be helpful.

## **RESCUERS AND CARERS WANTED**

FNQWR needs extra volunteers to care for **or** pick up/rescue wildlife. Some animals such as birds (depending on their injuries, illness and size) **may** only require: a couple of weeks in care and a small area to recover in. In regards to rescuing, in many cases FNQWR just needs people to pick up animals from homes and businesses around the far north and transport them to vets and carers. If you or someone you know is able to help out, please contact Renee Croft (Centre Manager) on 4053 4467 between 9am and 12.30pm on Mondays or Wednesdays

## **POSITIONS VACANT**

FNQ Wildlife Rescue is currently looking for pro-active, enthusiastic, and dedicated volunteers to join the driving team behind the controls of Wildlife Rescue. Due to circumstances beyond our control we now have the following positions vacant. Please contact Renee Croft if you are interested in any of the positions.

### **1. Secretary.**

The successful volunteer will need to be able to attend all committee and general meetings. Be able to record, distribute and file minutes for all meetings. On a weekly basis access, sort and distribute the contents of the organization's mailbox located in Cairns. Scan and email all urgent correspondence and keep all relevant records. Prepare draft correspondence for approval by the committee. Assist the Centre Manager with record keeping and other admin duties when required, and assist with committee activities. Regular Email and landline phone access is essential.

### **2. Member Liaison Officer.**

The successful volunteer will need access to a reliable landline phone (not mobile), or the centre. Be willing to interview new and existing members of the organization by phone. Be able to communicate professionally and confidentially on behalf of FNQ Wildlife Rescue. Have good email access and reasonable computer skills. This volunteer will need to demonstrate a good understanding of the general care and husbandry required for assorted wildlife.

### **3. Promotions Coordinator.**

The successful volunteer will be responsible for the research into, and follow up purchase of promotional material for FNQ Wildlife Rescue. Computer and internet access and skills would be an advantage, however not essential.

### **4. Workshop Presenters.**

We are seeking volunteers willing to pass on their knowledge and experience to other carers. This can be done in small groups, one on one, or at large workshops. A high level of experience in wildlife is required for this position, however training notes and assistance will be available. Full or part workshops can be run with several presenters. This position will require more than one applicant.

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## **WHAT'S ON**

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### **CAIRNS GENERAL MEETINGS**

When: **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February** and **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April** at **6.30pm**,  
and **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June** at **1pm**

Where: Cominos House  
Corner of Little and Greenslopes Streets, Edge Hill

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## WHAT'S BEEN

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### Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December

A general meeting was held at the Edge Hill State School Environment Centre.

### Saturday: 13<sup>th</sup> December

A bird workshop was held at the Edge Hill State School Environment Centre. It was run by Fred Howles

### Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February

A general meeting was held at the Barron Valley Hotel in Atherton.

### Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February

A committee meeting was held at the Wildlife Rescue Centre in Manunda.

### Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February

Aline Sheehan and Gunda held a market stall on the Esplanade, Cairns.

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## THANK YOU

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**FNQWR would like to thank:**

**Donators:** MP Steve Wettenhall for his \$500 donation and Glenwood Homes for their \$200 donation.

**Corporate Members:**



**The Sponsor:** 4CA FM

**Life Members:** Louise Baume, Janet Dean, Annabelle Olsson and Jan O'Sullivan.

**Vets and Wildlife Carers** around the far north.