



**FY24**

**IMPACT REPORT**



# Contents

Message from our CEO	3
About Us	4
Our Volunteers	6
Our Favourite Rescues	8
Wildlife Rescue Team	10
Emergency Response Team	11
Wildlife Welfare Team	12
Wildlife Veterinarian Dr Tania Bishop	13
Case study: Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome	14
Wildlife Training	16
Advocacy for Wildlife	18
Programs	19
Wildlife Programs	21
Community Engagement and Education	24
Philanthropy and Bequests	25

# Message from our CEO

**There is little doubt that we are now in an era of mass wildlife mortalities.**

**In the past year WIRES has responded to two distressing wildlife emergencies – an unprecedented outbreak of Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome (which you can read about in detail on page 10), and just three months earlier, a starvation, heat stress and paralysis event affecting flying fox populations across three eastern states.**

In both situations, our widespread, coordinated efforts made a critical difference for wildlife.

Our wildlife veterinarian Dr Tania Bishop treated and advised on hundreds of cases. Our Wildlife Ambulances, Emergency Responders and specially trained Volunteer Emergency Response Teams assisted with urgent rescues and transportation, alleviating pressure on local vets and carers. Our Disaster Relief Program, with the support of our partner

Woolworths, distributed much needed supplies to wildlife carers across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

For the flying fox crisis in particular, our emergency response was backed up by the support of our longer-term programs, including vaccination programs and specialist training, emergency alerts to warn Responders before temperatures spiked, collaboration with councils, and establishing large-scale pre-release enclosures for recovering populations.

As with all that we do, these efforts were born out of a critical need. Since the catastrophic bushfires of 2019/20, WIRES rescues have increased by 50%, equating to an extra 23,000 native animals a year in urgent need of our help.

To that end we now rescue more native animals than any other group, take more calls per year from the community, support more wildlife volunteers, and invest more money in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation than any other group in Australia.

Thank you sincerely, for helping us fulfil this vital role for Australian wildlife. As you will read over the following pages, these

wildlife-saving efforts were only possible thanks to the dedicated hard work of our volunteers, who remain the backbone of all that we do.

I am deeply grateful to our WIRES volunteers, and to our Board, our staff, our partners and our donors, for actively sharing in our life-saving work for Australian wildlife. Together, we are the safeguard our native animals urgently need us to be.

Thank you.



Leanne Taylor,  
CEO WIRES



WIRES acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their connection to native wildlife. We pay respect to their Elders past and present.





# ABOUT US

WIRES is Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation. We've been rescuing and caring for sick, injured and orphaned native animals since 1985 and our mission is to actively rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife – and inspire others to do the same.

The WIRES Wildlife Rescue Office is

**OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY, 365 DAYS A YEAR**

---

Every day WIRES receives hundreds of rescue requests

---

WIRES co-ordinates around **4,000 VOLUNTEERS**

to help rescue and rehabilitate native animals

---

We have a growing team of

**EMERGENCY RESPONDERS** with fully equipped Wildlife Ambulances

---

WIRES supports **THOUSANDS OF NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS**

---

# 148,276

Animals assisted across WIRES



**500** Vets work with WIRES to assist native animals in need



**6,819** Users in XMatters to assist with wildlife rescue and care  
**41%** of these users from 17 external organisations in NSW, ACT, QLD, WA, SA and TAS



**2,688** Total WIRES training courses completed

# 4,064

VOLUNTEERS

**Rescue 101**  
Volunteers 18.9%

**Community Mange**  
Volunteers 0.5%

**WIRES Branches**  
Volunteers 78%

**6** Wildlife Ambulances make up our rescue vehicle fleet and travelled over  
**212,400 kms**



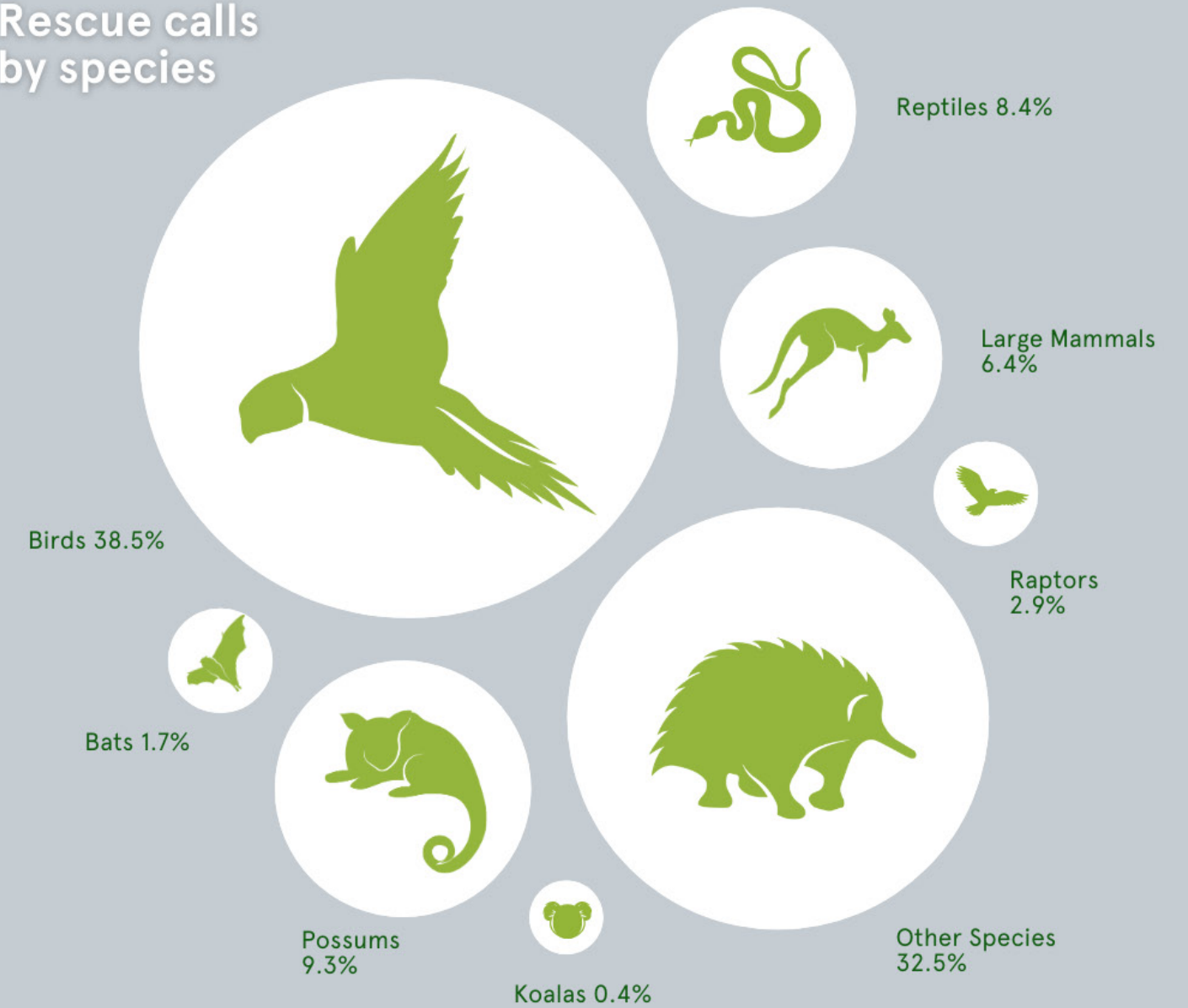
## Wildlife RESCUE CALLS



**197,708** Rescue calls to the WIRES 24/7 1300 Rescue Line

**26,399** Calls received in our busiest month (October)

### Rescue calls by species



# OUR VOLUNTEERS

WIRES manages a community of over 4,000 dedicated volunteers. We are very grateful for the ongoing dedication, compassion and tireless efforts of our front-line volunteers. Our volunteers work around the clock, every day of the year, providing rescue, rehabilitation and care for wildlife that simply would not survive without their efforts.

**28** WIRES BRANCHES

**3,172** BRANCH MEMBERS

**769** RESCUE 101 VOLUNTEERS

**123** COMMUNITY MANGE TREATERS

## VOLUNTEERING WITH WIRES

Becoming a WIRES skilled rescuer and/or rehabilitator can be a deeply rewarding experience. There are also many other ways volunteers can get involved with WIRES rehabilitation activities such as: transporting wildlife, assisting with administrative or fundraising tasks within one of our branches, gathering foliage for wildlife food, helping to establish and maintain tree planting sites for wildlife food, crafting pouches and dreys for animals in care.

WIRES offers flexible involvement options, allowing volunteers to choose how often and how much time they wish to commit. The contribution of all volunteers, big or small, is important, and is greatly appreciated.

Whilst volunteering across Australia continues to decline, we are grateful to note that WIRES volunteer numbers have grown steadily since 2018, providing vulnerable native species with a critical lifeline of support.



A possum in care  
photo supplied by Rebecca Unger and Brian McKenzie

## WIRES SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERS

WIRES has increased its support for volunteers year on year covering 100% of all food costs, subsidising training, collaborating with the Black Dog Institute to support our volunteers mental health and providing 24/7 rescue assistance for all volunteers, for all species.

### WIRES SUPPORTS VOLUNTEERS IN MULTIPLE WAYS:

- ➔ Mental health and well-being support, provided by WIRES collaboration with the Black Dog Institute
- ➔ Covering 100% of food subsidies for approved wildlife food
- ➔ Fundraising support for local events
- ➔ Providing emergency support and Wildlife Ambulances during critical wildlife events
- ➔ Subsidised wildlife training; including species specific courses
- ➔ Educational support and advice from qualified WIRES wildlife vet; including webinars and materials
- ➔ Vaccinations for Bat species coordinators
- ➔ Subsidies for equipment, vaccinations, PPE and training
- ➔ Regular volunteer recognition programs e.g. end of year dedication to wildlife awards

## VOLUNTEER AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

WIRES wildlife volunteers play an essential role in the conservation and rehabilitation of native animals. Their work involves rescuing injured, sick, or orphaned wildlife, providing medical care, and facilitating their eventual release back into the wild. These volunteers work tirelessly, often in challenging conditions, driven by a deep commitment to animal welfare and conservation.

Our thanks go out to all WIRES volunteers for their immense hard work and dedication over the past year and decades.

In this report, we would like to highlight the incredible commitment of the following WIRES volunteers:



Robyn Gray

Leoni Byron-Jackson

### ROBYN GRAY

Led by Branch Bird Coordinator Robyn Gray, the WIREs Clarence Valley Branch assisted over 2,500 lorikeets during the devastating Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome event earlier this year, many of the distressed native birds receiving up to eight weeks of dedicated care and rehabilitation before being ready for release.

Establishing a community drop off centre with WIREs Wildlife Vet Dr Tania Bishop and our Emergency Response Team, our Clarence Valley volunteers provided triage and treatment to affected animals including diagnosing the extent of their paralysis, administering necessary medical care, and stabilizing them for recovery.

The volunteers also played a significant

role in raising awareness about the outbreak within the community. They collected supplies, coordinated with local veterinarians, and educated the public on how to assist and support the affected wildlife. This community engagement was vital in managing the outbreak and ensuring a coordinated response.

Robyn and the WIREs Clarence Valley volunteers made significant personal sacrifices during the event, often working around the clock and under emotional and physical stress, with their homes transformed into wildlife hospitals. Their dedication highlights the selflessness inherent in wildlife volunteering and the deep bond they share with the animals they protect.

### LEONI BYRON-JACKSON

Leoni's unwavering compassion and dedication to wildlife rescue and rehabilitation is demonstrated in every aspect of her work. She has been committed to wildlife rescue and rehabilitation for over 40 years. She is renowned for treating both wildlife, and her fellow volunteers, with compassion and care.

As a founding member of the WIREs Northern Rivers branch, she has not only held many key positions on the Branch Management Committee but has also been a key member of the WIREs Small Mammals Management Team. Her deep affection for echidnas and small mammals drives her remarkable contributions, making her an invaluable mentor and a trusted trainer for hundreds of volunteers across various WIREs branches.

Leoni's commitment is further demonstrated in times of crisis, such as the Northern Rivers flooding in 2022, where she became a beacon for the community, tirelessly coordinating rescues and caring for countless animals every day. Her extraordinary impact is reflected in her personal rescue record—having

attended to over 2,500 animals, the highest ever recorded by any WIREs volunteer. Leoni embodies the WIREs mission with her passion and dedication.

**We are also extremely pleased to see Kath, Gisela and Kris honoured by the Australian community over the past year.**

Kath Hamilton	Narrabri Shire Council - Citizen of the Year: Environmental Award
Kath Hamilton	NSW Hidden Treasures Honour Roll
Gisela Kaplan	Order of Australia Medal (AM)
Kris Spasojevic	Westfield Local Hero Award 2023

# OUR FAVOURITE RESCUES

## BLOSSOM BAT IS BACK IN THE WILD

Earlier in the year our specialist bat carer Denise was called to rescue what she originally believed to be a displaced microbat. On arrival she saw it was actually a Blossom Bat – a species that has only come into her care three times in the 12 years she's been a WIRES volunteer.

The Blossom Bat was hanging on a brick windowsill in a suburb with remnant bushland nearby. She was in quite a bad way. Denise noted she had a parasite infestation, with mites completely covering her wing membranes.

Denise cared for the bat and treated her infestation. The original solution of bi-carb and salt had little effect on the mite eggs and so she moved to a very mild Ivermectin solution.

After several weeks the Blossom Bat was strong, healthy and mite-free. She was released into bushland where she'll continue her vitally important work – pollinating our native plant species.



## URGENT RESCUE FOR INJURED LACE MONITOR

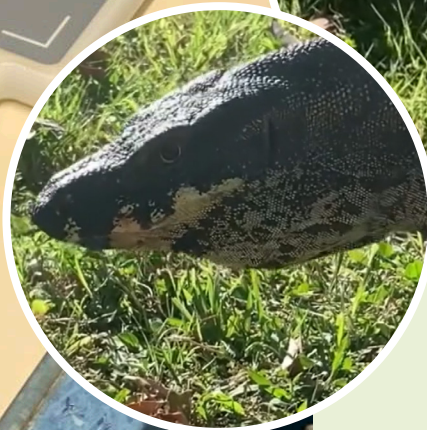
WIRES Carer Melinda was driving through the Hawkesbury when she suddenly spotted an injured Lace Monitor lying on the road.

Melinda leapt out of the car and quickly moved the large reptile to the side of the road and out of harm's way.

The Lace Monitor had been run over by another vehicle, with cuts along its arms, head and mouth. It was also struggling to move. Melinda called experienced WIRES reptile carer Josh, who quickly made his way over.

They transported the Lace Monitor to Wilberforce Vet for an X-ray. Amazingly, it had no fractures or breaks and was soon placed in Josh's care for rehabilitation.

Just six hours after being rescued, the resilient Lace Monitor began showing signs of recovery: walking around and flicking his tongue. He remained in care for two weeks, before being released back where he belonged.





## SWAMP WALLABIES BUDDIED UP FOR THEIR REHABILITATION JOURNEY

In December 2023, orphaned swamp wallabies 'Elvis' and 'Little Miss Wriggles' spent their first Christmas in the care of WIRES Central West volunteer Monique.

The story of how they survived is testament to the hard work WIRES volunteers undertake every single day.

A few weeks earlier, after clocking off from work, Monique set out to perform pouch checks on macropods hit by cars between Dubbo and the town of Mumbil.

Illuminated by a full moon and armed with a torch, she travelled over 70 kilometres and undertook 14 checks.

Her herculean search for surviving joeys was finally rewarded in the early morning, when she found a male Swamp Wallaby joey, whose mother had been killed by a car. Nicknaming him Elvis, she transported him for a vet check, and then back to her property for rehabilitation and care.

A few days later, a member of the public was driving through Bathurst when they suddenly struck a Swamp Wallaby mother who had leapt onto the road.

The driver pulled over and examined the mother. While she had sadly not survived, her female joey was still alive. After an urgent rescue by WIRES volunteer Rachel and a vet check, she was transferred to Monique, buddied up with Elvis and given the nickname 'Little Miss Wriggles'.

From the moment they were paired, these two Swamp Wallabies became inseparable. They have continued to go from strength to strength during their rehabilitation and when ready will be released together.



## A SECOND CHANCE FOR TEX THE KOALA

A member of the public witnessed a distressing koala hit and run on the notorious Appin Road in Southwest Sydney. The koala was thrown several metres. After sitting dazed for a few seconds, he quickly climbed high into a nearby tree.

WIRES rescuers were called to the scene. Over the course of the day, they monitored the koala, but he was way too high for them to reach, and it was deemed too risky for Fire and Rescue to close a lane of the busy road to reach him. WIRES called local arborist Chris Walker of Tex's Timberland. Using his specialist equipment Chris quickly climbed the tree and enclosed the injured koala in a bag.

Our koala expert Tracey transported the koala to Bradbury Vet Clinic, where he was triaged and found to have a fractured limb. He was provided with pain relief and transferred to specialist care at Western Sydney University Wildlife Hospital.

Named 'Tex' after his rescuer, the koala is now in care with WIRES carer Kate, where he'll remain until well enough for release. A big thank you to Chris Walker of Tex's Timberland for providing this lifesaving service free of charge!



# WILDLIFE

# RESCUE OFFICE

The largest service of its kind in the world, the WIRES 24/7 Wildlife Rescue Office is a critical lifeline for sick and injured wildlife.

**197,708** TOTAL CALLS RECEIVED  
a 22% increase on last year.

**148,276** TOTAL NATIVE ANIMALS ASSISTED

**873** KOALAS ASSISTED

The largest service of its kind in the world, the WIRES 24/7 Wildlife Rescue Office is a critical lifeline for sick and injured wildlife.

Our operators coordinate vital rescue assistance at any time of the day or night, every single day of the year. They document the information received, issue emergency alerts and collaborate with a nationwide network of wildlife volunteers, wildlife organisations and vets to provide emergency rescue and care for thousands of sick, injured, orphaned and displaced native animals.

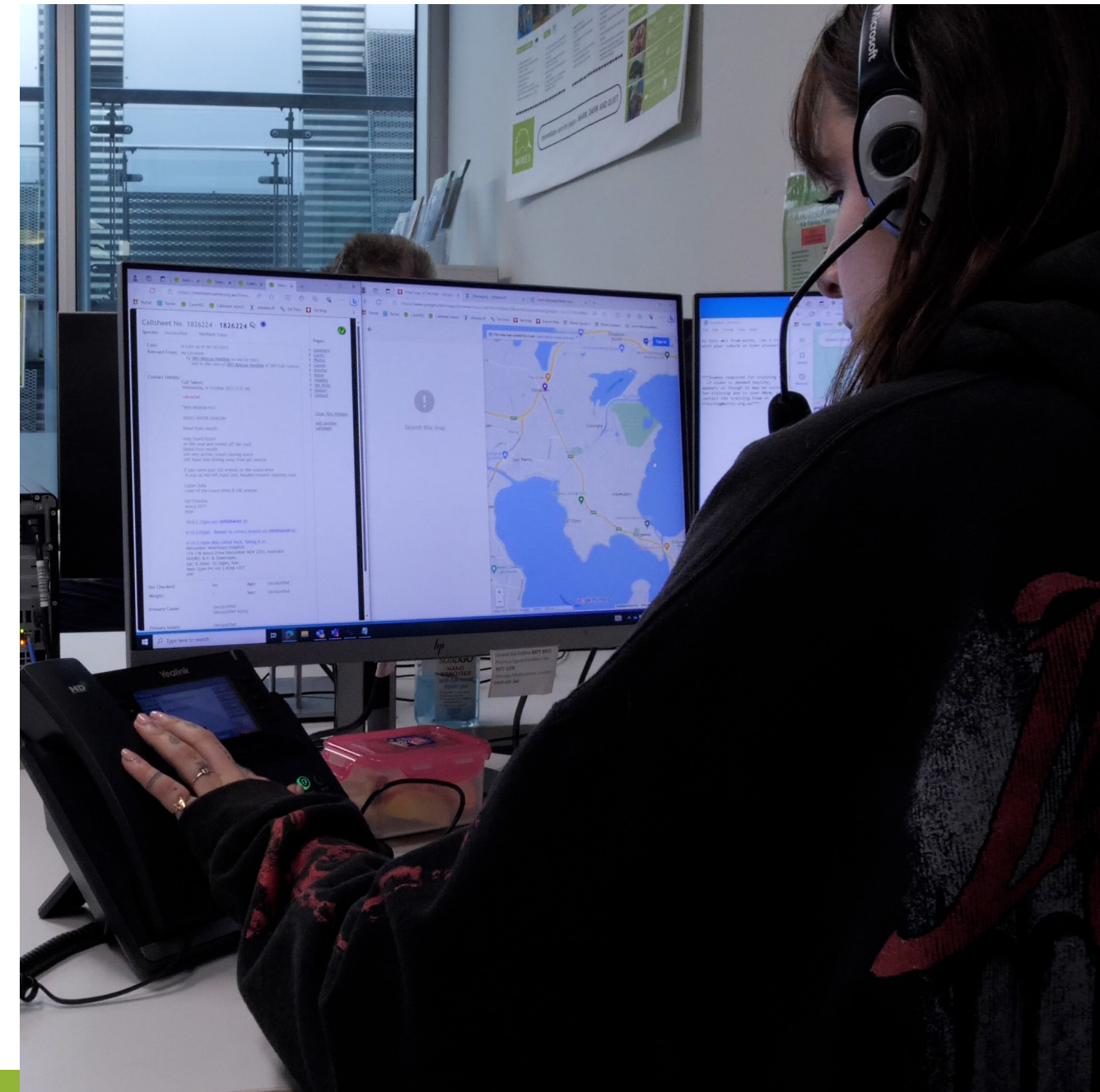
They also play an extensive role in community education – guiding the Australian public on what to do when they find a native animal in distress and advising on how to coexist peacefully with our native wildlife.

## CONNECTING RESCUES TO AVAILABLE CARERS WHEN EVERY SECOND COUNTS.

This year we've continued leveraging digital efficiencies via our rescue communications platform xMatters, through our partnership with Everbridge. This technology allows our Wildlife Rescue Office to extend its support beyond New South Wales to callers across the country, connecting them with available wildlife volunteers and rescue organisations to assist thousands more native species in critical need.

xMatters now has 6,819 users, with 2,916 users from 17 external organisations across NSW (seven), ACT (one), QLD (three), SA (three), WA (one) and TAS (two). We are actively looking to support more organisations.

Everbridge also continues to be critical in helping us maintain the safety of volunteers in the field, helping provide monitoring and welfare checks in disasters and alerting volunteers to risks in their area.



# EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

In the past year the Emergency Response Team (ERT) continued to provide vital assistance for critical and urgent rescues in NSW, Tasmania and southern Queensland.

**6** WILDLIFE AMBULANCES  
across NSW, Tasmania and Queensland

**5,079** CRITICAL RESCUES

**212,400** KMS TRAVELLED

WIRES Emergency Responders receive extensive training, enabling them to attend our most critical and challenging rescues. They are trained in the rescue and care of all Australian species, including the venomous.

Emergency Responders have access to a Wildlife Ambulance containing emergency rescue equipment and medical supplies to provide first aid in the field and during transport. Wildlife Ambulances are also equipped with specialised equipment and

communications systems for deployment to disaster events.

Adding to the capability of WIRES Emergency Response Team, we have over one hundred members across New South Wales forming Volunteer Emergency Response Teams to support WIRES branches and nationally.

## GRAFTON LORIKEET PARALYSIS SYNDROME RESPONSE

February 2024

WIRES ERT and Wildlife Ambulances were deployed to Grafton to support local WIRES carers and volunteers during

a Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome outbreak in the region.

Due to the increasing numbers of impacted birds, the ERT and Wildlife Ambulances assisted with the set up and operation of a drop off centre for affected birds. Supported by local Veterinary Clinics, WIRES Vet and Vets Beyond Borders, hundreds of lorikeets were triaged, provided with treatment and transported to WIRES carers for

recovery. WIRES ERT established liaison with EPA, Wildlife Health Australia and RSPCA forming effective communication channels for reporting, advice and information sharing during the event.

Members of the Grafton community and dedicated WIRES volunteers collected and delivered affected birds to the drop off centre for triage, assessment and treatment daily.

## NPWS KU-RING-GAI WILDLIFE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM HAZARD REDUCTION BURN EXERCISE

March 2024

WIRES ERT and Wildlife Ambulances participated in a National Parks and Wildlife Service training exercise along with IFAW, Taronga and Sydney Wildlife Rescue in Kuring-gai Chase National Park.

The Wildlife Ambulances were exposed to wildlife response in a controlled environment of a hazard reduction burn with NPWS staff and other stakeholders. Scenarios were undertaken in the field including safety briefing, personal protective equipment, communications and wildlife rescue on the fireground and wildlife triage in company with NPWS Technical Advisor Wildlife (TAW).



# WILDLIFE

# WELFARE TEAM

The WIRES Wildlife Welfare Team supports our Wildlife Rescue Office to provide guidance to the community on wildlife welfare issues; and directly assists WIRES volunteers with licensing compliance, Codes of Practice, navigating regulatory frameworks, and complex animal welfare cases.

The team also receives and refers cases of animal cruelty, supports agencies with animal seizure operations, and manages community enquiries regarding mistreatment of animals, illegal trapping, unlicensed ownership of protected animals, habitat destruction and wildlife trafficking. The Team also works closely with the veterinary industry across Australia to support native animal welfare.

As part of this work, since 2020 the WIRES Welfare Team has stepped in to provide an important safeguard for captive bred reptiles in urgent need of care. Working closely with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the team has so far managed around 850 captive bred reptiles that have been seized, surrendered or displaced.

The WIRES Welfare Team, along with our Volunteers provides immediate care, transportation to and from vets, quarantine and rehabilitation, after which time the reptile is rehomed through the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. The program currently fills an important gap in NSW, where few organisations have the expertise to care for and quarantine surrendered captive bred reptiles.



Surrendered Broad-banded sand swimmers enjoy burrowing in sand for the very first time.

## WIRES HOME-BASED REHABILITATION FACILITIES

The WIRES Facilities Program is delivering best practice home-based facilities for authorised WIRES volunteers; and also focuses on establishing large-scale rehabilitation facilities for priority and at-risk species.

To date, WIRES Home-based Facility Program has delivered 35 bespoke manufactured aviaries and enclosures for WIRES carers. They include possum aviaries, possum trailers, intermediate and larger flight aviaries.



A flight aviary being constructed for a WIRES volunteer, as part of our Home-Based Facilities project

# WILDLIFE VET

# DR TANIA BISHOP

Over the past year, Dr. Tania Bishop, WIRES' dedicated Wildlife Veterinarian, has continued to provide invaluable species-specific diagnostic, treatment, and case management guidance across Australia. Her expertise has greatly benefited WIRES carers, veterinarians, vet nurses, and wildlife carers in managing various species, especially during crises. She has delivered hands-on treatment and one-on-one advice for hundreds of native animals, showcasing her deep commitment to wildlife welfare.

Dr. Bishop has been a key leader in the treatment and response efforts for lorikeets and flying foxes, especially during mass death events. She leads a multidisciplinary working group of wildlife experts across NSW and QLD to standardize best practices during such crises. A notable example of her efforts was her involvement in the Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome event, which highlighted her unwavering dedication in the face of mass wildlife emergencies. Additionally, Dr. Bishop has worked on mitigating heat stress, starvation, and pup abandonment in flying fox populations, providing expert guidance to help vulnerable species like the Grey-headed and Spectacled flying foxes. Her

presentations to local governments on preventing heat stress in flying fox camps are a testament to her role in raising awareness of wildlife issues.

Dr. Bishop's impact extends beyond direct care. She represented WIRES at various forums, including the Queensland Environmental Round Table, advocating for stronger conservation policies, and the Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference, where she discussed the importance of "gut biota" in wildlife health. Her work with the Invasive Species Council on responsible pet ownership and her involvement in government biosecurity webinars have contributed to broader conservation and

wildlife protection initiatives. Her leadership in developing protocols for wildlife disease reporting and creating safety measures in response to incidents like the H7 avian influenza outbreak has been crucial in ensuring the protection of wildlife across Australia.

In direct wildlife care, Dr. Bishop's expertise has been pivotal in the rehabilitation of individual animals. A poignant example is her work with Kodie, a koala who was critically ill due to starvation, chlamydia, and gut issues. Dr. Bishop guided the recovery process, which included managing Kodie's dehydration, restoring gut health, and addressing chlamydia symptoms. Thanks to her interventions, Kodie made a remarkable recovery, showcasing the profound impact of her veterinary care and leadership in wildlife rescue.

Through her tireless efforts, Dr. Bishop has demonstrated both clinical excellence and a profound commitment to wildlife conservation, making significant contributions to the broader wildlife care and rehabilitation community.



Doctor Bishop holding a rescued swamp wallaby



Koda's wrist and arm injuries



Kodie battling with eye scarring due to chlamydia

Dr Bishop also supported rehabilitation of Koda, a Koala subadult male (dispersing) who was attacked by an older dominant male koala.

Koda came into care of Penny Walsh with a badly bitten wrist, damaged tendons in the wrist and a swollen arm. Dr Bishop collaborated with Penny to develop a care plan including initially avoiding using the arm, then adapting the koala enclosure to serve the function of physiotherapy to allow the tendon to heal until it was strong enough for him to climb properly.

## KODIE'S REHABILITATION ENCLOSURE

Stage 1



Stage 2



Veterinary staff are critical to wildlife rehabilitation. To further support industry professionals with access to up to date training material and resources, WIRES has developed a range of Vet Booklets for veterinarians and vet nurses to assist them in managing wildlife patients in a clinic setting to improve outcomes for wildlife.



Kodie released into the tree yard for fitness prior to release

# CASE STUDY

# LORIKEET PARALYSIS SYNDROME

## OUR COLLECTIVE WORK IN ACTION

In January 2024 wildlife carers across northern NSW and southern QLD were faced with an alarming outbreak of Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome – a debilitating paralytic disease suspected to be caused by a naturally occurring toxin.

By the third week of January 2024, WIREs volunteer Robyn had over 150 lorikeets suffering with paralysis in her care and many more began arriving each day.

The outbreak quickly reached unprecedented levels. The WIREs Wildlife Rescue Office began receiving hundreds of calls a day from concerned locals, whilst carers in the region were receiving hundreds of paralyzed birds every day.

### An Emergency Response

On the 1st February 2024 WIREs Wildlife Veterinarian Dr Tania Bishop set up a triage and reporting system for all vets being inundated with lorikeets. Dr Bishop gave detailed instructions on what signs lorikeets needed to display to be effectively treated. This helped local vets prioritize birds who had the best chance of survival, and to euthanize birds whose paralysis had progressed too far.

WIREs dispatched four Emergency Responders with Wildlife Ambulances to assist with rescues and transportations, and activated our Disaster Relief program to provide urgent supplies to carers across the affected regions. Specially trained Volunteer Emergency Response Teams were also deployed.

### Community Drop Off

On the 7th February we set up a Community Drop Off Centre in Grafton to alleviate the pressure on local vets and carers. More than 90 birds were received on its very first day of operation.

WIREs Wildlife Rescue Office began advising the public to transport paralyzed birds to the Drop Off Centre. WIREs Welfare Team also contacted Vets Beyond Borders, who organised vet nurses to assist.

Distressed members of the public, who talked about witnessing lorikeets literally falling from the sky, were met at the Centre by WIREs volunteers, where the lorikeets were quickly triaged and medically assessed. If a lorikeet's symptoms were not too severe, they had a chance of survival.



WIREs volunteer Gail (left), WIREs Emergency Responder Kyana (middle) and WIREs Volunteer Robyn (right) at our Grafton Community drop off centre.





**Our Wildlife Veterinarian Dr Tania Bishop, treating a Rainbow Lorikeet affected by Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome. Thousands of Lorikeets needed emergency rescue and care.**

WIRES Wildlife Veterinarian Dr Tania Bishop was on location at the Grafton Drop Off Centre and provided medical treatment to many hundreds of sick birds, and treatment advice for local vets.

Dr Bishop recalls how quickly lorikeets were succumbing to the syndrome. There were several instances where a seemingly healthy lorikeet would pass away in just a few minutes. Treating viable lorikeets as quickly as possible became the main priority.

### Specialist treatment and long term care

Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome affects a lorikeet's ability to fly and swallow. When a lorikeet is rescued early enough, a vet can flush out the kidneys with fluids and provide glucose for energy to support getting the toxin out of their system. They can also provide medication for any complications like aspiration and pneumonia, and lubrication to make sure their eyes aren't permanently damaged.

Whilst affected birds are extremely hungry and thirsty, it is impossible for them to swallow whilst the toxicity is in their system as it affects their muscles.

When the lorikeet can start swallowing again, a wildlife carer needs to support-feed them until they can feed themselves, and then provide up to eight weeks of specialised care before they are fit enough to survive in the wild.



### Why did it happen?

Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome has occurred more frequently over the past four years, with this season in January and February 2024 being the most serious. Thousands of lorikeets were impacted and had more serious and immediate symptoms. Dr Bishop believes it appears to be a toxicity that affects a lorikeet's kidneys, liver and muscles. It is likely that the intense rainfall preceding the outbreak had washed away much of the lorikeets' food sources, leading them to consume a harmful, naturally occurring toxin that triggered the paralysis.

### Recovery and Release

Over several weeks WIRES provided triage, medical treatment and care for hundreds of affected lorikeets.

More than 400 lorikeets recovered with WIRES carer Robyn alone, who erected pre-release aviaries on her property and provided rehabilitation until they were strong enough for release.



# WILDLIFE TRAINING

Supporting wildlife volunteers is a key priority for WIRES and a vital safeguard for the native animals depending on their expert care.

**3,664** COURSES COMPLETED IN FY24

**62** FACE TO FACE SPECIES COURSES delivered to **798** PEOPLE



Rhianon Cochrane - Grey Headed Flying Fox

## WIRES COURSES

### RESCUE 101 TRAINING

Rescue 101 Volunteers complete an entry level training course which enables them to get involved in the rescue and transport of possums, frogs, lizards, turtles and birds. This tier of volunteering has grown to a healthy base of over 500 since inception in 2021 and has greatly helped to provide better outcomes for wildlife with faster response times for rescues.

### RESCUE AND IMMEDIATE CARE COURSE (RICC)

By completing our Rescue and Immediate Care Course (RICC), volunteers become members of WIRES and are connected to their local branch. They are initially authorised to rescue birds, small and large mammals, lizards, turtles, frogs and raptors, and can provide immediate care for up to 24 hours.

WIRES ran 42 face-to-face RICC workshops across the year with 362 people completing their training this way.

### WOMBAT MANGE TRAINING

WIRES offers 3 different pathways to access Wombat Mange Training via our Members Mange course, Community Mange Course which is available for concerned community members, and National Mange course for members of other wildlife groups. These courses equip people with everything they need to diagnose and treat wombats affected by mange. Calls reporting mange-affected wombats have more than doubled in the last 5 years, so we need as much help as we can get to eradicate mange in our precious wombat populations

### ADVANCED SPECIES TRAINING

After completing the RICC, WIRES members are eligible to attend an array of advanced species training, to develop specialised skills to be authorised to care for and rehabilitate species of interest, with the ultimate aim of releasing them back into the wild.

### NATIONAL COURSES

WIRES National Courses are available to members of other wildlife organisations and licensed professionals around the country to equip them with best practice knowledge to enable them to improve outcomes for wildlife in their area.

### NEW COURSES

In October 2023, WIRES Training released a course dedicated to stress and pain management for wildlife. The course addresses the impacts of inadequate pain management and how this affects rehabilitation outcomes, the role of veterinarians in managing pain in wildlife, appropriate pain management strategies for wildlife rehabilitators and the obligations and responsibilities of wildlife rehabilitators to adequately manage pain for wildlife in their care.

During FY24, WIRES Training developed and released three emergency response related courses to support WIRES members respond to emergency events that impact wildlife – including bushfires, flooding and heat stress events. The Training Team also developed three new species care courses to assist wildlife rehabilitators caring for seabirds, lizards, turtles, bandicoots, carnivorous marsupials and native rodents.

#### New courses developed:

- Flying-fox Heat Stress Course
- Small Mammals Rescue and Care Course
- National Lizard and Turtle Care Course
- Understanding Pain in Wildlife Course
- Seabird Rescue and Care Course
- Emergency Response Courses



# WIRES COURSES COMPLETED IN FY24

INTRODUCTORY COURSES	ATTENDEES
Rescue 101	305
Immediate Care Course	12
Community Mangle Treatment Course	138
Rescue and Immediate Care Course	439
Rescue and Immediate Care Refresher Course	24

NATIONAL COURSES	ATTENDEES
National Koala Rescue Course	15
Introductory Tasmanian Mammal Training	62
National Sea Turtle Rescue Course	6
National Sea Snake Rescue Course	1
National Introduction to Wildlife Rescue (Nat Rescue101)	160
National Lizard and Turtle Care Course	187
National Treating Wombats with Mange	43
Wildlife Rehabilitator Train the Trainer	14
Wildlife Rehabilitator Conflict Resolution	23
Wildlife Rehabilitator Leadership	25

SPECIES COURSES	ATTENDEES
Avian Care Course	142
Bat Care Course	144
Frog Care Course	15
Koala Rescue and Transport Course	41
Lizard and Turtle Care Course	55
Macropod Care Course	146
Possum and Glider Care Course	174
Raptor Rescue and Transport Course	39
Small Mammal Care Course	189
Snake Handling Course	104
Seabird Care Course	35
Sea Turtle Rescue and Transport Course	9
Sea Snake Rescue and Transport Course	2
Wombat Mange Treatment Course	66
Wombat Care Course	60

GOVERNANCE COURSES	ATTENDEES
Conflict Resolution	22
Roles & Responsibilities of the Branch Executive	19
Train the Trainer	7
Species Coordinator Course	5
WSC and Board Course	2

WELFARE/EMERGENCY RESPONSE	ATTENDEES
Emergency Response Course	149
Understanding Pain in Wildlife Course	762
Flying-fox heat stress Course	27

## WOMBAT MANGE TREATMENT WORKSHOPS

In 2023, WIRES was awarded funding under the Wildlife Heroes and Foundation for National Parks mange fund. Part of the funding has been allocated to the delivery of face-to-face mange treatment workshops around the state to recruit more mange treatment volunteers.



Ken Piper - Brown Falcon



Jo Bryant-Snaith - Monitor Lizard

# ADVOCACY FOR WILDLIFE

**WIRES has continued to advocate for wildlife, the communities who care about them, and the volunteers who rescue and rehabilitate wildlife. We have increased our presence in parliament, raised critical issues with decision makers, and identified areas where the government can do more. Importantly, WIRES has firmly placed improved outcomes for wildlife as a core component of government policy and outcomes.**

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### ADVOCACY FOR KOALA CONSERVATION

Throughout the year, WIRES has assisted the community to highlight the crisis facing Sydney's only disease free and growing koala colony at Campbelltown.

A devastating number of koalas are being hit and killed on Appin Road, threatening the viability of the local population. We continue to make representations to highlight the critical need for this important colony and are pleased to report the Hon. Penny Sharpe, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council announced, **\$5million dollars in funding to improve outcomes for koalas, including \$4.5million for the Wildlife Health and Conservation Hospital, and \$500,000 in support the dedicated koala rehabilitators in South Western Sydney.**

### ENHANCING WILDLIFE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

This year we also met with the Hon. Jihad Dib, Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice and RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM to discuss the **integration of Wildlife Emergency Response Teams (WERTs) into incident management processes and decision making.** We continue to make considerable progress towards an effective and integrated approach to ensure more effective emergency preparedness, planning and response during wildlife emergency events.

### ADDRESSING VETERINARY WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

Another important event was the NSW Government Inquiry into the Veterinary Workforce Shortage. This was an opportunity to highlight the community service the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector provides and an avoided cost to government. WIRES made three submissions to the Committee and provided evidence in-person during hearings for the Inquiry, emphasising that a suitably trained, resourced, and supported veterinary sector is essential to ensure more effective outcomes for wildlife.

**WIRES submissions to protect and preserve wildlife in response to legislative reviews, proposed changes or proposals that seek to threaten habitat and species included:**

- Appin Road Safety Improvements (2024) Addendum review of environmental factors [SOUTH]
- Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill
- Response to Department of Home Affairs - Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper
- Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience
- Draft Dealing in Protected Birds Code of Practice
- Koala SAI (Offsets) nomination
- Reviewing the NSW Koala Strategy (discussion paper)
- Nature Positive (Environment Protection Australia) Bill (2024) [Provisions] and related Bills
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (POCTA) Amendment (Virtual Stock Fencing) Bill

# GRANTS AND PROGRAMS

In FY24, WIRES supported groups across Australia, including New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

## TRAINING GRANTS PROGRAM

WIRES Training Grants Program continued to support wildlife rescue and rehabilitation groups around Australia with access to high-quality wildlife rescue and care-specific training. Since the program began in 2021, 32 organisations around Australia have participated in the program, exceeding \$85,000 worth of training support.

## NATIONAL GRANTS PROGRAM

In 2023, 75 projects were approved for funding under WIRES National Grants Program 2023. These projects are focused on threatened species rehabilitation and conservation, habitat restoration, community education programs, support for wildlife rehabilitators and an expansion to the wildlife rehabilitation sector.



## NATIONAL GRANTS PROGRAM

75

PROJECTS  
NATIONALLY



**MIKLA LEWIS OAM HABITAT RESTORATION & ENHANCEMENT GRANT**  
Rainforest Rescue, QLD



**PAT CONNORS AVIAN GRANT**  
North East Biodiversity and Conservation, NSW



**HELEN GEORGE OAM MAMMAL GRANT**  
Mornington Peninsula Koala Conservation, VIC



68 FACILITIES, MEDICAL SUPPLIES, RESCUE EQUIPMENT

9 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION

6 WILDLIFE MONITORING & SURVEYS RECOVERY

6 HABITAT RECOVERY

1 NEST BOXES & BURROWS

## PROJECTS PROTECTING WILDLIFE INCLUDING THREATENED SPECIES

Macropods	12	Wombats	5	Bats	8	Birds	10
Koalas	12	Gliders	1	Other mammals	6	Raptors	4
Platypus	1	Frogs	1	Marine Wildlife	3		

## RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM

WIRES Research Grants Program 2024 provided funding to seven projects across five states. The projects include research into wildlife disease, post-release behaviour, predator awareness training and tracking wildlife in the illegal pet trade.

## DISASTER RELIEF PROGRAM

Australian wildlife has been tragically impacted by many unprecedented events in recent years, including fires, floods, food shortages, drought and disease outbreak. Scientists forecast that due to climate change, more severe and frequent natural disasters will continue to be experienced in the future.

WIRES Disaster Relief Program (DRP) focuses on Australia-wide events that impact significant numbers of native animals. The program provides emergency supplies to support wildlife rescuers and rehabilitators during disaster events that affect wildlife. The program is funded by WIRES and a generous contribution from Woolworths.

WIRES Disaster Relief Program provides emergency supplies such as: wildlife food to ensure that native animals have access to the sustenance they need; wildlife first aid for immediate medical care for injured wildlife; rescue equipment to equip rescuers with the tools to save animals safely and efficiently; care equipment and essential supplies for the animals being rehabilitated; personal protective equipment (PPE) to prioritise the safety of volunteers when they are

rescuing and caring for wildlife in disaster situations. FY24 was an extremely busy season for WIRES DRP. We provided support for twelve emergency events including an oil spill, fires, cyclones, an east coast flying fox starvation event, two paralysis events, extreme heat events, droughts and floods. The program helped approximately 40 other wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organisations across New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and Australian

Capital Territory. As well as essential rescue and care equipment, throughout the season, WIRES DRP supplied more than 400kgs of milk formula for orphaned wildlife, over 3 tonnes of fruit for flying foxes and 1.2 tonnes of fish for pelicans during the oil spill.

For more information on the WA oil spill, see page22 of this report and the Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome is covered on page14-15.

### ORGANISATION

### APPLICATION

University of New South Wales (NSW)	<b>Reducing the risk to wildlife from the illegal pet trade</b>
University of the Sunshine Coast (QLD)	<b>Establishing vital roost characteristics to facilitate urban insectivorous bat conservation</b>
University of Canberra (ACT)	<b>Reducing the impact of the deadly amphibian chytrid fungus on native frogs in the wild</b>
The University of Melbourne (VIC)	<b>Field trials of moxidectin to treat sarcoptic mange in wombats</b>
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (WA)	<b>How to stop possums falling from the trees? Strengthening ngwayir (western ringtail possum) resilience in the face of a changing climate and fire regime</b>
The University of Western Australia (WA)	<b>Protecting released western ringtail possums from fox predation</b>
Federation University Australia (VIC)	<b>Behaviour and habitat patterns of birds of prey rehabilitated and released back into areas of western Victoria</b>

## WATER FOR WILDLIFE PROGRAM

Due to drought and bushfires, tree-dwelling animals are at great risk of dehydration and predation as they go in search of water.

In the wake of the catastrophic bushfires of 2019-2020, WIRES launched the Water for Wildlife Program to produce and distribute the Tree Troff water drinker to provide a safe source of supplementary water in the trees for vulnerable wildlife including koalas, gliders, lizards and birds.

By July 2022, 210 units had been distributed. Since then, a total of 564 water drinkers have been delivered by semi-trailer from the storage site outside Gunnedah NSW throughout SE Queensland, and in NSW from the North Coast to Greater Sydney, to council sites

or private properties for collection and assembly by approved applicants.

Feedback from program participants has been exceptional including shared observations of locally rare species and creating advocates amongst groups such as Greater Eastern Ranges and NSW Environmental Education Centres.

Distribution is now focussing on Central and SE NSW and across Victoria where considerable interest was shown when the program first commenced.



Flying fox pup supported by DRP supplies after QLD floods

Photo by Jasmine Vink















A TreeTroff in use

# CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

WIRES would like to extend an enormous thank you to all our Corporate Supporters. Whether through Corporate Partnerships, Corporate Fundraising, Workplace Giving or Corporate Donations, your support enables us to continue our mission to actively rescue, rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife.

With the increasingly complex issues and challenges facing our natural world, Australians are looking to the corporate sector to play a more meaningful role in protecting our environment. Working with WIRES can deliver tangible, long-term advantages to your business and the wildlife we serve.

PLATINUM	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
   	 	<p>KOKO BLACK</p>   	  

# WOOLWORTHS

## PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

Woolworths and WIRES have collaborated since 2020 to build a long-term partnership for the protection of vulnerable Australian wildlife, and to help Woolworths reduce food waste and support the community. The partnership has gone from strength to strength and has shown great impact.

Together, we have established the WIRES Food for Wildlife Program, the largest such program in Australia. The overall program is underpinned by Rescue Food, Food Support and Disaster Relief, and is largely funded through in-store product initiatives.



## RESCUE FOOD

The Rescue Food Program provides surplus meat, fish, fruit and vegetables from Woolworths stores to Australian wildlife carers to help combat food waste and provide supplementary food for native animals in care.

The program continues to expand each year across the country, with wildlife partners now collecting from their local Woolworths stores across every state and territory.

The Rescue Food Program currently supports 114 different wildlife rescue groups, individual carers and WIRES branches across Australia. These groups are supported by the 188 Woolworths stores involved in the Program.

Thanks to the support from these Woolworths stores, over 1,400 wildlife carers are assisted with surplus food donations.

This supports them to care for over 45,000 native animals annually.

## FOOD SUPPORT

Through our Food Support Program, WIRES distributes funds raised through in store product initiatives to support external wildlife carers across Australia, helping them to achieve better outcomes for the native animals in their care.

This allows wildlife organisations and carers across the country to access specialised wildlife food and formula, in turn helping to reduce costs as rescue demands increase in the warmer months.

WIRES have partnered with key wildlife food suppliers to ensure that the best quality, and a wide variety of wildlife food can be delivered directly to volunteers, all around the country.

In FY24 the program directly supported more than 3,900 external wildlife carers and 20,000 native animals with access to specialised food.

## DISASTER RELIEF PROGRAM

Australia has witnessed many unprecedented natural disasters in recent years, such as severe droughts, fires, and floods, which have tragically impacted wildlife.

In response to these events, WIRES set up the Disaster Relief Program. The program aims to provide a quicker and more efficient response to wildlife affected by natural disasters.

To support this program, Woolworths generously provides funding to help wildlife carers with emergency aid in response to major disasters. WIRES administers the funding and projects which focus on regional, state, or national events that impact numerous native animals.



## COMING TOGETHER TO SAVE PELICANS AFTER THE WA OIL SPILL

### CASE STUDY

In July 2023, WIRES learned of a devastating oil spill in Western Australia, imposing an immediate threat to pelicans in a region south of Perth.

Once it comes into contact with their feathers, oil can break down a pelican's waterproof coating, leaving them waterlogged and unable to fly. Additionally, oil-covered pelicans become vulnerable to predators and struggle to find food.

To tackle this environmental emergency, WIRES worked with three wildlife organisations, each playing a vital role in the rescue and rehabilitation of the oil-affected pelicans.

Western Australian Seabird Rescue was on the front line, rescuing over 45 oiled pelicans. After rescue, the pelicans were cared for by WA Wildlife and Darling Ranges Wildlife Shelter. **WIRES' Disaster Relief Program**, with

the support of Woolworths, covered the costs of fish for the rehabilitating pelicans, ensuring they received the nourishment they needed. Our Disaster Relief Program also provided the organisations with additional equipment and PPE.



APPROX

**1,245 kgs**

OF FISH (1.2 TONNES)

# BRAVECTO

## PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

Bravecto has been an extremely valued Platinum Partner of WIRES since 2022. The partnership has achieved so much in the past year, helping us mitigate the devastating impacts of wombat mange.

Mange is a debilitating and painful disease caused by the scabies mite. Due to their living conditions and behaviours, wombats are extremely susceptible to this mite and the disease is devastating many of our bare-nosed wombat populations.

Our partnership ensures that WIRES volunteers and trained mange treaters have access to Bravecto Spot-On for Dogs to assist in treating wombats with sarcoptic mange. This immediately alleviates the suffering of affected wombats and is helping to conserve this iconic species.

Shortly after Bravecto was approved as a treatment method, it became clear that demand would be higher than anticipated. In response, Bravecto and WIRES agreed on a Platinum Partnership, with Bravecto generously donating 2,000 doses of product to treat affected wombats.

The partnership is of strategic importance and is vital in supporting the environment, the community and vulnerable wombat populations. We are deeply grateful for their support.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

In FY24, our marketing strategy focused on continuing to engage with our community by sharing impactful rescue stories and highlighting WIRES' efforts in wildlife conservation. Through various digital channels, we successfully connected with our audience, raising awareness and mobilising support for wildlife protection.

## ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

### SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

- Our social media efforts resulted in a **27.5% increase** in engagement compared to last year. Across

platforms like Instagram and Facebook, we achieved over **18,969,255 impressions**, further extending our reach and deepening connections with supporters.

### WEBSITE TRAFFIC

- Our website also experienced significant growth, with a **94.7% increase** in web traffic and **456,899** of unique visits, reflecting the growing public interest in wildlife conservation and WIRES' work.

### CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

- During the year, we managed critical crisis communications, such as updates on Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome and the successful release of treated birds. These efforts culminated in our most-viewed post, which reached **3.3 million people** and featured a video of the cured lorikeets being released back into the wild.

### END-OF-FINANCIAL-YEAR CAMPAIGN

- Our End-of-Financial-Year campaign raised awareness of the urgent extinction issues facing Australia's wildlife. This campaign created 20 social media posts, Meta ads and Website blogs which reached **333,803** of Australians, successfully galvanizing support for conservation efforts.






### ADVOCACY SUPPORT AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

- We continued to support our Advocacy team by raising awareness of the critical challenges faced by koalas, particularly habitat destruction and human intervention. Our communications highlighted the plight of the Sydney koala colony impacted by road development, generating significant public discourse and support for conservation initiatives.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Our marketing and communication efforts in FY25 will continue to focus on building awareness around the conservation crisis, using powerful storytelling to engage the public and advocate for wildlife protection. By sharing more success stories, challenges, and urgent needs, we aim to further deepen community engagement and support for WIRES' mission.



	<b>2,274,962</b> Website reach
	<b>456,899</b> Page views
	<b>30,326</b> ENews subscribers
	<b>37.6%</b> Click through rate
	<b>18,000,000</b> Users reached on social media





# PHILANTHROPY AND BEQUESTS

**A heartfelt thanks to our Supporters, Major Donors, Trusts, Foundations, and Benefactors. Their generosity has enabled us to continue our vital and lifesaving work rescuing and rehabilitating native animals in need, while also supporting conservation projects that positively impact Australian native wildlife.**

**Thank you for caring about our most vulnerable wildlife; helping them to have a future in the wild.**

WIRES would like to acknowledge the following generous Trusts and Foundations that supported our vital programs this past year:

JMS Family Foundation

S&J Cook Family Foundation

The Smail Family Foundation

Gregg Foundation

Gum Tree Foundation

The Warren Robert Watkins Charitable Trust

Orgill Foundation

Curramore Foundation

PB Senn Family Trust

GreenGib Foundation

Savannah Foundation

Ereshkigal Foundation

The Allen Family Foundation



## ETERNALLY NATIVE

We would like to acknowledge our generous benefactors who have created a legacy to protect wildlife through Wires this past year.

Thank you to the Estates of the late:

Ann Gray

Angela Pina Pearson

Betty Molloy

Colin David Fuller

David Cottle

David Walter Matthews

Elizabeth G Waldock

Jacqueline Loreta Merlino

Jeanette Ann Kitto

Joan Hilary Cole

John Johnson

John Leslie Tolhurst

Julie Douglas

Leanne Maria Grimstone

Marie Lenore Lowndes

Meredith Adrienne Brooks

Miriam Pamela Saxon

Pauline M Dorien-Brown

Peter Alan Masters

Peter George Flay

Robin June Parsons

Ronald Wilfred Lloyd

Maxwell John Wellesley Rowland

Susan Lily Venn

Trevor William Langlands

Brenda Beatrice Magnifico

Douglas George Hillson

Helen Y P Belsey

Laurence Marconnet

Patricia Margaret Harriott

Lorraine Phillips

Nigel Harvey Webster



WIREs is committed to growing and improving wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, information and education services nationally, and to protecting and preserving Australian wildlife for future generations.

Our rescue, rehabilitation and release work returns life to the wild and community support makes this work possible.

By donating to WIREs, you are supporting this mission. Gifts of \$2 and over are tax-deductible within Australia. Thank you!

#### FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



### FINANCIAL UPDATE

WIREs' FY24 Audited Financial Statements will be available before the deadline via the ACNC Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website [www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au)