



Wildlife Rehabilitation

IS IT FOR YOU?

Many people are attracted to wildlife rehabilitation because they believe it is a valuable and rewarding activity. However, there are more facets to wildlife rehabilitation than most people initially expect. It can also be demanding and difficult. We believe that a better understanding of what is involved can help you make a more informed decision about it, how, and when you might want to become involved in wildlife rehabilitation.

As we begin to describe wildlife rehabilitation, we will also highlight some of the commonly held myths.

Green Ringtail Possum



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Myth One

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Anyone who finds an injured or orphaned wild animal can take it home and care for it...

Wildlife required specialist care to survive, especially those that are injured or orphaned. Without such specialized diets, feeding, housing and treatment, these animals will suffer and may die. Inappropriately released wildlife can result in problems with wild populations and/or the animal itself. Caring for wildlife requires specialised training and permits/licenses. Working with wildlife should be taken very seriously.

Benefits of Being a Wildlife Rehabilitator

- Rehabilitation provides a personal connection with nature and wildlife.
- Rehabilitation offers a positive and personal way to give back to nature for all that humans take and the problems we create.
- Rehabilitation brings a feeling of satisfaction from releasing a healthy, strong, viable wild animal back to live wild and free in its natural habitat.
- Rehabilitation provides a unique opportunity for learning about wildlife, nature, environmental issues, and human values.
- Rehabilitation creates an on-going opportunity for personal growth, involving such skills as problem solving, priority-setting, decision-making, conflict and crisis management, and building self-confidence.
- Rehabilitation provides an opportunity to talk with people about wildlife and impart an appreciation for native wildlife and habitat.
- Rehabilitation can help individual wild animals and help us discover ways to help wildlife populations at risk.



Sugar Glider...endemic to most parts of Australia

Interesting Fact...for every one found in the wild in Australia, there are approximately 10 kept as pets in the United States.

Common Wildlife Rehabilitation Activities

- *Answer a phone call from a member of public or hotline coordinator concerned about what he/she considers a wildlife problem: determine the concern; help the caller understand the reason for the situation (e.g., natural history and behaviour of the species); offer suggestions for humane solutions. Many wild animals may not need rehabilitation.*
- *Accept a phone call from an individual, business, or agency: determine if the animal is truly in distress or if it is the caller who is in distress (or both); calm the individual; educate about wildlife and offer suggestions; collect information and decide whether or not to assist the animal; identify risks from injury, disease, or parasites; explain legal issues on the possession of wildlife; arrange for appropriate and safe transport to a rehabilitator or veterinarian.*
- *Prepare for the animal's arrival: have handling and caging equipment ready for a safe transfer; prepare first aid supplies and admittance forms.*

Myth Two

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Wildlife rehabilitation is FUN... Wildlife rehabilitation can be interesting, stimulating, rewarding and sometimes very pleasant, but it is rarely FUN. Rather, it is physically and mentally demanding, emotionally stressful and considerable work. It involves many tasks that aren't necessarily pleasant, such as cleaning wounds, scrubbing cages and aviaries and occasionally having to make the decision to euthanize an animal that is suffering and without a reasonable chance of recovery.

Common Wildlife Rehabilitation Activities

- *Safely take possession of the animal(s); confirm correct identification of the species; assess each animal's condition; gather data from the rescuer; administer first aid; place the animal in a quiet, secure cage; treat if needed.*
- *Consult with a veterinarian for diagnostic testing and medical treatment if needed.*
- *Administer medical treatment (e.g., give medications, change bandages, provide physical therapy) and confer with a veterinarian as needed.*
- *Consult with wildlife experts, as needed, on habitat, diet, behaviours etc.*
- *Determine an appropriate diet and feeding schedule.*
- *Acquire and prepare formula or other food.*
- *Monitor health, growth, behaviour, and waste elimination for animals in care.*
- *Maintain hydration and feeding schedules appropriate for the species, age, and condition (daily for adult animals, several times a day for juveniles, hourly for small mammals, or even every few minutes for some young birds). Provide fresh water as appropriate.*

Common Wildlife Rehabilitation Activities

- *Provide safe housing and caging or appropriate environment for the species, age, and condition.*
- *Maintain a clean and sanitary environment. This requires considerable laundering and disinfecting.*
- *Maintain records and comply with permit and license requirements regarding paperwork.*
- *Prepare the animal for release: determine if it can identify, recognize, or catch food; check for predator recognition and survival skills; provide outdoor acclimatization, physical conditioning, and socialization with its own species.*
- *Identify potential release sites that meet habitat needs for the species and regulatory requirements; obtain landowner approval, if necessary; obtain wildlife agency approval, if necessary.*
- *Arrange transport to the release site.*
- *Release the animal at the appropriate time of day and/or season.*
- *Disposition of the animal: if it cannot be released, arrange for euthanasia or placement with a licensed facility for permanent care.*
- *Order supplies.*

Common Wildlife Rehabilitation Activities

- *Maintain communication with other rehabilitators as well as wildlife agency personnel.*
- *Build and repair cages/enclosures (less frequent).*
- *Devote time to continuing wildlife training and education, attending conferences, and researching topics that affect rehabilitation activities (less frequent).*
- *If you are able, volunteer some time to your wildlife organisation regarding other activities such as fund raising, public education seminars, hotline shifts etc.*

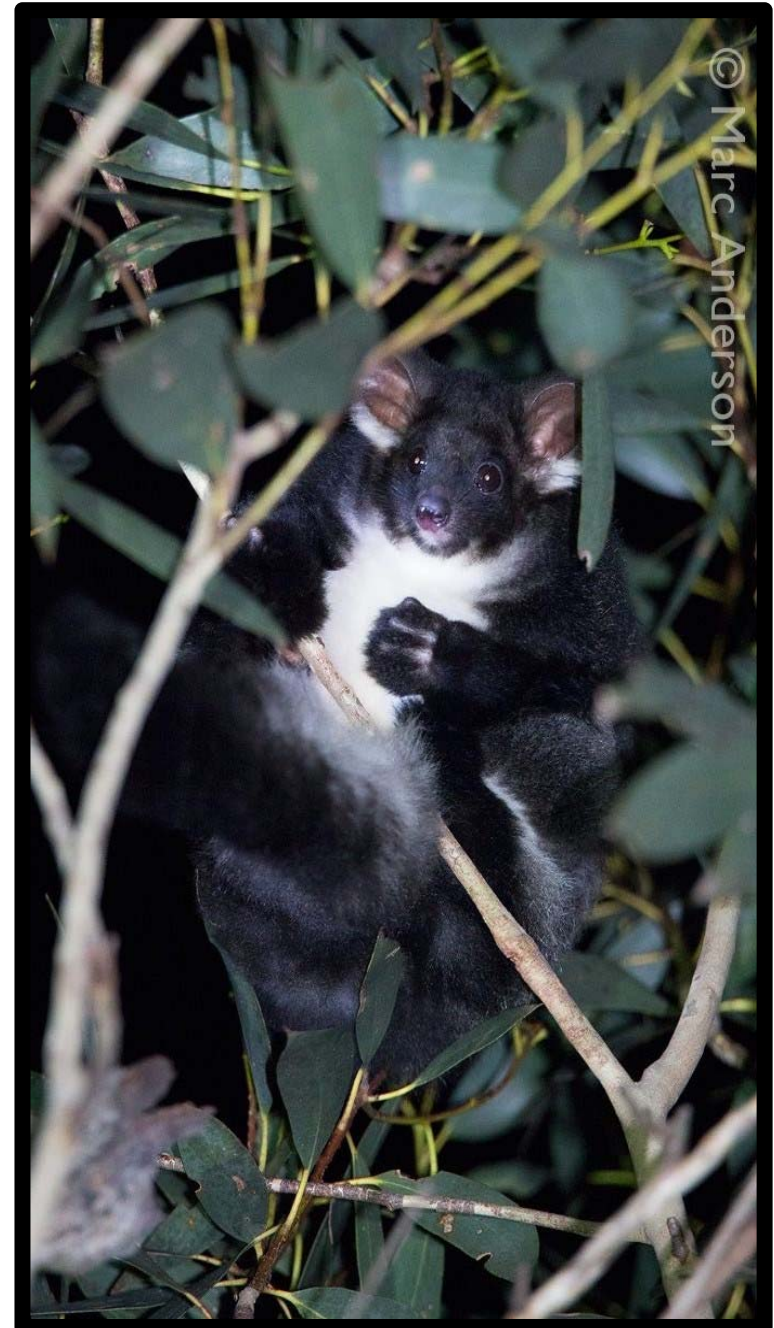


Common Brushtail Possum – Golden colour morph (very rare)



Southern Greater Glider (*Petauroides Volans Major*)

Pictured are the two colour variances of the Greater Glider found in the southern regions of Australia. Here in Far North Qld we have the Northern Greater Glider (*Volans Minor*) that is typically smaller in size and more charcoal grey in colour with white underbelly. The Northern Greater Glider is scientifically known as a sub-species.



Myth Three

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Wildlife rehabilitation is a hobby...

People choose when they spend time on a hobby. Wildlife rehabilitators do not have that option. Once an animal comes into care, providing food, water, and medical care; cleaning cages; and doing other necessary tasks requires time and effort each and every day. You cannot care for wildlife only when it is convenient, nor can you leave for an unplanned trip without first arranging care for your animals by another responsible wildlife rehabilitator.

- *Time* is a critical requirement for wildlife rehabilitators.
- Another key requirement is *commitment*, since once a wild animal is admitted for rehabilitation; it is totally dependent on the rehabilitator.
- Another key requirement is *financial security*.
- Wildlife rehabilitators must have *adequate space and habitat*, and meet government regulations for the species rehabilitated.
- *Knowledge and skill* in working with wildlife in a variety of situations are also key requirements.
- *Managing stress and risk* is yet another important aspect of wildlife rehabilitation.



**Adult Pygmy Possum (left) and baby
Green Ringtail Possum (right)**

The Green Ringtail Possum is endemic to the Wet Tropics area in Far North Qld. They rarely come into care and are very special and unique animals. Their fur is “olive green” in colour and they are very fussy eaters. The Pygmy Possum is the worlds second smallest marsupial. An adult only weighs approximately 18grams!



Myth Four



The Government “pays” Wildlife Rehabilitators to care for wildlife...

this is not true. They are generally unpaid volunteers who personally fund the expenses for their wildlife rehabilitation activities. Wildlife Rehab organisations such as TWR Inc. help our members where and when we can financially through a variety of means.

Wildlife rehabilitation licenses or permits are required to work with most native species.

- With very few exceptions, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protections requires individuals to hold current wildlife rehabilitation permits or licenses to rehabilitate wildlife. As a member of Tablelands Wildlife Rescue Inc, your permit will be under our name, so there is no real need to obtain your personal permit.
- If an animal comes into your care that happens to be listed as “endangered”, “critically endangered”, “vulnerable” or “near threatened” a special permit **MUST** be applied for. It is your responsibility to contact your management committee members as soon as possible regarding this.

- A TWR member MUST also contact the management committee members as soon as possible as you are NOT PERMITTED to care for the following animals species: Koala, Platypus, Echidna, Cassowary and Emu. Wildlife of the families Elapidae, Hydrophiidae and Laticaudidae (ALL species of snake); wildlife in the order Cheloniidae (marine turtles); wildlife in the order Cetacea (whales and dolphins); wildlife in the order Sirenia (dugongs); and wildlife in the order Crocodilia (crocodiles).
- It is the responsibility of the member to ensure that they have a current vaccination against Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL) and it is the responsibility of the licensee that ONLY persons that have been vaccinated against ABL be permitted to come into contact with, or handle bat species.
- The permit does NOT authorise the permanent keeping of wildlife not suitable for release
- The licensee (or member of TWR Inc) MUST adhere to the Code of Practice for Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Qld (Nature Conservation Act 1992)
- The licensee (or member of TWR Inc) MUST keep up to date records pertaining to each animal in care. These records must include the details of the person who found it, date, species, sex, nature of illness/injuries, body weight, method and locality of release, veterinary prognosis and any other relevant information for future reference. These records MUST be available upon request by a Conservation Officer.
- Any TWR members who receive an animal beyond their knowledge, training or capabilities, MUST contact the management committee as soon as possible for either mentorship (depending on the species classification) and/or transfer to a senior wildlife rehabilitator.

The BEST reasons for becoming a Wildlife Rehabilitator...

- Knowing that you are helping an animal that would otherwise have died without your intervention.
- Watching an animal develop and grow from a tiny baby into a strong and healthy sub-adult or adult.
- Witnessing the final soft release of an animal you have cared for, in some cases for many months, back to their natural habitat.
- Knowing that you have taught and encouraged both natural and non-natural behaviours, normally taught and encouraged by their biological mother.
- Shedding light on environmental issues within the community.
- Helping the general public understand how they could personally improve the wellbeing of native wildlife.
- Encourage the general public to become responsible domestic animal owners.
- Learning about an issue you are passionate about.
- A very strong sense of satisfaction...



Margit Cianelli with two of her Lumholtz Tree Kangaroo's in care



Margit and Bob Irwin with Dobby and Nelson – Lumholtz Tree Kangaroo's



Baby Lumholtz Tree Kangaroo

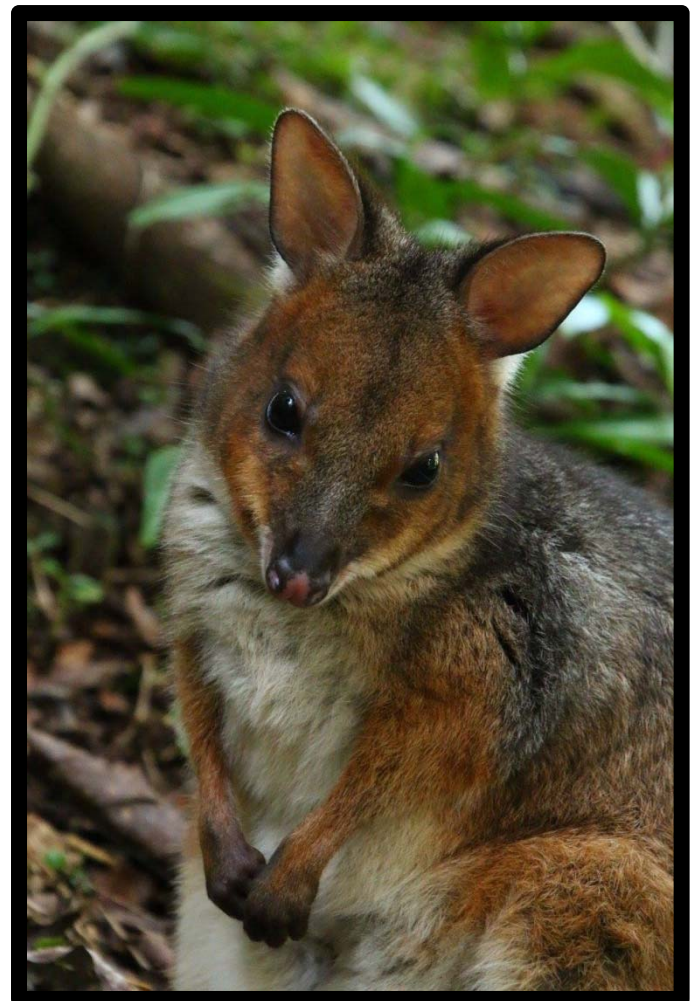
In conclusion...it is very important to realise and remember that Wildlife Rehabilitation can be what you want it to be. By this we mean that you as an individual can choose the level of commitment that will best suit your existing circumstances. We strongly recommend that you specialise in a chosen species or group of species (for example macropods) and concentrate on learning as much as you can about that species or group. There will be times that you will have to say "no" to additional animals coming into care. Get used to this and don't feel that you have no choice in the matter. It is vital to remember that home based wildlife rehabilitation must remain conducive to your family life and surrounds. If it becomes a "chore", then it is likely that you will become disenfranchised and you will begin to not take the responsibility seriously. These animals need your attention 100% of the time...this is not a hobby.



Pinkie (unfurred) Wallaby



Adult Pademelon (below)
Juvenile Pademelon (left)
Baby Pademelon (below left)



*NOW YOU HAVE AN
IMPORTANT DECISION TO
MAKE...WE HOPE TO SEE
YOU ALL AS MEMBERS
SOON!*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!



TABLELANDS
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www.tablelandswildliferescue.com