

2021 Wildlife Rehabilitation Award

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Award is awarded to an individual or a wildlife conservation group contributing to the preservation of Australia's wildlife. The award is intended to acknowledge and commemorate the individuals or wildlife conservation groups working tirelessly to rescue, rehabilitate, and conserve Australia's native wildlife. Many people find the experience of rehabilitating native wildlife rewarding; however, it is time-consuming and can be very expensive.

The award for 2021 was presented to Wildlife Rescue Australia of Woolgoolga, New South Wales.

Wildlife Rescue Australia is an Australia-wide, specialist volunteer organisation dedicated to rescuing native animals – Australia's first truly national twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week wildlife rescue phone service. Wildlife Rescue Australia operates an emergency twenty-four-hour call centre staffed by home-based phone coordinators trained to assist in all aspects of animal rescues.

Wildlife Rescue Australia has a considerable impact on the rehabilitation of native wildlife. The dedication of its founders can be seen in the technological development and the enormous volunteer hours that have already, and still are, being put into creating an easy-to-use efficient wildlife rescue system. Winning the Wildlife Rehabilitation Award will help promote this innovative and nationally coordinated wildlife rescue service that saves the lives of thousands of vulnerable native species in need of assistance.

Acceptance Speech from Wildlife Rescue Australia

First of all, we would like to thank the Australian Wildlife Society for this award. Like many volunteer organisations, we struggle to make ends meet, and this award is greatly appreciated. Wildlife Rescue Australia is run entirely by volunteers who work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week Australia-wide, to facilitate the rescue of injured or orphaned wildlife. Wildlife Rescue Australia came about because of our concern that many wildlife rescue organisations had difficulty answering their phones.

The phone call is the first contact between the member of the public seeking help and the provision of that help. If a phone is unanswered, an animal can be left to suffer or die. The caller feels frustrated or frantic. Wildlife rescue and carer groups are staffed by wonderful volunteers who work tirelessly; spending many hours rescuing and caring for wildlife and having to be on duty to answer the phone can often be just too much.

Wildlife Rescue Australia members do not generally go out and rescue animals, nor do we look after them. Our strength lies in that we organise rescues, using in-house computer software which uses an extensive database containing vets, tree climbers, chimney sweeps, local councils, police, and other contacts Australia-wide. Our phone coordinators are specially trained to use this system. At the click of a button, phone coordinators can direct the caller to the nearest vet, including an address and opening hours, provide the contact details of a local carer group, or another appropriate source of help, Australia-wide.

Once again, we would like to sincerely thank the Australian Wildlife Society for their generosity and recognition of our wildlife rescue work.



L to R: Brian Scarsbrick AM, Coral Johnson, Dianne Ward, Dr Julie Old, and Patrick Medway AM.