

2022 Community Wildlife Conservation Award

The Community Wildlife Conservation Award is awarded to a community group contributing to wildlife preservation in Australia.

The award for 2022 was presented to Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue LAOKO Inc of Berridale, New South Wales.

Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue LAOKO Inc, formed in 1988, is the second longest-running wildlife rescue group in New South Wales. It is a community organisation run entirely by volunteers caring for orphans, rehabilitating injured wildlife, and providing community education and training programs. Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue rescues injured and orphaned native fauna in the entire Snowy Monaro region. They have an emergency phone number operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by volunteers.



2022 Community Conservation Award. L to R: Dr Julie Old, Lisa Petroff, and John Creighton.

Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue regularly provides information at community functions, markets, civic clubs, and seasonal events. They are also present at schools whenever they are invited. They provide regular training events for members of the public with or without membership.

They have a social media presence, newsletters, and a website, all providing valuable educational information. Some Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue members have substantial landholdings in which to release rehabilitated animals. No call for help from a public member is ignored, and all native animals are protected and cared for by Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue members. Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue has taken over 1,200 emergency calls for help from the public and had approximately 250 animals in care in the past twelve months with almost no government funding (except for \$2,000 per year provided by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service).

A committee manages the organisation, with five positions on the executive committee and eleven positions on the general committee. These volunteers work tirelessly and are devoted to the native fauna in the Snowy Monaro region.

They have had a long-standing role as a community group aiding species conservation. They dedicate enormous time and resources to rescuing and caring for native animals in need and are well deserving of the Community Wildlife Conservation Award.

Acceptance Speech from Snowy Mountains Wildlife Rescue LAOKO Inc

We accept this award with our deepest gratitude – thank you, Australian Wildlife Society.

We are a small volunteer rescue group in the heart of the Snowy Mountains in New South Wales, covering the entire Snowy Monaro Local Government Area. Our volunteers coordinate a phone line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to rescue, rehabilitate, and eventually release our local native wildlife.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services grant our license to rescue and rehabilitate native fauna. It regulates our rescues and rehabilitation of all animals to ensure they can be returned to their natural habitat.

The award and recognition are wonderful and greatly appreciated. The \$5,000 will help us purchase and supply the unique marsupial milk powder for orphaned or injured joey kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, possums, and koalas we rescue yearly. Our average milk expense is at least \$20,000 per year. We must continually fundraise or seek grants or donations for our group to survive.

Sadly, our peak season for rescues is winter, with the advent of snow season – when the influx of snow tourist traffic

in our region can only be described as slightly chaotic! It seems everyone is in a hurry to make it to their ski holiday destination. Unfortunately, many of our native wildlife species are nocturnal or are active at night, dusk, and dawn. Many graze roadside and often fall victim to motor vehicle accidents.

Last year we received more than 1,200 calls to our 24-hour emergency phone number and rescued over 700 native injured or orphaned animals. Each animal was placed with a trained wildlife carer until it could be rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Wombat joeys are in care for approximately two years before being released, and kangaroo and wallaby joeys stay in care for approximately ten months. The dedication our members exhibit to caring for and releasing native animals is tremendous, and they offer a considerable commitment to our native fauna.

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