

2022 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 2022 was presented to Quoin Turtle Rehabilitation Centre of Gladstone Harbour, Queensland.

Quoin Island Turtle Rehabilitation Centre is located on Quoin Island in Gladstone Harbour, the gateway to the Southern Great Barrier Reef. They are dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of critically endangered and endangered sea turtles.

Quoin Island Turtle Rehabilitation Centre opened in March 2012 and is the region's first sea turtle rehabilitation facility. They service Central Queensland, from Yeppoon to Agnes Water, about 300 km of coastline.

Sea turtles are constantly at risk of injury or illness. Environmental events like flooding and the constant threat of human interference, such as fishing, boating, and littering, heavily impact them. Each turtle requires an individual assessment and care program, with successful rehabilitation taking many months. The centre has a steady success rate of 72 percent, meaning most of the patients are rehabilitated and released back into the wild. Since its establishment, the centre has rehabilitated and released 236 sea turtles into the wild.

Of the 236 turtles taken in by Quoin Island Turtle Rehab Centre, 213 were green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), 14 hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), 6 flatback sea turtles (*Natator depressus*) and 3 loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*). All species are either endangered or critically endangered.



2022 Wildlife Rehabilitation Award. L to R: Dr Julie Old, X, and Dr Robin Crisman.

Acceptance Speech from Quoin Turtle Rehabilitation Centre

We are very grateful and honoured to receive this award. Our centre cares for sick and injured sea turtles 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Like all wildlife organisations and carers, we purely do this for the animals, expecting nothing in return. To have our hard work recognised and acknowledged means a lot to us.

We opened our rehabilitation centre on 3 March 2012 in response to the large amounts of sea turtles stranded in our region due to flooding and a cyclone. These high rainfall events on land cause sediment to run into the ocean and cover sea grass, the primary food source for sea turtles. When turtles have used all their fat stores, they strand and are severely emaciated. It takes turtles, on average, three months in care with us to recover, and with a success rate of 72 percent, most turtles return to the ocean.

We are the only sea turtle rehabilitation centre in our region and still deal with the effects of flooding. Last year, we received triple the number of patients compared to 2012 when we started. This influx of patients in care resulted from two separate flooding events in our region.

Other significant problems sea turtles in our region face are boat strikes and fishing line entanglements. We are located in the Gladstone harbour, the gateway to the Southern Great Barrier Reef, which gets heavily marketed as a boating and fishing destination. Consequently, unfortunately, that comes at a cost to marine wildlife.

Our hope for the future is that human impact on innocent sea turtles due to negligence will be a thing of the past. For

that reason, we also focus on educating the public. We set up our stall at several local events, write educational posts on social media platforms, and have schools visit our centre regularly. We educate people about the impacts of plastic, fishing, and boating on sea turtles. We also teach them how to reduce their plastic consumption and go responsible fishing and boating. The children are very receptive to this information and go home and teach their parents.

Fortunately, we have a steady base of about one hundred volunteers who respond to strandings up to 400 kilometres away, help us transport turtles across the region, prepare food, feed the turtles, and clean the tanks and pool. We also have three to four volunteers that live on-site at any time to help provide around-the-clock patient care. Without the help of volunteers, our centre would not be as successful as it is.

This award is an acknowledgement to all the volunteers, local businesses, schools, and individuals who support us, but especially to the person who makes it all possible: the very generous Bob McCosker, who built our centre and still pays all the bills.

Thank you, Australian Wildlife Society, for this award and the recognition of our wildlife conservation work. In accepting the award, we acknowledge all the other organisations and individuals across Australia working tirelessly to rescue and rehabilitate wildlife. Thank you for all you do, and keep up the excellent work!