

## 2023 Community Wildlife Conservation Award

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

The award for 2023 was presented to **The Agile Project – Wildlife Rescue Inc.** of Cairns, Queensland.

The Agile Project is a dedicated team rehabilitating native animals in Cairns and surrounding regions. Over the past four years, they have successfully relocated 880 agile wallabies (*Macropus agilis*) from the suburbs of Cairns to a safe habitat. They provide a 24-hour hotline and offer animal rescue and care courses to ensure any distressed, injured, or displaced animals can be rescued and rehabilitated.

The group actively engages with the community through educational talks at local schools and community events and hosts informative stalls. They also work closely with and bring together regional stakeholders, such as the community, local Council, and developers, to ensure the conservation of native wildlife. Their efforts have been recognised with the Community Conservation Award for their outstanding dedication to community engagement and wildlife preservation.

### Acceptance Speech from The Agile Project

From all The Agile Project members, we thank the person who nominated us and the Australian Wildlife Society for recognising our efforts through this award.

The Agile Wallaby Project was originally an initiative founded by Shai Ager in 2017 to establish protocols for a large-scale macropod relocation to be carried out under her guidance.

A few years later, the group evolved into a rescue and rehabilitation service that helps not only wallabies and other macropods but all native species across Far North Queensland. We commit to ensuring accountability for ethical practices, responsible resource management, and fostering a supportive environment prioritising the mental health and well-being of all individuals involved in our wildlife rescue and conservation efforts. Our central committee does its best to foster a culture of open communication and mutual respect to meet the highest standards of ethical conduct, transparency, and responsibility in all activities. We see this

as a priority due to the demanding nature of the work we are exposed to. Doing so ensures our members feel supported and helps with the longevity and continuity of their time as volunteers.

Like other dedicated non-profit wildlife rescue groups around Australia, we:

1. Have a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week rescue hotline,
2. Provide training in triage, care, and humane capture of native animals,
3. Have a dedicated team of rescuers and carers,
4. Create fundraising events to assist with the demanding costs of releasing an animal back into the wild, raise public awareness, and educate the community, and
5. Work alongside key stakeholders such as councils and developers to achieve the best outcomes for wildlife.

With over 160 members, we are a very active volunteer group with people out on the roads, answering phones, working

behind the scenes, and raising animals from their homes daily.

Additionally, our group includes citizen scientists who help with research, data collection, and studies that contribute to developing better wildlife management practices across Australia. Our original large-scale macropod relocation of over eight hundred agile wallabies was so successful that it helped set a precedent for an alternative approach to human-wildlife conflicts. The success has been well-documented, and state government bodies even use it as a reference in their legislation and processes. Our founder and other experienced macropod handlers now travel Australia, teaching what so many others told us was 'impossible' and proving large-scale relocation success in agile wallabies and many other species, contributing to the biodiverse range of fauna across the country.

Following the recent Cyclone Jasper, Cairns and the surrounding area were impacted by the worst floods our area has seen in one hundred years. Our rescue hotline received over 150 wildlife rescue callouts in 24 hours. That week, we had over fifty joeys come into care and let's say our bird records 'flew out the window' because we simply could not keep up. Many of these flood-affected wildlife victims are still in care and are experiencing ongoing medical problems. The receipt of \$5,000 from the Australian Wildlife Society will be a significant help in continuing to provide these animals with the love and care they deserve, and will assist us in purchasing medical supplies and covering vet bills. To be recognised for our work by receiving this award is a great honour and much appreciated.

Once again, on behalf of The Agile Project, thank you to the Australian Wildlife Society for their generosity and recognition of the tireless work our volunteers do for our native wildlife.



2023 Community Wildlife Conservation Award Recipient. L to R: Brian Scarsbrick AM, Alison James (Treasurer, The Agile Project), and Patrick Medway AM.



L to R: Shai Ager (President) and Alison James (Treasurer) relocating an agile wallaby (*Macropus agilis*). Image: The Agile Project.