



# Saving Wildlife in South Australia

Dina De Ruyter, SA Native Animal Rescue Inc.

SA Native Animal Rescue Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation that started in November 2022 with a group of experienced wildlife carers with wildlife permits. We rescue sick and injured wildlife and, when well and rehabilitated, release them back into the wild. We aim to support our wildlife carers in the best way possible, which includes supplying them with food and equipment for wildlife.

In addition to specialising in birds and other small native species, our organisation is committed to researching information on vulnerable species such as the yellow-footed antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*), native bush rat (*Rattus fuscipes*), and other small native animals that most people are unaware of. By doing so, we aim

to educate members of the public on the required habitat and food sources these animals depend on. We believe in educating the public about native wildlife so that our wildlife has a better chance of survival. We also aim to highlight the reasons why we are losing our wildlife, such as the disappearing forests and green pathways due to urbanisation, in hopes of enhancing positive perceptions and actions towards our wildlife and ensuring that our native species persist well into the future.

We are delighted to share some short stories and images of a few species our wildlife carers have either rescued, rehabilitated, and released back into the wild and/or provided specialised information about to members of the public.

## Yellow-Footed Antechinus

Nine yellow-footed antechinus were found under a fallen branch when a member of the public was clearing his property. Antechinus are marsupials. They are a protected species. They are classified as vulnerable in South Australia. Their back feet have a thumb (like the rat); however, they have no claw on this thumb. They have small cat-like teeth.

**Top:** Three noisy miners (*Manorina melanocephala*). Image: Maria Yatskova.

**Bottom left:** Rosie the ringtail possum (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*). Image: Jill Caruso.

**Bottom right:** A juvenile yellow-footed antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*). Image: Jill Caruso.





SA Native Animal Rescue's Logo. Images: Nuria Solsona, Jill Caruso, Aliya Piper, Dina De Ruyter, Charlotte Faulhaber, and Maria Yatskova.



Dina De Ruyter next to native bush rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) habitat. Image: Jill Caruso.



Robbie (L) and Roxie (R), the brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*). Image: Bethany Badger.

The quickest way to tell the difference between an antechinus and a mouse is by looking at their head. An antechinus has a much pointier, long, narrow snout, unlike a mouse with a round head and nose. They are also larger than a mouse, with a body length of up to 165 millimetres. They also have a tail that is approximately the same length as its body. They have a white ring of fur around their eyes, doubled-lobed ears, and yellow feet, legs, and bellies. Unfortunately, most people mistake antechinus for ordinary house mice.

### Ringtail Possum

Rosie, the ringtail possum (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*), came into care weighing 49 grams. When she was old enough and able to look after herself, she was softly released with her mate on a property. She returned with triplets and is doing a great job as a first-time mum.

Seeing the dedication and around-the-clock support our carers provide our wildlife is admirable. It is extremely rewarding when animals are given another chance to live the life they deserve, free and in the wild, and successfully reproduce in their natural environment.

### Purple-Crowned Lorikeet

Maisy, the juvenile, purple-crowned lorikeet (*Parvipsitta porphyrocephala*), was found on the footpath in front of McLaren Vale Primary School with a broken leg. After many trips to the vet, two weeks in splints and bandages, and weeks of physiotherapy to increase leg movement and strength, Maisy finally started socialising with other birds.

Maisy was paired with two young musk lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) because there were no other purple-crowned lorikeets to pair her with. Once they had all developed good flight strength and an aversion to humans, they were released in McLaren Vale, close to where Maisy was initially found and where there is a large population of rainbow, musk, and purple-crowned lorikeets.

### Native Bush Rats

SA Native Animal Rescue received a telephone call from a lady in McLaren Vale who had found five bush rats alone in an abandoned car on her property with no mother in sight. When we first received them, we had to ensure they were native and not the common black or brown rat. After research and phone calls, we realised we had five baby native bush rats. We learnt a lot about them and enjoyed caring for and rehabilitating them back into the wild.

The native bush rat is a small omnivorous rodent (which means they eat fungi, grasses, fruits, seeds, and insects). They are found across Australia in woodland areas. They are usually nocturnal and elusive. Their numbers continue to decline due to feral predator predation and habitat loss.

### Brushtail Possums

Roxy and Robbie, two brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), were brought into the Meadows Veterinary Centre by a member of the public, who said they were twins. However, there was 70 grams difference in



weight between them. As we did not have the mum, we could not check whether both teats were being used, which would alert us that they could be siblings. We often get brushtail possums with a joey in the pouch and an older one. We usually do not separate them. These two were successfully released together.

### Koala

This story is dedicated to a koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) called Alphie. Alphie was a local koala who lived in our neighbourhood for many years. He was one of the reasons I became a koala carer. Alphie moved into our neighbourhood when he was a young, energetic koala. I saw him on many occasions in his favourite tree.

As a koala carer, I had Alphie in care on two occasions. In 2014, I rescued him as he was severely dehydrated during one extremely hot summer. The Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Centre in Plympton, South Australia, rehydrated him, and when he recovered, he was released. In 2017, he was hit by the neighbour's car as he was sitting in the middle of their driveway, and the neighbour did not see him. He was assessed by the Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Centre and was given all clear but was still extremely sore due to soft tissue injuries. He stayed with me for a while, then released in his favourite tree.

Unfortunately, at the end of last year, a group of people were looking at a koala near my place, and I went over to have a look. It was Alphie. Alphie was struggling and not in good condition. At this stage, he was about 14 or 15 years old. After an assessment, Alphie's teeth were completely worn down, and he had gut issues. Unfortunately, Alphie went to Koala Heaven. Rest in Peace, Alphie. You have taught me a lot about koala behaviour and the habitat you live in.

### Noisy Miners

Noisy miners (*Manorina melanocephala*) are a protected native Australian species and one of the most misunderstood native birds in Australia. They are very territorial and are dedicated to protecting their babies. Noisy miners are honeyeaters and, as such, have an essential role in pollinating plants.

They are often accused of taking the territory of other smaller honeyeaters. The reality is that they are a successful species that takes advantage of our changing environment – caused by humans. Other honeyeaters and smaller birds need a larger scrub area and low vegetation to survive. As we continue to destroy these scrub areas necessary for these other small species, they will continue to disappear. The loss of these small species is sometimes blamed on the noisy miners, but this is not true.

We are incredibly grateful for the support provided by the Australia Wildlife Society. With this financial assistance, we can obtain resources for our wildlife carers, such as food supplies, incubators, enclosures, thermo-controlled heat mats, rescue baskets, syringes, and teats to help sick and injured wildlife with their rescue, rehabilitation, and release.

**To find out more about the work of SA Native Animal Rescue, please visit [bit.ly/SANARInc](http://bit.ly/SANARInc)**



Alphie the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) when he was younger. Image: Dina De Ruyter.



A juvenile native bush rat (*Rattus fuscipes*) feeding. Image: Jill Caruso.



Maisy the purple-crowned lorikeet (*Parvipsitta porphyrocephala*) (Top). Image: Aliya Piper.