



IMPACT REPORT FY21



Billy Thomson

Image © Billy Thomson
Short-beaked echidna
(*Tachyglossus aculeatus*)

ABOUT US

WIRES is Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation and has been rescuing and caring for sick, injured and orphaned native animals for over 35 years. Our ongoing mission is to actively rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife and inspire others to do the same.

WIRES operate a dedicated Wildlife Rescue Office assisting wildlife and the community across Australia 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, providing rescue advice and assistance for over 130,000 animals annually. We also have provided full-time mobile Wildlife Emergency Responders operating across Greater Sydney, South-East Queensland & Tasmania.

WIRES has been providing significant national support for hundreds of projects to assist with wildlife rescue and rehabilitation across Australia while also working nationally with major partners to support the long-term recovery of wildlife habitat and the long-term preservation of native species in the wild.

We are now in the United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration and we are facing unprecedented issues putting the future of wildlife at risk. WIRES remains focused on implementing projects to improve rescue, rehabilitation and recovery outcomes for wildlife, reduce future emergency risk, mitigate the impacts of climate change, protect habitat and save native fauna from extinction.



WIRES acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land and recognise their connection to native wildlife. We pay respects to their Elders past and present.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

AS OUR NATION MOVED INTO RECOVERY MODE FOLLOWING THE BLACK SUMMER BUSHFIRES, THE TEAM AT WIRES FOCUSED ON IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR OUR WILDLIFE.

The past year demonstrated once again that Australia's climate emergencies are becoming more frequent and severe. Many parts of the country endured major floods and fire and the impacts on our native animals have been nothing short of devastating.

Whilst we can never bring back the billions of native animals that perished in the 2019/20 bushfires, we continue to do everything possible to re-establish the populations we've lost and safeguard their future.

Our focus over this period has been on helping build the capacity of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in Australia, paying particular attention to improved emergency response, the restoration of threatened species habitat and funding critical research for our most vulnerable native species.

This year we also established fully equipped mobile rescue teams to reach across vast and often remote locations in NSW and QLD, and together with our network of dedicated volunteer carers, directly assisted more than 130,000 sick, displaced, injured and orphaned native animals. Our 24/7 Wildlife Rescue Office took more than 182,000 calls.

Our thanks go out to the veterinary staff, wildlife hospitals and rescue groups across Australia who care for native animals every day.

We also thank those who reported an injured animal, donated, fundraised, shared our social media posts, offered a safe haven for wildlife or completed a rescue training course.

Finally a special thanks to our amazing volunteers, who give so much of themselves in service to native animals, every single day (and night) of their lives. We truly appreciate you. Together we have assisted thousands of desperate native animals over the past year – and on their behalf, I thank you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leanne Taylor".

Leanne Taylor, WIRES CEO



NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE

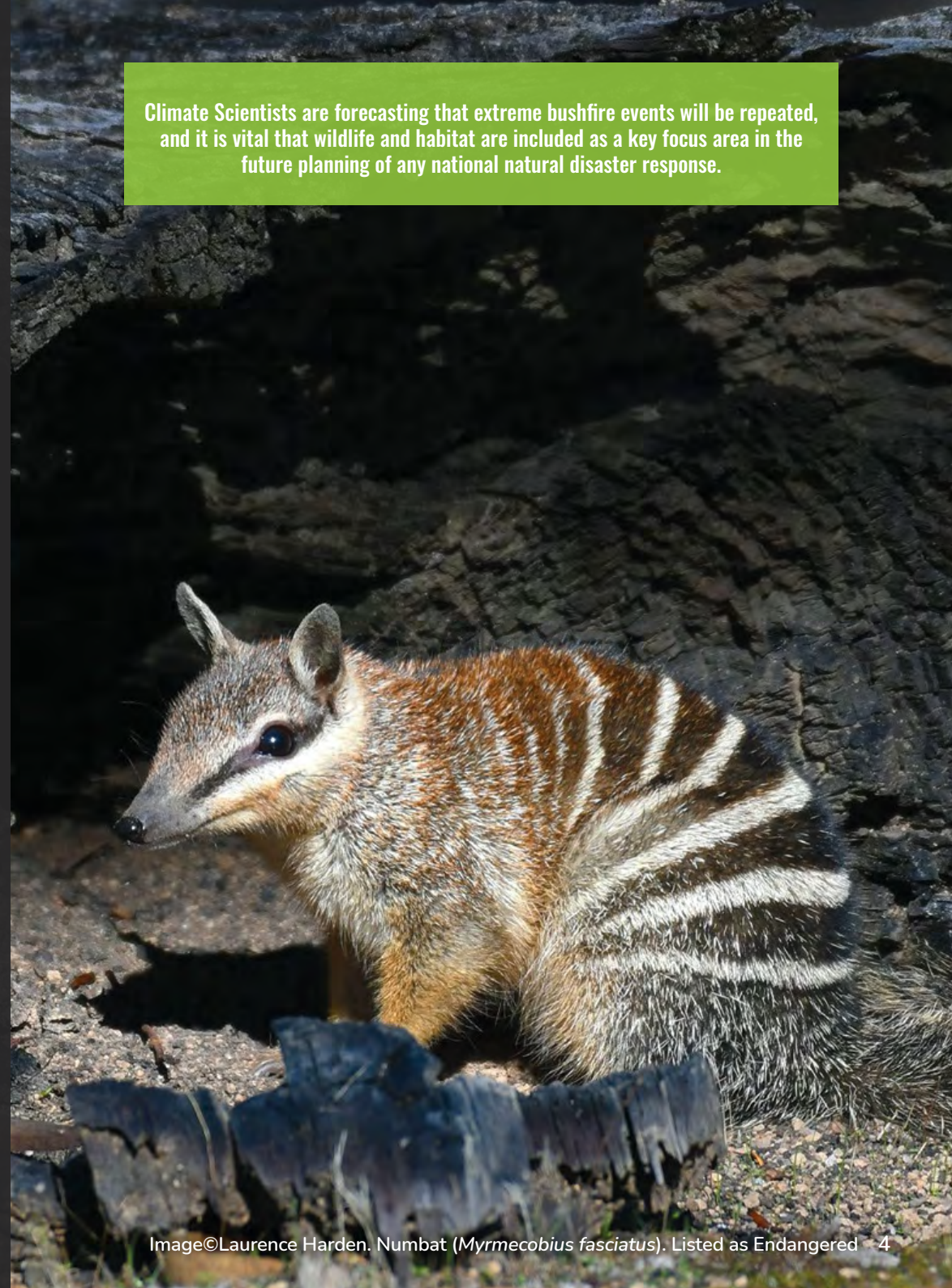
In July 2020 WIRES CEO, Leanne Taylor, represented WIRES as a witness during the Royal Commission into the National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

Critical aspects of wildlife emergency management WIRES identified for improvement included:

- Developing and implementing clear wildlife emergency management strategies and responsibilities focused on animal welfare
- Quick identification and communication of requirements for wildlife search and rescue
- Establishing consistent requirements regarding access to bushfire affected areas for wildlife responders, including the provision of relevant training for all emergency responders to be able to access and operate safely in a fire affected area.
- Changing firefighting mitigation strategies to avoid additional loss of wildlife and habitat
- Coordinating professional triage centres established and managed by vets and vet nurses trained to treat Australian wildlife
- Integrating established wildlife focused groups and authorities into overall emergency management operations and planning, at local, state and federal levels.
- Developing specialist wildlife emergency response teams

The scale of biodiversity loss following the recent bushfire crisis, is on an ecological scale that will have impacts on wild populations well in to the future. With so many native species experiencing serious decline key strategies need to be implemented urgently to ensure that habitat and wildlife are protected.

Climate Scientists are forecasting that extreme bushfire events will be repeated, and it is vital that wildlife and habitat are included as a key focus area in the future planning of any national natural disaster response.



FY 2020-2021 PRIORITIES

WIRES FY 2020-2021 PRIORITIES	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Build strong alliances with vets, wildlife hospitals and other rescue groups to collectively and consistently rescue and care for more native animals nationally.	Currumbin Hospital Extension ERT QLD – full-time wildlife rescue Veterinary vaccination program
Recruit and train more wildlife rescue volunteers to increase our capacity to attend calls & provide ongoing care to injured wildlife.	New Rescue 101 program Training Grants program
Expand wildlife information and education programs, particularly in relation to threatened species.	Launched new marine turtle rescue course
Improve WIRES and national systems for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, to deliver the fastest possible rescues and best practice care for native animals.	Bonorong Tasmania using our rescue comms system xMatters, providing access to over 1000 volunteers
Increase emergency preparedness to be able to better respond to wildlife in distress every day and in the event of major emergencies.	Expanding our ERT with developments to the branch teams, training and field guides
Commission critical wildlife research to improve rehabilitation and conservation outcomes.	Confirmed WIRES Research Grant Program
Increase the rehabilitation skills for wildlife carers nationally across all species by sharing resources.	Expanded Training Grants Program
Collaborate on projects to protect, preserve and restore critical wildlife habitat	Aussie Ark Sanctuary Opening Australian Wildlife Conservancy Kangaroo Island project Supporting Koala Health Hub 64 Landcare projects
Create and manage long-term programs to protect and preserve wildlife in the wild, including threatened species projects.	Sought out priority projects for Stage 2 Emergency Funding, worked on proposals and will announce the next wave of projects late 2021.



Image©Jeremy Murray
Bare-nosed wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*) 5

LIVING IN THE AFTERMATH

The Black Summer Bushfires burned for 240 days. They destroyed 18.6 million hectares of land and killed, injured or displaced an estimated 4 billion native animals.

As a result of the worldwide outpouring of grief and generosity in the wake of this catastrophe, WIRES was able to establish an **Emergency Response and Recovery Plan** to respond to the immediate devastation, and to implement long term programs for the future survival of our wildlife.

Our Emergency Fund distributed over \$12.4 million for response and recovery in 2020/21 and allocated a further \$41 million over the following two years as part of our Stage 2 Plan.

Stage 1 of the Plan focused on building the capacity of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in Australia, paying particular attention to improved emergency response and habitat and species recovery projects in areas impacted by the fires and drought.

STAGE 1 INCLUDED:

- **\$4+ million for Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation**
- **\$2.6+ million for Species Conservation and Fire Recovery Projects***
- **\$1.2+ million for Wildlife Habitat Recovery**
- **\$1.2+ million for Wildlife Research***
- **\$1+ million for Food for Wildlife**
- **\$1+ million for Water for Wildlife***

*With multi-year programs the funding is allocated over several years and dispersed based on an approved schedule, aligned with the delivery of project outcomes.



NAVIGATING A PANDEMIC

From early 2020, WIRES had to adapt quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the world as we knew it ground to a halt, the need for wildlife rescue did not.

For our rescue staff and volunteers, the process of contactless rescues was established so vital rescue work in the community could safely continue. The State Government determined that Wildlife rescue was an essential service, and worked closely with our volunteers and rescue teams to develop new procedures for safely navigating constantly evolving border closures and travel restrictions.

Running our 24/7 Rescue Office was also a challenge and required teams to work from home or with strict social distancing in place. All staff had to move to online work spaces, creating new challenges in technology and communication.





IMPROVING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The WIRES Rescue Office is the communication hub of WIRES, working 24/7, 365 days of the year to assist native animals in distress. We have expanded to provide national advice 24/7 for all species.

In FY21 WIRES 1300 number received and made **182,616 calls**, with the busiest month being November with over **22,235 calls received**.

WIRES provided rescue advice and assistance for over 130,000 animals which was a record year.

WIRES volunteers rescue and care for many iconic Australian species. In the last year WIRES recorded reports of many threatened species including 69 Bush-stone Curlews, 53 Squirrel Gliders, 51 Powerful Owls, 651 Koalas, and 13 Quolls.

Managing thousands of calls and emails every week, WIRES Rescue Office document the information from incoming calls and emails and liaise with WIRES volunteers, veterinarians, and external rescue organisations to get sick, injured and orphaned wildlife assistance.

The WIRES Rescue Office plays a significant role in the provision of wildlife information and education to the community, speaking with over **180,000 callers** each year, communicating critical species information to improve welfare outcomes and explaining how communities and wildlife can coexist within our urban environments.

WIRES expanding Emergency Response Team is an integral part of the Rescue Office's operations, responding to hundreds of rescues every month. WIRES have Emergency Response Vehicles operating in QLD and NSW with plans to expand further.

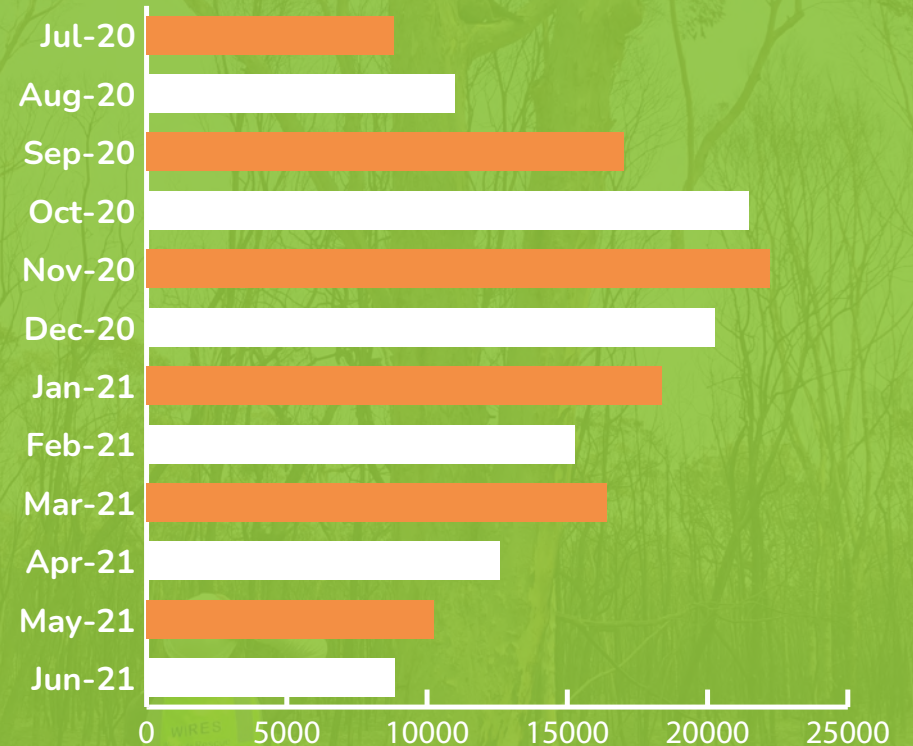
In June 2021, working closely with the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) and Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary, WIRES Rescue Office began supporting wildlife in Tasmania by helping to facilitate the placement of rescued wildlife with rehabilitators.



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EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**NUMBER OF CALLS TO WIRES
1300 NUMBER PER MONTH**

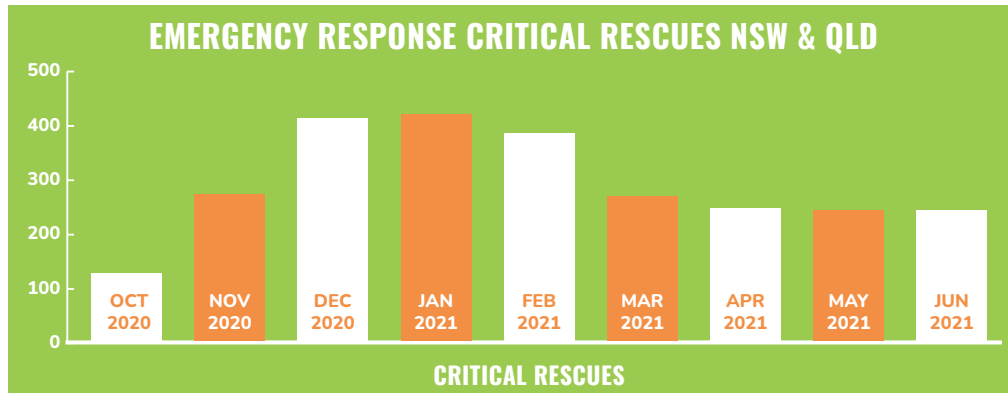


EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS

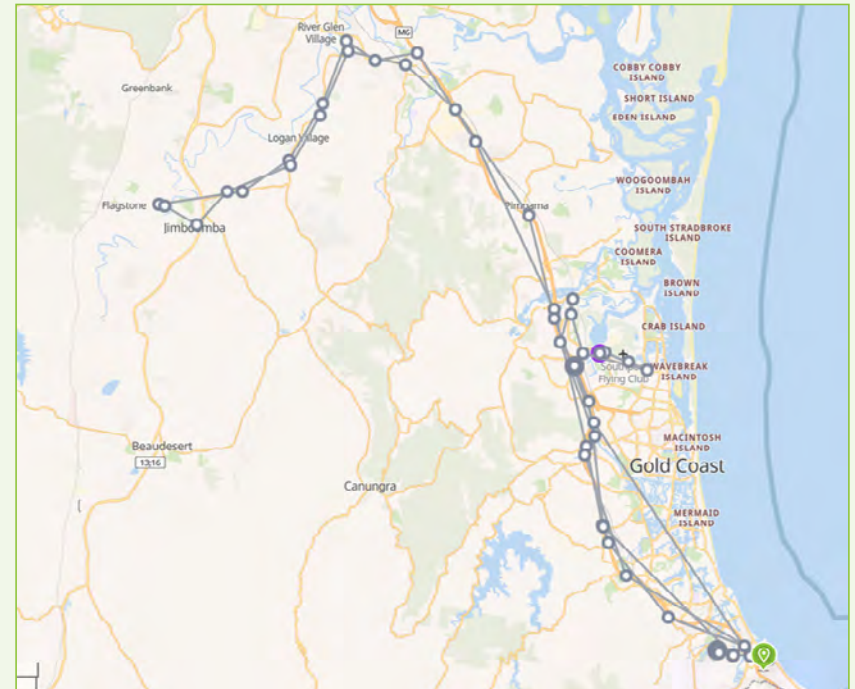
This year WIRES have significantly developed our Emergency Response Team (ERT) and capacity. WIRES Emergency Responders are full-time, highly skilled Emergency Rescuers with Emergency Vehicles designed to improve emergency response for wildlife.

Beginning in October 2020, over nine months the team has been expanded to include five Emergency Rescue Responders across three regions and the team completed **2,953 emergency rescues**.

During their first week one of our Emergency Rescuers attended 31 rescues, for 17 different species and drove 840 kms.



THE MAP BELOW SHOWS THE DISTANCE TRAVELLED BY AMY, OUR QLD EMERGENCY RESPONDER ONE THURSDAY IN OCTOBER.



WIRES has also worked closely with Emergency Management Consultants to develop WIRES emergency response documents, including a new Incident Management Plan, Field Guide and Evacuation Plans.

As part of WIRES improved emergency response capacity, our ERT have also established 27 Volunteer Emergency Response Teams within NSW. These volunteers have completed Basic Wildlife Awareness training through TAFE NSW and are being enrolled in First Aid training. A specialised online course specifically for Team Leaders and Emergency Responders is also in development and once volunteers have completed this as well, teams will be ready and prepared for deployment.

This critical work has been proudly supported by re:wild and we are deeply grateful for their support and partnership.



SUPPORTING OUR VOLUNTEERS

We are extremely grateful for the thousands of dedicated volunteers, both new and existing, who gave up so much of their time for distressed native animals, despite the very serious challenges of COVID 19.

Whilst it was very difficult to hold face to face courses during the pandemic, our volunteer numbers increased by 30% over the 12 months, with total volunteer numbers, including Rescue 101 volunteers reaching 4,050 by June 30 2021.

To keep our volunteers abreast of the constantly evolving situation we sent more than 154 e-newsletters over the 12 months, including updates to rescue procedures, training and species updates, emergency updates, and critical health and wellbeing checks.

With access to reliable IT becoming ever more necessary, we implemented a wide range of system and process improvements, including better systems automation for the onboarding of new volunteers, and faster response times for volunteer questions and requests.

A new website specifically for our volunteers was launched in August 2020 to provide fast access to critical information, and a new online shop for branches was launched in September 2020 so branches can order their own marketing and promotional materials.

A new range of clothing specifically designed for volunteers was launched in May 2021.

WIRES are now also providing more extensive support to the Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation sector nationally, including access to our rescue communications platform. As of June 2021 our systems were being used by rescue organisations in SA, QLD, NSW and Tasmania, representing a further 1,352 volunteers.



Throughout the relentless crises of bushfires, floods and a global pandemic, WIRES volunteers continued to show extraordinary resilience, often going to enormous lengths to reach native animals in distress and access critical supplies.

This courage was particularly recognized in the Mid South Coast Branch, who won South Coast Volunteer Team of the Year 2020 and went on to win the overall NSW Volunteer Team of the Year award on 4th Dec 2020.

An excerpt from the application we submitted noted:

“They gave their land and lounge rooms to help care for sick and injured animals at a time when they so desperately needed care and assistance. They performed all sorts of rescues from wallabies, wombats, birds and snakes – all while their own homes and those of their friends and family were also under threat. In all they completed more than 2,750 rescues from early 2019 to early 2020 – with a 60 percent increase over the bushfire period.”

East Branch was nominated for Waverly Council Hero Awards and were successful in two categories: Belinda won the Community Volunteer award and the entire East Branch won the Working Together award for their outstanding work and contribution to the community.

As always, thank you to all of our amazing volunteers.



Mid South Coast Branch



East Branch

RESCUE STORIES

Of the many hundreds of rescues that occurred over the year, here are just two...

It takes a community to save a platypus

A displaced and very stressed juvenile platypus was discovered by staff at a wastewater treatment plant on 15 March 2021. There is a creek near the waste plant where platypus are believed to live, and where he probably gained access. WIRES volunteer Tracy responded to the urgent call, but quickly realised her 5 metre catching pole was not long enough to reach the platypus.

She sent out an urgent request for extra help, and together with another WIRES volunteer and a team of concerned staff from the plant, they creatively invented an extra-long pole, utilizing hard plastic tubing and rolls of gaffa-tape.

After several attempts the team caught the young male but were deeply concerned he'd ingested contaminated water whilst trapped in the tank. He was taken to a local vets for an immediate health check before being transported in the WIRES Emergency Rescue van to Taronga Zoo Wildlife Hospital for more thorough tests and monitoring.

10 days later he was released into a waterway by National Parks and Wildlife Service and WIRES and is expected to thrive.



Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*).
Listed as Threatened.

Lucky escape for concussed flying fox

In February 2021 a large male flying fox, later named Bluey by his WIRES carer, was found lying at the bottom of an electrical pole. He had no signs of electrical burns but certainly seemed dazed and disorientated and was in danger of being harmed by a group of local cats, who were watching him closely.

A concerned member of the public called WIRES and we advised them to place a box over the flying fox to keep him protected whilst help was on the way.

Bluey's initial WIRES rescuer suspected he'd been hit by car and drove him to a local vets for a thorough medical check. His eyes were glassy but he was still very alert and aware, and was extremely thirsty.

Likely to have had a mild concussion, he was soon given the all-clear and transported to a WIRES volunteer specifically trained in the care of flying foxes. Under Caroline's dedicated care he recuperated quickly, eating more than a ½ kilo fruit every day.

One month later he was moved to a large aviary in Lane Cove National Park, where he regained his muscle strength and flying skills. Carers at the aviary carefully 'test fly' each flying fox to make sure they fly well enough for release. Once they can fly, they are moved to an aviary where hatches are left open, and where they can come and go whilst fully regaining their confidence.

After almost six weeks Bluey regained his own confidence and left the aviary for good, to hopefully keep up his vital role in pollinating remaining bushlands.



Grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*). Listed as Threatened.

NEW RESCUE PROGRAM & TRAINING GRANTS

Due to ongoing increasing trends in the number of rescue calls and the subsequent need to attract more volunteer rescuers and carers, WIRES developed a new training program for volunteers called Rescue 101 that launched across NSW in March 2021. The **Rescue 101 Program** is a new training initiative designed to engage more people to become involved in volunteering with WIRES, by providing the knowledge and skills they need to quickly start helping with native animal rescues. Rescue 101 volunteers are able to assist with simple rescues of birds, possums, lizards, turtles & frogs, transporting these animals if they are sick or injured to a veterinarian for assessment.

By the end of June we received 216 enrolments and 84 new volunteers had completed the course. 66 additional rescues were attended by Rescue 101 trainees.

To help wildlife rescue organisations nationally to recruit and train more volunteers post the Black Summer fires, WIRES also developed a national version of the program, launching a new **Introduction to Wildlife Rescue Course** that is available online across Australia. This course is designed to assist existing rescue organisations to recruit and train more volunteers in basic wildlife rescue and begin rescuing the native animals most commonly reported needing assistance.

WIRES has offered all rescue organisations keen to collaborate, a Training Grant that covers the cost of all volunteers they would like to complete the program. In FY21 over 500 volunteers across 11 organisations have enrolled in the program, including one organisation within NSW, two from QLD, four from SA and four from WA.





IMPROVING MARINE TURTLE RESCUES

We launched a new Sea Turtle Rescue Course in April 2021 for WIRES volunteers and have plans to launch a version of the course nationally later in the year.

Six out of seven of the world's sea turtles species are found in Australian waters with all of those listed as vulnerable to extinction or endangered.

This rescue course covers the following specialist topic areas:

- Biology and life cycle including key definitions, identifying features and terminology
- Species identification
- Diseases and threats to sea turtle populations
- WHS risks involved in rescuing and transporting sea turtles
- Rescue scenarios
- Appropriate handling and transport methods
- Reporting processes post rescue

The course addresses the WHS risks involved in rescuing and transporting sea turtles, techniques to safely handle sea turtles whilst minimising stress for the animal, information to identify injuries and signs of disease and provides tools to identify species found in NSW.

To maintain high standards of animal welfare, the course aligns with the standards outlined in the DPIE Code of Practice for Sea Turtles. Since the launch in April 2021 there have been over 600 enrolments into the course.

To complement the release of the course and allow for optimal outcomes of sea turtles requiring rescue, WIRES provided all 10 coastal branches with a sea turtle rescue kit containing water safety equipment and rescue and transport equipment.

As part of improvements to WIRES emergency rescue preparedness and safety procedures, WIRES has also completed risk assessments that address a range of potential risks and hazards and the appropriate controls including working with marine turtles and working around water.



WILDLIFE TRAINING UPDATES

Despite the pandemic having an enormous impact on training plans, over the year WIRES Training Team received record enrolment numbers for our Rescue and Immediate Care Course (RICC), with a total of 1405 enrolments during this period and 926 volunteers completing the course.

Due to the disruptions caused by COVID-19 only 59 face-to-face RICC workshops were held. However, an option to complete the course 100% online was launched in July 2020 and 252 students chose this option to complete their training.

ADVANCED SPECIES TRAINING COMPLETED INCLUDED:



13 macropod courses were delivered, training 224 people



12 possum & glider courses were delivered, training 200 people



5 microbat & flying-fox courses were delivered, training 81 people



14 avian courses were delivered, training 122 people

To support WIRES volunteer trainers and presenters to deliver the RICC and community presentations, WIRES developed a package of new resources including a booklet, training videos and updated educational community presentations for adults and children.

In October 2020 WIRES conducted a one day pilot Advanced Snake Handling Course. The course covered a range of complex rescue scenarios and advanced techniques such as tubing of snakes and rescuing snakes entangled in netting. The pilot course was delivered to 14 of WIRES most active snake rescuers, to provide participants with additional strategies and techniques to use when faced with challenging rescues in the community. The course was extremely well received and will become part of WIRES snake training schedule in future seasons.





Womabt joey (*Vombatidae*)

WILDLIFE TRAINING UPDATES

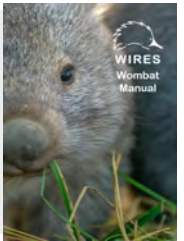
WIRES' species training manuals are an essential resource designed to complement the WIRES species courses and support members on an ongoing basis during rescue, rehabilitation and release activities. The species manuals are based on best practice and scientific research and undergo regular updates to reflect best practice.

Examples of the updates made this year include:



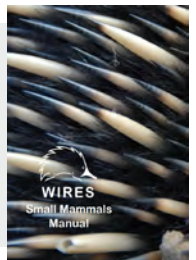
Improvements to the Possum and Glider manual included updates to treatment strategies for selected illnesses and updates to possum and glider husbandry plans.

Improvements to the Wombat manual included updates to reflect current best practice such as husbandry standards and treatment processes.



Improvements to the Macropod manual included changes to align with the updated Department of Planning Industry and Environment Macropod Code of Practice, as well as updates to the husbandry plans, information regarding an unidentified macropod seizure syndrome and information regarding transitioning between milk formulas for joeys.

Improvements to the Small Mammals manual included updates to reflect changed best practice for a range of species.



NATIONAL RESCUE, REHABILITATION AND VETERINARY SUPPORT

During 2020/21 WIRES funded **over 240 projects** to improve National Emergency Response and to provide national assistance for Wildlife Rescue and Recovery.

WIRES SUPPORTING ARC IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

WIRES provided \$420,000 in funding for Animal Rescue Cooperative (ARC). The grant covered national wildlife food support, the purchase and distribution of essential rescue equipment and helped to increase their emergency response capability across all hubs.

ARC has in the past, established a national network managing large scale emergency response logistics, helping to get critical supplies and equipment to wildlife carers across Australia. A further \$19,000 was provided to ARC following fires in Western Australia, for emergency equipment needed.



VETERINARY SUPPORT

WIRES launched a Vaccination Grants Program for veterinary clinics to cover the costs of vaccinations to protect veterinary staff from Australian Bat Lyssavirus. This enabled staff to actively treat sick and injured microbats and flying foxes, many of which are threatened species.

To complement the vaccinations and help veterinary staff improve treatment outcomes, WIRES developed a bat treatment booklet addressing a range of injuries and illnesses, treatment strategies and appropriate medications. **A total of 89 clinics across Australia received the booklet.**



CURRUMBIN HOSPITAL EXTENSION WIRES PARTNERSHIP

Currumbin Wildlife Hospital is one of the busiest wildlife hospitals in the world.

As a key partner, WIRES provided \$312,000 to build an extension for the increased numbers of wildlife needing medical assistance and in preparation for future disasters. The hospital was built in 2009 with a plan to cater for a 10-20% growth in admissions annually, but within ten years this increased by 300%.

Funds received contributed to the construction of the hospital extension as well as the medical fit out costs. The new facilities provided increased capacity for triage, examination, and treatment, while also increasing the capacity for native animals requiring hospitalisation for extended periods of time.

WIRES will also be supporting ongoing emergency rescue assistance with a dedicated emergency rescue responder and emergency vehicle based at Currumbin to improve rescue response capability and speed.

The new hospital extension was officially opened on 27th February 2021.



HABITAT RECOVERY

MEN'S SHED COLLABORATION

Natural tree hollows are an increasingly scarce and valuable resource for many native species and for some they are essential. Hollows provide safe places to shelter and in many cases to breed. Natural hollows that are suitable to support wildlife can take 100-200 years to form and many hollow-bearing trees were lost in the 2019/20 bushfire season.

In response to this, in collaboration with The Men's Shed and ARC, WIRES have delivered **538 boxes** to help WIRES volunteers and small mammals across 20 branches.

WIRES provided funding to the Men's Shed for the boxes, which they said helped them immensely after having to close for such a long time due to COVID-19 restrictions. There were six sheds involved in this project: Gosford, Terrigal, Erina, Wangi, Morpeth and Raymond Terrace.

The boxes have been used for both in-care situations and soft release. The nesting boxes will also be used by wildlife carers around the country in the course of care and at time of release for target species.

This is a huge undertaking that will benefit countless animals. We are very proud to be working with Men's Shed, who have always been supportive of wildlife carers. Local sheds also often work with wildlife carers near them to build enclosures and perches.



Image©Sandy Collins
Yellow-bellied Glider (*Petaurus australis*)



This WIRES project is supported by WWF Australia, Paddle Pop Koala, Robert Frend from Wildsip Pty Ltd who designed and produced the TREE TROFF® drinkers, and Reece and their suppliers, who have generously donated many components enabling hundreds of additional drinkers to be provided.

WATER FOR WILDLIFE

The Water for Wildlife collaboration distributed \$1 million worth of arboreal water stations for native wildlife.

800 drinkers are in the process of being distributed to fire and drought affected areas, and to support wildlife recovery in critical refuge areas.

Focusing on how best to support wild populations in the long term, WIRES began working with Dr Valentina Mella, Postdoctoral Research Associate - Animal Behaviour and Conservation, School of Life and Environmental Science at The University of Sydney in January 2020. Dr Mella's past research had previously found that koalas used supplemented water extensively throughout the year, even during cooler months.

The arboreal drinkers are also regularly visited by other native animals including sugar gliders, squirrel gliders, feathertail gliders, brushtail possums, tree frogs, geckos, pythons, a variety of birds.

Well maintained drinkers are designed to last up to 20 years, and they can be relocated over time to areas of higher need if required.

SPECIES RECOVERY

SPECIES RECOVERY WIRES AND AWC PARTNERSHIP

After the Black Summer bushfires of 2019/20, AWC (Australian Wildlife Conservancy) and WIRES formed a partnership to help recover species and their habitats. WIRES contributed more than **\$1.6 million** to AWC's bushfire recovery projects and towards saving the endangered Northern Bettong and Kangaroo Island Dunnart from extinction.

MAJOR AWC PROJECTS WIRES SUPPORTED INCLUDE:

\$500,000 for bushfire recovery

\$400,000 to help save the Kangaroo Island Dunnart from extinction

\$740,000 to help save the Northern Bettong from extinction

Since then, these projects have progressed as part of our long-term response to threatened species recovery. Updates on the projects are as follows:

PROJECT 1: Saving seven threatened species in the wake of the Kangaroo Island bushfires

The project focused on conservation land management programs such as removal of feral animals outside of set fenced areas, fire management, and invasive weed control. The Western River Refuge was officially announced as complete on Kangaroo Island in February 2021, and the 370-ha area will protect up to seven threatened species.



Kangaroo Island Dunnart (*Sminthopsis aitkeni*). Listed as Critically Endangered



Northern bettong (*Bettongia tropica*). Listed as Endangered.



Northern bettong (*Bettongia tropica*). Listed as Endangered.

PROJECT 2: Bushfire recovery projects in NSW

Identifying Potential Refugial Sites

Part of the bushfire recovery project was identifying refugial sites for species under threat. AWC ecologists continued to search for suitable acquisition or partnership properties to assist with bushfire recovery in south-eastern Australia and provide viable habitat for severely affected species such as the Koala and Long-nosed Potoroo. A consultant was engaged in the project to identify areas of high biodiversity value in northern NSW. Areas that protect multiple species, including the Koala were actively found.

Wollombi Valley Bushfire Recovery Project

Through a comprehensive analysis of the area after the Black Summer bushfires, it is now known which species reside in these areas, including invasive predators threatening native wildlife. With further research and statistics becoming known, the next steps for recovery in the Wollombi Valley are clearer.

PROJECT 3: Saving the Northern Bettong from Extinction

With fewer than 1,000 Northern Bettongs remaining and the Northern Bettong placed on the Federal Government's 20 most endangered mammals list, a fenced feral predator-free area at AWC's Mount Zero-Taravale Wildlife Sanctuary is now well underway.

AUSSIE ARK AND WIRES - OFFICIAL OPENING OF BARRINGTON WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

To help support Aussie Ark's conservation work with 15 threatened species and three bushfire recovery and habitat projects, WIRES provided over \$1 million in funding to the animal protection organisation. The 400-hectare Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary was officially opened on the 26th November 2020.

In October 2020, Aussie Ark delivered a major milestone with the release of 11 Tasmanian Devils into the sanctuary, marking the return of this species to the mainland for the first time in around 3,000 years. As part of the official opening in November, a wide range of species were released into the sanctuary, to live within the 400 hectares of protected habitat. This included Eastern Quolls, Long-nosed Potoroos, Rufous Bettongs and Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies.

The sanctuary is also home to other threatened species including Koalas and Greater Gliders. Aussie Ark is also involved in threatened species breeding programmes and rewilding projects within the sanctuary, enabling species to be reintroduced to the Australian mainland in safety.



Eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*).
Listed as Endangered.



WILDLIFE RESEARCH

KOALA HEALTH HUB UPDATE

The Koala Health Hub (KHH) at the University of Sydney and WIRES have a strong history of working together to deliver improved health outcomes for koalas. WIRES provided a **grant of \$1,012,399** made possible by the generous outpouring of donations to WIRES in the aftermath of the 2019-2020 bushfires to enable the University of Sydney to amplify this positive impact through research. Working together, our vision is to secure a sustainable future for Australia's endangered koala population.

WIRES's support of the KHH has allowed the Hub to maintain and build its core capacity to respond quickly to emerging needs in koala care and management in a holistic way and commence new initiatives with confidence.

"On behalf of the Koala Health Hub, I want to thank WIRES and those who donated during the 2019-20 bushfires."

– Damien Higgins, Associate Professor of Patho-biology and Wildlife Health at the School of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney.



MESSAGE FROM THE KOALA HEALTH HUB

WIRES's support has allowed us to continue to lead or contribute to the following, by maintaining our laboratory and its technical officer, Dr Andrea Casteriano:

- Ongoing provision of diagnostic testing for koalas in care
- Migration and maintenance of KHH website and online resources
- Continued technical support of two outstanding existing PhD students.
 - Cristina Fernandez who is investigating the drivers and impacts of chlamydial disease in koalas (funded by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE).
 - Sarah Simpson who is undertaking field evaluation of a chlamydial vaccine for koalas (funded by DPIE).
- Technical support of two Honours projects by animal and veterinary bioscience students (who have since commenced veterinary training).
 - Martina Zanin investigated the association of Koala retrovirus with chlamydial infertility and body condition in koalas on the Liverpool Plains.
 - Tori Stragliotti undertook an evaluation of scat microbial diversity as a tool for the evaluation of health in free-living koalas.
- Laboratory support of collaborative field projects and the provision of veterinary expertise and diagnostic capacity. This ensures quality health data contributes to the management of koala populations in the following ways:
 - Blue Mountains – investigating koala ecology and health (Science for Wildlife)
 - Southern Highlands – investigating koala ecology and health (DPIE and Wingecarribee Council)
 - South Coast and Southern Tablelands - monitoring distribution of chlamydia (DPIE)
 - Campbelltown – monitoring chlamydia- free population (DPIE)
 - Southern Tablelands – investigating post-bushfire impacts (ANU).

MESSAGE FROM THE KOALA HEALTH HUB (CONT)

KOALA HEALTH HUB UPDATE. NEW INITIATIVES – KOALAVET

In response to the need for improved veterinary coordination and training highlighted in the 2019-20 bushfires, we have established a “Koalavet” online video forum. The forum membership comprises over 50 koala/wildlife vets from all states with koalas and meets every six weeks. Topics discussed to date include:

- Criteria for triage and euthanasia
- New approaches to the treatment of chlamydial disease
- Approaches to the treatment of burns
- Chlamydia testing and decision-making
- Various case studies.

It has also created an avenue for out-of-session email queries and discussions to provide ongoing communication and support. WIRES funding supports the administration of this initiative.



POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW

Research Fellow, Dr Belinda Wright, joined the team on a two-year term. Belinda brings expertise in genetics, genomics and bioinformatics, which will be a huge boost to several of our projects. She has an applied focus and extensive experience in bringing her work to practical outcomes for the management of many wildlife species including Tasmanian devils and the koala. Next-generation genetic sequencing methods are powerful tools with application across most of our programs, including koala genetics in disease, investigating chlamydial strains and their virulence, and the involvement of Koala retrovirus in disease, to name a few. In addition to her discipline expertise, having her on board will allow us to support additional PhD and Honours students to achieve further research outcomes and train the next generation of wildlife health researchers.

PHD STUDENTS

In January, we recruited the first of our additional PhD students, Yasmine Muir, whose project aims to improve the diagnosis of koalas at admission and develop indicators of successful rehabilitation and release to enhance welfare outcomes and efficiency in koala rehabilitation. The work also has benefits in the validation of methods for improved assessment of health in free-ranging koala populations. WIRES' support gives us the capacity to supervise more PhD students and provides resources to implement projects quickly for the best outcomes.

HONOURS PROJECTS

The expertise of our new postdoctoral fellow is critical to two Honours projects we have initiated in early 2021.

- Association of koala genetics with susceptibility to chlamydial disease (Honour's student, Alana Kidd). This project trials a new approach to investigating these important immune genes in koalas and examines their association with chlamydial infertility in female koalas. This is important to inform genetic management of fragmented koala populations.
- Genetic predisposition to cryptococcosis in koalas (Honour's student, Hannah Newton). Based on evidence of genetic predisposition to fungal infections in humans, this project sets out to find and describe the same gene in koalas and investigate its association with cryptococcal disease. This project will particularly inform captive management of koalas and brings an additional member of academic staff to our team, Lecturer in Veterinary Pathology, Dr Luisa Miranda.

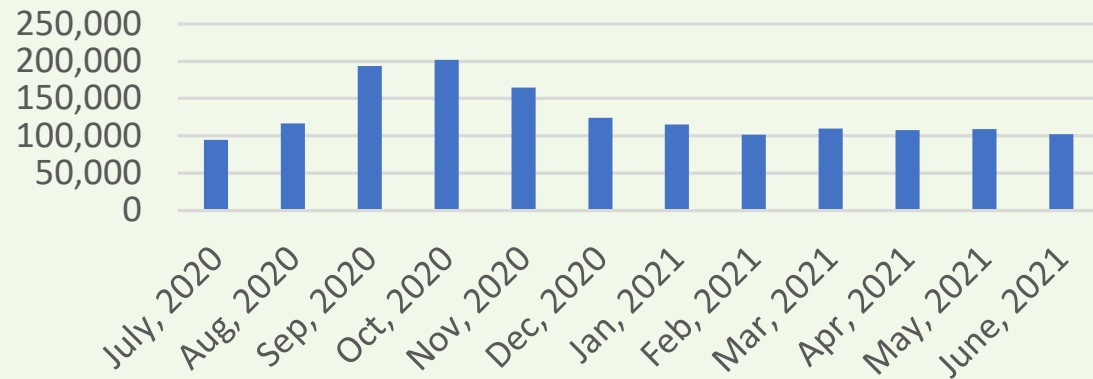
COMMUNITY INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

OVER 1.5 MILLION



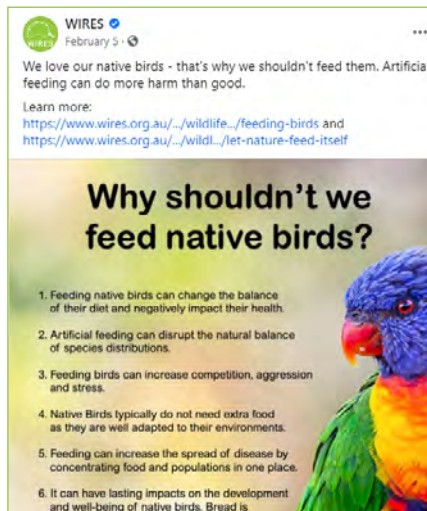
UNIQUE VISITORS TO WIRES WEBSITE

UNIQUE VISITORS



FACEBOOK – 150K FOLLOWERS

Facebook page reach: **3.49 million**
 Top performing post reached over **98k**
 Post below reached over **95k**



INSTAGRAM – 388.8K FOLLOWERS

Instagram Reach: **1.089 million**
 Top performing post was the wombat video below which reached over **162.8k**



TWITTER – 10.6K FOLLOWERS

Tweet Impressions by month range from **24k to 241k** per month





ACTION FOR OUR WILDLIFE

WIRES put forward submissions to protect and preserve wildlife in response to the following proposals:

1. Manyana Coast Pty Ltd Referral (July 2020)
2. Independent review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act – Interim Report (August 2020)
3. Future Water Project 2060 (Dunoon Dam) – Requested by WIRES NR (September 2020)
4. Draft Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan (CPCP) (October 2020)
5. Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Streamlining Environmental Approvals) Bill 2020 – Senate Inquiry (November 2020)
6. Local Land Services Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2020 (February 2021)
7. Castlereagh, Agnes Banks and Windsor Downs Nature Reserves Draft Amendment to the Plan of Management (March 2021)
8. National Emergency Declaration Act 2020 Review (March 2021)
9. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Standards and Assurance) Bill 2021 (March 2021)
10. Inquiry into the Health and Wellbeing of Kangaroos and Other Macropods in New South Wales (April 2021)
11. Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment (Plastics Reduction) Bill 2021 (April 2021)
12. Inquiry into the Long-Term Sustainability and Future of the Timber and Forest Products Industry (May 2021)

WIRES is also actively involved in the Places You Love alliance - a movement of over 1.5 million people across 60 like minded organisations who are fighting to preserve our wildlife, ecosystems and a safe climate for our generation and future generations. Together, we're demanding strong nature laws that actually protect our natural environment and conserve our biodiversity.



To find out more visit
www.placesyoulove.org



CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT – LITTLE GIANT



WIRES is fortunate to have collaborated with a number of great organisations over the past year. One of these organisations is our Platinum Partner, Little Giant, an Australian owned wine producer from the Barossa Valley in South Australia.

The basis of the relationship is our mutual love for Australian wildlife and Little Giant have made the wombat core to their branding. Indeya Passfield, Brand Manager of Little Giant says “We believe in linking passion. Corporate Social Responsibility and the ability to do great work is the ethos that underpins our relationship.”

In addition to monetary support, Little Giant have also helped fund a much-needed dedicated quarantine enclosure facility for wombats to be nursed back to health. This is crucial as orphaned baby wombats need up to eighteen months of care before they are released. Little Giant keep their customers up to date on social media, by sharing photos, stories and facts about the wonderful wombats with their followers, raising

the profile of this distinctly Australian marsupial.

With the cultural shift that has occurred over the last decade, Little Giant and WIRES understand the advantages of a close relationship. Over 80% of millennials expect a high Corporate Social Responsibility benchmark, which will actively influence their choice of consumable. The partnership with WIRES also therefore benefits Little Giant commercially, as well as leaving a positive footprint on the wider community.



CORPORATE PARTNERS

We extend our sincere gratitude to all our corporate partners and every business that has donated to support wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and recovery.

A corporate partnership with WIRES could deliver long-term advantages for your business and for the wildlife we serve. WIRES could work with you to develop a mutually beneficial partnership that provides your organisation the opportunity to align your Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives with our work with wildlife, enabling your organisation to have an enduring positive impact on the lives of Australian native animals. All enquiries can be emailed to philanthropy@wires.org.au

Thank you again to all our corporate partners for your support of native animals, we are incredibly grateful for your ongoing involvement.

PLATINUM PARTNERS



GOLD PARTNERS



WIRES AND WOOLWORTHS PARTNERSHIP

In response to the Black Summer Bushfires, WIRES and Woolworths formed the Food for Wildlife Program, a long-term partnership to support the rescue, rehabilitation and release of native animals across Australia.

As part of Woolworths commitment to its 2025 sustainability plan, Woolworths is aiming to redistribute 100% of its edible unsold food to those who need it most. Woolworths are also raising donations through a range of initiatives to support wildlife groups around Australia.

WIRES and Woolworths support licensed volunteers and rescue groups across Australia to provide supplemental fruit and vegetables to wildlife in care, food which would otherwise go to waste. Food is often a major expense for these volunteers, as they may look after an injured and orphaned native animal for many months before they can be released back into the wild. 152 Woolworths stores across Australia are currently involved, with more locations coming on board every month.



Pacific black duck (*Anas superciliosa*)



TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS

Thank you to all Trusts and Foundations who have generously supported WIRES.

Your support helps us continue our work to rehabilitate and care for sick, injured and orphaned Australian native animals, now and into the future.

- The Lansell
- Penkun Holdings Pty Ltd
- Bimonu Pty Ltd
- Henry Pollack Foundation
- Renee Pollack Foundation
- Avshare Investment Pty Ltd
- Bungie Foundation
- Nell & Hermon Slade Trust
- The JMS Foundation
- Ereshkigal Foundation
- Allen Family Foundation
- Flight Centre Foundation



FINANCIAL UPDATE

WIRES, NSW Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service Inc's revenue, including branch income was \$11,813,050 (inclusive of \$7,965,855 in WPGF disbursements) and WIRES' Public Gift Fund (WPGF) revenue, including branch income was \$7,680,901 for the financial year ending June 30, 2021 (FY21).

WIRES' FY21 Financial Statements are available via the ACNC Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website www.acnc.gov.au





FY2021-2022 PRIORITIES

- Increase wildlife rescue and rehabilitation capacity
- Improve wildlife emergency response capability
- Establish a strong network to improve national outcomes for wildlife
- Expand wildlife information, education and training programs
- Implement improved and innovative systems for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, to deliver the fastest possible rescues and best practice care for native animals
- Support critical projects to improve rehabilitation and conservation outcomes
- Collaborate on projects to protect and preserve critical wildlife habitat



GET INVOLVED

WIRES is committed to increasing and improving wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, information and education services nationally, and dedicated to protecting and preserving Australian wildlife for future generations.

Our rescue to release work returns life to the wild, and it is community support that makes our work possible.

By donating to WIRES you are supporting the rescue, rehabilitation and recovery of native wildlife. Gifts \$2 and over are tax-deductible within Australia and donations can be made at wires.org.au

We thank every individual and organisation that has been a part of our journey so far, we look forward to working with you long-term to help more sick, injured and orphaned animals. Be sure to stay in touch via our [enews](#) and [social media](#)

If you would like to leave a lasting legacy for wildlife through a gift in your will, please email bequests@wires.org.au

Finally, if you'd like to find out more about becoming a WIRES Wildlife Rescuer and Carer yourself please visit our website: wires.org.au/rescue/become-a-rescuer

Thank you!

Thank you for sharing our mission to actively rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife and inspire others to do the same.





WIRES, NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Inc.

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CFN 10170

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Incorporation No. Y0116216

Rescue Line: 1300 094 737

Donations P: (02) 8977 3396 F: (02) 8977 3399

All gifts to WIRES \$2 and over are tax-deductible within Australia

www.wires.org.au

info@wires.org.au

WIRES is licenced to rescue and care for wildlife by the NSW
National Parks & Wildlife Service, licence no. MWL000100285.