



**Save Our Wildlife Foundation Inc.**  
PHONE OPERATOR  
INFORMATION HANDBOOK

Version 1.3



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# GENERIC ANIMAL ADVICE

## FIRST RESPONSE

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Young possum, macropod, wombat joeys, flying fox, bat pups and unfledged birds should be picked-up day or night and reported to the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group or appropriate species specialist. All **young animals require warmth** and special treatment and any delay in placing them into care could be the difference between surviving or not.

### MARINE ANIMALS

Advise the caller to **keep everyone clear of the animal** and refer to AMWRRO head office: (08) 8262 5452 or their emergency paging service: (08) 8378 3364.

### SWARMING BEES

Advise the caller not to disturb the bees, they may retaliate. Refer to the local beekeepers association.

## FERAL ANIMALS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### WHY ARE FERAL ANIMALS SUCH A PROBLEM?

Feral animals are introduced species not native to Australia and have created a number of problems for our native fauna, such as competition for food, shelter, and nesting sites and through direct predation by animals such as cats and foxes.

### WHAT IS THE HUMANE WAY OF GETTING RID OF FERAL BIRDS E.G PIGEONS, STARLINGS, AND INDIAN MYNAH'S FROM AROUND MY HOME?

The best method available to people is to encourage native birds to their garden which will displace the feral species. This can be done by.

- Providing a suitable habitat or
- Growing food and nesting plants which are native to your area and will attract native birds

Some pest companies offer a service in controlling some birds, but if the habitat is not changed to attract native birds the pest will quickly re-establish themselves.

### I HAVE A FERAL CAT LIVING IN THE BUSH BEHIND MY HOUSE. WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Refer the caller to the RSPCA, Cat Protection Society, or local council. They may have traps to catch the animal. They should also notify the Department of Environment and Water if they see feral cats in a national park or their property backs onto a national park area.

**Complaints about domestic cats should be referred to the RSPCA or their local council.**

## WE WANT TO REPORT A FOX IN THE BUSH BEHIND US.

If you receive a call about a fox sighting refer the caller to the local council or the Department of Environment and Water if in a national park.

## I HAVE FOUND A STRAY DOMESTIC ANIMAL. WHAT CAN I DO WITH IT?

If the animal is injured, sick or orphaned put out a rescue call to have the animal taken to the vet. Most wildlife volunteers deal with native animals only. If a caller needs help with any of these animals, refer them to the RSPCA, suitable animal agency or the local council.

Some wildlife volunteers may sometimes rescue domestic animals if the appropriate animal organisation cannot be contacted.

# BIRD ADVICE

## FLEDGLINGS

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Fledglings will have full wing feathers and a stumpy short tail and should only be taken into care if it is doing poorly, is injured or is in a dangerous location such as right next to a busy road. If the bird is in good health, is running around and flapping about, this is normal behaviour, and the bird should be left alone. Parents of fledglings do not hang around the fledgling at all times, they will come and go. If the parents are not present this does not necessarily mean the bird has been abandoned and needs to come into care.

There are several young bird species that often leave the nest before they are ready to fly. Often these birds can be placed on a branch, left, and observed rather than being brought into care. Refer the call to the appropriate species specialist for advice if unsure.

Young fledgling Tawny Frogmouths can often be returned to a nearby branch if the parents are nearby.

## ARTIFICIAL NESTS

An artificial nest can be made in a hanging pot with stick and leaves. An ice cream container or small plastic food container lined with the same can also be used. The container must have drainage holes in the base so that in wet weather it does not fill and drown the birds.

Try to match the size of the nest to the size of the bird and attach the artificial nest as close as possible to the original nest. All birds that are placed into the nest have to be watched for at least a couple hours to see if the parents are feeding them. If not, have them collected by a wildlife volunteer.

If the parent bird is feeding the chick during the day, but not staying with it at night, advise the caller to bring the chick into the house at night. Same applies if there is heavy rain.

## RAPTOR RESCUE GUIDELINES

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Advise the caller to monitor the bird at distance but **do not attempt to rescue** the bird. Raptors are not only specialist species under the National Parks and Wildlife Regulations 2019, but they can be a particularly dangerous animal to deal with and all wildlife volunteers require additional training and an endorsement by the permits department to be able to attend a rescue or have in care. It's important to get a photo from the member of public to correctly identify the species.

**Before posting on xMatters** please call the species specialist. If the member of public already has the bird contained, ask them to take to a specialist bird vet listed [here](#). These birds include:

- Falcons, Kestrels, Eagles, Goshawks
- Sparrowhawks, Buzzards, Kites, Osprey

Exceptions to this rule are the following and do not need a special permit so can be posted on xMatters for a wildlife volunteer to attend.

- Southern Boobook, Tawny Frogmouth, Blue-winged Kookaburra
- Laughing Kookaburra, Owlet nightjar, Barn Owls

## BIRDS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group or contact relevant species specialist.

### I FOUND A BABY BIRD, WHAT SHOULD I FEED IT OVERNIGHT?

Advise the caller not to feed the bird. Baby birds need to be warm enough and well hydrated to feed. A cold and/or dehydrated bird can't digest food, and the correct food needs to be obtained of which involves correctly identifying the bird and getting out to purchase it is unlikely at night.

### I HAVE FOUND A YOUNG BIRD. WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH IT?

Ask the caller if they have fed the bird. If they have, ask them what they have fed it and advise them not to feed it anymore. If they know where the nest is and the baby bird is not injured, ask the caller if they can put it back into the nest.

If the nest is too high, instruct them on how to make an [artificial nest](#) and nail or hang this high in the same tree, if possible, on a leafy branch to provide protection from the sun and predators as well as being out of reach of domestic pets.

If the bird is a young fledgling and just learning to fly, it may be possible to simply return it to a safe branch and advise the caller to monitor it for a few hours. If the parents do not return to the artificial nest or fledgling, the bird must be brought into care.

### THERE IS A BIRD HANGING FROM A TREE. CAN YOU DO SOMETHING?

Ask the caller if they know what type of bird it is. If it is a raptor, then refer the call to the species specialist who will contact the relevant people. If it is an introduced species, then send a rescue volunteer for humane reasons.

Ask how long it has been there? How high up the tree it is? What kind of tree it is? And if it is reachable with a ladder or a long handed pruning saw? If not, would it be accessible using a Cherry Picker?

If the bird is accessible by a Cherry Picker, you may try the local power supplier and see if a Cherry Picker is either available or in the area to help. Send a rescue volunteer to meet the Cherry Picker and to collect the bird when it is rescued.

### I HAVE A BIRD CAUGHT IN BIRD NETTING OVER THE FRUIT TREE.

With the permission of the caller send a rescue volunteer out to cut the netting off the bird using a small pair of scissors with rounded ends. The bird may be able to be released immediately if not injured. Ensure there is no netting left entangled around the toes or wings which may cut off the blood supply.

### THERE IS A BIRD TRAPPED IN OUR BUILDING. HOW CAN WE GET IT OUT?

Birds that are caught in large factories or houses may fly out if left quietly and the doors or windows left open. If the roof is very high and the doors or windows small, then the bird may have to be caught.

If the building is dark and quiet, it may be caught with a long-handled catching net. Some birds such as parrots may come to ground for seed. Raptors will require a special loop trap to catch them on the ground. Refer to relevant species specialist for advice.

### THERE IS AN OWL IN A TREE BEING HARASSED BY MAGPIES.

This is natural behaviour; nature taking its course. Advise the caller to monitor the Owl and if it comes to ground call us back and we will send a wildlife volunteer to assist.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MAGPIES/BIRDS SWOOPING - ATTACKING?

The three main bird species that display this behaviour are the Australian Magpie, Butcherbird and Masked Lapwing (commonly known as a Plover). This occurs during the breeding season, usually in spring and can last up to six weeks before the swooping stops. Aggressive Magpies are likely to swoop at people who come within 30 to 50 metres of the nest.

The parent birds are only trying to protect their eggs or young chicks. Once the chicks have fledged the problem is likely to stop. Actions they can take.

- Avoid the nesting area if at all possible, during the incubation and raising of the chicks. This can take up to six weeks
- Wear a hat or other headgear to eliminate the risk of injury during attacks. Paint on the back of the headgear, the bird will think it is being watched and is unlikely to swoop
- Carry a stick or umbrella at head height to prevent the attacker from getting to close. **It is not necessary to wave the stick about**, as they may hit or harm the bird
- When on a bike, wear a helmet and/or have a flag attached to the rear of the bicycle when riding through an area where birds are swooping

Explain to the caller that if the adult bird is killed, the other adult cannot feed the chicks on its own and they will all die. If Magpies are attacking young children at preschools, aged care homes, handicapped children's schools or if families are not able to exit their homes, front or rear without the bird drawing blood, then advise the caller to contact their local council or the Department of Environment and Water.

### MASKED LAPWINGS (PLOVERS) ARE ATTACKING PEOPLE AS THEY ENTER THE BUILDING. CAN THEY BE REMOVED?

They are only attacking because they have eggs nearby. It is usually a futile exercise to try and catch these birds. If the eggs are removed the birds will only lay eggs there again. Once the eggs have hatched the parent birds will take their young chicks into the bush and the problem will be solved.

In the meantime, they may put a sign nearby warning others of the swooping birds. This way people are prepared for evasive action. It takes about 4 weeks for the eggs to hatch.

### I HAVE FOUND SOME BIRD EGGS ON THE GROUND AND THE PARENTS ARE AROUND. SHOULD THE EGGS BE THERE?

Ask the caller to describe the parent bird to try and establish what bird it may be. If the bird described is a Masked Lapwing (Plover), then this is a natural occurrence. These birds lay their eggs on the ground. Advise the caller to leave the eggs where they were found.

## I HAVE A KOOKABURRA ATTACKING MY WINDOW, I'M AFRAID IT WILL HURT ITSELF OR BREAK THE WINDOW. WHAT CAN I DO TO STOP IT?

Kookaburras are territorial birds and when they see their own reflection in the window, they attack it.

Advise the caller to cover the window with flyscreen, paper, or something similar to stop the mirror effect usually caused by the sun shining on the window at just the right angle. Kookaburras are more territorial during the breeding season which is from September to January.

## A BIRD HAS JUST FLOWN INTO MY WINDOW. WHAT CAN I DO FOR IT?

During breeding season this can be a problem as most birds are territorial. Seeing their own reflection in a window may cause them to attack it, often knocking themselves out.

See if the caller is prepared to look after it for a couple hours and advise them to place the bird in a covered box, in a quiet room away from noise, children, and pets. Advise the caller to ring back if there is no improvement and you will have the bird rescued as soon as possible.

If the caller will hold the bird for a couple hours, advise them not to feed it as this will only stress the bird. Also advise them **not to place water in the box** as birds can drown or become wet, hypothermic and die.

If this is a re-occurring problem, the following are some suggestions to alleviate this.

- Hang shade cloth strategically on the outside of the window
- Hanging plant basket may be effective
- Install anti-glare screens over the windows, this prevents the birds getting access to the windows while reducing the glare and heat inside the house without affecting visibility
- Stop reflection by smearing outside windows with Ajax or similar until the breeding season is over
- Hang strips of aluminium

## THERE IS A COCKATOO IN MY YARD, AND IT HAS A LOT OF FEATHERS MISSING AND LOOKS SICK. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

This bird could have Beak and Feather disease otherwise known as Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (Pbfd). There is no treatment at this time for this highly contagious disease. If it can be contained it will require transport to the vet and humanly euthanized as not to infect other birds.

## I FOUND A BIRD WITH OIL ON IT'S FEATHERS. HOW CAN I REMOVE OIL FROM FEATHERS?

Send a wildlife volunteer as the bird will need intensive treatment.

So long as the bird has not ingested any oil, then the oil can be removed with gentle washing in lukewarm water using Amway L.O.C, Dawn detergent or KY Jelly. Do not use undiluted. Washing the bird may require several treatments to remove all the oil from the feathers.

Do not use a hairdryer to dry the bird as the noise will cause stress and the heat may burn the bird's skin. Gently dry with a towel and make use of the sun's natural warmth when possible. Filter the sun's rays so that you do not overheat the bird. If drying indoors, make sure the bird is not in a draught and keep the bird warm until it has recovered.

## I HAVE A FLOCK OF COCKATOOS EATING MY HOUSE. HOW CAN I STOP THEM?

Galahs and Cockatoos usually start eating verandas when bored. This is caused by these birds being fed by the public and therefore they do not occupy their time in finding food for themselves. Suggest the caller finds out who in their area is feeding the birds and explain to them the problem.

**To deter Cockatoos and Galahs.**



- Attach near the eaves or where the birds are chewing, strips of aluminium foil, fabric, or feathers from feather dusters that will flutter in the wind. This may replicate a scarecrow effect
- Attach a silhouette model of a bird of prey, made from black cardboard or plywood to the eaves or purchase one from a local nursery
- Painting woodwork with a crib spray available from an equestrian produce store can be effective as it gives the wood a nasty taste
- Use a water pistol every time the bird lands

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT WILD DUCKS EATING MY VEGETABLE GARDEN?

Advise the caller to purchase a wonder-bird scarer (plastic hawk) and hang it near the vegetable garden. And/or cover the vegetables with chicken wire so that the ducks cannot get to the vegetables.

### I HAVE RESCUED SOME DUCKLINGS. CAN I RELEASE THEM ON WATER?

Advise the caller that if the adult duck has disappeared or been killed, that it would not be a good idea to release the ducklings back into the water as ducklings do not have their water-proof feathers. The mother duck provides the oil for water-proofing their feathers. If placed in any water, they will die of pneumonia.

If the ducklings cannot be returned to the parents, advise the caller to keep them together contained in a box and to provide warmth until they can be collected.

### THERE ARE DUCKLINGS IN MY POOL AND THEY CAN'T GET OUT. WHAT CAN I DO?

If there are ducklings in the pool tell the caller to **turn the pool filter off immediately** as the ducklings could be sucked up into the filtration system and killed as they are unable to get out. A wet towel hung over the edge of the pool attached to a float will allow the ducklings a means of escape from the pool. The birds should be observed from a distance to see if the parent birds return and lead the ducklings away.

If the duckling needs to be caught, the adult duck needs to be caught first. The ducklings can then be herded into a corner and scooped out with a long-handled catching net or pool scoop. Re-unite parents and ducklings then release in a safe environment nearby.

### I HAVE DUCKLINGS SWIMMING AND FOULING IN MY SWIMMING POOL. HOW CAN I KEEP THEM OUT OF THE POOL?

Advise the caller to place an inflatable ball or pool toys in the pool. These will move around and keep the ducks away. Or a solar pool cover that will not only exclude ducks from the swimming pool but will heat the pool to some extent.

### PELICAN DOWN NEAR THE BEACH, APPEARS TO BE ENTAGLED IN FISHING LINE.

Ask the caller to watch the Pelican until a volunteer arrives and call if it should disappear. If they have contained the bird, ensure they **do not tie-up the bill** as Pelicans have no external nostrils and will not be able to breathe. When rescuing Pelicans two rescuers will be required.

Call an experienced wildlife volunteer or call the AMWRRO head office: (08) 8262 5452 or their emergency paging service: (08) 8378 3364. Never send a Pelican to a vet before checking first they will take it.

### EMU ON THE LOOSE AND IN DANGER OF BEING HIT BY A CAR.

Advise the caller **not to chase the bird**. Emus are prone to myopathy.

A number of wildlife volunteers should be sent. A catching net may be needed, much the same for catching macropods on the loose. Do not tie up the legs, as this will cut off the blood circulation. Keep the legs pointed away from you and cover the head with a sack as this will calm down the bird.

If a wildlife rescue volunteer is unavailable pass the rescue onto the local Department of Environment and Water office. Once the bird has been apprehended, make sure to advise the volunteer to **keep the bird upright and not on its side or leaning on its chest** or the bird will suffocate and die.

### I WANT TO RELEASE MY PET COCKATOO THAT I HAVE HAD FOR THE PAST 10 YEARS. HOW WOULD I GO ABOUT IT?

Advise the caller that if they no longer want the cockatoo and they cannot find a good home for it with a reliable person, it would be far kinder to have it euthanised by a veterinarian than to release it in the vain hope that it would be able to live out a natural life in the wild.

A pet kept for that length of time would be unable to fend for itself and would slowly die of starvation.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO STOP MY PET COCKATOO PLUCKING HIS FEATHERS OUT?

This could be a physical or psychological problem. To determine which of these it may be the caller would have to take the bird to the vet for accurate diagnosis. Physical issues include.

- Dietary problems
- Skin parasites
- Hormonal imbalances
- Bacterial or viral infections
- Allergies

If it is a psychological problem, then it is more than likely suffering from boredom or frustration. Birds kept in small cages with no variety to their surrounds are most susceptible to this. Birds need room to move and exercise freely, a varied diet, things to chew, companionship and security. Some female cockatoos will feather-pluck in the breeding season due to sexual frustration. Supplying a male with often stop this.

#### **Some ways to relieve boredom include.**

- Transferring the bird into a large aviary
- Giving the bird the company of another bird, of the same species
- Allow the bird to wander around the house (supervised of course)
- Giving the bird native branches, gumnuts, or banksia cones to chew
- Placing the bird near a radio or television
- Most importantly, giving the bird more attention

### I HAVE FOUND A RACING PIGEON. WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH IT?

Give the caller the phone number of the local Racing Pidgeon Club, the caller can then provide them the colour and/or numbers of the leg band(s). Giving the club the opportunity to organise to have the bird collected from the member of public.

# MAMMAL AND MARSUPIAL ADVICE

## POISONED MAMMALS AND MARSUPIALS

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Many animals may be poisoned, and it is often difficult to diagnose if an animal is suffering from poisoning. Animals may consume rodenticide baits, industrial waste products, metaldehyde baits, fertilizer sprays and pellets, household chemicals, stagnant or polluted water. Symptoms may include any of the following.

- Muscle spasms
- Seizures
- Symptoms of shock
- Internal haemorrhaging
- Extreme salivation/frothing at mouth
- Loss of balance
- Difficulty breathing
- Vomiting
- Cloacal bleeding
- Bleeding from the mouth

If an animal is suspected of poisoning it should be taken to the vet immediately. Ask the caller if they have used poisons recently and if so, the name of the poison. If the caller is unable to take the animal to the closest veterinary clinic send a wildlife volunteer to assist. Offer suggestions to avoid future poisonings.

## POUCHED YOUNG

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Many marsupials sustain injuries from domestic pets, moving vehicles, man-made structures and even from extreme weather conditions. Females may have a pouched young and these can often be free from injuries which may have caused the demise of their mother.

Sometimes the caller may not be aware of the sex of the animal. The **pouch or testicles will be in the same area as a belly button might be**. All female marsupials have a pouch including.

- Wombats
- Possums and Gliders
- Kangaroos and Wallabies
- Bandicoots and Quolls
- Koalas

Any reports of deceased marsupials should involve asking the caller to check for a pouch.

## POUCHED YOUNG – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group or contact relevant species specialist.

### I HAVE JUST HIT OR SEEN A DECEASED ANIMAL ON THE ROAD. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Explain to the caller that it is possible that there may be young in the pouch and ask them to check the pouch. In some circumstances the young will survive in the pouch for several days after the mother has died. If the joey is still in the pouch of its deceased mother and is still attached to the teat, the **joey(s) are not to be removed** unless there are maggots, the joey(s) have come off the teat or the animal is too large to transport, and it smells.

If too large to transport, then ask the caller to provide a photo of the mother for identification.

If the joey is attached to the teat. The joey can be removed from the pouch by pushing on the outside of the pouch and turning it inside out. Once the joey is out of the pouch, secure a safety pin to the teat and cut behind the safety pin to prevent the joey from swallowing the teat and choking.

**Advise the caller not to pull the joey from the teat as this can cause irreparable damage to the mouth.**

Ask the caller to wrap the joey in a hanky or towel and place in a container with a hot-water bottle filled with warm tap water, wrapped in a towel, and arrange for it to be transported to an experienced wildlife volunteer as soon as possible. **Do not leave overnight.**

If no heat is available, the wrapped joey can be placed under their shirt to keep it warm, ensuring it does not get squashed if small. It is preferable for experienced wildlife volunteers to remove the joey, although sometimes an experienced wildlife volunteer is not always available.

## I HAVE FOUND A DEAD POSSUM/GLIDER WITH LIVE BABY. NOW WHAT?

Advise the caller that these animals could have multiple young and to check the surrounding area where the animal was found for any other joeys that may have been separated from the mother. This can be done while awaiting collection by a wildlife volunteer. If the mother has been deceased for some time the joey(s) can wander off. Ask the caller to.

1. Place the joey(s) in a warmed cotton bag (pillowcase, sock, or beanie) and wrap in a towel. Place in a container with a hot-water bottle filled with warm tap water and wrapped in a towel. Immediate delivery or collection is required, **do not leave overnight**
2. If the joey is separated from the mother, bring the dead mother in for identification if possible or ask caller to provide a photo

# POSSUM ADVICE

Possums who insist on making their home in roof cavities can become a problem. Possums are an all year round 'get-into-trouble' animal. Smart and inquisitive they find their way into all sorts of situations.

## POSSUM TRAPPING

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We do not trap possums if they are **living in the callers roof**, running across the roof, or making noise outside the window at night because the caller thinks they are a nuisance. We only trap injured possums or possums that may have been locked in the callers roof due to extensions or repairs being done to the roof.

**Possums are very territorial and cannot be relocated** as it generally ends in one possum dying while fighting for territory. Suggest to the caller that they place a suitable weather-proof box designed for possums in a tree close by so the possum has a home to shelter in.

There are licensed possum trappers that will assist callers in repairing rooves and also supply a possum box. **Protectamate** will install a one-way door in their roof so the possums can leave at night and not get back in. They will block any entry points to stop them getting in and guarantee their work for 12 months!

Advise the caller if they book their service, to tell them they found them through SOWFI and they will provide a free possum box installed as part of the service.

**It is against South Australian law to relocate an animal more than 50 metres from its original location.**

## POSSUMS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group or contact relevant species specialist.

### I FOUND A POSSUM THAT HAS BEEN HIT-BY-CAR. NO VETS ARE OPEN. WHAT CAN I DO?

Ask the caller to remove the possum from the side of the road using an inverted pillowcase or towel placed over the animal. Warn about sharp teeth and claws.

Ask the caller if they are able to deliver the possum to the closest wildlife volunteer. If the caller is unable to move the possum off the road, advise the caller to stand near the possum, placing a towel or blanket over the animal to reduce its stress and wait for a wildlife volunteer.

## I HAVE HAD A POSSUM FOR THE LAST WEEK AND HAVE BEEN FEEDING IT COW'S MILK. IT SEEMS UNWELL. WHAT CAN I DO?

Possums are protected animals and cannot be kept without a permit from the Department of Environment and Water. If the caller does not want to give up the possum, try and gather as much information as possible such as.

- Name
- Residential address
- Contact number

Advise the caller that a species specialist will assist them with information and that you will arrange for them to call. Never hand out the species specialist number without prior consent. Explain to the caller that.

- Native animals are unable to drink cow's milk as it has inappropriate nutritional value and can cause gut problems i.e diarrhoea
- Possums require the correct diet and benefit from being paired with other possum(s) of the same age and species
- There are special milk formulas for rearing native wildlife and that the possum may die without the correct diet and/or care
- Stress will very quickly kill an animal
- They can drop the possum at a vet (free of charge) for collection if that is what they prefer

## HOW CAN I GET A POSSUM OUT OF MY ROOF?

Explain to the caller that possums are protected and are very territorial animals. While a possum is in the callers yard it is deterring other possums from entering. If at all possible, the best option for both the caller and the possum is to wait for nightfall. It's at this time the possum will leave the roof in search of food.

Once it has vacated the premises the entry hole(s) can then be sealed so that the possum cannot re-enter the roof. **Note: Access is usually soiled by oils and dirt from possum fur and feet.** At least it will then still be in its own territory but in need of suitable accommodation.

Recommend that possum boxes are placed in nearby trees before deterring the possum from the roof. When sealing the roof remind them to check there are no other possums in the roof at the time. Sometimes possums leave their young in the roof whilst they go out to forage for the night.

Trees that overhang the roof are a means of climbing onto the roof and into the cavity. Any overhanging branches should be removed. Fit a cylinder that is constructed of metal or other non-climbable material around the trunk of the tree to prevent climbing.

## THERE IS A POSSUM SITTING IN OUR TREE IN THE DAYTIME. SHOULD IT BE?

Explain to the caller that possums are nocturnal animals and that they should not be seen out during the day. Ask the caller.

- How high up in the tree is the possum?
- Are there any signs of injury e.g. missing fur, visible blood, flies buzzing around the animal?
- How long has the animal been there?
- What size is the animal?
- Is there one or more?

If there are no visible injuries, advise the caller to.

- Watch the animal, it may have been caught out in daylight hours while making its way home
- Keep all domestic pets inside

If the possum is injured but is too high up the tree to be contained safely. A possum trap will need to be set for when the possum comes down at night. If the possum is constantly being attacked by birds, the caller can hose the birds. **An experienced wildlife volunteer should be sent to assess the situation.**

### I HAVE FOUND SOME SMALL POSSUMS IN THE FIREWOOD. CAN I LET THEM GO?

These little possums are more than likely Feather-tail gliders or Pygmy possums. Pygmy possums may be in torpor (asleep) and if warmed up will come out of that sleep and use up their energy. They will probably require feeding before returning to their area. Ask what area the firewood originally came from, if known.

Have the animal(s) collected for identification and possible quick release if not injured. These very small gliders/possums should go to an experienced wildlife volunteer.

## FLYING FOX AND BAT ADVICE

Only vaccinated wildlife volunteers can handle bats, please refer these calls to Fauna Rescue South Australia - Bat Rescue: (08) 8486 1139. **The caller must be advised not to handle or touch these animals.** The public are not at risk provided they do not touch these animals.

### AUSTRALIAN BAT LYSSAVIRUS

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The Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) is a virus closely related to the rabies virus which causes serious and usually fatal disease in humans. ABLV has been found in a number of bat species including flying foxes/fruit bats and microbats. Surveys of wild bat populations have indicated less than one percent of bats carry ABLV. In sick and injured bats, around 7% have been found to carry the virus. However, it must be assumed that any bat (sick, injured, or healthy) in Australia could be infectious with ABLV.

Only experienced and vaccinated wildlife volunteers are to be sent to collect these animals. If the caller was bitten or scratched advise them that they must, **immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water for at least 15 minutes to reduce infection risk.** If available, an antiseptic with anti-virus action such as povidone-iodine or alcohol (ethanol) should be applied after washing and medical attention should be sought immediately. The health department must also be notified.

Any bats must be referred to a species specialist for further investigation. Bats showing signs of ABLV will be euthanised and sent to the nearest testing facility for Lyssavirus testing.

### FLYING FOXES HAVE BEEN VISITING MY FRUIT TREES. WILL I GET ABLV IF I EAT THE FRUIT?

The virus is unlikely to survive very long on fruit. It is destroyed by exposure to sunlight and drying (*Fishbein & Bernard 1995*). The fruit should be washed, and any bitten fruit should be discarded.

For further information advise the caller to contact the South Australian Health Department.

## FLYING FOXES AND BATS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### I HAVE FLYING FOXES EATING MY FRUIT. WHAT CAN I DO?

Advise the caller to cover the fruit tree with plastic or paper bags. Empty bladders from wine casks are ideal to fill with air and hang on the tree as a deterrent. And try to harvest the fruit before it ripens. Alternatively, cover the fruit tree with netting stretched out tight over a frame to cover the tree so the bats do not get tangled in the netting. Further information on wildlife friendly netting is available [here](#). **Do not extend the netting to the ground as snakes will get caught in it.**

### THERE IS A FLYING FOX HANGING IN OUR FRUIT TREE. WHAT IS WRONG WITH IT?

The same situation applies to flying foxes as to possums. If they are found in a tree or away from the colony during the day, then we need to assume something is wrong. However, sometimes they may be resting and will fly off in the evening.

Ask the caller if they have netting over the tree as entanglement may be a problem.

Ask the caller if the animal is alive and if there are any obvious injuries. Then explain to the caller that you will need to organise a vaccinated wildlife volunteer to come and assess the situation if the animal is hanging very low in the tree. Any domestic pets should be kept inside until the flying fox is removed.

### THERE IS A FLYING FOX HANGING ON POWERLINES. SHOULD IT BE THERE?

If possible, send a vaccinated and experienced wildlife volunteer immediately. Check for a pup with binoculars. There may be a need to wait for the local power company to arrive with a Cherry Picker.

**Call the local power company (SA POWER NETWORK 131 366) only if a pup is visible.** Advise them of the situation, the location of the animal and that you will organise for a wildlife volunteer to be at the scene when they arrive.

### HOW CAN I GET SMALL BATS OUT OF MY CEILING?

Explain to the caller that bats naturally live in the area. The best deterrent is to seal off the cavities in the roof or walls after the bats have left the area. If the caller is interested in purchasing a bat-box to offer the bats as an alternative roost site, refer them to [FauNature](#).

These cases are to be referred to Fauna Rescue South Australia - Bat Rescue: (08) 8486 1139 so the site can be assessed for the best possible solution. Bats are not fond of light, so the caller may leave a light on in the cavity for up to 48 hours to deter them.

Explain to the caller that before sealing any cavities, they are to ensure no bats, or their pups have been left behind. If the cavity is blocked while the bats are out feeding, there maybe pups left in the roof who will be trapped inside and starve to death. A maternity colony **cannot and should not be disturbed or removed** from the site.

### MY CHILDREN/CAT HAVE BROUGHT IN A SMALL BAT. WHAT CAN I DO?

Advise the caller not to handle the animal but to cover it with a towel and place a box over the top of it until a vaccinated wildlife volunteer arrives. All domestic pets and children should be kept clear. Animals that have been bitten by a cat or dog will need antibiotics as-soon-as-possible.

### THERE ARE FLYING FOXES SQUABBLING IN MY PALMS AT NIGHT.

Advise the caller that they are only feeding but if the noise is annoying them, suggest that they remove the palm fruit. This will stop the flying foxes from visiting.

## I FOUND A FLYING FOX WITH A BAND ON IT'S LEG. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

It is likely that the flying fox was banded under the **Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS)**. This is performed by professional banders, and each with a unique number embossed on it.

If the animal is dead, the band should be removed only by an approved and vaccinated wildlife volunteer. **The caller is not to handle the deceased animal.** The band is then flattened, stuck to a piece of cardboard or paper, then placed in a transparent resealable bag and sent to:

*The Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS)*

*GPO Box 8*

*Canberra ACT 2601*

The following details should accompany the band.

- Date and location, where the animal was found
- Your name and contact details, so they can mail or email you a recovery report

If the flying fox or bat is alive, the preferred method of reporting a find or sighting is to use the [Online reporting form](#). Alternatively, you can report a sighting to the ABBBS via email [abbbs@awe.gov.au](mailto:abbbs@awe.gov.au), or phone (02) 6274 2167. The following information is required when a report is made.

- The band number and/or colour markings
- Location of the animal or band (GPS coordinates or street address preferred)
- Date when you found the band or sighted the animal
- What happened to the animal
- Where the animal is now
- Where the band is now, and
- Any other information about the animal, including photos where available

**Banded birds (such as Australian Magpies) must also be reported to the relevant species specialist ASAP.**

# MACROPOD ADVICE

## MACROPODS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### I HIT A KANGAROO AND IT'S LEG IS BROKEN.

Adult kangaroos cannot be brought into care as they stress, and it can cause more problems for the animal. Explain to member of public best option is euthanasia and why. Advise the member of public to contact the South Australian Police 131 444 if within the suburbs or remote location with no shooters available.

Phone operators are to contact a shooter directly, **do not hand out numbers to the member of public.** Ensure all on lookers have been removed from the scene.

### REPORT OF UNINJURED MACROPOD RUNNING AROUND SUBURBS.

Generally, there is nothing we can do but advise the member of public to notify South Australian Police if it is a potential traffic hazard.



## I HAVE A KANGAROO IN MY FRONT YARD. SHOULD I TRY AND GRAB IT?

Large macropods can be very dangerous especially if cornered. Advise the caller not to approach the animal and keep domestic pets and children inside. Allow the animal to leave on its own accord. Chasing the animal is dangerous and can cause myopathy.

# BANDICOOT ADVICE

## BANDICOOTS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT BANDICOOTS DIGGING HOLES IN MY LAWN?

Bandicoots are very likely eating pest insects, snail, and in particular larvae of the cockchafer beetle which can destroy a lawn by eating the roots of the grass. They are a gardeners best friend. This problem usually occurs in late autumn after periods of rain. Bandicoot holes are vertical, cone shaped and four to eight centimetres in depth.

To deter bandicoots, erect a low chicken wire fence around the area with the bottom buried to a depth of ten centimetres. Spotlighting the area may deter them. **Do not use sprays.** These may kill the bandicoot as they eat a lot of soil with the invertebrates.

Bandicoots are under threat from domestic pets. Bandicoots being rescued should be transported in a cloth bag tied securely at the top. These animals suffer from stress and need to be housed correctly. **Contact the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group immediately for advice.**

# KOALA ADVICE

## KOALAS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### I HAVE JUST SEEN A DECEASED KOALA ON THE ROAD. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Ask the member of public to check the pouch, report the gender and age if possible. Then advise the caller to wrap the body of the koala in a towel and drop it into a local vet or remove from the road to avoid collateral damage by scavengers.

### A KOALA IS SITTING AT THE BOTTOM OF A TREE AND DOESN'T LOOK WELL.

Any koala exhibiting abnormal behaviour should be checked by a vet. If it is a particularly hot day (exceeding 35°C) ask the member of public to lightly mist the koala, provide a bowl of water and monitor. If the koala climbs back-up a tree in the cool of evening it's okay, if not send a wildlife volunteer.

When sending a wildlife volunteer make notes to **advise if the koala is on the ground or up a tree** as this will determine the equipment and resources required to complete the rescue.

# WOMBAT ADVICE

## WOMBATS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### I HAVE FOUND A WOMBAT THAT APPEARS TO HAVE A SKIN PROBLEM.

Many wombats, especially adults, may have sarcoptic mange. **This can be spread to anyone who has contact with the animal.** Sarcoptic mange is a burrowing mite spread by foxes and is usually found in areas where wombats are abundant. The severity of the condition and age of the animal are determining factors in the treatment and recovery. Often animals found out in daylight hours, particularly in the winter months will be suffering from mange. Ask if the animal has large scabs on the face, ears, and flank.

Treatment is to apply an application of Revolution (20-40KG available from any vet or pet store) to the animal and leave in its natural habitat. This can be attempted by a wildlife volunteer or alternatively by the caller if the wombat is a regular visitor to their property. In some case the animal has to be euthanised if treatment is unsuccessful or the animal is too badly infected. **Only send an experienced wildlife volunteer for adult wombats.** If a wombat joey is rescued, it should be placed into a pillowcase and kept warm. Overheating can cause heat stress.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT WOMBATS DIGGING UNDER AND DESTROYING MY FENCES?

Wombats use as many as ten holes within their home range although, only two or three of these will be used regularly. **Their home range varies from 5-25 hectares, depending on the habitat quality.** The killing of wombats as a means of reducing the damage to boundary fences is futile as in most wombat areas there is a reserve of young transient wombats ready to replace any established animal that is removed.

Some solutions are.

- Erect a two-wire electric fence 30CM outside the existing boundary fence, with wires 15-30CM above the ground
- Wombats do not like fertilizers made from chicken manure (e.g. dynamic lifter) and this discourages them if placed in areas where their digging is a nuisance
- Install swinging gates at regular wombat access points to relieve damage.

For this to work 2 or 3 well used holes must be chosen and all other holes within a few hundred metres must be repaired daily. After about a month, the wombats should only be using only the selected holes. The frame for the gate is then erected around the hole and left for the wombats to become accustomed to it before the gate is hung. This will exclude rabbits, kangaroos and wombat holes being made in fences.

### WHEN IS WOMBAT BREEDING SEASON?

Wombats breed throughout the year. The females pouch opens to the rear, they have one joey per year.

# NATIVE RAT AND MOUSE ADVICE

## NATIVE RATS AND MICE – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### I DON'T KNOW IF WHAT I HAVE RESCUED IS A MOUSE OR ANTECHINUS.

The antechinus (marsupial mouse) may be distinguished from the introduced house mouse by the lack of an obvious mousy smell and the presence of many small teeth in its mouth. The snout of the antechinus is long and pointed. The droppings are 5-10mm long, irregular, and easily crushed between the fingers, while mouse droppings tend to roll and remain intact under moderate pressure.

Ears are large, rounded and slightly crinkled. Antechinus are brownish/grey in colour. If the caller is unsure, see if they are able to transport to experienced wildlife volunteer to be identified.

### IT IS WINTER AND A DEAD ANTECHINUS HAS BEEN FOUND.

Breeding season ends around August. If there are no visible signs of injury and it is identified as a male, it may have died as a result of stress and exhaustion after mating. Injured and/or orphaned antechinus should be taken to an experienced wildlife volunteer. **Contact the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.**

### HOW CAN I TELL IF THE RATS IN MY ROOF/SHED ARE NATIVE OR FERAL?

Swamp rats, water rats and bush rats are native and are not likely to be in the house at all, but there are exceptions to the rule if the caller's residence backs onto bushland. It is almost certain to be feral rats that get in the rooves of houses. Native rats are hard to identify at the best of times, so it would be advisable to have it collected and identified by an experienced wildlife volunteer.

# ECHIDNA ADVICE

## ECHIDNA RESCUE

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- **Never use a shovel to dig out an echidna**
- The 'Stroke' method involves kneeling next to the echidna and stroking one hand after the other along one side until you can ease the fingers of one hand underneath the animal
- Alternatively, the 'tickle' method can be used. Easing your fingers under the belly of the echidna, gently tickle the stomach and the echidna will release its grip. If you keep constant pressure upward every time the echidna gives a little, you will be able to lift it out a little more each time and eventually it will come free. Using a towel, it can then be easily lifted
- Wrap an ice brick in a towel and place it in the bottom of the carrier to keep cool as the temperature needs to be below 25°C
- Three towels (with no loose threads) or a wool blanket should be placed on the bottom before placing the echidna into the bin. Put another towel over the echidna to allow it to burrow into the towels for security and to reduce stress

- Young Echidnas, even when spineless, should not be placed on heat but treated in the same manner as a joey rescue using the same pouches. **Never pick up an unspined puggle with bare hands**, as a puggles immune system is not able to cope with human bacteria

Watch for any blood in the bubbles as this may indicate a broken snout which cannot be repaired, lung or other internal damage that will require immediate vet attention. Clear bubbles are not a concern as echidnas blow bubbles of mucous through their snouts as a normal process to remove dirt.

Avoid relocating adult echidnas around **breeding season**. Young are left in a burrow while mum forages for food. **Relocate the animal as close to the rescue site as possible** as they will try to return once released.

## ECHIDNAS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### I HAVE RESCUED AN ECHIDNA AND BUBBLES ARE COMING OUT OF ITS NOSE. IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH IT?

It is natural for clear bubbles to be coming from the nose. Any nose injury, blood in bubbles, must be seen to by a veterinarian. Adult echidnas **have a home range, and it is imperative they are returned** to it.

### WHAT CAN I PUT AN ECHIDNA IN FOR TRANSPORTING PURPOSES?

A plastic carrier or garbage bin with holes in it for ventilation with a secure lid. Wooden box well ventilated with hinged lid and lined with plenty of mulch or shredded paper can be used.

Never place an echidna in a cardboard box as you will find that it would have buried itself into the car.

**Echidnas can die from heat stress, never provide a heat source.** Males have a long spur on their hind legs that can cause a painful injury. Please handle with care. Echidnas are required to go to an experienced wildlife volunteer. **Contact the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.**

### I HAVE AN ECHIDNA IN MY YARD AND THE DOGS ARE BARKING AT IT. WHAT CAN I DO?

Echidnas often wander through backyards in search of ants or water. When disturbed, they curl into a ball of radiating spines or dig themselves into the ground surprisingly quickly. Advise the caller to help the animal by keeping people clear of the animal and keeping all domestic pets inside until the echidna moves away. Relocation isn't necessary if there is plenty of natural bush nearby or surrounding the property.

If the echidna is in the middle of suburbia with houses all around then, so long as it is not breeding season, relocation to nearby bushland may be the best option.

Sometimes the echidna has crossed a busy road and if it is placed on the other side, it may venture back across the road so don't relocate unless the animal is in danger.

**Breeding season** is July-August. Gestation, incubation, and pouch life in September-October. Suckling and lactation from November through to March. **Do not relocate**, especially during these periods as the young could be in a burrow nearby.

# REPTILE AND AMPHIBIAN ADVICE

Only accredited wildlife volunteers can handle snakes and goannas, please refer these calls to Snake Catchers Adelaide: +61 0416 435 245. **The caller must be advised not to handle, touch, or approach these animals.** The public are not at risk provided they do not touch these animals.

## SNAKES AND GOANNAS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

### THERE IS A SNAKE IN MY YARD CAN YOU HELP?

Many calls for snakes needing to be relocated from yards can be a waste of the handlers time as most of the time the snake disappears before they arrive. Only **send a snake handler if the caller is distressed or at risk**, i.e if the snake is in the house or in a school yard where children play. Do not hesitate to refer the caller to an experienced handler. The handler is the best person to judge if they should attend.

If the snake is caught in netting, ask the caller to protect the animal from the sun. Any object can be used to cast a shadow over the snake from a distance. Do not suggest the caller goes near the snake. If the animal is caught in netting or in a pond, call a snake handler immediately as the snake may drown.

If the caller threatens to kill the snake explain that there is no need for that, and you will call a handler immediately. Ask the caller if they live in close proximity to the bush. If the snake is not threatening or near where children play, explain to them that if left alone the snake will return to the bush. Snakes are often just passing through or sun basking. Advise the caller to keep their pets inside until the snake has moved on. If you cannot contact a snake handler and the snake is in a dangerous situation and you have exhausted all other avenues, then try calling the Department of Environment and Water.

### MY PET HAS JUST BEEN BITTEN BY A SNAKE. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Advise the caller to take the animal to the vet immediately. If the snake has had an encounter with a dog and still there, the snake will need to be contained and assessed by an accredited snake handler.

### HOW CAN I STOP SNAKES FROM COMING INTO MY YARD?

Snakes do not come looking for people. They are usually attracted by food (mice and/or rats), water in dry weather and/or hiding places in your yard. To reduce the chance of unexpected encounters with snakes near living areas you can modify the habitat around buildings. If the caller lives in close proximity to bushland there is no way to stop them. However you may suggest the following.

- Clear all rubbish in the yard and around buildings
- Maintain lawn height
- Remove any piles of wood and other cover, in particular sheets of iron
- Keep firewood as far from the house as possible
- Be visually alert and wear shoes or boots as protection during the warmer month, even at night

If you come across a snake, leave it alone. Most snake bites occur when someone tries to either move or harm the animal. Snakes often frequent aviaries or chicken pens looking for mice that may be scavenging for seed. Fishponds are also a common hangout for snakes as they feed on frogs.

- Do not leave water bowls near the house
- Do not leave pet food outside at night as it attracts rodents

## GOANNA UP A TREE.

If a goanna is up a tree, then advise the caller to leave it alone and remove any domestic pets or children from the area. The goanna will leave in the evening when it is comfortable. If injured, these animals can only be contained by an experienced reptile handler as they can cause serious bite and scratch injuries.

## LIZARDS AND TURTLES – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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If you can't answer a question the member of public may have - let them know you will find out and call them back. Ask the question in the SOWFI Rescue Line chat-group.

You may send any wildlife volunteer to contain these animals. However if it turns out to be a snake, the wildlife volunteer is not to touch it, unless they are an authorised snake handler. Obtain the size of the lizard before notifying our wildlife volunteers, if it appears quite large it would be best to refer the call to an experienced reptile handler.

If the lizard is injured or caught in anyway laying in the direct sun, ask the caller to cover it using a towel or provide cover from the sun using a box or washing basket.

### I HAVE FOUND A TURTLE AND IT IS NOT INJURED. WHERE CAN I RELEASE IT?

Always ask where the turtle was found. Is it a marine or freshwater turtle? Marine turtles have flippers, freshwater turtles have claws. All marine turtles should be referred to AMWRRO head office: (08) 8262 5452 or their emergency paging service: (08) 8378 3364.

Sometimes animals are picked up while traveling in the country and bought home. We need to know where the animal has come from. Sometimes turtle decide to go walkabouts, looking for new homes in dryer periods. Ensure the turtle is not injured. If it appears well, ask the caller if there is a creek or body of water in close proximity to where they found the turtle.

If the caller knows the area the animal came from, they can return it to the water for release. If the caller does not wish to release the animal themselves, send a wildlife volunteer. If an injury is found, have the turtle collected for inspection by a vet.

# APPENDIX

## **Additional References and recommended books.**

A Field Guide to Mammals of Australia, Menkhost, P. & Knight, F. Oxford University Press

A Guide to Living with Wildlife, written by Ian Temby, publisher DCE Victoria

Australian Bats, written by Susan Churchill, Publisher Sydney: Allen & Unwin

Australian Natural History Series, publisher UNSW Press

CSIRO have a range of great books for various species available [here](#).

Field Guide to the Birds of Australia, written by Graham Pizzey and Frank Knight, Angus and Robinson

Field Guide to Australian Birds, written by Michael Morcombe, publisher Steve Parish Publishing

Possums, written by Sonya Stanvic

Taronga Zoo: Guide to the Care of Urban Wildlife, written by Erna Walraven, publisher Allen and Unwin

The Mammals of Australia, editor R. Strahan, publisher Reed New-Holland

The Complete Guide to the Care of Macropods, written by Linda Staker

QWRC Glovebox Guide, available from QWRC district representative or contact [secretary@qwrc.org.au](mailto:secretary@qwrc.org.au)