



# Western Australian Seabird Rescue Newsletter - May 2021



## *Welcome to our May 2021 Newsletter*

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Welcome to our first newsletter of 2021. In this edition we look back at some of the events of last year as well as news from the first quarter of this year.

Last year was busier than ever for our organisation. As always we have had winter storms blowing in beautiful pelagics, outbreaks of botulism in urban waterways, pelicans and cormorants interacting with recreational fishers

A 'once-in-a-decade' storm in May 2020 caused hundreds of Threatened Lesser Noddy to blow to land, washing up on beaches between Perth and Albany.

Despite the efforts of WA Seabird Rescue (WASR), and others, many perished from hypothermia and exhaustion and only 35 were rescued.

Not all of those survived, some died within minutes or hours of coming into care, but thanks to a huge team effort led by Fiona O'Sullivan and

and suffering entanglements, and juveniles of a wide range of species including spoonbills, herons, cormorants and grebes come into care.

With an additional 50 volunteers recruited last year, and another 10 so far this year, we now number around 100 volunteers covering all areas of operation from rescue to rehabilitation, phone supervision, administration and fundraising staff.

Several of our staff are now trained to use an automatic net launcher which greatly assists in our rescue success.

Our Annual General Meeting was held on 25 November 2020 and the committee has already been busy updating policies & procedures and identifying new fundraising opportunities to assist as we continue to grow.

### *This time last year .....Lesser Noddy 'Wreck'*

Sharon Manson, and a collaboration with marine biologist Dr Chris Surman, 17 birds were successfully rehabilitated and returned to their island home - the remote Abrolhos



*Lesser Noddy photographed by Marine Biologist Chris Surman*

Islands - their only known breeding location in Australia. WASR gave the birds six weeks of round-the-clock care to ready them for release and ensure they were fully water-proofed and healthy enough to survive in the wild.

After rehabilitation the birds were driven from Perth to Geraldton in the early hours of the morning where they made the three-hour boat journey back to Pelsaert Island.

## Volunteer Training



*Mandurah Workshop Group Photo*

In 2020 we held five rescue training workshops in Perth, Mandurah and Rockingham, and another in March this year. Around 60 new people

signed up in total. A number of these new people are now competent at handling pelicans and using the net launcher to

rescue entangled darters, both challenging types of rescues.

We now have a total of four net launchers in Perth, one in Albany and recently bought another for Mandurah where training in its use is ongoing.

We also paid for about twenty volunteers to attend Raptor Handling Workshops at WA Birds of Prey Centre, these are always a huge hit and the only live wildlife training our volun-

teers get apart from the workshops we provide.



*Raptor Handling Workshop*

## Working with others

As our profile in the community grows and we get busier we often work with other organisations to ensure the very best response and care for our wildlife.

Special thanks goes to WA Wildlife, who admit many of our birds to their care, providing them with free veterinary treatment and Darling Range Wildlife Shel-



*Cormorants enjoying a large aviary at DRWS*

ter (DRWS) who provide their lovely large waterbird aviaries when they can for pre-release care of some of our birds like spoonbills, pelicans and cormorants who benefit from longer rehabilitations.

We also co-ordinate with other rescue organisations like AWARE in Mandurah and FAWNA & Dunsborough Wildlife Care in the South West.

## Community Involvement



*EnviroFest 21 November 2020*

Despite the Covid situation we have been involved with many community events, some of which have also been great fundraisers. EnviroFest in Caversham, World Wetlands Day in Mandurah, City of Melville's National Tree Planting event, two screenings of the Chris Jordan film "Albatross" (thanks to Dr Louise Sparrow of Doctors for the Environment DEA) and Coastal Cleanup events

have all given us an opportunity to raise awareness of the work we do, the threats to our precious birds and the simple changes we can make in our lives.

Our volunteers have also represented WASR at local initiatives. In Mandurah Lee, Joanne & Barbara gave a presentation at the museum, while our Albany Supervisor, Carol, was interviewed on ABC South West radio.



## Fundraising & Costs

As we increase in size our costs also increase significantly - we spent \$50,000 in 2020 - and hence we have to raise more money every year. We provide new volunteers with crates and nets, a vest or shirt, safety glasses, safety sunglasses, cutters and gloves. All up we budget around \$150 per new volunteer. We have also introduced a fairer system of remuneration for fuel costs and last financial year spent about \$5000 on fuel allowances alone.

We are very fortunate to have had significant sums donated

from our long-term supporters "Protection of Earth and Wildlife" (PEWA) and Santos. We also received a very generous legacy donation from the family of a long-time friend of WASR.

We have been busy fundraising. In 2020 we obtained a \$9,798.00 "WA Wildlife Heroes Rehabilitation and Emergency fund" grant as well as \$4,000 from the City of Melville, \$2,300 from the City of Rockingham and \$1,500 from the City of Belmont. A Facebook online fundraiser for a net launcher raised over

\$3,000 and a Mandurah bingo group also gifted us \$1,500 towards another net launcher.

In addition, our Fundraising Coordinator, Ellaine Hislop, has been running some online 'Giving Days' with the most recent event bringing in approx. \$2,400. Funds have been spent on rescue equipment, incubators, hospital boxes, training courses, uniforms and net launchers and monies are still being spent.



This campaign is flexible funding: the organization will receive all donations.

GOAL \$ 5,000 AUD

**\$ 2,465**

49%

## Quiz Night

Our 2020 Quiz Night was unfortunately cancelled due to Covid-19 but we are planning big things for our 2021 event and have had a great response to our request for donations for the raffle & silent auctions, including some beautiful artworks.

## Oil Spill Response

Fiona O'Sullivan & Halina Burmej continue to give feedback to this evolving Department of Biodiversity, Conservation & Attractions (DBCA) policy. Two WASR members will be invited to participate in a week long exercise in the Houtman Abrolhos with particular input regarding sea-

birds. DBCA have requested that WASR trial some paper leg bands for birds and would like photos of home care setups to see what would be required in the event of a spill. WASR will continue to work with this project wherever possible.

## Murdoch Parasitology Study

WASR and Animal Happiness Vets are working with Murdoch University on a project looking at parasites (gut, blood and skin) in both seabirds and waterbirds. We have noticed an increase in parasite burden in some of our bird species in recent years and hope

this project will shed some light on this disturbing trend.

In the meantime we have agreed to collect deceased specimens and data for use in the project.

## Our Rescue Work:

National Volunteer Week is on 17-23 May this year.

WASR is run entirely by volunteers & we'd like to take this opportunity to recognise the valuable contribution our volunteers make each and every day.

On average we get seven calls for rescue per day. Sometimes it takes more than one person to do a rescue. Hours and hours of time, and driving many kilometres, are put in helping our seabirds and waterbirds.

We also want to thank our home carers whose lives are taken over by the birds in their care. Without them and their dedication these birds wouldn't have that second chance.

Our volunteers do many other jobs too - our committee of seven who do all the "management" things, those that answer the phones every single day of the year, those that transport birds to vets, home carers and for release, those that do fund-

## Our Volunteers

raising and apply for grants, those that do educational displays, go to markets and talk to the public, and those that organise events.

Everyone who contributes in some way to WASR is a very valuable member of our team and we are very grateful for their passion and commitment.

We have too many volunteers to post a photo of each of them but here are two in action.



Jo & Lee rescuing a sick pelican

## Too Many Bird Entanglements

We get multiple daily calls about seabirds and waterbirds with awful fishing line entanglements, often with embedded hooks and attached sinkers. Sometimes these birds are found hanging from trees, attached by line.

Pelicans, Cormorants and Silver Gulls are the worst affected but we also get regular calls about Crested Terns, Pacific Gulls, Nankeen Night Herons & Oystercatchers. Often the birds have been interacting with fishermen who throw them bait and encourage them to approach.

Australasian Darters, with their finely serrated beaks are very susceptible to beak entanglements from any foreign material in the water.

Entanglement in plastic and other solid rings is an issue for our waterbirds who live in wetlands in built-up areas. Litter on the road washes into stormwater drains which wash into wetlands, rivers or the ocean.

Sadly, there are just too many stories to choose from for this publication. Instead we have included photos of some of the recent entanglements we've had to deal with.

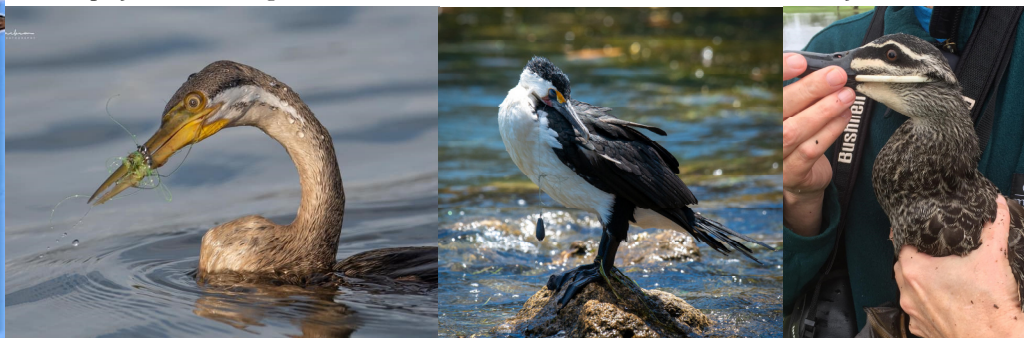
We are submitting all our statistics on entangled birds to the Entangled Wildlife Australia project which has a database recording all the entanglements our wildlife suffer.



We also work to raise awareness, along with many other organisations, through a diverse variety of media and community engagement.



From top left: Nankeen Night Heron, Pelican, Silver Gull, Darter, Pied Cormorant & Pacific Black Duck





## Orphaned and Baby Birds

Our work isn't just about entanglements. Sometimes we get lots of babies who have fallen from their nests.

Over the past few months one of our carers had 7 baby herons in care!! Yes, that's a lot of hungry mouths to feed.



*Nankeen Night Heron*

Two baby pelicans were found on Shoalwater Beach, one at the end of February weighing just 3.84kg and another in mid March at just

2.5kg. We think they came from the pelican rookeries on Penguin Island and somehow ended up in the water and washed up on the beach.



*Baby Pelican*

Both of these beautiful birds have been an absolute delight

to care for (we won't talk about the mountains of washing though) - completely different characters and we're happy they had each other to grow up with.

During the breeding season we are often very busy with ducklings and cygnets. Ducks often nest some distance from the river or wetland where they raise their ducklings and the journey on foot there for the young family may include busy roads, drains and fences as well as predators like dogs, cats, ravens and even goshawks trying to pick the ducklings off.

We can often give them a bit of a hand, sometimes just shepherding them on their

journey and sometimes catching ducks and ducklings and driving them to the wetland we hope is the one they are aiming for.



*Orphaned Baby Shelducks*

Sadly we also sometimes get orphaned ducklings whose parent/s have been killed on the perilous journey.

The birds pictured have all been successfully released except the pelican which is continuing its rehab at DRWS.

## Northern Rockhopper Penguins



*Northern Rockhopper Penguins in care in Albany*

Three Northern Rockhopper Penguins were in the care of our Albany Rehabilitator earlier this year. We also had several Little Penguins in care in Perth & Albany.

Penguins come ashore from December to April every year to moult and are unable to

return to the water for around 3 weeks while they grow new feathers. They lose all their feathers at once, unlike other birds which go through a gradual process.

The birds cannot regulate their temperature at this time and are not waterproof, so

they cannot go to sea to fish or avoid danger. Before the moult they pack on the weight in readiness as they will be unable to go to sea for around three weeks.

If the penguin is smart it will land on a remote island or beach for this time, but when the penguins come in where there are people, dogs & four wheel drives they can be in a very vulnerable position.

Along with the dangers of fox or feral animal attacks it can be a very tricky time for these birds. This is why penguins need to come into rehabilitation with an experienced carer so that they can complete this yearly event safely & securely before returning to the ocean.

Upon checking the Rockhoppers for microchips Carol discovered that one of them

was already microchipped & was in fact the same bird she had in care with her last year. This is fantastic news as it shows that the birds we release are successful when returned to the wild.

All penguins in our care have now been released following a long period of rehabilitation to bring the birds up to the correct release weight. To ensure they are well water proofed they had plenty of exercise in the rehab pool.



*Little Penguin*

## Western Australian Seabird Rescue

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Find us at: <https://wasr.org.au/>  
or  
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*Thank you for your support in protecting  
WA's beautiful seabirds and waterbirds.*

*Western Australian Seabird Rescue is a network of seabird and waterbird rescuers based in coastal south-western Australia. Every year we rescue and rehabilitate hundreds of waterbirds such as herons, swans and ducks, and a huge variety of seabirds including pelicans, cormorants, shearwaters, penguins and albatrosses. We rely entirely on donations to fund our work.*

*How to donate:*

*By Direct bank transfer –  
Name: Western Australian Seabird Rescue  
BSB: 633 000  
A/C No.: 139577217*

*Through our new donation platform at  
<https://www.givenom.com.au/wasr>*

*By cheque made out to – “Western Australian Seabird Rescue”  
and sent to: PO Box 43, Bayswater WA 6933*

*For tax deductible donations:  
Online through Western Australian Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (WAWRC) [at https://www.wawrc.org.au/](https://www.wawrc.org.au/)  
Please specify your donation is for WASR.*



*Our Containers For Change Scheme ID is C10280268*

## *Helping Little Shearwaters*

Little Shearwaters are the smallest of our shearwaters, weighing only about 250g, and nest on islands off the WA coast.

Shearwater fledglings leaving their island burrows are often drawn to coastal lighting and

end up on the land. Every year we get many call outs to collect these gorgeous birds.

They are often found on large areas of bitumen, possibly thinking that it is water, and have been found in some unusual places including a

high school basketball court, and on one occasion a pub in Albany!

Usually all they need is rest and fluids and can be released within a couple of days to resume their life out on the ocean.

