

Annual Report on Activities

Wild 2 Free Inc. ABN: 15 730 637 955

1443 Runnyford Road, Runnyford NSW 2356

July 2019 - June 2020



Executive Summary

Due to the many questions raised at our AGM and it becoming disruptive, the committee failed to fully report on the Association's activities in the previous financial year. The following account has been written for the members, by the outgoing Vice-President Yana del Valle and outgoing Treasurer Rae Harvey.

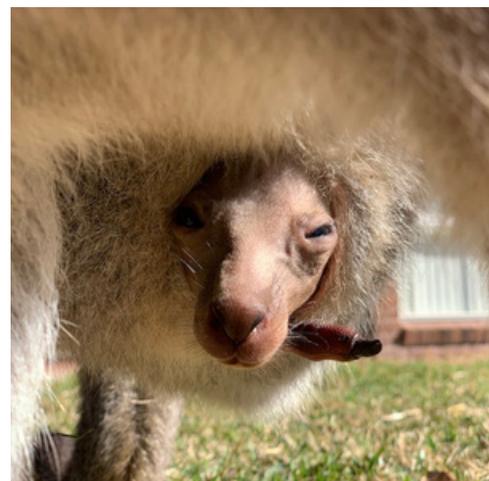
July

We farewelled our incredible member, Marilen Gabel (AKA Mary), who returned to Germany after 7 long months of dedicated volunteer work at Wild 2 Free. She is currently studying wildlife veterinary in the Netherlands, with a special focus on kangaroos of course! Mary remains a W2F member and plans to return during university breaks. We can't wait!



August

Our co-founders, Rae and Sayo, ceased working together due to personal reasons in August, which led to Rae departing for 5 weeks. A volunteer, Katalin Kratz stayed on to assist Sayo. The released Storm, continued to raise her first-born at the house for reasons only known to her. Elvis, an older wild joey rescued from Bawley Point, released himself on the property,



September

Our member Laura Taylor from Canada volunteered for several weeks and reported to Rae on the kangaroos in her absence, and returned again to assist in late September, following Rae's return to the property. Sayo and volunteer Katalin departed and relocated to Melbourne. 5 more kangaroos were released.



October

Member Karen Bachelder from Seattle arrived, enabling time to prepare the property for the bushfire season. Following another bone break suffered by long-term care kangaroo Riley in August, Rae made the heartbreaking decision to release him from ongoing pain and suffering. Karen and Rae spoiled Riley in his final month, before local vet Sean from Casey's Beach Vet Clinic made a 'home visit' on October 30. The date was chosen to avoid a heat-wave, beginning on October 31. Riley despised hot weather.



November

The clean up continued, paddocks slashed, leaf debris cleared. A shipping container was purchased to keep animal feed safe and secure. Long-term care cat Louis, was euthanised by vet Sean following seizures. He was suffering major health issues on rescue and required ongoing vet care. He lived for 9 years, 3 years longer than vets initially predicted. His long history of health issues serves to remind members that all cats should receive vaccinations. Karen left to help bats in QLD. The Currowan fire started Nov 26, just 20km north of W2F.



December - Part 1

The remaining joeys began their 'soft-release' program. Rae set up a Go Fund Me to get food and water out to help wildlife survivors of the Currowan bushfire in the Shoalhaven. Karen extended her Visa and returned to assist, and is pictured here with member Kylie Young at Batemans Bay. Kylie worked tirelessly to transport to volunteers between the Bay and Ulladulla. Almost 8,000kg of feed was distributed to 150 feed stations, using 60+ volunteers and 7 distribution centres.



December - Part 2

On Dec 31, bushfire destroyed the property at Runnyford, W2F operates from. All W2F assets were destroyed, except a shipping container full of animal feed. The fire also destroyed members Simon & Yana's wildlife sanctuary next door. Simon, also an RFS volunteer, bravely rescued Karen and Rae from the Clyde River, before returning to rescue other stranded Runnyford residents. His efforts that day saved lives and will never be forgotten.



January - Part 1

Rae was unable to continue the wildlife feed program but Kylie Young took over so volunteers could continue receiving assistance. Karen and Rae were sheltered by WIRES volunteer and friend Zora at Bawley Point. Zora also hosted one of the W2F food distribution centres and this surviving wild male is pictured eating food provided by the program at Bawley Point.



Simon discovered a fire damaged but surviving cabin at W2F and took shelter there, distributing food and water to animals on the property and in the Mogo State Forest until Rae and Karen were able to return on January 5 and 6 respectively. Rae's home, which also served as W2F HQ and provided animal care rooms, was destroyed. Pictured is the traumatised Clover sheltering at an area which formally provided shelter and food to in care and released kangaroos. Yana organised 60 bales of Lucerne for local farm animals and spent days coordinating logistics despite limited comms and road block issues, arranging delivery and drivers to get produce and water to animals in need. She personally donated over \$2,000 in water deliveries.



January - Part 2

With no medical supplies available to assist the animals (all lost in the house fire), critical donations from ARC, MediDivert, Willow Wood in SA and others began arriving. World Vets were next to assist, which sadly saw the euthanasia of Bee, the first joey of ex-orphan Honey, her burns deemed too severe by the vet. Clover euthanised her own small joey by depouching her. With little natural food available, the joey was fed to a surviving lace monitor. Sheep escapees from a farm were also fed.

Animal Evac NZ conducted a search and rescue, resulting in one female wallaby found at nearby Egans Road. She died overnight, her thumb sized joey was euthanised. Reachout World Wide from the USA built five critically needed shelters, to continue providing for surviving wildlife including the ex-orphans.

Marcus from Alphadog Animalarmy and Shannon from Whisker Woods captured or darted adult kangaroos requiring vet care and the incredible vets Anita Dowe & Amelia Butler stayed for several days to ensure all animals requiring vet care were seen to.

After several months of pre and post fire support, Karen Bachelder returned home to Seattle. Former volunteer and member Laura Taylor flew in at great personal expense to provide ongoing assistance.

Rae's music contacts proved helpful, with German Rapper, Kontra K arriving with friends to provide on-ground assistance. Inspired by our work, he donated \$50,000 to Wild 2 Free following his departure.



February

Feb 2 marked the momentous occasion when Cricket, who was still on a bottle pre-fire and suffered third degree burns, hopped again for the very first time. She also endured a horrific outbreak of kangaroo pox after rain brought the mosquitos back and continued to receive antibiotics until Mid-Feb. She is pictured here on the final day she had to endure a 'jab', being rewarded with an almond.



The fires that continued to break out on the property in January and February were finally extinguished. The photo on the right, was taken by Peter Sharp of Tame & Wild Studio on February 12, still burning despite the heavy rains. Peter is a regular visitor from Sydney who volunteers his talents to provide us with images, some of which will be shown on the next page. Peter also volunteers his photography services to the Sydney Dogs & Cats Home (to whom he also serves as President), and Sydney Wildlife.



The rain brought growth and the Mogo State Forest feed distribution eventually ceased. Big thanks to Robyn Cox for donating a shipping container, providing us with the ability to safely store donated medical and animal supplies.



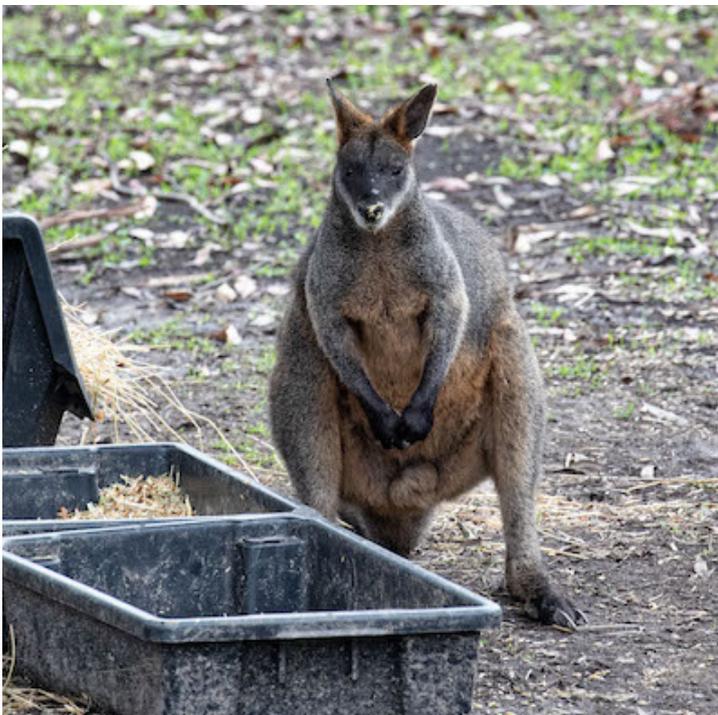
Power was restored to the property and surviving cabin in mid February and, a donated sofa was set up by Laura, to help former orphan Kanku recover following a fight with a wild alpha male. Kanku also ate the feed left out for surviving possums, causing many kangaroos to follow his lead and start heading to the cabin at dusk for a feed.



Post fire photos, courtesy of Peter Sharp, Tame and Wild Studio



W2F was not insured, but we thank Rae's insurance company Youi, for going the extra distance, providing shade cloth to keep wildlife safe from the destruction. Bird seed continues to be provided, due to lack of seed and fruit in the burnt forest.



A wild wallaby takes shelter from the floods, while eating. Several trees were removed by Forestry Corp, but they were happy to work with Rae, to protect any trees which could be saved to provide habitat instead of being removed like normal.

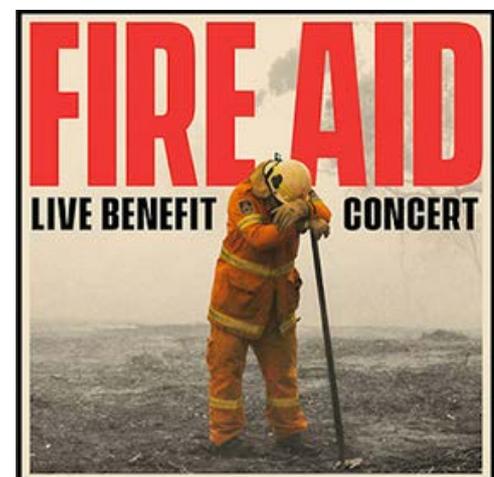
March

Clover returned to care when found on a bush track. Her big toenail had fallen out and she was unable to hop. A second toenail fell out that night so Clover lived in the bedroom of the cabin with Rae until she recovered and was re-released mid-March.

The only known survivor of a mass post-fire shooting at Jeremadra in Jan, was released into Rae's care after being cared for by a family who lived at the Jeremadra location. 'Smokey' was re-named Koa and lived outside during the day, and in Rae's bedroom alongside Clover in the evenings. Member Nicole Lesslie started and continues to bring bark and tree branches most weeks for the wildlife, which is no longer available locally.

Laura rescued 3 male guinea pigs who like Koa, spent their days outside and evenings in the cabin. They were later adopted by a family at Frogs Hollow in the Bega Valley. The house Rae lived in, which also held W2F assets and was where animals were rehabilitated, was removed alongside other debris, by the end of March. Laura left on one of the last flights back to Canada before borders were closed due to Covid-19.

The donations, which poured in after footage of the damage at W2F was shown by ABC in Australia, NBC and CBS in the USA and across UK & Europe began to slow as Covid-19 took hold across the world, \$60,000 of the \$650,000 raised by John Butler Trio and friends, was donated to W2F. As friends of Rae's, she also provided advice on other charities and 4 of those received donations from the fundraiser, including Alphadog Animalarmy and Southern Cross Wildlife Care.



April

Ex-orphan Kirri was treated for a respiratory condition and made a full recovery. Rae filled the hole the house left, by using the funds donated to her by Red Cross, towards building two 100,000L concrete water tanks. These will save Wild 2 Free thousands of dollars from buying extra water in drought years. Water isn't only used to provide direct to animals, it's used to wash hundreds of pouches and pressure wash animal areas.



May

The new tanks are already being filled with water, in preparation for the rebuild. Big thanks to Batemans Bay Concrete Tanks for getting guttering up on the burnt out but still standing machinery sheds days before the next downpour! Many gum trees are back, but with a lack of seeds and other native trees, we continue to provide for all wildlife on the property.



June

Many attempts to capture a displaced cat failed miserably. We hope she has returned to her family at nearby Nelligan. Joey Koa remained in care preparing for 'soft-release'. The wildlife trail cameras, installed in May, began giving us insight to the variety of wildlife still existing on the property and breeding. Native wood ducks and a pair of rosellas were the first to produce young, followed by brushtail possums, wallabies and kangaroos. The river and estuary around the property not only saved human lives on December 31, 2019, but a wide variety of precious native wildlife are no doubt still alive today, thanks to the Clyde River and the dams, which are protected by trees to help retain water.



So what happened to all the orphans at W2F?

Since inception, 56 macropods were raised at Wild 2 Free, primarily by Sayo & Rae under license to Wildlife Rescue South Coast. That doesn't include those rescued and provided with short-term care or those who were rescued and re-homed elsewhere.

Of those 56 macropods, 6 died or were euthanised in care and 5 died after release in previous financial years. Riley was the only sad loss in the 19/20 financial year, leaving 44 ex-orphaned macropods to account for. 12 had moved onto land further afield before Nov 2019. An additional 5 disappeared amidst the increasing smoke of the Currowan fire in December (Angel, Boris, Pluto, Mikey-Potato and Kirri (with her two joeys)).

27 remained on December 31 (not including their joeys). Post fire, Yogi was seen on January 5 but disappeared, and was never found. The very wild JoJo was also spotted. 8 others have not been seen since the fire: Marian (her joeys Lucy and Malu are here), Autumn (her joey Summer is here), Storm and joey Sabina, Buggy, Melvin, Heidi and Hope, wallaby Jude and joey.

One way people keep going following a disaster, is to shut out the negative and focus on the positive, which is exactly what happened at W2F. A celebration of the survivors, has been acknowledged with a hand-made tree, made from one of the fallen trees. Trees all over the property are now lovingly adorned with the names of the survivors and their joeys. We will never forget what happened here, but these names serve as a daily reminder of great strength and resilience following trauma.



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Of the 17 remaining ex-orphans in order of their original arrival:

- Clover made a full recovery from burns and trauma (her joeys Elsie and Clyde survived uninjured).
- Kanku recovered from a fight, no fire-related injuries.
- Honey suffered painful extensive burns on both feet and paws and made a full recovery. Her joeys: Bee (euthanised due to injury) and Berry (missing)
- Jake was not injured
- Pocket was not injured (nor her joey Zak)
- Scratch was not injured
- Lily was not injured, her daughter Holly is missing
- Brutus had minor burns, did not require treatment
- Jess was treated for burns, but most recovery came from her standing in the salt water all day
- Venus and her joey Caesar survived, she fed others
- Penny was assessed for minor burns and stress issues
- Morty had minor burns not requiring treatment
- Minnie had minor burns not requiring treatment
- Cooper had no apparent injuries
- Cricket had 2nd and 3rd degree burns and recovered
- Bo only had a couple of fur burns, untreated
- Jules (wallaby) also survived with her young joey

Kirri, who disappeared weeks before the fire, returned on Jan 10 to check out the disaster. Deeming it safe, she returned again next day with her two joeys (and one in pouch). All four have been living on the property ever since. She was uninjured, but later treated for respiratory problems.

Interestingly, only females suffered injuries requiring treatment. All 18 kangaroos above are still alive today, alongside their wild born joeys and the joeys who survived following the disappearance of their mothers.



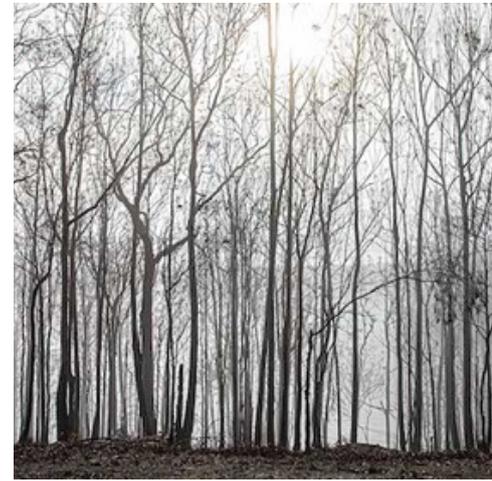
What about the other wildlife?

Every single tree and piece of land was burnt. Some of the tree canopy may never recover. We can only presume that the animals took shelter: behind rocks near the river, in the river or estuary, protected by the mangroves, in one of the 3 dams on the property or in the very large dam at the sanctuary next door, belonging to Simon and Yana. The fence between the two properties was removed several years ago, to expand the available land for wildlife and to provide safe passage into the Mogo State Forest.

5 wild kangaroos and two swamp wallabies were seen immediately post fire. The wild kangaroo mob grew to 13 by March. 7 red-necked wallabies and 51 kangaroos were counted in one sitting at nearby Egans Road.

Possums and gliders were seen feeding at shelters and both species are now breeding as did a pair of surviving Rosellas. The resident territorial pairs of masked lapwings and magpies survived, as did the kookaburra and raven families.

Male and female bower birds, galahs, king parrots, at least one pied butcher bird, a tawny frogmouth has been heard but not seen, common bronzewings, sulphur-crested cockatoos, yellow faced honeyeaters, noisy friarbirds, spotted pardalote, eastern yellow robins, golden whistlers, grey fantails and several other bird species are active. We are excited to inform you that two endangered Pied Oyster Catchers were spotted on the rocks in the river. Sadly, the resident glossy black cockatoos, some of whom were seen post fire, have presumably moved onto areas they can find suitable feed, which is no longer available in the area.



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NO red-necked wallabies have been seen at Wild 2 Free post fire. No sounds of sugar gliders. One feather-tailed glider was seen post fire. Reptiles are barely present, just one death adder and two lace monitors have been seen.

Hopping mice are present which is lovely, but we also suffered an outbreak of black rats & caught a fox on night camera in June. The ticks, which caused many problems pre-fire, have not been found anywhere or on any animal post fire. Ticks live under the leaf litter, which was burnt.

Due to the enormous stress effects that loud noise or changes in the environment cause our precious and fragile kangaroos, there are no plans to take in orphaned wildlife until after the rebuild. We continue to provide food and water for all wildlife and ex-orphans living on the property, along with additional care as required.

In closing

We thank some of the many people and organisations, who assisted us on-ground post-fire: Karen Bachelder, Laura Taylor, ARC and their navy volunteers, Alphadog AnimalArmy, Whisker Woods, Robin and a team from Toll Couriers, Robyn Cox, Vets Anita Dowe & Amelia Butler, Sally Beachmeare, Benny, Nicole Lesslie & Family, Worldwide Vets, Animal Evac NZ, German Rapper Kontra K and his team, Reach Out Worldwide, Colin Baillie and many other volunteers who drove emergency supplies or helped directly. We additionally thank every person and organisation who sent medial and animal care supplies. We will forever be grateful to those who gave their time to save lives following the devastating impact of the Black Summer Bushfire that destroyed us on Dec 31, 2019. Thank you.

