

Caring for Our Wildlife

We have many amazing and important native animals that have adapted to live in our suburban and city environments. Seagulls, for example, take advantage of peoples carelessly discarded food waste in the streets and at the beach. Also, possums love to feed on native and non-native plants in our gardens and nest inside our roofs. Micro bats can also live in our roofs and under the bark of gum trees in our gardens. Blue tongue lizards enjoy “sunbaking” on rocks, bricks, and, logs. Frogs breed in ponds, eating the mosquito larvae that are often found in there as well. Many insects live on and around our homes, all part of an ecosystem were one critter relies on the other for survival. If we removed/poisoned all of the spiders and insects from around our homes what would our insect eating birds such as magpies and wrens survive upon?

You can help our wildlife in many ways. Here are just a few ideas....

1. Simply stop using poisons and chemicals around your home. You will also be making your home safer for your family by cutting out the herbicides, pesticides and chemical fertilizers.
2. In hot weather leave shallow bowls of fresh water around your garden, both on the ground and higher up in shrubs or trees.
3. Do not feed wildlife. Food that we eat such as bread and mince meat is not good for animals as it does not contain the essential nutrients they need, and can often be high in preservatives, sugars and salts. A high fruit diet alone for animals such as possums causes digestive problems. Let animals find their own food in your garden. Animals that have become too used to humans as a food source can become a nuisance to others and become the target of culling campaigns as well.
4. Keep old trees on your property and plant plenty of natives (especially local native – Indigenous – plants) including ground covers, grasses, lilies, shrubs, and trees. These plants are better adapted to our environment and result in a healthier and lower maintenance garden as well!
5. Consider installing a frog pond. By constructing a suitable frog pond you can provide habitat for some of our wonderful native frogs such as the banjo frog, with his beautiful “bonk” call. Leaf litter and compost is also important for frogs as they do not live in the pond, but go there to breed. Leaf litter is home to many insects that are an invaluable food source for frogs. <http://frogsaustralia.net.au/conservation/creating-habitat.cfm>
6. Keep a compost and/or worm farm. Reduce your landfill waste, create your own organic garden fertilizer, and provide habitat for insects and frogs. Frankston Council shops sell great compost bins and worm farms, or you can easily build your own.
7. Leave some “messy bits” in your garden. Some of the untidy areas in your garden are ideal habitat for birds, small mammals, frogs, lizards, snakes, bats and even owls! Rocks, twigs, logs, bricks, and even old tiles create the perfect habitat for many native animals. Small holes and gaps in fencing also allow wildlife such as lizards to move easily between gardens. If you find snakes in your garden and are concerned call a licensed snake handler to safely and humanely relocate to a safe bushland area nearby. <http://www.snakehandler.com.au/>
8. If you have barbed wire fencing on your property, consider removing or adapting it. Many animals including wallabies, possums, gliders, and birds can easily become entangled on

poorly designed and maintained fencing. Also, if you net your fruit trees consider the many animals that become entangled and injured every year in the poorly installed netting and aim to improve the type of net you use and the way you install and maintain it.

<http://www.wildlifefriendlyfencing.com/WFF/Home.html>

9. Ideally keep your dogs in at night and if you have cats keep them confined to your house and a suitable cat enclosure. Keeping dogs in at night also keeps them safe from fright and escape after fireworks. A simple construction of recycled hard wood and cat mesh will provide a safe and happy environment for your cat/s and our wildlife. Cats should have access to fresh air, sunlight, and grass, but it should be done in a wildlife friendly manner.
<http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/pets/cat-care/confine-your-cat/diy-cat-enclosure-and-fencing>
10. Consider joining or volunteering with a wildlife or environment organisation. There are many organisations that help our environment and our wildlife in many ways. You could join a friends group and help take care of a special area of native bushland such as Kananook Creek, The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve or Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve. You could also help out at a local wildlife shelter with many duties including cleaning and feeding, or you could become a rescuer after some basic training. Many people also help out by knitting pouches for orphaned young animals, or volunteering for emergency phone line operation. The Gould League can also help with advice -
<http://www.gould.org.au/>
11. Local wildlife groups - <http://www.awarewildlife.org.au/>
<http://www.animaliawildlife.org.au/>
<http://www.helpforwildlife.org.au/>

Local friends groups -

http://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Environment/Groups_and_Places/Environmental_Friends_Groups/index.aspx

12. Install some wildlife nest boxes around your property in suitable locations. Many large trees that naturally create hollows for our wildlife to live in are being cut down at an alarming rate. Many animals such as possums, birds and bats will benefit from leaving old trees where they are, and/or providing some extra dwellings! It will also help to keep possums out of your roof. Possums are territorial and if you have an established male on your property it is likely he will defend his territory from newcomers. If he is happily living in a nice box in a tree, he will have less reason to come into your roof. You can build and install your own or call a local wildlife group for information. There are a number of web sites that offer free nest box plans online.
13. If you come across sick, injured or orphaned wildlife, please help. If they can be picked up place them into a box in a warm, dark and quiet location (ensure they have adequate ventilation) and call for help or take directly to a local vet. Please drive carefully at night when much of our nocturnal animals are out and about. If you hit any animal please stop and offer assistance. It is actually illegal to hit an animal and drive away –

AWARE – Australian Wildlife Assistance, Rescue and Education - 0412433727

Wildlife Victoria - 13 000 94535

Animalia Wildlife Shelter – 0435 822 699

14. If you do go fishing, please do not discard your unwanted lines, hooks and lures into the water or off the piers. Many animals, especially sea birds, need to be rescued due to

entanglements. Please also pick up any rubbish, such as bait bags and bottles, you do see when you are out at the beach or boating.

15. Learn to live in harmony with animals. Instead of seeing possums as a nuisance, learn more about them and try to appreciate that they belong here and are actually doing us a favour by pruning our plants when they eat them, and fertilizing our gardens for free with their droppings! Also, seagulls belong here and they help to keep our beaches and streets clean by eating our food waste. If not for seagulls would we have a mouse/rat issue in the CAD? Remember all native animals are protected by law and it is illegal to kill or harm them in any way.

Melanie Attard
Wildlife Rescuer – 0421 782 731
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Seagull at Frankston Foreshore



Our native Eucalypts provide habitat for many animals including possums, gliders, bats, and, birds.



A pair of Tawny Frog Mouth's roosting in a silver birch.



A Blue Tongue lizard basking on the edge of a road.



A wildlife friendly front garden in the making – plenty of water bowls, native and indigenous plantings including grasses, shrubs and trees.



A large cat run with house access makes keeping cats and looking after wildlife easy. Built with recycled hard wood.



The “messy bits in a garden” provide the best habitat for many animals including frogs, lizards, insects, small mammals and birds.



A Wood Duck limping due to a fishing line entanglement around both legs. Rescuers can spend hours on these more difficult rescues, as the duck can still fly. This duck was rescued, rehabilitated and released about a week later.



This female koala was brought in by rescuers after a lump was seen around the eye area. A tumour was removed and the koala was released a few weeks later.