



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

# TURTLES SIGHTED IN THE AREA!

Australia is home to 6 species of sea turtles and they are listed as either vulnerable or endangered.

Rough weather, disease and boat strikes can bring turtles to shore. If you find a sick or injured turtle please do not touch it and call WIRES on 1300 094 737.

Keep your distance, move slowly and keep an eye out for turtles, particularly around reefs and shallow water



Put any rubbish, plastic and discarded fishing line in the bin to avoid it ending up in our oceans



REPORT A  
RESCUE  
1300 094 737

Never attempt to put a sick or injured turtle back in the ocean



# Wildlife Rescue

Sea Turtles are secretive, if you see one count yourself very lucky indeed. All adult sea turtles live in coastal waters whereas the young turtles live out at sea. Where I live in Pittwater, Sydney, we have three species, most common are the green sea turtles, the loggerhead turtle, and leatherback turtles. There are seven species worldwide, six are endangered or threatened due to human activities.

Sea turtles come up for air every 30 minutes, they are the gardeners of the sea, eating the seaweed and other flora so they are found mainly on the headlands where they live and eat. I have seen more than a dozen turtles over the years on the small reefs off each headland. The trouble is that a lot of people drive their boats too fast and too close to the reefs where the turtles live and feed. In the last two months, we have had three sea turtle rescues called in. WIRES rescuers have an app so we receive notifications daily for the northern side of Sydney and beyond. Two turtles have been hit by boats and one was sick, often due to consuming plastic. Turtles are taken to the zoo or another marine rehab center depending on who is available.

The good news is that their shells can sustain quite a blow. Mating is often when the shells are damaged so provided the wound doesn't get infected and isn't too deep, turtles can recover from a boat strike. The key factor is for people to stop and check what they have hit, turn their engine off and wait until they have identified if it was a turtle they hit. They may need to wait 20 minutes for the turtle to surface, then call it into WIRES. Turtles go into shock and will need to surface, accidents happen but we don't want to miss the opportunity to rescue the injured or sick turtle so please take the time to find out if a WIRES rescuer is needed. MOP's members of the public are not legally allowed to handle wildlife and shouldn't because there are precautions to take when handling wildlife such as gloves to avoid zoonotic diseases that are transferred from animals to humans. Simply call WIRES 1300 094 737

—Slow down, turtles are around.

*Amina*

# Cheeky Poss



Releasing wildlife is the ultimate outcome for sick and injured animals but sadly many have to be euthanised. Last month I had the pleasure of releasing a 6 month old possum that had been raised with it's blind mother by a WIRES volunteer. Mum wouldn't survive in the wild so the youngster needed to find a new home.

Living adjacent to a national park is seemingly the ideal place to release wildlife. It was handed over to me in a possum pod, ready to secure in a tree with a food bowl. We fed it each night until noticing it wasn't returning, release success or so we thought. A few weeks later a neighbour called me to tell me about the little possum he had retrieved from the large rubbish bins situated on the ferry wharf.

Twice the little possum had climbed in but was unable to get out. On this particular day, the possum had decided to make the ferry shed it's home, it was time to recapture. The plan was hatched, secure the bins, hold it over night and release it again the next evening with the hope that it doesn't try to depend on the bins for food.

The problem with eating out of the bin is that people have terrible diets! Feeding possums bread and other yeast-based items causes the possums terrible skin issues, deadly in fact. Dermatitis is painful and will eventually kill them. The seemingly innocent act of feeding wildlife processed food such as bread will kill them. The bread disrupts their digestive system which is not designed to process starch. For kangaroos, processed food causes lumpy jaw that will eventually kill them.

What do possums eat? "They will eat leaves, fruits, flowers, fungi, bark and sometimes small lizards, birds and eggs. Possums have a low metabolic rate and can easily become overweight. Their diet should be mostly native plants." [www.nt.gov.au](http://www.nt.gov.au)

For the next week we set up a night time camera but didn't catch any glimpses of the possum. We checked the bins, no possum to be found, was the release a success? A week later, a friend that lives on the next headland told me about a little possum that has decided to live at his house. Cheeky poss has moved up in life no longer scavenging the bins!

**Possums are native to Australia**  
Never feed possums processed food.  
Always secure your compost & bins.

**WIRES wildlife rescue & rehabilitation, rely on volunteers & donations. What can you do to help? If you find a sick or injured animal call 13 000 WIRES. Think about becoming a member, you can help with fundraising or transporting wildlife, you don't have to handle animals but you can learn to!**

# Kooka



If you see a sick or injured bird, please call WIRES. If a rescue volunteer is not available in your area, they will guide you through how to capture it. Wildlife are then taken to the vet to be assessed. Once they are ready for care or release, a volunteer will collect it. For a month I have been caring for an injured kookaburra AKA Kooka. He is only a juvenile so he requires force feeding 2-3 times a day.

Whilst he is able to fly to a height of 50 cm off the ground, to be released he needs to fly from the ground 2 meters high. This is an adequate height to escape from predators. I tried twice to release it, the urgency is that kookaburras forget their families after just 3 weeks so it is super important to reunite them with their family as soon as possible.

Kooka was taken back to the vet to be reassessed. A second x-ray revealed a fractured wing, I was advised he may not fly again. Euthanasia is the humane solution in many circumstances but this juvenile is otherwise so healthy, I agreed to care for him indefinitely, for life it need be.

Story by Amina Kitching, WIRES Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation

Whilst not being able to fly well has lent Kooka to being a happy patient. After 3 weeks of convalescing, this wild bird would rather be flying with its family and I don't blame him. I would love nothing more than to give him a successful release. For now, he is confined to his carrier for the morning to rest his broken wing and spends the afternoon in a large aviary to enable flight.

"Kookaburras mate for life and live in close family groups, comprising two adults and the older siblings from previous breeding seasons, which remain for up to three years to help their parents incubate the eggs, and feed and protect the chicks and fledglings before moving on to nests of their own."

[www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au)

After 6 weeks in care, kooka let me know that he was ready to be released. Once again, we returned to the location where he was found, would this beautiful bird return to the wild? Upon opening the carrier kooka leapt with full commitment flying low at first then up high into a nearby tree. It was a magical moment, a little rough on his first landing but he was free.

**Kookaburras are native to Australia.**  
Kookaburras don't drink water, they get enough water from the food they eat.

**Kookaburras eat small insects and reptiles, spiders and millipedes. They sometimes eat worms, frogs, crabs, crayfish, and fish or snakes, birds and small mammals.**



[Instagram.com/pittwaterwildlife](https://www.instagram.com/pittwaterwildlife)

**WILDLIFE HELP TO STABILISE THE ENVIRONMENT**



# Wildlife Tips



Wildlife help to maintain the eco-system

**WIRES WILDLIFE RESCUE 1300 094 737**

Australia is home to many native birds, animals, and reptiles. The presence of people and domestic animals has impacted wildlife.

When humans feed birds they create a hot spot for disease to spread between species. Please do not feed wildlife, and if you do feed them you must disinfect the area daily with a vet-grade disinfectant. Parrot viruses such as 'beak and feather' disease spread easily and are fatal.

Feeding birds can also cause an over-abundance of some species which can mean the disappearance of other species. We all need to protect our biodiversity, co-existing with wildlife means not interfering with their diet and habitat, and keeping your pets contained.



## Tips for helping native animals:

- 1 Plant native species in your garden.
- 2 Contain your pets so they cannot harm wildlife.
- 3 Provide a wildlife-friendly yard.
- 4 Provide native food and water.
- 5 Provide safety and shelter, hidden nooks to relax in.
- 6 Use glass safety marking decals, to prevent birds flying into glass.
- 7 Slow down! Drive your car or boat with care.
- 8 Always stop and check if the animal needs help.

