



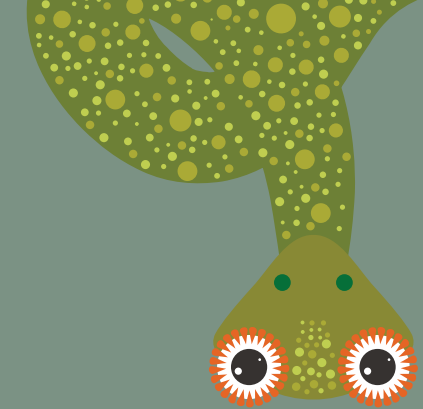
Wildlife Rescue Handbook: the first 24 hours



Wildlife Heroes
Caring for our Backyard Buddies



**Foundation for
National Parks
& Wildlife**



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Your role in the first 24 hours



You can save the life of an animal by knowing what to do as the first person on the scene.

Your role is to secure the animal quickly and efficiently, without injury to yourself or further injury to the animal.

Only essential first-aid should be carried out. The animal should be taken to a veterinarian or a qualified wildlife carer asap.

For non-native species, contact the RSPCA or a vet.

Emergency contacts

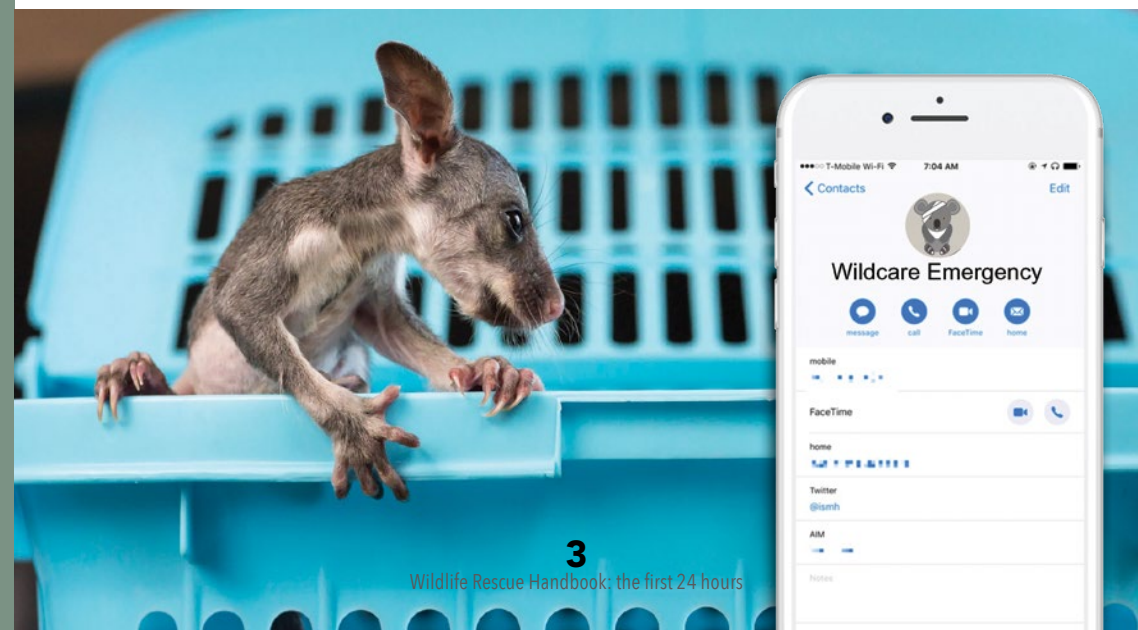
Find the number of your local wildlife group:

<https://www.backyardbuddies.org.au/help-byb/injured-wildlife>

Store the emergency number on your phone and write below.

My local wildlife emergency contact number:

ORRCA: Australia wide rescue line for marine mammals (02) 9415 3333



Safety first

No matter how urgent the situation may seem, stopping your vehicle in the middle of a busy road puts you and others in danger. Where possible, drive your vehicle off the road and turn your hazard lights on. Take care getting out of your vehicle due to passing traffic. When handling wildlife, personal hygiene is very important. Some diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans. Be aware injured or scared animals can bite or scratch.

Note: Never attempt to handle bats, large kangaroos or snakes.

When finding a sick, injured or orphaned animal, ask yourself these questions:

- What will I do with the animal when I have caught it?
- How will I contain it?
- Will I need help?
- Which part of the animal can hurt me?



Wildlife First Aid Kit for your car:

torch, fluoro vest, pillow slip, towel, spray paint, gloves, scissors/wire cutters, blanket, rubber band, safety pins, saline and a bottle of water



Is rescue required?

Before attempting to rescue any animal, be sure the animal really needs rescuing. Baby birds are often 'rescued' because they seem to be abandoned when in many cases, the parents are nearby. Observe the animal from a distance to decide if intervention is needed. Call a wildlife group for advice about whether a situation is normal.

Most wildlife cannot easily be captured and treated unless they are very helpless, or badly injured. Many of these animals can only be captured when they are just too exhausted, young or too injured to escape. This makes it essential to treat them correctly without delay as often they will already be close to death.

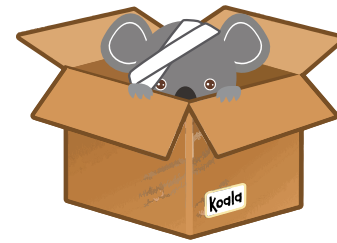
Handling and transporting animals

If you are confident you can capture an animal, approach from behind and walk slowly and calmly. Make sure you take a towel or blanket with you.

Cover the whole animal with the blanket or towel if possible, this will often stop it from moving and make it easier to pick up. Have a box or container ready so you can scoop up the towel and animal together in a bundle that can be immediately placed into the box.

Do not attempt to capture a sick or injured animal if you do not have a means to confine them safely.

Wildlife must never be placed in the boot of a vehicle for transportation. The floor in the front seat is a good place (ideally with a passenger to supervise) once the animal is secured in a bag, box or pet pack.



It is common for wildlife to end up stuck in an awkward spot in a car or house after escaping from the box they were being held in. They can be excellent escape artists so secure temporary housing well to avoid a second rescue!



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The basics of wildlife first aid

Shock and stress

To a wild animal, humans are terrifying predators. Stress alone can kill! Patting or stroking only serves to elevate the stress the animal is already under. It is important to minimise handling, remember that an injured animal is likely to be in shock – **a life threatening condition**.

Warmth, dark, quiet

The best first aid you can provide is warmth and minimising stress. Keep the animal in a warm, dark and quiet spot until you can get it to a wildlife carer.

Food and water

Many people cause further harm to wildlife by trying to give food and water. Do not give food, water or milk to native animals without getting advice from an expert.

Most animals will survive for up to 12 hours without food or water. If you are unable to contact a wildlife carer or get informed advice, you could give the animal some warm pre-boiled water, by syringe or eye dropper.

Place water in a shallow dish. Never feed animals out of a water bottle, this can lead to inhalation and pneumonia.

Never give native wildlife cow's milk.

Airways

Airways must sometimes be cleared from such things as dirt, grass, etc. and this should be carried out with caution and only if the animal is having breathing difficulties.



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Bleeding

Firmly apply a clean bandage directly onto the haemorrhage or wound. If bleeding does not stop or slow, wrap another bandage around, maintaining pressure. Do not remove a bandage once bleeding has been stemmed. Leave it for the vet or experienced wildlife carer to treat.

Concussion

Concussed animals often appear to be docile and quiet easy to handle and put up little resistance. Beware, these animals must still be restrained in a suitable container, bag or blanket as they can lash out or seem to come to life without warning, injuring themselves or others.

Burns

Animals caught in a bushfire will have serious injuries that need immediate veterinary care. If possible, flush the burns with tepid water for at least 5 minutes, to prevent further burning and remove debris. Eyes should be flushed with 0.9% saline. A moist towel placed under the animal can help, as many will have burnt feet.

Broken Bones

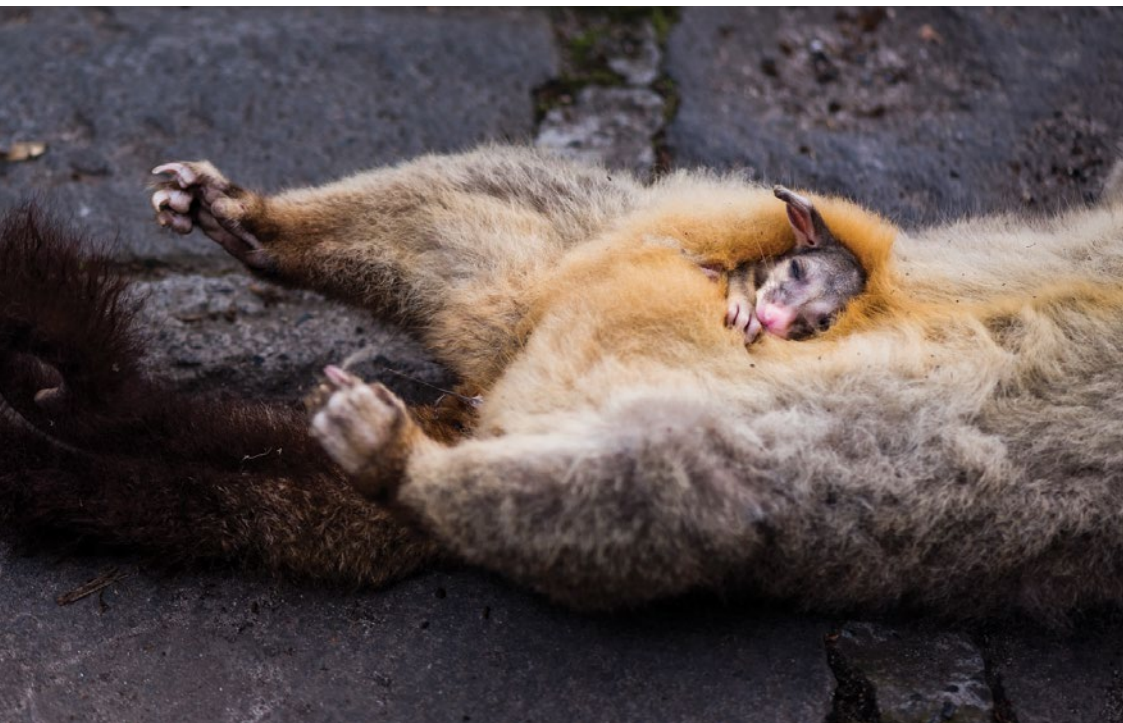
Broken bones should not be handled or manipulated. Where the bone has pierced the skin (an open fracture), cover the area, very lightly, with a clean cloth and keep as clean as possible to avoid infection. Do not apply any pressure. Seek veterinary help as soon as possible for treatment.



Car collisions

Car collisions are a main cause of death, injury and orphaning of Australian wildlife, especially marsupials like kangaroos, possums, wombats and koalas.

Marsupials carry their young in a pouch and in many cases an injured female will have a joey. Always check the pouch of dead females, as joeys have been known to survive in the dead mum's pouch for days. Before checking the pouch, gently prod the animal with your foot to make sure she is dead, then feel the outside of the pouch for any bulges or movement. Pouches are pretty gross, so use a plastic bag or gloves (anything you can) to make it easier for you to put your hand in and feel for the joey. Never pull a joey by its legs or tail when removing it from the pouch, it is easy to accidentally break their bones. Put your whole hand around the joey and lift its body gently.



If the joey is still attached to the teat **do not try to pull it off**. This can damage the delicate membrane around the mouth. If possible, transport the animal with the joey still attached. If you can't do this, try to slide a finger into the joey's mouth to break the seal, or hold the sides of the joey's mouth and twist gently, do not use force. Should this not work, it is preferable to cut the teat from the dead mum leaving the joey still attached. The teat needs to be fastened to whatever material you're going to wrap the joey in, by a safety pin or similar, or the joey will suck it in and may swallow it and choke.

Gently slide the joey out of the pouch by lifting it under the front legs and into some sort of fabric wrapping. A towel, t-shirt, singlet, anything you have will do initially. If the joey is very small and doesn't have much hair, it can be wrapped in a hankie or tissues and popped inside your shirt to share your body heat. Very young joeys are unable to maintain warmth so merely wrapping or putting the animal in a bag will not be enough for it to survive.

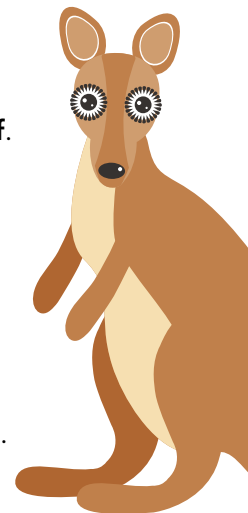
Unfurred animals need a more stable heat source for longer-term care. A hot water bottle filled with **warm** water will do, but will have to be replenished regularly. Be careful not to overheat. The animal will also soil its bag and will need to be cleaned and have its wrapping changed frequently.

You should only feed cooled boiled water if you are unable to reach or talk to an experienced carer or vet within 6 or 7 hours. It is easy to accidentally get liquid into the joey's lungs (aspiration), so drip slowly onto the lips. A great temporary transport item for furred joeys is a material shopping bag.

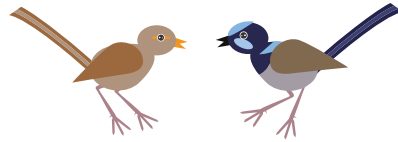
Note:

IF POSSIBLE: Mark the dead animal with bright spray paint, coloured tape or fabric to let other wildlife helpers know the pouch has been checked.

IF SAFE: Move the animal to the side of the road to stop scavengers from also being hit by cars.



Birds



Baby birds

When presented with a baby bird situation, the most important thing to consider is can it be reunited with the parent birds? The benefits from being parent raised, far outweigh any amount of foster care, no matter how expert. Contrary to what most people believe, parent birds do not smell that young have been handled if you pick them up. Most parent birds will not abandon their nestlings. Many will hang around the nest site for a couple of days searching for their offspring.

Birds have a fast metabolism and baby birds especially need to be fed regularly, but they can be hard to feed and each species has its own dietary requirements.



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Young fledglings on the ground do not automatically need to be rescued. There is a good chance they are simply learning to fly and their parents are somewhere nearby. Fledglings learn to fly quickly and will hide in bushes at night. The best thing you can do is give them safe space from domestic animals and children for a few weeks.

Should there be no sign of the parents returning the chick should be taken into care. Contact your local wildlife carer as soon as possible. Meanwhile, baby birds need warmth. Many baby birds will feel more secure with a light covering of tissue or a light material simulating a parent's wing. Keep bird in a warm room but not in air-conditioning. Extra heat may be provided using warm water in a hot water bottle or plastic bottle. Birds can easily die from being too hot or too cold - another reason to get the bird to one experienced carer as soon as you can.

Avoid a large container in which the chicks get “lost” or use lots of energy moving around. Soft tissue paper is good nest lining.

Note: A nestling is usually covered in down or fluff while a fledgling has most of its feathers.





Adult birds

Be careful

All birds dislike being handled and many can cause injuries. Beware of raptors (birds of prey) with sharp beaks and claws or fishing birds with muscular necks and sharp beaks. These birds will often strike aiming for your eyes. Parrots (even small ones) may inflict a painful bite (lorikeets are notorious), and large honeyeaters can latch on with their feet and twist, they are quite difficult to release.

Tips for containing birds

Preparation is the key; have a box or container ready. Approach the injured bird from behind if possible, with a towel held open in both hands. Try to throw the towel over the bird, especially the head. Pay particular attention to clawed feet. Many birds will calm down once the head is covered. Gather the bird up within the towel and place in the box.

The best plan of action is to protect the bird from further stress and injury. Treat all cases as if in shock and keep dark (a ventilated cardboard box is ideal), warm (usually inside, near heat source if temperatures are cold) and

quiet (resist the urge to peek every five minutes and remove children and domestic animals). If you are not confident catching an injured bird you can put a washing basket or box over it while waiting for a carer to arrive. Cover the basket or box with a towel to help reduce stress on the animal. This enclosure method may not be appropriate if the bird is in direct sun, it could quickly overheat.

Food and drink

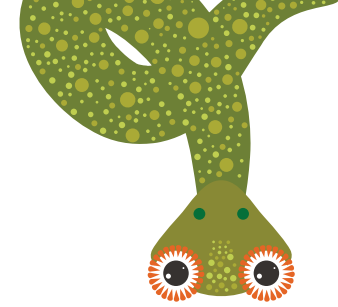
Ideally, get the bird to an expert asap and avoid trying to give food or water. A bird's windpipe is the closest opening to the beak tip. It might seem like the kind thing to put food or water into an orphaned or injured bird's beak but there is a high chance it will get into the lungs and potentially cause pneumonia. Wait for expert help.

Never sit birds in water, even water birds. This can kill ducklings as they are not yet waterproof.

Window collisions

Birds often fly into windows seeing the reflection. If no apparent injury, keep warm, quiet and dark for several hours and then try to release.

Reptiles and frogs



Snakes

Leave it to the experts!

If someone gets bitten by a snake call (000) for an ambulance immediately. You should treat any snake bite as an emergency, regardless of whether you think the snake was venomous or not. Apply a pressure immobilisation bandage and keep the person calm and as still as possible until medical help arrives.

Lizards

When attempting to catch a lizard (of any size) slowly and quietly approach it from behind. Have a net or towel, thick gloves and secure box on hand. Throw the net or towel over the lizard and grab the lizard at the back of the neck and base of the tail. Watch out for a swinging tail from the larger size specimens, they work like whips. Do not attempt to examine the animal but secure it in the box / pet pack and seek expert help.





Turtles

If you find a turtle in your backyard or in the street and it is not injured or diseased, pick it up with one hand on each side of the shell, with your fingers between the legs, being careful to avoid the claws on the feet. The turtle will turn its head into its body, but will soon poke it out to look around and if able, to take a bite. Keep the turtle away from your body as it may urinate. Place the turtle into a secure box or crate and return it to the nearest permanent fresh water source.

Injured or sick turtles need to be collected in the same way, but taken to your nearest veterinarian or wildlife carer for advice.

If holding the turtle overnight, place it in a secure box in a quiet dark room away from children and animals. Water is not necessary, but a damp towel may make the turtle more comfortable. The turtle will spend all night trying to climb out, so make sure the box or cage is secure. If the turtle has a broken

shell, do not remove the broken pieces or try to stick them back on. Instead, if pieces of the shell have fallen off, place them in a glass of water, cooled from the kettle, and put them in the fridge, so that the veterinarian may attempt to reattach them.

Do not offer the turtle food or water to drink. It is not necessary and may make a mess, causing more problems.

Note: If a turtle is crossing a road in the direction of a water source, the best thing is to carry it to the other side!

Frogs

Injured frogs should not be handled unless hands are soap and chemical free and damp. Even tap water can be harmful to frogs if it contains chlorine. It is preferable to gently scoop them into a container using a clean, wet cloth. Do not immerse in water, a wet towel for the frog to sit on will make it more comfortable.

Tips for keeping wildlife safe:

- Avoid driving after dark, especially at dusk and dawn when animals are most active.
- Protect wildlife from pet dogs and cats. Keep cats indoors.
- Native animals that have been bitten or scratched by a cat need veterinary treatment. Even a small puncture wound will eventually kill our delicate wildlife.
- Add a ramp to the edge of your pool to help ducklings, frogs and small mammals escape if they fall in.
- Use wildlife friendly netting on fruit trees to prevent entanglement (you should not be able to fit a finger through the netting holes).

- Do not use barbed wire when fencing. But if necessary, do not place as the top strand.
- Report flying foxes on powerlines. Flying fox pups often survive when their mother is electrocuted. Wildlife groups can organise rescue.



Everyone living in Australia needs a permit to care for injured or rescued wildlife, consider joining your local wildlife rescue group to get trained and licensed.



Australian Government

The Wildlife Heroes National Bushfire Emergency Response is supported by the Australian Government's Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation initiative.



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