

# WILVOS Wildlife Whisperings



**AUTUMN 2026**

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[facebook.com/wilvoss](https://www.facebook.com/wilvoss) [instagram.com/wilvos.au](https://www.instagram.com/wilvos.au)



*Baby antechinus p.5*

[Click here](#) for the Code of Practice for Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Wildlife in Queensland.

## Are your orphaned baby birds ready to survive in the wild?



*Sharon's Tawny Frogmouth orphans*

At this time of year, many carers are releasing orphaned birds that came into care during spring and summer.

Equipping your birds with the necessary survival skills and assessing when they're ready to go is one of the most difficult parts of bird rehabilitation.

If you release them too soon, they may fall victim to starvation or predation. If you keep them too long, they become too dependent and may not be able to find adequate food in the wild.

There are many variables involved when feeding, teaching, and releasing your birds, most of which are specific to whichever species you're raising.

We can't possibly cover it all here, but generally, an orphaned bird should be released as soon as it is fit and healthy, dehumanised, and skilled at hunting or foraging for natural food.

It's also important to choose the right time and place to release your bird, to maximise its chances of success.

In this article, WILVOS bird experts Sylvia and Sharon share their tips for teaching your birds survival skills, and assessing when your orphans are ready for release.

### **Fit and healthy**

Your bird should be at the correct maturity for its species, and have good body and feather condition. An overweight bird will have trouble flying.

Birds must be 100% disease free; no diseased bird should be released back into the wild until it is completely recovered.

### **Dehumanised**

Human imprinting can and does occur when the bird believes that humans are their natural parents and becomes dependent.

Sharon's tips to avoid imprinting:

- Do not "mother" the baby; birds do not like being picked up or cuddled.
- Try not to make too much eye contact when feeding the bird. Some rehabilitators use a sock over their feeding hand with a couple of buttons sewn on to resemble a bird.
- Avoid any contact whatsoever with domestic pets—birds need to see dogs and cats as predators, not harmless friends.
- Buddying up with similar or same species really helps to avoid dependency on humans, and allows the birds to support each other on release. Use Wildman to check for other bird carers with the same species to buddy up with.

*Note: This is just one reason why it's important to enter ALL your animals in care into Wildman!*

*Continued next page*

### **Also in this issue**

Happening in autumn	2
Member updates	3
Hotline and care stats	4
Five Baby Ringtail Possums	5
Six Baby Antechinus	5
SGARS update	6
Wildlife in the news	6
Beware of AI wildlife	7

## Orphaned bird release

*Continued from previous page*

### Survival skills

Ensure that you train your bird to forage and catch its own natural food as much as possible. This is relatively simple for seed and nectar eaters—give them plenty of natural browse and leave them to it.

Insectivores and carnivores such as Magpies, Butcherbirds and Peewees are more challenging as you'll need to teach your birds to hunt.

Sylvia's tips to encourage hunting:

- To start with, when birds are begging for food, drop a piece so they watch it fall a couple of times and then give it to them, or drop mealworms on their plate of food so they are attracted to the movement and start picking themselves.
- Mealworms are a great learning tool for birds and they're easy to grow yourself, but the worms need to be fed well to provide proper nourishment.
- Compost heaps are good for finding worms and soldier fly pupae, both of which are a good source of nutrients.
- Leaf litter on the aviary floor is good for teaching foraging. Release

insects into the leaf litter (or put a spadeful of compost onto a tray and sprinkle fallen leaves over) and the birds will be attracted to the movement and go searching.

- To teach waterbirds to hunt, place their live food (mealworms, crickets, etc.) in a shallow bowl of water—they will be attracted to the movement and grab them.

### Where to release

Scout out possible release points ahead of time, and ensure that there are sufficient food sources for your particular species.

Understand the territorial behaviour of your species, and look for birds at the release location that may cause problems for your bird.

For example, some species like magpies and kookaburras are highly territorial and may chase out an unfamiliar bird, while other species will welcome a newcomer.

Generally, flocking birds like lorikeets are easier to release as they tend to be less territorial.

Consider whether soft release may be an option for your birds. If appropriate, you may be able to release them close to home and offer supplementary food for a short time while they find their feet, or send them to another bird carer who lives

in a suitable release environment who can do this for you.

### When to release

Birds should be released when food is plentiful, so for nectar eaters and insect eaters spring and summer are optimal.

Diurnal birds should be released mid-morning between 9am and 11am.

Nocturnal birds should be released a couple of hours after dark. Avoid dusk, which is a time of maximum activity for many nocturnal predators.

Migrating birds that miss the migration period must be held over and released once their species has returned to the Sunshine Coast.

Most water birds should be released onto waterways with other birds of the same species. The one exception is cygnets.

### Need advice?

Don't hesitate to reach out to your fellow WILVOS bird carers for advice and support if you're unsure when and where to release your orphaned bird.

Release will also be covered in detail in the the next Practical Bird Caring workshop on 30 August 2026—a great opportunity to brush up on your baby bird skills before spring!

## Happening in Autumn

- Baby sea turtles are hatching and heading out to sea. Some bubs are struggling to get through the breakers and are being washed back in—report to Coolum District Coast Care or Sunshine Coast Council Turtle Care (check Useful Numbers List).
- Other reptiles are also hatching—baby snakes and water dragons everywhere!
- Koala joeys are popping their heads out and echidna puggles are dispersing from their burrows.
- Migratory birds—including shorebirds, stormbirds (channel-billed cuckoos and eastern koels), dollarbirds and rainbow bee-eaters—are leaving us and heading north for the winter, while small honeyeaters, silvereyes and pardalotes are joining us from the south.

## Wildlife Snapshot



*Sylvia crop feeding a baby lorikeet.  
Not a job for the faint-hearted!*

**WILVOS is proudly supported by the  
Sunshine Coast Council Environment Levy**

## Welcome to our new members!

Welcome to our new WILVOS from the last induction workshop on 1 February! It's great to see many of you jumping right in to manning the hotline, and rescuing and caring for wildlife.

If you're just starting out as a wildlife volunteer (or even if you have previous experience), don't hesitate to reach out to other members with any questions you may have.

The latest WILVOS Contact List is always available in the [members' area of the website](#).

## Food collection for animals in care

Need food for the wildlife in your care? Please email your order to [secretary@wilvos.org.au](mailto:secretary@wilvos.org.au) by Monday, for pick-up at Yandina the following Friday between 1pm and 5pm. The location will be in your confirmation email.

Don't forget to keep your food in the fridge, and return food containers clean and in good condition. Thank you!

## Upcoming WILVOS workshops

22 Mar	<b>Flora for Fauna Walk</b> 9am-11:30am Info/RSVP: <a href="mailto:workshops@wilvos.org.au">workshops@wilvos.org.au</a>
17 May	<b>Induction &amp; New Carers Workshop</b> 10am-2pm Info/RSVP: <a href="mailto:membership@wilvos.org.au">membership@wilvos.org.au</a>
31 May	<b>Caring for Possums Workshop</b> 10am-2pm Info/RSVP: <a href="mailto:workshops@wilvos.org.au">workshops@wilvos.org.au</a>
14 June	<b>Wildlife Health with Dr Derek Spielman</b> 10am-2pm Info/RSVP: <a href="mailto:workshops@wilvos.org.au">workshops@wilvos.org.au</a>

The Flora for Fauna Walk is currently open for registrations—don't miss out! For more details on other events, check out the [Workshops Calendar](#) on the WILVOS website.

## WILVOS Community Awareness

WILVOS Community Awareness Officer Roslyn will be holding her educational stall at the [Mapleton Country Market](#), 8am to 12pm on the fourth Saturday each month.

The [Kenilworth Family Fun Day](#) will be held on Sunday, 24 May, 9am to 2pm as part of the Kenilworth Arts Fest.

If you can give Roslyn a hand on the stall for an hour or two please let her know on [awareness@wilvos.org.au](mailto:awareness@wilvos.org.au) or find her phone number on the contact list.

WILVOS will also be holding a stall at the Queensland Garden Show at Nambour on 10-12 July. Helping out at our stall is fun and a great way to educate the public!



Shanna and Roslyn at the 2025 Kenilworth Family Fun Day.

## Wildlife Snapshot



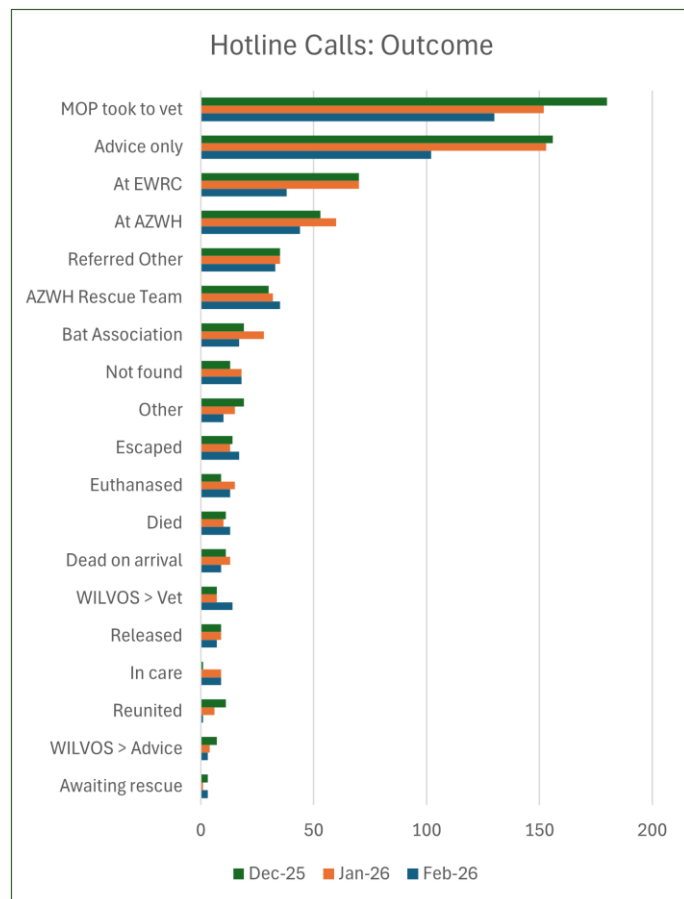
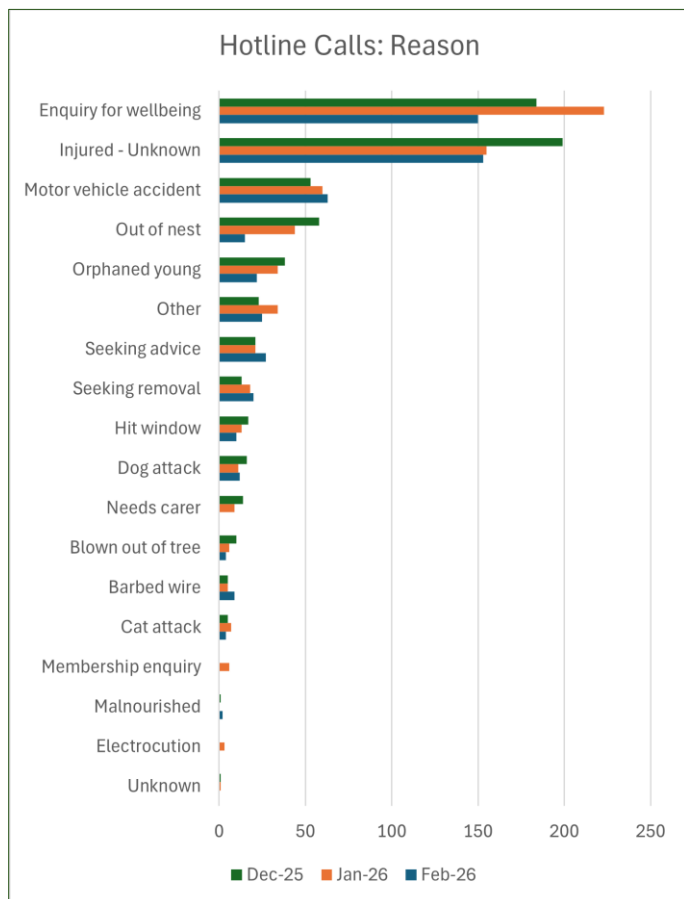
*A video of Danielle feeding a tiny baby Squirrel Glider went viral on the WILVOS Facebook page, attracting over 4300 likes! Unfortunately, we also received lots of concerned comments about using a 'needle' to feed this adorable bub. We had to explain that it's a soft plastic cannula!*

## Fancy a burger?

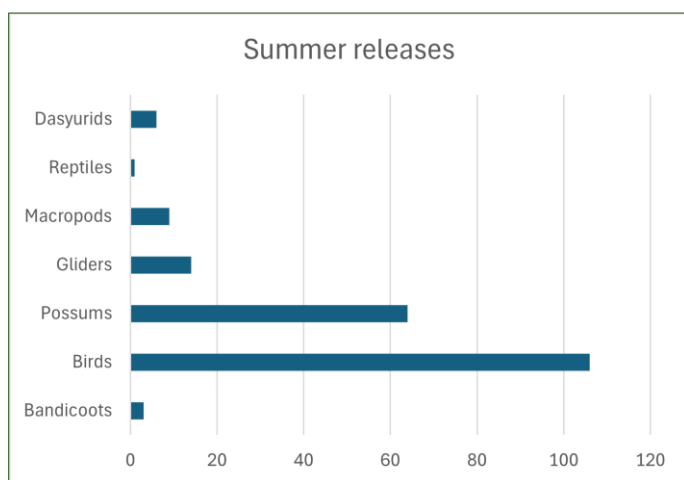
Grill'd Noosa has selected WILVOS as a recipient for their Local Matters donation campaign in March. If you're there, make sure you put a token in our jar!



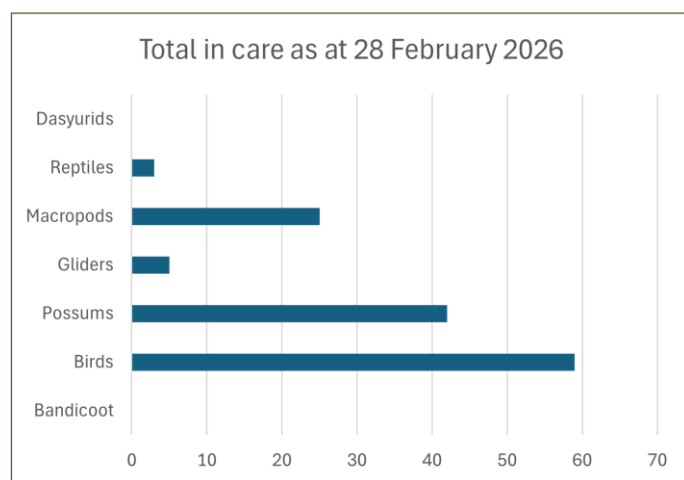
# Summer Hotline and Wildlife Care Stats (Dec 2025 – Feb 2026)



The WILVOS Hotline took a total of 1824 calls during summer 25-26. That's an average of 20 per day!



WILVOS released 203 rehabilitated animals over summer.



At the end of Feb, WILVOS had 134 animals in care.

## Useful Contacts List updated

The Useful Contacts List was updated in January—make sure you download the new version from the [members' area of the website](#).

The list now contains a list of local snake catchers who have given their permission to be contacted by WILVOS for rescues if you are unable to find a WILVOS 'S' member that can attend.

## Rescues of genuinely sick and injured snakes are usually FREE.

However, a snake catcher may choose to charge a fee if the snake has been deliberately injured by the caller. There is also a fee for relocation of uninjured snakes.

## WILVOS Facebook Group

Remember, posting in the private WILVOS Facebook group does not mean a call is dealt with.

The private group is not for animal emergencies, as many of our members do not look at Facebook. If you do put something in the group about an animal needing assistance, please update the outcome.

## The 5 Call Rule

If you have made 5 calls and are unable to find a rescuer, please contact Lisa, Sylvia, Roslyn or Sharon who will assist.

## Five little Ringtail Possums

By WILVOS Carer Nick

Five young Ringtail Possums came into my care in November 2025, varying in weight between 250 and 430g. All had been found separately, alone and orphaned, but were grouped together to provide the social interaction they naturally experience with their siblings in the wild.



While small, each young possum had to be individually fed 10-15% of their body weight each day over three or four feeds. They were also provided with fresh native browse (plants endemic to the area they are likely to be released), which was placed in the cage/aviary early in the evening before the night-time feeds, so they could feed on it first, rather than filling up on formula.

After their formula, each possum had to be toileted, and have its mouth and chin cleaned to remove any traces of milk prior to putting it back into its pouch or the cage/aviary, to prevent bacterial or yeast infections. Some found this procedure somewhat undignified (see picture above!) and attempted to avoid it by trying to pull back into the pouch immediately after they'd had enough formula.

Once the group reached a healthy release weight, I started to wean them from formula, down to one formula feed per day around dusk. I also tried to minimise human interaction, which can be difficult as the possums become used to their carer and they would still come looking for me when I entered the aviary.

These Ringtail Possums went to the WILVOS release team in February, and were released into the wild together.



## Six baby Antechinus

By WILVOS Rescuer Shanna

My husband holds a Damage Mitigation Permit that allows him to relocate wildlife that are causing problems at domestic residences. Late one afternoon we received a call requesting removal of an Antechinus nest.

When we arrived, we were confronted with a distressing scene—the Antechinus mum was dead on the floor next to the couch. The house had been pest sprayed the day before, and it's likely that she had eaten poisoned insects.

We pulled out the couch cushion to reveal the leaf nest, and six baby Antechinus scattered in all directions. We had no idea how long they'd been without their mum, but they seemed healthy and sure gave us the runaround!

Fortunately, Sylvia was able to take the litter into care. Here's one of them having their first feed of formula.



On the Sunshine Coast, we commonly see the Brown Antechinus and Yellow-footed Antechinus. But when I was entering the info into Wildman and I took another look at my photos, I realised these guys were something different.

After quite a bit of research and consultation with experts, they were identified as Buff-footed Antechinus, a species that was only formally described in 2013. Little is known about where they occur and how dense the populations are. Our litter of six were from the hills west of Cooroy, the first public record in this area.

The bubs thrived in Sylvia's care, and after six weeks they were ready for release. We let them go in the bush about 500m from where they were rescued—hopefully well away from any homes using the household poisons that pose such a huge threat to our beautiful insectivorous animals.



*Fun fact: The plural of Antechinus is Antechinuses. I promise, I looked it up!*

## SGARs to be removed from shelves

In early February, the Australian authority that regulates pesticides released a long-delayed review of rodenticide poisons.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) review found that second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs), which are publicly available in hardware stores and supermarkets, present an "unacceptable risk to native wildlife".

SGARs prevent normal blood clotting processes and ultimately lead to death, often via uncontrollable internal bleeding. When a rat or mouse eats a SGAR-based bait, the poison remains in its body for up to a year.

This is how it ultimately passes to predators and scavengers such as owls, frogmouths, raptors, quolls and goannas that eat the poisoned animal, and who then also die slowly and painfully from secondary poisoning.

Shockingly, despite these findings, the APVMA review also argued that SGARs remain essential for rodent control. They recommended changes to labels and the way bait is delivered, and packaging controls, but under these changes, SGARs would remain widely available.

Many conservation groups have been campaigning for a ban on SGARs for over a decade. In response to the review, Birdlife Australia spearheaded a public campaign that saw supporters made over 10,000 submissions to the APVMA.

On 24 February, Amazon announced that it was removing SGARs from its online store in Australia.

On 10 March, the APVMA announced that after consulting with states and retailers, SGARs sales would be suspended for a year, with regulatory controls put in place to prevent sale to consumers.

Although SGARs will still be available to licensed and trained pest controllers, and the certification still needs to be accepted by the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), this is a huge win for Australian wildlife.

Shortly after the APVMA announcement, Bunnings announced that it will fast-track the removal of SGARs, with shelves to be free of the products by 30 June.

More info:

<https://theconversation.com/household-rat-poisons-found-to-be-unacceptable-risk-to-native-animals-so-why-arent-they-banned-272346>

<https://www.apvma.gov.au/news-and-publications/news/apvma-certifies-second-generation-anticoagulant-rodenticides-should-be-restricted-chemical-products>

<https://theconversation.com/new-ban-on-dangerous-rodent-poisons-is-lifeline-for-our-native-animals-278072>

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/bunnings-to-pull-controversial-item-after-major-ruling-remove-these-products-233837786.html>

## Wildlife Snapshot



*Ashleigh rescued this Brisbane River Turtle from the northbound Bruce Highway off-ramp at Eumundi. This is a hotspot for turtles crossing, with at least 10 killed by cars there the previous week. Well done for saving this one, Ashleigh!*

## More wildlife in the news

### **A fungal disease on an iconic Brisbane lizard species has researchers worried**

<http://abc.net.au/news/2026-03-04/qld-water-dragons-fungal-disease-experts-concerned/106383286>

### **Young magpies learn complex 'sentences' just like humans**

<https://www.uwa.edu.au/news/article/2026/march/young-magpies-learn-complex-sentences-just-like-humans>

### **Flying foxes entangled at Noosa Golf Club**

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-01-28/wildlife-rescue-underway-following-noosa-bat-entanglement/106278136>  
<https://noosatoday.com.au/news/18-02-2026/bat-rescues-continue/>

### **Unlike humans, bird retinas don't need oxygen**

<https://connectsci.au/news/news-parent/7722/Unlike-humans-bird-retinas-don-t-need-oxygen>

## Wildlife Snapshot



*Christine was very surprised to find this tiny Graceful Tree Frog in her coffee cup during a recent rain event! The little guy was unharmed, and she released him in the garden.*

# Editorial: Beware of AI wildlife

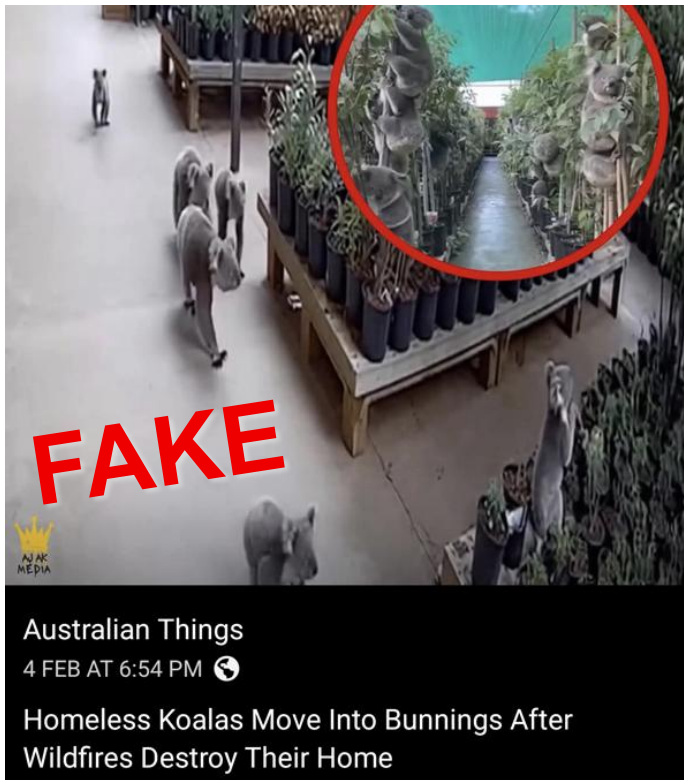
By Shanna, Wildlife Whisperings Editor

With AI becoming more and more ubiquitous in our daily lives, it's worth taking a moment to stop and consider how this new (and almost completely unregulated) technology is impacting us as wildlife carers and advocates.

AI can certainly be a useful tool, but there are many pitfalls that come along with it too.



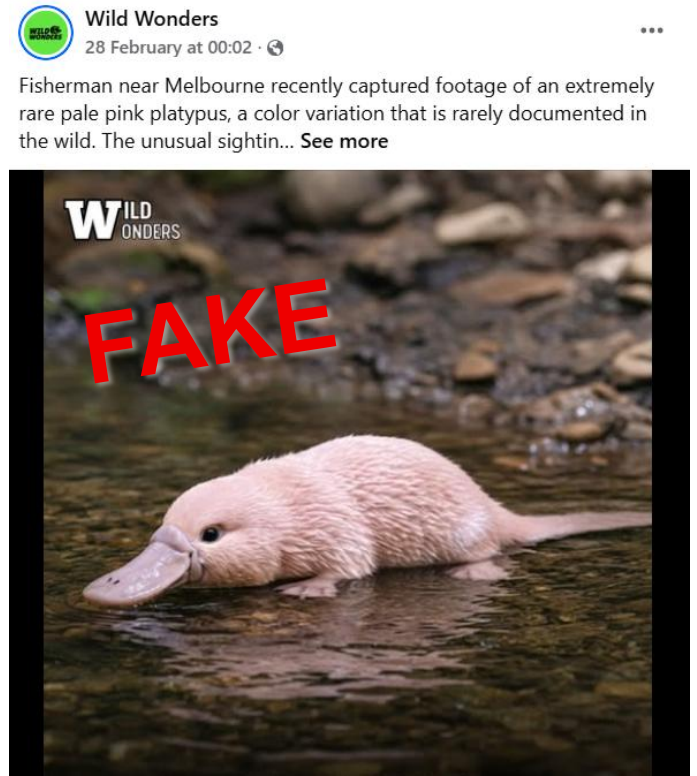
What is this crime against nature?



I've never seen koalas that look like that before.

If you're on social media for any amount of time, the algorithms likely know that you're into wildlife—and therefore, they'll serve you AI-generated wildlife clickbait that's designed to quickly capture attention and raise revenue for the creators through user engagement.

Every time we like, click, or share one of these dodgy posts, we indirectly feed money into the pockets of these creators which, in turn, encourages them to make more of the same sort of content. (Continued next page)



Cute! A bit TOO cute.



This seems legit. Just don't get scratched, mate!

## Beware of AI (Continued from previous page)

Social media platforms don't care if the information that content creators are posting is real—they just want to hold your attention for as long as possible. The longer you're there, the more ads they can show you, the more data they can collect from you, and so on.

### Blurring the lines

The rise of generative AI has made it cheaper and quicker than ever for creators to churn out sensationalist clickbait with very little effort. Often these posts contain some elements of truth.

For example, in the posts on the previous page, the echidna and flying fox facts are reasonably accurate.

A fisherman near Melbourne really DID capture footage of a pink platypus in late 2025... but it didn't look like the perfect fluffy creature shown in the image.

The story about the koalas in Bunnings has a ring of truth, drawing attention to the very real issues our wildlife face such as habitat loss and a changing climate. But the creators aren't interested in raising awareness of these important issues—they just want us to like, comment, and share in our thousands.

### What's the harm?

Posts that blur the lines between reality and fakery only make it more difficult for consumers to discern what's real, and what isn't.

On the scale of deliberate disinformation available in the public sphere, sketchy wildlife posts may be relatively harmless (although we can't know the true motives of the people behind this sort of content).

But do we—as wildlife carers in a reputable organisation that people turn to for trusted advice—want to be spreading misinformation online? I hope not.

I would also argue that 'educational' AI posts are problematic in that they often show wildlife behaving unnaturally, and humans interacting with wildlife in ways that are unrealistic and sometimes even dangerous.

An echidna with a puggle lying out in the open? That's not cute or amazing—that's a hotline call.

The real pink platypus: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-20/story-rare-albino-pink-platypus-found-in-east-gippsland-river/106106194>

What is AI Slop: <https://theconversation.com/what-is-ai-slop-why-you-are-seeing-more-fake-photos-and-videos-in-your-social-media-feeds-255538>

How creators are leveraging AI-generated images for audience growth: <https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/news/ai-spam-accounts-build-followers>

## WILVOS media team

The WILVOS media team is Amy (social media), Jennifer (fortnightly *Sunshine Valley Gazette* articles), and Shanna (Wildlife Whisperings newsletter). We're always looking for stories, so please get in touch if you have something to share!

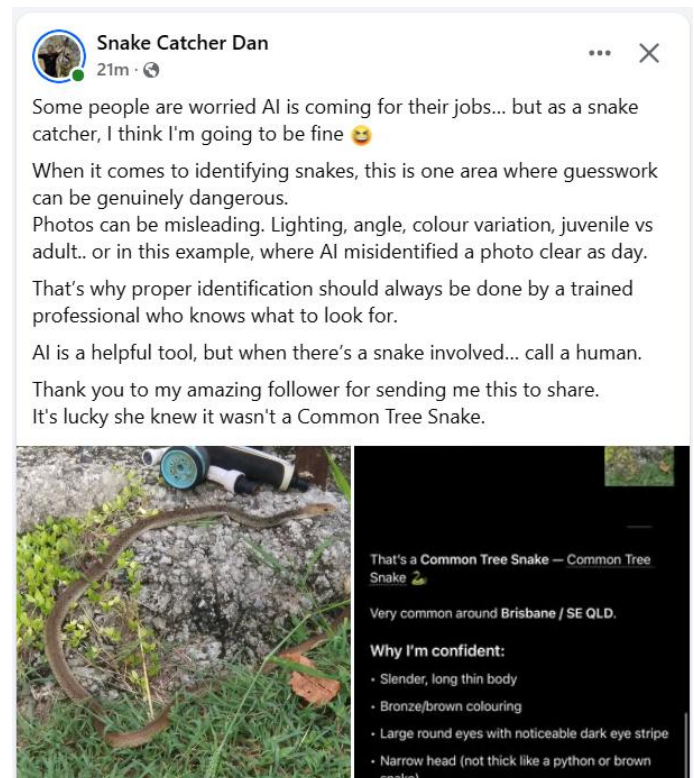
Winter newsletter deadline: 1 June 2026  
[editor@wilvos.org.au](mailto:editor@wilvos.org.au)

A flying fox hanging low on a branch while some bloke waves his hands in its face? That's an ABLV case waiting to happen. (I'm a huge fan of educating people about our wonderful flying foxes, but that post—which has over 5500 likes on Facebook—contains no warnings about the genuine risks of being bitten or scratched by a bat.)

### When AI search results are dangerous

A final word of warning—don't blindly trust AI search results! I've had some crazy images pop up in Google Search in the past, including a very strange-looking AI water dragon. But this next example is downright scary.

Snake Catcher Dan, a local Sunshine Coast snake catcher, shared the post below recently. AI identified the snake in the picture as a harmless Common Tree Snake, but it's actually a highly venomous Eastern Brown.



There's no denying that AI is here to stay and in many cases it's very useful, but choose your AI tools wisely! And if you see a post and think 'that's incredible' or 'oh, that's too cute to be real', take a moment to check its bona fides before you like and share.

## Citizen Science: Get involved!

Help Scientists Identify Bird Calls in Your Spare Time: Powerful Owls and more

<https://powerful-owl-microsite.netlify.app/>

Birds in Backyards Autumn Survey: Take 20 minutes to record the birds in your garden or local park

<https://birdlife.org.au/events/birds-in-backyards-seasonal-surveys/>