



## Wild about Seatrees

July 2014



Issue 3: Wallaby Heaven



### Long Term Seatrees Resident Buffy Turns 17!

Buffy, our miniature Jack Russell/Fox Terrier/ Chihuahua cross celebrated her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday in May. What an achievement!

Congratulations Buffy.

Any glimpse into the life of an animal quickens our own and makes it so much larger and better in every way.

*John Muir*

### *It's Wallaby Heaven Here at Seatrees*

#### **River racing towards release**

River, a just-furred, swamp wallaby came into care in late February. Like all wildlife he has his own distinctive personality. His is marked by a sense of naughty humour, a love of jumping and boxing and high-speed sprints. When a tiny joey he lived in the bedroom in his pouch and loved to snuggle his head into your neck. However, there have been times when he worried us with sudden onset lacklustre turns when his head and body were limp and he couldn't even attempt to drink his milk. One particular episode required a vet visit and we feared losing him overnight.

Fortunately after a vitamin B complex injection he picked up and he now seems to have outgrown these episodes. He is currently ensconced in our outdoor enclosure, which has direct access to a stable type room where he sleeps on his pet bed and retreats to in bad weather. He still has two bottles of milk per day and eats a lot of vegetation and pellets.

When the weather warms in a couple of months the enclosure doors will be opened and hopefully River will happily explore the perfect wallaby environment on Seatrees Farm.



River, a portrait

River in bed in the enclosure



Truffles and Ingleby using the feeding station



*Wallaby Heaven, continued. . .*

### Ruby and Truffles join Ingleby

In April two female swamp wallabies arrived for release. Unlike the previous wallaby occupant, Ingleby, they were very unsettled, raring to go and were not at all happy to be in the enclosure. They wanted out and were not interested in their bottles. So after a week of adapting to the sounds of the sea and the local foliage, we opened the enclosure doors, for what is known as a soft release.

Both emerged slowly and hesitantly before heading off into the bush. To our delight and surprise they then returned nightly to sleep in their original quarters, sleeping on the straw and eating their paddock hay and wallaby pellets.

Ruby and Truffles lost this home base when it became River's turn to occupy the enclosure, but they adapted superbly. Like true night watchmen, they, with Ingleby, return to munch on pellets from the weather proof, rat proof feeding station at the rear of the enclosure.

Little River hears and smells them through the wall and dreams of ... stay tuned!

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Fattie Rattie, the Bush Rat, featured in our last edition, has had babies. Here is one of them!



## Pebble & Popsie

Two Ringtail Possums - a female and a male - were released on Seatrees Farm in June. Pebble was found sitting in the middle of the Great Ocean Road in the Aire Valley so we are not sure what happened to his mother. As Ringtails do much better if reared with a mate we secured Popsie from another shelter. They were lovingly and successfully raised by our new Otway Wildlife carer, Pamela Carey.



Popsie just out of the enclosure and into the wild for the very first time

Pebble in Pamela's hands

### How did Pamela feel raising her very first wildlife orphans?

*'As a complete novice wildlife carer, it would be an understatement to say that I was anxious and afraid when wee Pebble first came into my care. My heart was in my mouth the first time I held him and I simply don't have the words to describe the feeling of joy and amazement when he started gently lapping from a tiny bowl of warm milk formula, which I held in my other hand.'*

*He was soon joined by Popsie, a real city chick, and within a day the two of them were inseparable. It was a thing of wonder to watch them grow into sleek, confident, happy and adventurous adult ringtails.*

*What a pleasure and a privilege it has been to raise these two exquisite little creatures to the point where, one still, bright, moonlit night we released them into a wonderland of rope "runways" which my husband and I had lovingly plaited and strung between the trees for them. I know I'll be a ringtail possum addict for as long as I live.'*



In the end, we conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.

*Baba Dioum  
Senegalese environmentalist*

## Blue Fairywren Courting a Female

There he was, the little fairy wren in his beautiful breeding blue suit flying after a female wren with a bright red geranium petal in his mouth. She did not seem interested but I was!

The pursuit went on around the house without success. Maybe she knew that male Blue Fairywrens are known to be one of the most promiscuous birds. Both the female and the male of this species are socially monogamous but sexually promiscuous. They form pairs but each will mate with other individuals.



Rejected Wren

Later the petal lay abandoned on the deck.

It wasn't until I took a photo of it that I noticed it was heart shaped!!!



Instructions for living a life:  
 Pay attention.  
 Be astonished.  
 Tell about it.

Mary Oliver

## The Snake vs the Rufous Bristlebird

It was a hot day when I first heard the piercing squawk of the Rufous Bristlebird. It caught my attention because it sounded so close to our house and because of the unbridled panic in the tone. Usually these exquisite, shy songbirds only come close to the house to drink at the deck water bowl, dashing off as soon as possible.

Then I saw the reason.

A large tiger snake was coiled in a shaft of sunlight with the Bristlebird less than two feet away. The Bristlebird was tearing around circling the snake, as the snake also circled, never taking its eyes off the bird. The Bristlebird fluffed itself out to be as big and threatening as it could, darting and tearing around to prevent the snake taking aim.

The two played out the contest for at least ten minutes. I was sure the snake would pounce at any moment and could hardly bear to look. The Bristlebird never let up because it had a nest nearby and wanted the snake to go away. It had chicks to protect. The snake was the enemy. Eventually the snake gave up and slithered away.

Round one victory to our little champ.





## Crested Terns

We noticed them first one evening in early May. A continuous line of whitish birds with a raspy call, flying low across the sea. Some landed on the ancient rock shelves in front of Seatrees, others went further out to sea and bobbed together as if floating on a raft. When the weather became wild they sheltered on the lee side of the largest rocks, safe and sound. Over the next few weeks we noticed them again in that same position as well as on the Marengo Reef and at the Barham River estuary.

The Crested Tern is the second largest of the terns found in Australia. It has a pale yellow bill, scruffy black crest, grey wings and back and white underneath. It is often seen with other sea birds such as the Sooty Oyster Catcher, Pacific Gull and White Heron. It mixes in well. When a whole colony of terns rise in the air, bank and fly off together, their strident, piercing sound is like nothing else. One just stops, looks and listens.

## Vale, Brave Little Echidna



This small adolescent Echidna came into care after it was run over on the Great Ocean Road near Grey River. There was little chance of survival as its breathing became very laboured and it was most likely suffering internal injuries. Our superb wildlife Vet, Mike Rhodes, tried but unfortunately was unable to save it.

### Did you know . . .

- \* Echidnas are monotremes and were around at the time of the dinosaurs.
- \* Monotremes are mammals that lay eggs instead of giving birth to live young like marsupials and placental mammals.
- \* The other Australian monotreme is the platypus.
- \* Echidnas do not have teats but suckle their young by secreting milk from their stomach.
- \* A baby echidna is called a puggle.
- \* When a puggle is old enough it is hidden in a burrow. Its mother goes off to forage and only returns every 5 days to feed it. They've got the secret to non-stressful motherhood covered!

## Beach Stone-curlew

It is terrible news to hear that a particular species of bird is threatened.

So imagine our joy in hearing that one such threatened bird was seen on the rocks in front of Seatrees. We received the news from a regular ecologist guest who checked sightings with the Birds Vic website to confirm that a few people had also noted seeing the bird in and around the Otways. They are normally a northern Australia bird.

Then three weeks ago we saw one ourselves in pretty much the same area which is the little sandy cove next to Snorkel Bay. Again, it was on its own.

The Beach Stone-curlew is a very large, thick-set wader. It has a massive bill, largish head and is beautifully patterned with colourings of grey, black, white and brown. It has stout, longish legs with knobby 'knees'. When standing on Snorkel Cove, it was superbly camouflaged amongst the rocks.



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Donations to our Seatrees wildlife shelter are greatly appreciated.