



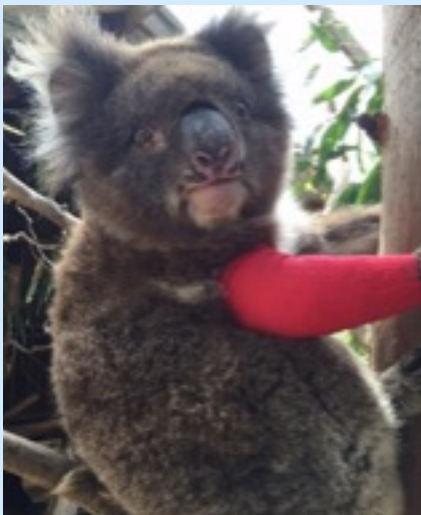
Wild about Seatrees

April 2016



Issue 5: The Big Dry

This edition is dedicated to all the wildlife who were injured or lost their lives in the devastating Wye River Fires of December 2015 and January 2016.



Female Koala with burnt arm, in care at Kerry's wildlife shelter in Apollo Bay

It's been the driest year ever...

When we bought the land we named Seatrees Farm twenty-seven years ago, the Otways were the wettest region in Victoria, which meant that our flock of fifty sheep had plenty to eat all year round. In fact, they had more than enough. We had to actually slash the farmland twice a year.

How times have changed. We now feed our Perendale wethers - carpet wool sheep - lucerne twice a week as the dry weather resulted in no munchies for our boys.

This January was one of Victoria's warmest and wettest Januarys on record, with the "once in a century" rains that led to widespread flash-flooding in Geelong. The only parts of the state to experience below average rains were Warrnambool and Apollo Bay as well as our fire-affected Otway's region.

"The love I have for our wildlife is so great, it fills my world. After Black Saturday I saw a world that was black and white, void of animals and humans. What I missed most was the love and life of living with the wildlife. Each day I think of the ones gone and there is a deep hole in my heart ... I missed the animals, the sounds of peace and love that came from them. Such beauty and harmony with nature, only animals can be that smart."

Stella Reid from Wildhaven Shelter, which was completely destroyed on 7th February 2009 and is now rebuilt

The driest year, continued. . .



Our birds and wildlife have also been seriously affected by the low rainfall and days of heat, prompting us to install numerous water bowls around the property. One hot 37-degree day we gave much appreciated relief to one of our old fella koalas by spraying him with water.

Over the past few years our trees and bushland have shown increasing signs of distress due to climate change, the Tea-tree and middle storey bushes are thinning out and the taller trees are losing their thick canopies. We hope that our glorious ferns and large grey gums found around our swing bridge track in the middle of the property will be here for perpetuity.

To ensure it remains a protected area we have recently placed a conservation *Trust for Nature* covenant on this unique area. This is a permanent, legally-binding agreement placed on a property's title to ensure that vegetation communities, including those of state significance, together with the associated wildlife are protected forever.





Mary

Mary, the orphaned Koala joey found at Seanook cottage, released in December

This tiny koala joey was found In January 2015 just outside Seanook cottage, huddled on the ground. For reasons unknown she had been separated from her mother.

A joey this size would normally be riding on the back of its mother, suckling its milk and eating eucalyptus leaves. Once separated, it is very difficult to reunite mum and baby, and although we tried, it was not to be, so the joey was taken into care.

The joey was named Mary and placed in the care of our Otway Wildlife Group's koala expert, Kerry. She was given specially formulated milk and daily armfuls of fresh eucalyptus leaves and snuggled together with another orphaned koala joey, Darcy.

Mary was in care for nearly a year before we welcomed her back to Seatrees. She has a contraceptive implant in order to help keep our koala numbers to a sustainable level and to help preserve the trees that our koalas love to eat, which are already showing signs of overgrazing.

Our koala numbers are growing and we have sighted three joeys this season from wild koala mothers. Mary now has the chance to live for 15-20 more years at Seatrees.



And off goes Mary sprayed with a blue dye so we could keep an eye on her

Shelter Rescues over Summer included twin orphaned Ringtail Possum joeys from Skenes Creek; Echidna release after being trapped in drain; Koalas translocated to safety from Great Ocean Road; Grey Shrike Thrush juvenile trapped in shed and New Holland Honeyeater concussed from flying into window.

As I travel through the Australian bush I find myself apologising for being human to all the wildlife I come upon. And if you could hear a distressed animal's quiet sobbing...what would you do? Judge your life not by how good you are, but rather by what good you do.

Professor Steve Garlick PhD, FAUCEA

Surprises

Sugar Glider found asleep in a feeding box

Our released Sugar Gliders are supplementary fed twice weekly and we wondered if they had managed to have babies after spending a couple of years in the wild. Seems so – this unharmed adolescent was found sound asleep in a tree-feeding box. Maybe it had been separated from its parents the night before, but whatever, we safely placed her in one of the glider boxes where she waited for her parents' return after nightfall.



What a breakfast surprise!

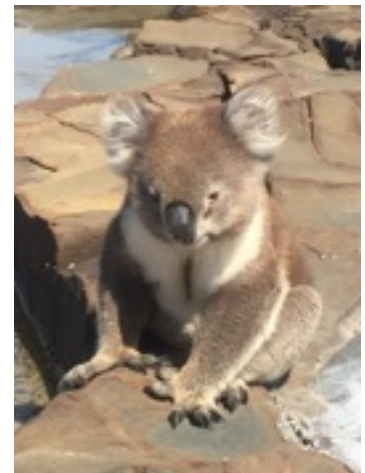
An Eastern Great Egret was a dazzling sight early one morning as it stood elegantly on our kitchen deck bird feeding station.

This Egret is a large bird with an impressive wingspan observable when it flies. When they are hunting they do so in a classic heron fashion, standing immobile or wading slowly through wetlands, capturing fish with a deadly jab of their yellow bill.



Koala on the Coast Cottages beach

In February one of our cottage guests was surprised to find a fit looking male koala sunbaking on the rock face in front of Coast Cottages. Initially there was some concern finding him out of his natural habitat, but after some time he ambled confidently back into the bush.



White Browed Scrub Wren nest in bike basket

A plucky little scrub wren was clever enough to find a weatherproof and comfy place to build its nest - one of our bike baskets – which put the bike out of action for a month or so! You can see from the photograph that it's a somewhat messy looking nest; bulky, roundish in shape, with side entrance; loosely constructed of grass, moss, bark, and dead leaves and fronds; lined inside with fine grass and feathers.

More surprises...

Elephant Seal rests at Mounts Bay

Australian Fur Seals are regularly sighted in front of Seatrees – either swimming or basking on the rocks. But an Elephant Seal is a rare visitor as they come from Antarctica. They are very big and cumbersome on land, morphing into superb swimmers and divers in the water. They are capable of diving to two kilometres deep and holding their breath under water for up to two hours! They cruise the whole Southern Ocean and can swim enormous distances but are not usually sighted on the Australian mainland.

We set up seal signs to protect this young one until it decided to head back into the water and swim south after a couple of days rest.



Hoodie Success

Great news: Our Hoodies (Hooded Plovers) on the beach in front of the cottages have successfully bred two chicks this year. How wonderful given that these birds are endangered in Victoria. Survival of the chicks to fledging stage is a moment of great celebration given that survival is rare as chicks are vulnerable to the threat of human interference; dogs, feral cats, foxes and seafaring bird attack as well as high tides.



Hoodie Chick with Parents



This Hoodie Chick fledged after 43 days

Forever a most loved and integral member of our Seatrees family

Our little treasure, Buffy, passed away on Easter Saturday after nearly nineteen glorious years together here at Seatrees.

Buffy looked a little like a miniature Border Collie with connections to Chihuahua (fluffy tail, high C bark, brimming with personality), Jack Russell (energy, tenacity, resilience) and Miniature Foxie (silky fur, playful, intelligent).

She was a little champion and we have been so fortunate to have had such a loving spirit in our lives. A spirit that will never leave us.



Seatrees Wildlife
- Mammals -



Seatrees Wildlife
- Birds -

Seatrees Wildlife Booklets

We have recently produced two delightful little books to celebrate the wildlife that inhabit Seatrees Farm.

- Seatrees Mammals presents photographs of over forty-nine beautiful creatures, many of whom we have had the privilege of rescuing and restoring to a full life at Seatrees.
- Seatrees Birds contains a selection of the 120 species of birds recorded on the property. It features photos of birds with a little information on each.

Copies can be purchased for a \$20 donation to our wildlife shelter.

Contact us if you would like one.

www.coastcottages.com.au/wildliveshelter.html

Donations to our Seatrees wildlife shelter are greatly appreciated.