

Wild about Seatrees



November 2020

Issue 8: The Seatrees Dream

We have a dream that Seatrees Farm will remain beautiful, natural and forever protected. That the animals, trees, birds, lizards, tiny beetles, fungi, and creatures of every kind, size and shape will continue to reside in a protected environment. A shared home with humans and animals existing as inseparable parts of a unified whole. We also intend for Seatrees to continue on as a welcoming space for guests to find beauty in the natural world. And through our little booklet series to learn more about Seatrees mammals, birds, fungi and other features.

To support our dream we have established the Seatrees Foundation Charitable Trust, meaning that in the future Seatrees will function under the guidance of trustees who are committed to the Seatrees vision. www.seatreesfoundation.org Additionally, we are now included in the National Register of Environmental Organisations, enabling opportunities for attracting tax deductible donations from grant makers, philanthropic bodies and individuals. This inclusion and capacity to attract supportive donations is crucial to our vision for Seatrees.

So far we have been successful in attracting grants and donations for the planting of four hundred koala specific eucalypts; a fire protection system on our wildlife shelter; weed and feral animal eradication, and the construction of fencing to protect native bushland. In conjunction with Trust for Nature, we have established a 13 hectare legally binding covenant on a significant remnant vegetation community in the centre of the property.

We deeply appreciate every guest who stays with us at Seatrees for their support, encouragement and expressions of appreciation for what we have created. So our focus now is on the future and working towards our dream.

“I think sometimes we need to take a step back and just remember we have no greater right to be here than any other animal.”

- Sir David Attenborough

Dragonflies



It was as if they had been waiting for the perfect moment to emerge and begin the aerial phase of their lives. Or so it seemed over two warm days in early October when thousands of dragonflies and damselflies filled the sky in the brief time they have to mate and lay eggs. These exquisite creatures existed as nymphs crawling around in the mud on the bottom of our dams before growing wings and emerging - superman style - into the air.

Photo: Alison Pouliot

Big Brain in Tiny Body

from Willie Bedford, Seatrees Wildlife Manager

After months of care I soft released my sweet little pygmy possums – Peewee and Heidi - into my back garden in autumn before winter hit. Even so they were exposed to some unseasonal wet and bitterly cold weather. There had been no sign of them using their nesting boxes nor their supplementary feeding station so all I could do is pray that they were safe.

About a month later I decided to plant a Peaches 'n Cream Grevillea that I had bought for the pygmies to eat. As I pulled the plant out of its plastic pot to transplant it into a much larger pot, low and behold there was a pygmy possum lying in torpor in the dirt at the base of its roots. How on earth it got in there and how it could breathe is a big mystery. He would have had to dig in. Very clever though as the pot had often fallen over on its side and hence provided a dry alternative to sleep in.

So Peewee was taken back into his previous enclosure to be fattened up for his second release once the weather warmed up! This time a selection of plastic pots filled with dirt and plants were also provided along with an increased number of nesting boxes! This photo was taken just after discovering him in the pot plant. Quite amazing and aptly demonstrates just how much we often underestimate the intelligence of animals.



Peewee

"We search for life on other planets and in other regions of our galaxy. Meanwhile, we destroy and ignore the other life on this planet."

— Anthony D. Williams – One Voice for Animal Rights

Artistic Creations & Designer Homes

Bird's nests are beautiful artistic creations and each bird species instinctively builds a design that is specific to their species.

Some birds like Swallows and Fairy Martins adhere their nests to the side of a wall or under bridges, but most are cup shaped. A variety of materials are used including spider webs, animal hair, lichen, feathers, moss, leaves, plants, and mud to strengthen their nests. Birds use their sharp beaks and sometimes their wings or feet to manipulate and weave a loose group of twigs into a structurally sound home. Some even use their own saliva as a type of nest 'glue'. Nest construction can vary from 3-4 days up to 2 weeks.

Sue Healy, Professor of Zoology at the University of St Andrews in Scotland argues that nest building is not simple and requires sophisticated cognitive skill. She along with other researchers has found that birds learn the art of nest-building rather than it just being an instinctive skill.

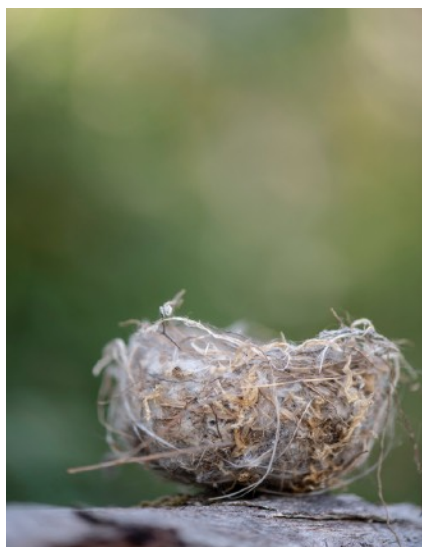
Dr Patrick Walsh, University of Edinburgh, says that for birds practice makes perfect. He found that individual birds varied their technique from one nest to the next and with more experience they dropped blades of grass less often.

Other studies reinforce that birds can learn from their own nest-building experience while further research suggests birds may learn by example from their parents or other familiar birds.



Photos: Alison Pouliot

Superb Fairy Wren Nests



Nest building is done entirely by the female in 3–4 days, using spiders' webs, fine twigs and grass, which is then lined with wool, feathers or animal hair. The nest is a dome-shaped structure of grasses and other fine material. It is usually placed in a low bush. The female incubates the eggs alone, but both sexes feed the young, along with other members of their group.

Eastern Yellow Robins seem to put more effort into decorating. You can usually recognise a Yellow Robin's nest by the strips of bark attached vertically to the outside. When the nest is in an upright fork of a tree this ensures great camouflage, mimicking the way bark hangs in a fork. They tend to decorate the nest in the style of whatever branch it's placed on, adding moss and lichen if that matches the tree. The inside is lined with fine grasses and dry leaves. The beauty of these nests is born of function and the need for camouflage, but you can't help admire the artistry of the creatures that somehow construct each one using nothing but their bill as a tool.



Yellow Robin's nest



Grey Fantail's nest Photo: Alison Pouliot

The **Grey Fantail** builds its nest in a thin tree-fork, usually between 2 and 5 metres above the ground. It is made of fine grass bound together with large amounts of spider web. The bottom of the nest is drawn out into a long stem, resembling a wineglass.

The male and female Grey Fantail together gather up plant fibres such as moss, bark, fine grasses and lots of cobwebs to build a nest in the fork of a tree or bush. They line the nest with feathers and fur to keep their fledglings warm against the last of the winter chills.

The parents share the duties of sitting on their two to four eggs for about two weeks and both feed the chicks.

Postscript: Thumbs Up for Spiders – not often do they receive good press. Spiders are of great importance to birds in Spring. Not only do they make good food for adults and chicks, but also their webs are an essential ingredient of many nests.

Recent Seatrees Wildlife Shelter Patients

Rainbow, the beautiful juvenile Rosella came into care as he was found uninjured on the ground, unable to fly which made him vulnerable to predator attack. Fortunately after a few days in care he found his wings and was released back to where his mother welcomed him with delight. In addition to his beautiful vivid colourings his plumage is patterned to create an extremely effective camouflage, assisting him and his fellow mature parrots in avoiding detection by potential predators.



Eastern Rosella



Ringtail Possum joey

Pablo, a Ringtail joey possum was found wandering along the Cape Otway Lighthouse Road by our new Seatrees wildlife carer, Kimberly. Only weighing 80 gms, he was dehydrated and scared but once taken into care recovered and relaxed into his lengthy rehabilitation. He was Kimberly's first ever wildlife patient so he will forever hold a special place in her heart. After several months he was successfully soft released back into the wild.

These **Pacific Black Ducklings** were found huddled in a drain near the Twelve Apostles on the Great Ocean Road. Mum was nowhere to be seen so kind tourists rescued them and delivered them to our Shelter. Fortunately ducklings know how to feed themselves from day one but they often die from grief of losing their mother. Having siblings in care with them helps survival, as does a feather duster placed over them for warmth. These little fellows grew and eventually swam back into the wild thanks to transferring them to the care of our expert duck man, Fritz.



Pacific Black Ducklings



Koala joey

Adam came into care as a small and lethargic koala joey weighing just over 2kg. He has been lovingly nurtured over the last 5 months by new Seatrees carer, Emma. Now a very healthy, active and acrobatic koala he is spending his days in a beautiful new large outdoor enclosure and is awaiting release back into the wild in a couple of months.

Seatrees Wildlife Shelter is delighted to welcome two new wildlife carers – Kimberly and Emma – to our team.

Spectacular wildlife sight!



Yellow-faced Honeyeaters have always been a familiar and welcome sight in spring and summer at Seatrees. They are attractive, busy little birds who spend much time singing and probing flowers for nectar as well as gleaning insects from tree foliage. Their name derives from the yellow stripe bordered in black that runs back from the bill and below the eye.

Last autumn we were so fortunate to witness a unique experience, never before seen in our 30 years watching these birds. Thousands of yellow-faced honeyeaters streamed past our windows for an hour or so. Apparently this phenomenon happens every year as they congregate in large flocks to migrate north along the Great Divide. As spring arrived they returned and are already collecting nesting material to build a neat, woven, sometimes fragile, cup-shaped nest from green materials such as moss.



*Yellow Faced
Honeyeater
& Eggs in Nest*

“Only by means of reverence for life can we establish a spiritual and humane relationship with both people and all living creatures within our reach. Only in this fashion can we avoid harming others, and, within the limits of our capacity, go to their aid whenever they need us.”

**- Albert Schweitzer - theologian, musician, philosopher
and Nobel Prize-winning physician**

Unseen deaths caused from dogs chasing wildlife

Many people think that their dog doesn't harm wildlife when they give chase. Nothing could be further from the truth. Allowing your dog to chase wildlife can cause a painful death even if the dog does not catch or touch the animal

Wildlife can suffer from what is called 'capture myopathy' when the animal is under extreme stress being attacked or chased by a dog.

The animal does not have to be injured directly to develop a disintegration of muscle fibres. From within 24 hours up to a few weeks after the incident, the wallaby or kangaroo will show stiffness and paralysis mainly in the hindquarters, progressing to complete paralysis. It will also salivate excessively, and death will occur within 2-14 days after the stressful incident. It is natural for us to think that if the dog does not catch the wallaby, no harm has been done, that the dog had a good run and the wallaby got away. The wallaby may have escaped but it may not have escaped a painful and slow death.

Dogs chasing macropods also potentially leads to a number of joeys being ejected from their mother's pouch.



This beautiful, just furred **Swamp Wallaby, Storm** had been thrown out of her mother's pouch when chased by a dog. She was found freezing cold and entangled in blackberries. She came into care, struggled gallantly for a month but died because her kidneys had been mortally damaged due to the cold.

Stay in our cottages to enjoy and experience the beauty of Seatrees

www.coastcottages.com.au

Tax deductible donations to our Seatrees Foundation are greatly appreciated.

www.seatreesfoundation.org