

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Trauma in New Zealand Wildlife

(Please note the photos will be graphic and may be disturbing to some)

### Full name

Dr Stuart Hunter

### Institution, City, Country

Senior Lecturer in Wildlife Pathology, Massey University, Palmerston North

### Content of talk:

Cases of death due to trauma form a large part of the submissions we get through the Wildbase Pathology Service. Most of these involve avian species, but we also see cases of trauma in our marine mammals, including cetaceans and pinnipeds. We all too frequently see kiwis killed by mustelids and dogs in particular. Kereru succumb to or are euthanased due to severe chest trauma following window strikes and similarly with harriers being struck by vehicles. We have seen ship-strike in the population of Brydes Whales in the Hauraki Gulf, and unfortunately, most years, I see ballistic injuries in both birds and mammals, as well as several cases of animals being stabbed or bashed. Many of these submissions have the potential to turn into legal cases, so it is crucial to accurately document post mortem findings with both written records and photographs.

This talk will cover some of the different types of traumatic injuries I've seen during my 11 years as a Wildlife Pathologist at the School of Veterinary Science/Wildbase at Massey University in Palmerston North.

## Dr Stuart Hunter Bio

I graduated as a veterinarian in 1998 and spent several years in small animal practice before returning to Massey University to complete a three-year residency program in Veterinary Anatomical Pathology. I then spent four years as a domestic animal pathologist at the College of Veterinary Medicine in Raleigh, North Carolina. I returned to New Zealand in 2009 to take up a position as Senior Lecturer in Wildlife Pathology, where I've been working ever since.

During my time at Wildbase, I've done over 6000 autopsies on a range of wildlife species, predominantly avian.

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14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

WRMD – Understanding the benefits and uses of this amazing FREE tool

### Full name

Rachel Avilla

### Institution, City, Country

Co-founder, Secretary and Customer Relations Manager of The Wild Neighbors Database Project, USA

### Content of talk:

Wildlife Rehabilitation MD, better known as WRMD, has become a very useful tool throughout the wildlife rehabilitation community. WRMD was created by rehabilitators for rehabilitators. Our first goal was to create something easy to use and simple to understand because rehabilitators do not need any more complications in their lives. The second goal was by standardizing record keeping; organizations can start to analyze their own data in order to better their own practices and procedures to improve care. Our third and eventual goal is to use the data in aggregate to better understand what is happening to wildlife globally, regionally and locally. By looking at data in aggregate, trends in wildlife health can be identified in near real-time so that agencies can act quickly upon events before tragedy strikes. Allowing for the ultimate preparedness in identifying potential wildlife health threats.

For this presentation, we will go over some of the history of WRMD and what our organization is about. We will then leap into a live demonstration of the basics of how to use WRMD. We attempt to cater to the needs of our audience, so all questions are welcome. If there is time, we can also go into some of the more advanced features within WRMD and discuss how New Zealand has a fantastic opportunity to utilize this program as a national tool.

## Rachel Avilla Bio

Rachel has been a Wildlife Rehabilitator since 2002. After graduating from college with a BS in Environmental Science, she started volunteering/working for several California based wildlife rehabilitation organizations and Belize Bird Rescue. She is the co-founder of the Wild Neighbor's Database Project and has supported her partner Devin (the developer), through the creating of WRMD by adding the human element to the design and managing customer relations. Since WRMD has been a booming success, it has given her the opportunity to visit dozens of centers all over the US and abroad. With this experience, she has developed a unique view into wildlife rehabilitation internationally and has made it her goal to discover the leverage points of this field. How can wildlife rehabilitators best continue to improve their skills and knowledge as well as bring its hard work and knowledge to the forefront of science to use that collective data to better help wildlife as a whole?

As much as Rachel loves working directly with the animals and wishes she could contribute more to direct animal care, she has come to the acknowledgement that at this point, her skills are best used in organizing the community as a whole. With her experience of collaborating with hundreds of organizations and thousands of users, she has gained a view of the big picture. Rachel has joined the California Council for Wildlife Rehabilitators (CCWR) board of directors in 2017 and took on Presidency in 2018 - current. CCWR is one of the oldest statewide wildlife rehabilitation organizations and has the opportunity to make a difference at a state level.

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14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Preparedness: The role of One Health in professional rehabilitation

### Full name

Lynn Miller CWR, PhD

### Institution, City, Country

General Manager, New Zealand Bird Rescue, Green Bay, Auckland

### Content of talk:

This presentation will review One Health (OH) concepts and the crucial role wildlife rehabilitators play in this field. As a crucial part of the front line team, rehabilitators often lack support, knowledge, resources and even time to work on many routine surveillance issues, let alone ones that can herald a novel disease or emerging parasitic epizootic. Even the World Health Organisation (WHO) has failed to recognise the importance of our community and the role we can and should play in bio-surveillance. So, where do we go from here?

To illustrate the OH issues we face on so many levels, we will explore a *Sarcoptes mangle* outbreak in red foxes in Massachusetts, USA. It is far from simply a welfare issue; instead, it is an everyday OH issue that involves wildlife rehabilitation at every step as the story unfolds.

What are the lessons we can take from this, and what are the next steps we can take as a professional community? NZ is a unique country and is uniquely suited to lead the world in this paradigm shift. Let's 'poke the bear' and put NZ on the map as the most progressive model for this much needed professional shift. We should emphasise our preparedness to respond to our non-human neighbour's plight, our preparedness to continue our education, take greater responsibility for our professionalism, and our inclusion within the One Health arena. But our world needs to take responsibility to make it possible to do our jobs too! And yes, that means financial support!

## Dr Lynn Miller Bio

Lynn began life in New Zealand surrounded by animals; cats, dogs, chickens, horses, budgies, etc. Her passion for wildlife and conservation led to Summer School at Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and a stint at London Zoo. A rather lovely holiday in France led to meeting a gorgeous French Canadian chap and a new life in Quebec.

While attending McGill University's MacDonald College, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, near Montreal, she began working with birds of prey at the Macdonald Raptor Research Centre. Although raptors were the speciality, it did not deter the many people who bought in ducklings, songbirds, herons and pigeons. The mistake was to take these birds to her home, or was it? That was over 35 years ago.

Along with academic studies, rehabbing has also been central to her life, with the founding of Le Nichoir in 1994, becoming an International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC) instructor over 15 years ago, joining the IWRC Board of Directors, and in 2011, becoming president of IWRC. The work front also saw positions that included being the Director of Rehabilitation for the Cape Wildlife Center, Barnstable, MA. Director of Education, South Florida Wildlife Center, Fort Lauderdale, FL, before returning to NZ as the General Manager of NZ Bird Rescue in Green Bay, Auckland in 2019.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Preparing to be inundated!

### Full name

Pauline Nijman

### Institution, City, Country

Wildbase Hospital and Recovery Supervisor, Wildbase, Massey University, Palmerston North

### Content of talk:

The year 2011 was incredibly busy for Wildbase with two major response efforts: the broad-billed prion wreck and the C/V Rena oil spill. In July, a massive prion wreck occurred, with thousands found dead or dying on the West coast of New Zealand. Over 600 individuals were brought to Wildbase Hospital over the course of two days. There were many challenges to face in this event, some local and some national, such as financial implications and responsibilities and human resources.

Caring for starved sea birds is challenging, but when there are over 600, the response efforts change from individual health to herd health. Daily tasks of feeding, weighing and cleaning become operations in efficiency to minimise stress in such fragile birds. The prion wreck prepared Wildbase staff for a more efficient response during the Rena oil spill. These are lessons that I wish to share with the rehabilitation community as we are set to face more large-scale responses due to severe weather and meteorological phenomena.

## Pauline Nijman Bio

Pauline had a background in marine and sea bird zoo keeping before taking on the wildlife technician role at Wildbase in 2009. Over the ten years at Wildbase, Pauline has developed a school program, been involved in New Zealand's largest oil spill response, co-developed plans for both the Wildbase Hospital and Recovery Centre and co-developed games and educational material for the Recovery Education Centre. Pauline is now the supervisor for both facilities, acting as the conduit between the two and managing an extensive collection of wildlife patients, native residents and exotic collection.

On-going learning is a passion of hers and has found the rehabilitation of our native fauna most rewarding. Pauline looks forward to actively participating in research to better understand outcomes of our common species seen through both the hospital and rehabilitation centre.



# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Comparing Active and Passive Rehabilitation Program of Kereru (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) to Determine Fitness to Release

### Full name

Tania Mutiara DVM

Kerri Morgan PhD, BVSc, PGDipVCS, MANZCVS (Avian Health)

Pauline Nijman

Dr Charlotte Bolwell, BSc, MSc, PhD

### Institution, City, Country

School of Veterinary Sciences, Massey University, Palmerston North

### Content of talk:

When wild animals are brought to a veterinary clinic or hospital to recover, the next goal will be to rehabilitate them to be released back into the wild. Researches have been done to determine if the fitness program done during rehabilitation will help these birds regain their fitness faster. Kereru (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) is a New Zealand native species that most often comes to animal clinic and hospital. This research will involve kereru at Wildbase Recovery Center undergoing a fitness program to compare if they regain fitness and get ready for release more rapidly than the other group who are not doing the program.

Keruru that are transferred to Wildbase Recovery Centre for rehabilitation will be included in this study. The birds will be divided into two groups: Group 1 will do a passive exercise programme with no specific intervention, while Group 2 will do an active rehabilitation programme via encouragement to exercise. Active rehabilitation will be given for 3 minutes twice daily. The birds will be given seven days to adjust before the data taking started on Day 7.

This study's objective measures are respiration rate, pectoral muscle depth, blood lactate levels, and biochemistry panel. Baseline data will be taken before the programme start (Day 7), then every other week (Day 21, Day 35). Respiration rate will be taken pre-and post-exercise through video monitoring. Pectoral muscle depth will be measured using a hand-



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held ultrasound. The baseline blood lactate level will be measured before exercise, then 2 minutes post-exercise and 10 minutes post-exercise using Lactate Pro 2 blood lactate monitor. Biochemistry parameter AST and CK to determine if there is muscle damage or capture myopathy.

From this research, we hope we can assess parameters that can be used to evaluate the readiness of kereru to be released back into the wild.

## Tania Mutiara Bio

Tania is a Master student of Massey University School of Veterinary Sciences. She came from Indonesia and graduated from Bogor Agricultural University in 2018. Although her first job involves primarily small animals, she was active in Student Wildlife Club during her school years and did some internships in wildlife, including Borneo Orangutan Survival (2015) and Bali Bird Park (2017).

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

SPCA's Role in Preparedness and Impacts on Wild Animal Welfare

### Full name

Christine Sumner PhD

### Institution, City, Country

Scientific Officer, SPCA, New Lynn, Auckland

### Content of talk:

Much of SPCA's work related to preparedness is to help animal owners prepare for emergencies. Additionally, as part of the Civil Defense Emergency Management Plan, SPCA provides support and coordination of services during catastrophic events such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, storms, tsunamis, and volcanic activity. Including animals as part of preparedness has focused primarily on helping people with their companion and farmed animals, notably animals with whom we have closer connections either as members of our families or those with significant economic interests. Wild animals have long been impacted by catastrophic events, and certain ones such as oil spills and wildfires generally receive more attention in the media, government, and general public domain. But there remain other catastrophic events that negatively impact wildlife but do not receive this level of attention.

An opportunity exists for increased preparedness for events that harm wild animals, including preventing suffering and advancing animal welfare. For this presentation, I will use the example of avian botulism in New Zealand to discuss preparedness through a welfare lens, what SPCA has historically and is currently doing in this space, and where future efforts should focus on improving the welfare of wild animals.

## Christine Sumner Bio

I am a Science Officer with the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (SPCA). In this capacity, I engage with diverse stakeholders from industry, government, non-profits, and the public on cat management and improve the welfare of animals in laboratories, zoos, and the wild. Previously, I have worked with a diverse range of captive animals in sanctuary, zoological, and educational settings in the US. My research background includes studying farmer and veterinary motivation to improve management practices on commercial dairy farms in Canada and New Zealand and smallholder farms throughout Africa, Asia, and South America.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Preparedness: Ensuring we can respond to our patients' needs in an uncertain world.

### Full name

Daniela Najera DVM

### Institution, City, Country

Clinical Director New Zealand Bird Rescue, Green Bay, Auckland

### Content of talk:

We live in a changing world where a natural disaster can happen at any time, and it is hard to be prepared for the unknown. However, in New Zealand, we have recurrent wild bird emergencies over the same period every year. This is a huge advantage for us as rehabbers as it allows us to prepare for the potentially high number of animals coming in and provide the best care possible.

One example is avian botulism. It is a life-threatening condition that results in progressive, generalized muscular paralysis. Meaning birds lose the ability to fly, feed, defecate, and eventually breath. In Auckland, every year during January and February, our hottest months, several well-known outbreak sites are monitored for dead or dying birds. Dead birds are removed to prevent their cadavers, contributing to further issues and any live birds collected and brought to Bird Rescue. They are then evaluated, treated and once recovered, released. The result was a collaboration that begun at a conference hosted by the SPCA and New Zealand Bird Rescue in November 2019.

This presentation explores;

1. The steps taken to mitigate this issue by forming collaborative efforts with concerned governmental agencies, NGOs and the public, resulting in the very effective management of cases in the field.

2. The care needed for these patients, from clinical management to release. The Botulism Staging handout and Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) currently used by BR will be reviewed.

3. The lessons we learned through this process and the positive outcomes we are now able to utilize.

## Daniela Najera Bio

I am a vet from Colombia. I am 28 years old, and I have been working with New Zealand Bird Rescue for the last two years.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Wildlife Triage and Decision Making

### Full name

Dr Janelle Ward

### Institution, City, Country

NZ Department of Conservation, Hamilton

### Content of talk:

Wildlife rehabilitation is undertaken with the goal to return healed wildlife to a behaviourally and physically normal life in the wild. Triage means the prioritisation of medical cases usually based on urgency. For sick or injured wildlife, triage also incorporates the relative importance of the individual (e.g. threatened species) and making euthanasia decisions based on the degree of injury or illness.

Good triage decisions early in the process aim to reduce welfare impacts on animals and reduce human impacts of caring for cases that will ultimately be euthanised. The limited options for permanent captive placement also contribute to the need for early decision-making. This also allows rehabilitators and veterinary staff to refocus resources on cases that are more likely to succeed.

A current literature review will be discussed investigating published and anecdotal reports of release and post-release survival of specific avian cases. Cases include potentially difficult triage decisions: for example, should an otherwise healthy owl with vision in one eye be rehabilitated? How about a penguin? Which species can survive in the wild without full flight? Can a parrot thrive in the wild without a toe? How about a falcon?

This talk aims to help prepare rehabilitators for tough decision making, but that should hopefully reduce the loss of time and resources into cases that are incompatible with the core goal – the release of healthy wildlife back into the wild.

## Janelle Ward Bio

Janelle is a wildlife veterinarian with a keen interest and experience in wildlife health and conservation, species translocations, avian medicine and rehabilitation. She works part-time for DOC with the wildlife rehabilitation portfolio and part-time as the Species Coordinator for Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari – a large ecological restoration project in the Waikato.



# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

What's for dinner? That age-old question! Eating well in rehab

### Full name

Lynn Miller CWR PhD

### Institution, City, Country

General Manager, New Zealand Bird Rescue, Green Bay, Auckland

### Content of talk:

The daily grind of preparing dinner or any meal for that matter can be quite a chore. Our species' young grow relatively slowly, so getting appropriate nutrition in over, say, a three-day period means we are doing pretty darn good. However, it still needs to have the basic building blocks for growth incorporated into it and then to get them to eat it can be such a challenge!!! OMG!

This is not the case for our patients, especially the avian kids! They do in about 16 days what human kids do in 16 years, so each day is critical to ensure every mouth fully meets their growth and development needs. Sounds great, but what about the food needed?

This presentation will take you through diet development based on trophic category, biological development and natural history. Together we will explore these aspects for familiar favourites, tuis and white-faced herons. From hatch to adulthood, looking at the literature, resources, stocking your avian pantry, recipes (please bring yours along to share and compare), ideas, and things to look out for to ensure we feed appropriate diets to our precious patients.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

When every penguin counts – Hoiho Conservation

### Full name

Rosalie Goldsworthy MNZM

### Institution, City, Country

Manager, Penguin Rescue

### Content of talk:

Penguin Rescue has been rescuing penguins in Northern Otago for over 30 years. We have developed protocols over that time, based on core values of sustainability and conservation.

The story of Mrs 139 illustrates what we do, why we do it and the rewards for the penguins and for us.

### Rosalie Goldsworthy Bio

Rosalie began rehabilitating wild birds in Days Bay, Wellington in September of 1994. Rosalie and her neighbour, Vivienne, decided to do this together and it did not take long to realise that there was a real need and they established the Eastern Bays Little Blue Penguin Foundation, as a charitable trust to help fund their work.

Their centre closed in 2001 and Rosalie moved to Moeraki to continue the work for Penguin Rescue. She rehabs mostly penguins and manages the 2 largest Yellow-eyed penguin colonies left on mainland New Zealand, which make up 20% of the population.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Morepork vs Parapara (Morepork for the win!)

### Full name

Pauline Nijman

### Institution, City, Country

Wildbase Hospital and Recovery Supervisor, Massey University, Palmerston North

### Content of talk:

The indigenous parapara or "bird-catcher" tree (*Ceodes brunoniana*) is somewhat controversial. It produces sticky fruits over the winter months and has been known to catch birds, especially small passerines. Rescuing birds from these plants' sticky clutches is nothing new; there are reports from as early as 1883 where sparrow and wax eye were removed, washed and released.

Many rehabilitators use 'Desolvit' for cleaning birds that have been caught in the sticky clutches of the parapara tree. It is a citrus-based cleaner with a strong smell and oily residue. This oil should also be removed from the bird, least it preens and ingests the cleaner. The oil destroys the waterproofing, as any contaminant does, it can irritate the skin when in contact.

In August of 2020, an adult morepork was removed from a parapara tree in Otaki and admitted to Wildbase Hospital. The bird was in good body condition, but approximately 20% of the feathers, involving the tail and primaries of both wings, were covered by the parapara sap, disrupting silent flight and likely the ability to hunt successfully. The bird would need cleaning before release.

Before washing the Morepork with Desolvit under an anaesthetic, as is standard practice at Wildbase Hospital, I conducted a small trial to see if another less irritating product could clean the sticky sap away. The Morepork was anaesthetised, and several contaminated body feathers were plucked away. The Morepork was then recovered.

Each feather was subjected to the same cleaning method but using different products, utilising skills and knowledge from cleaning oiled wildlife. The trial concluded that both Desolvit and soybean oil were effective in removing the sap, and when washed with Dawn, produced clean feathers that would weatherproof.

The Morepork from Otaki was then treated using the soybean oil first as a conditioner, then washed with Dawn. The feathers were later assessed for weatherproofing before release back to the location of the finder.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic Title

The challenges of recovering an obscure shorebird

### Full name

Dave Houston

### Institution, City, Country

Department of Conservation, Auckland

### Content of talk:

Tūturuatu or shore plover are a critically endangered endemic species that are all but unknown to the NZ public. For the last 40 years, a programme of captive breeding and island translocations has attempted to restore the species to some of its former range, with limited success.

### Dave Houston Bio

I'm a technical advisor with the Department of Conservation in Auckland. I support recovery programmes for various species, including hoiho, shore plover, black robins, and Chatham Island oystercatchers. I lead the Shore Plover Recovery Group, and I am a DOC's Captive Management Technical Group member.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Preventative Medicine in the Rehabilitating Patient at Auckland Zoo

### Full name

Breeze Buchanan

### Institution, City, Country

Veterinary Nurse, Auckland Zoo

### Content of talk:

Disease outbreaks pose a significant risk in wildlife hospitals and rehabilitation centres, posing a threat to other birds being rehabilitated and the wild population if these birds are released. The risk to staff contracting a zoonotic disease such as psittacosis is also significant. We can be prepared for an outbreak and mitigate these risks by being aware of the potential diseases in particular species, mitigating these risks through quarantine and hygiene procedures, and screening incoming patients on arrival and pre-release.

The prevention of morbidities contracted in hospital/rehabilitation facilities should also be at the forefront of rehabilitators' minds for each species; for example, does the species have a predisposition to bumblefoot (pododermatitis) prone to stress-induced aspergillosis, is feather damage going to affect the bird post-release? A plan can then be formulated to reduce these risks.

### Breeze Buchanan Bio

Breeze was lucky enough to grow up on the beautiful Thames Coast where both her parents worked in conservation, which undoubtedly led to a career in Veterinary nursing. Breeze has been with the Auckland Zoo team for two years, previously gaining experience in general practices and the Animal Emergency Centre. Breeze loves being part of such a passionate and dedicated team that works together to make a difference in their patients' lives. She feels privileged to have worked with endangered wildlife such as kiwi and takahe,



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and also finds nursing stranded sea turtles very rewarding. A special moment for Breeze was when a stranded little penguin the vet department hand-raised was released into its new enclosure, describing it as how she would imagine it would feel sending your children to school for the first time.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

Avian Analgesia and Fluid Therapy

### Full name

Dr James Chatterton MSc Dipl ECZM (ZHM) MRCVS

### Institution, City, Country

Manager of Veterinary Services, Auckland Zoo

European Veterinary Specialist in Zoo Health Management

### Content of talk:

Understanding how best to provide fluid therapy to sick and injured wild birds is an important component of the patient's treatment. This talk will include: the range of fluids commonly available; choice of fluids in some commonly encountered situations; how to calculate the amount to administer; and which are the most appropriate routes of administration. Administering fluids to birds should be only performed by suitably trained people and on-going consultation with your local veterinarian is vital.

Analgesia is a word derived from Latin and means "inability to feel pain". The use of medications that provide analgesia are a cornerstone of the veterinary care of injured animals and a vital part of the management of sick and injured wild birds in a bird rescue and rehabilitation setting. This talk will cover the range of commonly used analgesics in avian species in New Zealand and their route of administration. As these are all prescription-only medications, then their use must always be under veterinary supervision.

### Dr James Chatterton Bio

All the way from Sheffield in Northern England, James brings a lot of talent and experience to his role as Manager of Veterinary Services at Auckland Zoo. After graduating in veterinary medicine at Edinburgh University, he worked with domestic species for eight years, followed by zoo and wildlife species for nine years, before joining Auckland Zoo five years ago. He loves providing veterinary care for such a large range of animals, and finds it extremely rewarding being directly involved in the conservation of endangered species.

His



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most memorable zoo moment involved treating a male kākāpō with severe wing injuries in the Auckland Zoo Vet Hospital, releasing it back into the wild, and then coming across two of his offspring when undertaking conservation fieldwork in the wild.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title

What a Large Scale Wildlife Emergency Taught us about Preparedness

### Full name

Leanne Taylor

### Institution, City, Country

CEO, WIRES, New South Wales, Australia

### Content of talk:

#### Abstract

Despite rescuing and rehabilitating wildlife 365 days a year for almost 35 years, nothing could have prepared WIRES or the Australian community for the devastation of Black Summer. Fires burnt continually for 240 days during one of the worst droughts on record. Millions of hectares of land were destroyed, much of which was threatened species habitat and almost 3 billion animals have been estimated to have been killed or displaced in the largest wildlife tragedy in modern history.

By January 2020, the world knew that the scale and severity of Australia's fire season was unprecedented, as was the tragic toll on native animals. Whilst responding to the emergencies on the ground, in the first 12 weeks of 2020, there were over 86,000 calls to WIRES' 1300 number, over 4 million visitors to WIRES' website and over 500,000 emails from individuals wanting updates and offering to assist.

Australia had the worst mammal extinction rate in the world pre-fires and hundreds of species have now been pushed closer to the brink of extinction. With the future of more species at risk than ever, and the likelihood that extreme weather events, including natural disasters, will continue to occur with higher frequency and intensity, it is imperative that major changes are implemented to better support native animals. Many lessons were learnt last summer, and we have a critical window of time to ensure they are implemented to improve future emergency outcomes for wildlife.

#### Introduction



Wildlife Rehabilitators Network New Zealand  
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WIRES is Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation, and WIRES' mission is to actively rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife and inspire others to do the same. WIRES operate a dedicated Wildlife Rescue Office assisting the community and wildlife 24/7 and WIRES have 28 regional branches with over 3,000 volunteers involved in wildlife rescue, rehabilitation, information and education. Annually WIRES provide rescue advice and assistance for over 100,000 sick, injured, orphaned, and displaced animals and normally run around 100 wildlife training courses for thousands of participants.

There were major problems for wildlife before last summer, with the numbers of sick, injured, and orphaned animals needing rescue and rehabilitation continuing to grow. WIRES are receiving approximately 10% more calls for help this year than last year, and received over 22,000 calls to the 1300 line in November 2020. WIRES' 1300 line would normally receive a few hundred calls a day in the quieter periods of autumn and winter, rising to 1,000 a day in the peak of spring and summer. Every day, all year, hundreds of animals need rescue assistance.

In the wake of the devastating 2019/2020 emergency events, WIRES began providing significant national support for wildlife, supporting over 240 projects to assist with wildlife rescue and care across every state and territory. WIRES are also working with major partners to support the long-term recovery of wildlife habitat and the long-term preservation of native species in the wild.

## Discussion

No organisation was prepared for the scale of the 2019/2020 emergency events.

Some of the major issues that arose included:

- Lack of clear communication and reporting lines for wildlife emergency response
- Conflicting requirements regarding access to bushfire affected areas for wildlife responders
- Key firefighting mitigation strategies led to higher losses of wildlife and habitat
- No structure for or overarching body operating in the interest of wildlife
- Poorly organised triage centres set up and coordinated by inadequately trained personnel
- Lack of robust rescue and rehabilitation response capacity nationally
- Animal welfare issues

## Actions Taken and Recommendations

Native animals are deeply valued by the community within Australia and internationally, we have a duty to ensure they are better protected in the future and an incredible opportunity to implement the changes required to preserve remaining species forever.

Over recent months WIRES has been progressing a range of major initiatives to improve emergency outcomes including:

- Expansion of our Emergency Response team and vehicles in NSW and QLD
- Established Volunteer Emergency Response teams in each 28 WIRES branches across NSW
- Expanded access to WIRES communication platform for other rescue & rehabilitation organisations nationally
- Launching a national online Introduction to Wildlife Rescue course to assist other rescue organisations to recruit more volunteers
- Provided national wildlife carer and vet grants
- Built of wildlife enclosures to support WIRES network of volunteers
- Expanded WIRES Rescue Office to assist with calls on a national scale 24/7

Some of the other major improvements required to improve emergency outcomes for wildlife include:

- Establishing consistent protocols, policies, structured management systems and training related to wildlife response in the field, including search and rescue
- Improving communication with emergency service personnel coordinating field efforts and advising on access to fire grounds
- Ensuring there are processes in place to reduce risk, pro-actively protecting wildlife, particularly threatened species and critical areas of refuge
- Clarifying regulations and protocols for deploying veterinary teams and triage centres
- Establishing systems that will facilitate ongoing increases in national rescue and capacity
- Utilising technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring the fastest possible rescue response for all impacted animals

## Conclusion

It is unknown yet whether all species currently at risk can be saved from extinction. There is a real risk that within decades iconic species, including koalas, may vanish from the wild. To ensure the long-term future of native species it is vital that wildlife and wildlife habitat are included as essential focus areas in all future planning for disaster responses. A strong, consistent national approach to rescuing, rehabilitating, protecting and preserving wildlife is also needed, one that will support all communities, states, rescue organisations and environmental groups, to work better together for the benefit of wildlife across Australia.

# WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

14 AND 15 MAY 2021 AUCKLAND ZOO



## Speaker Abstract

### Topic title:

**An Introduction to Birds New Zealand**

### Full name:

**Ian McLean**

### Institution, City, Country:

**Birds New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand**

### Content of talk:

Birds New Zealand/Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa is the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Our mission is to foster the study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds. In this talk I will be highlighting ways in which Birds New Zealand can support and co-operate with wildlife rehabilitators.

Our membership is a dynamic one that includes: scientific researchers, generalist birders, photographers & the occasional twitcher ! Birds New Zealand is committed to the study of birds and their habitat use within New Zealand through encouraging members and organising projects and schemes. Ongoing schemes include: National Shorebird Counts, the Beach Patrol Scheme, the New Zealand Bird Atlas, recording Rare Bird Sightings, Moulting Records, Nest Records & National Species Projects such as counting Bar-tailed Godwits or Royal Spoonbills. In addition there are numerous local projects, whilst we also fund bird research projects. An important part of our work is promoting greater birding knowledge with guided bird walks and thru social media. We also promote bird conservation in the media, whilst our studies can assist organisations such as DOC and local councils in the conservation of birds.

Birds New Zealand can assist wildlife rehabilitators in identifying rare or unusual birds. We have experts on shorebirds, seabirds and waterfowl that can provide advice regarding identification and the habitat preferences of various birds. Whilst these same experts or local members can assist with releasing birds in suitable habitat locations.



Wildlife Rehabilitators Network New Zealand  
[www.wrennz.org.nz](http://www.wrennz.org.nz)

Wildlife Rehabilitators can assist Birds New Zealand in recording valuable details on rare and vagrant birds that are taken into their care. We encourage rehabilitators to submit Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs). These provide valuable scientific records on the sightings of rare vagrant birds, record changes in bird distribution due to climate change and can record the colonisation progress of new native species such as the Barn Owl and the Australian Wood Duck.

Providing common messaging is something that both Birds New Zealand and wildlife rehabilitators could collaborate on. These include the negative affects of feeding birds bread are well known, but this is little understood by New Zealanders, whilst local councils are reluctant to provide any education to the public. Other examples are highlighting the careless littering of fishing line & fisherie bycatch that causes injury or death to both shorebirds & seabirds, whilst unnecessary light pollution can cause the dis-orientation of seabirds such as Cook's Petrels and Hutton's Shearwaters.

## Ian McLean Bio

Although my career is that of an Inbound Tour Operator selling New Zealand to International Tourists, I have always been interested in birds since I was a child. Birding was very much a secret hobby of mine and to this day many of my friends still know of me as a keen footballer (soccer player) rather than a birder. With age, my footballing ability dwindled, so I joined Birds New Zealand (Te Kahui Matai Manu O Aotearoa) & I am the Auckland Regional Representative for the society.

My role is that has of fostering the study and enjoyment of birds. It requires organizing a local program of events that include monthly meetings, bird surveys that assist conservation and many types of media activities. These can include guiding public bird walks, giving lectures and even the occasional television and radio interview. It's a challenging role, for it has had me doing things out of my comfort zone, like talking to an audience of 100 people. I do very much enjoy it, I love to share the knowledge and inspire interest in our birdlife.