

Newsletter- “**Black Saturday**” March 2009 Edition

The media throughout the world effectively and sensitively reported the devastation caused on “Black Saturday” to the local communities affected by the firestorm that indiscriminately engulfed human lives, private houses and livestock in Victoria. The flora and fauna throughout most of the affected areas was literally scorched to cinders or reduced to hot embers to the ground, indistinguishable really, to the seething hot soil and earth that spanned thousands of hectares. Humanity instantly sprang to the challenge to help the survivors who were left with next to nothing after the fires were kept under control by the brave men and women representing CFA, DSE, Victoria Police and other State Emergency Services. We applaud their efforts, alongside all those that generously donated to all appeals. Whilst the survivors in the affected areas of the bush are faced with enormous challenges in turning their lives around for many years to come, wildlife groups are faced with challenges of another kind to locate injured animals, treat their wounds accordingly and restore the overall ecology for future generations to enjoy and observe. Never before in this country, except in wartime or the Cyclone Tracey Darwin tragedy, have Australians been faced with turning around such a calamity and restoring the status quo.

Nigel's Animal Rescue has played an integral role from the outset in rescuing animals from the bushfire affected areas. Hundreds of animals have been retrieved from the bushfires, triaged and sent on to wildlife shelters for rehabilitation. Nigel has rescued or witnessed the following injured species that were retrieved from the bushfires:

KOALAS: Sustained 1st to 3rd degree burns on front and rear paws.

WOMBATS: Sustained burnt feet singed fur and smoke inhalation.

KANGAROOS/WALLABIES: Those that survived the horror were severely burnt on their feet, coat, legs and tails and were generally traumatized.

ECHNIDAS: Fortunately, many survived the fires but some did sustain minor burns and had burnt quills.

GREATER GLIDERS/SUGER GLIDERS/FEATHERTAIL GLIDERS: Survived the fire and were treated for minor injuries.

TORTIOSE: Minor burns.

HORSES: Regrettably many died and others survived with varying degrees of burns.

DEERS: Similar reports to horses.

BIRD SPECIES (roosters, chickens, lyrebirds, parrots etc): those that survived incurred minor burns.

CATTLE (Sheep, cows etc): many did not survive but those rescued had varying degrees of burns to their bodies.

After the Authorities declared the affected areas relatively safe and permitted wildlife groups and rescuers into the affected bushfire areas, Nigel immediately grabbed his specialized equipment and spent 2 weeks climbing up 100ft+ trees to retrieve the surviving animals, such as, Koalas. Nigel travelled over 4500 km between Whittlesea and Gippsland areas. It was an arduous and dangerous task that had to be undertaken to save the lives of our precious wildlife (refer to photos below). In addition, Nigel and his team assisted other wildlife rescuers in locating injured animals, delivering food and other supplies to the survivors of the bushfires. Several weeks ago on 3AW Radio, Nigel was asked what he witnessed and felt about the bushfire tragedy by the presenter of the show. Nigel took a deep breath and overcome with emotion replied, "I hope that I never have to see such a thing again in my lifetime". Such was the extent of psychological adverse trauma or negative impact on all the volunteers at the front line of the bushfires.

Despite the horror witnessed by the volunteers and personnel of state emergency services, they continue with their efforts to help the survivors and wildlife. The question beckons: What drives these brave people to continue? Some say that it is their calling. Others recognize the empathy shared by the many or it is simply brinkmanship of people coming together when such a tragedy occurs. Whatever the reason, the brave volunteers must be acknowledged for their sterling work. We praise their concerted efforts to help and, stand side by side with the survivors to overcome their plight in this difficult time. 3 Cheers to the volunteers and rescuers!

Nigel's Animal Rescue would like to take this opportunity to thank the following organizations and or sponsors and individual persons (NOT IN ANY ORDER) for their overwhelming support throughout the bushfire tragedy:

ORGANIZATIONS/SPONSERS:

3AW RADIO (for getting the appeal out to the public)

CASEY GRAPHICS (For designing and constantly updating the website)

ROBBO'S PET BARN (for donating animal food and supplies)

RUDDUCKS (for supplying cages, holding pens and dishes)

TOPDECK (for donating the Ute tray needed for donating food for animals)

MORNINGTON MAZDA (for supplying Mazda Bravo Ute for rescue and retrieval)

GARY LECHTE (for organizing petrol vouchers)

CASTROL /BP SERVICE STATIONS (for donating the petrol)

OAKLEIGH POLICE STATION (For organizing the public donations of food and supplies)

dealsdirect.com.au (for supplying cages)

TRACTION TYRES (For donating tyres to Nigel's car, so he can safely continue the rescues)

VETS: Special thanks to Dr Howard Ralph (IFAW), Greencross vet Clinics, The Ringwood Vet Clinic, The Hurstbridge Vet Clinic, The Niddrie Vet Clinic, and the Whittlesea Vet clinic.

SUPPLIERS: Hartmann Australia (for supplying Bandages and Atrauman) and Baxter (for supplying lifesaving fluids),

INDIVIDUAL PERSONS:

Barrie Tapp from **Cruelty to Animals** for helping with distribution of supplies to the survivors.

Denise, the president of **Help For Wildlife**, for supplying the Mobile Response Vet Unit and for her love and dedication to rescuing, treating and rehabilitating wildlife. Also, Sue for her fantastic work and commitment with the injured and burnt wildlife, and all the search and retrieval teams looking for injured wildlife from the burnt areas.

Colleen Wood for her dedication to the burnt and injured Koalas including the gorgeous "Sam" who was rescued by the fireman. Colleen also worked in conjunction with the wildlife groups **W.R.A.P. and BADGAR** . We commend them for all their great work and involvement with the rescue of wildlife in the Gippsland areas.

Dr Howard Ralph from IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) for his expert vet treatment of animals and Tania Duratovic (International relief Coordinator) for her help.

Marita and her crew from **Oakleigh Police Station** for collecting donations of food and other supplies and arranging transport of same.

Debbie Clarke for arranging transport of pet food and other supplies all around Australia.

Sharon Williamson (Nigel's lovely wife): for answering emails, taking phone calls; arranging and organizing distribution of supplies, forwarding receipts to persons who sent donations. In addition, caring and feeding of all the animals at the Devon Meadows Wildlife Shelter. In fact, absolutely everything concerned with the running of the business and attending to the house duties at the same time!

Peter and Maria Rustman (Sharon Williamson's parents) Peter for delivering supplies to the survivors with Barrie Tapp. Maria for taking care of toddler Keaghan Williamson, sorting out the donations and helping with the household duties. Everyone should try Maria's very own Sheppards Pie. It is a real treat.

Michelle Rustman for sorting out the donations and delivering supplies to the survivors.

Paul Williamson for sorting out food donations and overseeing the volunteers.

Venice Ballard for helping out with feeding and cleaning of all the animals at our Devon Meadows property.

AND MANY THANKS TO ALL THE VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED WITH THE MILITARY STYLE OPERATION IN SORTING OUT THE FOOD DONATIONS AND PACKING THEM IN TRAILERS AND VANS FOR DISTRIBUTION TO THE SURVIVORS OR OTHER WILDLIFE SHELTERS. THE CHALLENGE WAS MADE SO MUCH EASIER WITH YOUR SUPPORT.

SPECIAL THANKS ALSO GOES TO GREYHOUND HOTEL STAFF IN ST KILDA AND THE COMIC LOUNGE FOR THEIR FUNDRAISING NIGHTS TO HELP OUR FURRY FRIENDS. THANKS TO ALL CONCERNED FOR YOUR WONDERFUL SUPPORT.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, THANKS TO ALL THE PEOPLE WHO DONATED FOOD, MEDICAL SUPPLIES, BLANKETS, POUCHES AND MONEY TO OUR CAUSE IN HELPING TO SAVE THE INJURED AND BURNT ANIMALS. THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS.

This will be going on for many many months.

For your information, Nigel's Animal Rescue has received in excess of 40 tonnes of donations, including pet food, medical supplies, blankets, cages, etc. All the pet food and other supplies are being strategically and evenly distributed to the survivors or other wildlife shelters.

Nigel's Animal Rescue is seriously committed to helping wildlife in Victoria. It has only reached one tenth of its target in reaching its goals. More funding is required from the general public

and Corporate Sector to build a much needed emergency wildlife Hospital and to continue with rescuing animals.

We conclude this newsletter with a selection of photos taken by Nigel whilst in the bushfire areas as from 10th February 2009. We warn viewers that some of the photos may be disturbing to some people.

From all of the team at Nigel's Animal Rescue we appreciate your support from the bottom of our hearts.



#1 Nigel at 90 ft up a tree rescuing a Koala, looking down at the Badgar Wildlife Rescuers



#2 Nigel coming down a tree with Koala



#3 Nigel at 80 ft off the ground retrieving another Koala



#4 A dehydrated Koala being treated at the scene.



#5 Dr Howard Ralph from IFAW treating "George" The Peacock



#6 Sue from Help for Wildlife treating an injured wombat



#7,8 Vet Dr Ralph treating a Burnt Kangaroo



#9 Denise from Help for Wildlife with a rescued baby Deer



#10 Nigel with a Greater Glider



#11 Sudden delivery of supplies donated from the public



#12 The team behind Nigel's Animal Rescue



#13 Toddler Keaghan Williamson takes over the police car



#14 Nigel with Nova at The Greyhound Hotel who helped with the fund raising



#15 Brendan and Dave Hughes at the Comic Lounge Fundraiser.



#16 Barrie Tapp and Sharon Williamson enjoying the moment!



#17 Peter Rustman and Barrie Tapp delivering a load of animal food to Coldstream Animal Aid.



#18 The world famous “Sam” the Koala, with Carer Colleen Wood, Nigel and UK Wildlife Aid rescuer Simon Cowell from the Animal planet Series “Wildlife SOS”.



#19 Barry and Peter deliver stock feed and other animal supplies to farmers who lost their houses at Labertouche.



#20 “George” the peacock was happy to be back with his best mate Max the dog and owner Michelle after they lost their property at Kinglake, George was the mascot of the camp they owned and was found with minor burns to his feet by Help For Wildlife in a toilet block that was still standing after the fires.