

MORDIALLOC-CHELSEA LEADER May 14, 2007

The sick and injured wildlife of Kingston appeal for help, FIONA SEXTON reports

The call of the wild



Wildlife rescue

- **Swamped:** Up to 20 wildlife rescue calls a week from Kingston
- **Needed:** At least six Kingston-based volunteer rescuers
- **To qualify:** Volunteers need to do a \$10 weekend workshop and ongoing training



It's a pleasure to bring (sick) animals back to what they should be, and then release them. It's giving animals a chance

GRIET JEGES, wildlife carer (pictured below)



Pepe, a baby brushtail possum being cared for by AWARE volunteer Griet Jeges.

Pictures: IAN COOK, N42MC106

A WILDLIFE rescue service is being swamped with calls from the Kingston area.

The Australian Wildlife Rescue and Education (AWARE) service receives up to 20 phone calls a week for carers to rescue ill, injured or threatened wildlife.

Aware president Michelle Thomas is desperate for Kingston volunteers to help rescue and care for possums, lizards, birds - especially ducks - and other wildlife.

She said the service needs at least six more volunteers.

"Kingston has so many great water sources and conservation

areas that it's just the perfect environment for birds, in particular," Ms Thomas said.

The Frankston-based service is called out to rescues mostly in the Kingston area.

Ms Thomas said a common job for rescuers was escorting mother ducks and ducklings across busy roads.

Major threats to wildlife included cars, tree loppers, discarded fishing line, storms, and cat and dog attacks, Ms Thomas said.

After the animals recover they are returned to the areas where they were rescued, or found homes.

Two months ago, AWARE volunteers saved six pelicans tangled in fishing line in Patterson Lakes.

Poisoning is also a growing problem; residents who leave rat poison for vermin are unwittingly threatening birds of prey, Ms Thomas said.

Feeding, medicating and monitoring sick and vulnerable wildlife could be a round-the-clock commitment, Ms Thomas said. But Parkdale volunteer Griet Jeges said she wouldn't have it any other way.

Mrs Jeges, an AWARE volunteer for two years, has at least 10

injured birds and animals in her care, and about 35 at peak times such as Christmas. Her tiny charges include a baby brushtail possum found clinging to life in its mother's pouch after she was killed by a car three weeks ago.

Weighing just 200g, it lives in a heated basket, and will stay with Mrs Jeges until spring. "It's a pleasure to bring (sick) animals back to what they should be, and then release them. It's giving animals a chance," Mrs Jeges said.

■ **AWARE runs regular induction workshops. Details and bookings: 0439 463 279.**