



# Wildlife Witness

March 2006

## Special points of interest:

- AWARE is one year old on 31st March 2006!
- AGM & SGM being held on Saturday 1st April.
- We are currently applying for DGR status (Deductible Gift Recipient).
- Easter break—what to watch out for this Easter.
- AWARE is open to all people of all ages who are interested in helping our wildlife.

## Cliff, The Southern Elephant Seal

A Southern Elephant Seal has been on our side of the bay for nearly 2 months and has been monitored and protected by AWARE during that period.

The seal, nicknamed Cliff as he first turned up near Queenscliffe last November, has been resting daily on beaches from Rickets Point to Mount Martha. He is still a juvenile of approximately 7 years of age and is well out of his home ground which is well south of here. There is a small breeding colony on Maatsuyker Island off the south west tip of Tasmania although the main colonies are located further south on the sub Antarctic islands such as Macquarie Island and Campbell Island in the Southern Ocean.



*Cliff relaxes on the beach.*

*Photo by Paul Hackett*

Elephant Seals are the largest of all seals with males weighing up to 3800 kg. Their name Elephant Seal came about due to the inflatable trunk-like nose of the male which is used as a sound box to amplify its roar.

Juvenile males often stray from the colony until they reach breeding age and occasionally turn up on the beaches of southern mainland

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## Bayside Seminars

AWARE is currently trying to facilitate quicker response to wildlife requiring rescue in the Bayside area. Last year AWARE applied for funding with the Bayside City Council which resulted in a total of 6 training sessions being funded by Council (free room and facility hire). These trainings included: Introduction to AWARE, Rescue and Handling Techniques, Care of Birds Beginner Level 1 and Care of Possums Beginner

Levels 1 & 2 as well as a talk by Paul and Craig on their recent trip to Tasmania to research the Orange Bellied Parrot.

Bayside's interest in AWARE was proved with 12 new members, 10 of these volunteering their time to become rescuers. This is a very heart-warming response. It has made AWARE's ability to respond to calls in Bayside faster, facilitating better care as its less stressful, wildlife

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Bayside Seminars (cont'd)



Michelle Thomas presents 'Introduction to AWARE' at Bayside. Photo by P. Rivera

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are not left out in the elements where they are exposed to other animals or humans. Another benefit is that it assists AWARE in keeping wildlife in their own locations so they can eat their own foods and be released with ease back into their natural habitat.

Wildlife carers can spend unnecessary time driving back and forth to

an animal's habitat to collect the appropriate food for them, obviously driving from Frankston to Bayside is a costly exercise both in time and money so the help from volunteers in this area has been appreciated.

A big thankyou to everyone who helped in the sessions, to those who have become volunteers and to Bayside City Council for their support.

**By Lisa Rhodes**

## SEABIRD WORKSHOP

January 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> was a hands-on workshop. Saturday was held at Braeside Park and consisted of a talk followed by making the actual equipment used when catching seabirds (seabird noose and D-nets).

Sunday was a great day in which we met at Patterson Lakes boat ramp and split into 2 groups to survey the lakes looking



Seabird rescue team looking for pelicans.

for injured birds, particularly those with hook and line entanglements. In the morning one group went on foot around the lakes not connected with the river (land locked) while the other groups surveyed the river system in 2 boats loaned to us and navigated by Wayne from the Coast Guard and Erica of Marine Care, Ricketts Point. Thank-you to both!

This 'hands on' training included teaching us how to catch seabirds such as pelicans. Unfortunately they were not in

their usual numbers and it wasn't until late in the day when we finally came across 5 pelicans resting on shore. We laid a noose in the sand and threw fish on the other side of it to entice the pelicans to walk through it. As a female pelican put her foot on the spot Paul pulled tight and I had honour of running after the pelican whose first instinct was to take off over the water.

And in the drink I went! It wasn't one of my more glamorous moments however I was lucky enough to catch and handle this beautiful bird which was then fully checked over by Michelle for it's general health condition and for any hooks which are often found in their feet, eyes, bills and down their throats.

After receiving a clean bill of health this pelican was released a short time later to rejoin her group.



Michelle Thomas examines the pelican.

**By Paula Rivera**

## BUNNINGS BARBEQUE

THANK –YOU to all those people, who helped out at our fundraising bbq (Kellee & Wendy Ballard, the entire Dawes family, Ludmilla Neil, Sharon Dusting, Paula & Will Rivera) which was held on 5/2/06.

We had a load of fun and with the benefit of beautiful weather raised just over \$1000 towards our wildlife!

A also big thank-you also to Bunnings for allowing us to have this barbeque .

## QUIZ

1. What do you call a baby:

- a) wombat        \_ \_ \_ \_
- b) echidna        \_ \_ \_ \_ \_
- c) kangaroo      \_ \_ \_ \_

2. A flying fox is a:

- a) type of possum
- b) type of fox
- c) type of bat
- d) type of bird

3. Another name for a 'short tailed shearwater' is the \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ bird.

4. Birds suffering from 'Beak and Feather' disease (feathers are falling out and beak is often loose) must always be euthanased.        True or False

5. Registered wildlife carers are allowed to rehabilitate feral (introduced) animals. True or False

Answers on page 3

## Cliff the Southern Elephant Seal

(Continued from page 1)

Australia to moult. The trouble with Cliff is that he finished his moult a while ago and has still not left, which led us to believe he was sick. Cliff has lost a considerable amount of weight during his stay in Port Phillip Bay. We have sent some photos to seal experts for their opinions and have discovered that Cliff is extremely below a healthy weight for his age. One of the reasons for this is the lack of suitable food in Port Phillip Bay compared with the Southern Ocean.

Their diet consists mainly of large squid which are plentiful further south. At his present weight Cliff would not survive further south due to the lack of insulating blubber.

We have contacted the Department of Sustainability and Environment requesting their assistance with the care of Cliff. DSE are unable to help for several reasons, outlined below.

- To capture and transport Cliff would be too dangerous, and expensive.
- The transportation process would be stressful to the animal.
- Facilities for rehabilitation are not currently available and the cost of rehabilitation would be considerable.
- The animal could contract diseases from captive animals whilst in care and transport the diseases back to the colony upon release.
- Assisting Cliff would be intervening in a natural situation.



If the animal is seen to be suffering, DSE, upon expert veterinary advice will assist with the only option being euthanasia.

Even though we understand the Departmental stance on this issue, it doesn't make it any easier as we watch the slow decline of this majestic creature. It is made even harder with the knowledge that this animal is a good candidate for rehabilitation. Their northern hemisphere cousin, the Northern Elephant Seal which exists along the west coast of North America is often rescued and rehabilitated.

We believe that the Department of Sustainability and Environment needs to change its views regarding the care of these rare visitors to our shores. I personally believe that the 'natural situation' left the equation the moment Cliff entered Port Phillip Bay. Even though he entered of his own free will, the interaction with humans which has occurred may be a factor in the delay in his departure. For example, in the Frankston Leader newspaper a photo shows Cliff taking pilchards from the hands of two fishermen at a jetty in Davey's Bay. Cliff appears to enjoy the company of humans who crowd around him at whichever beach he decides to visit.

Dr Michael Lynch, a veterinarian from the Melbourne Zoo has checked on Cliff several times and at this stage is not considering euthanasia. We all hope that Cliff recovers enough to head south to have access to suitable food and contact with his own kind.

### Outcome (footnote)

On the 21/3/06 DSE staff euthanased Cliff at Mother's Beach in Mornington. On the previous night, two men had fed Cliff the contents of the scraps bin at the fish cleaning table. The contents of the bin which had been in the sun all day would surely have been writhing in salmonella and other dangerous bacteria.

Cliff had visited Mornington on other occasions although had left after a day or two. This time however he was fed on a regular basis, in particular by a woman who feeds stingrays there on a daily basis which is an illegal activity. Other people would run from their cars and throw fish and drive off before wildlife carers could do anything.

Cliff may have recovered and moved on, we will never know. What we do know is that Cliff found the reliable food source at Mornington irresistible and decided to stay and be fed rather than hunt for himself.

Thanks to our volunteers who spent countless hours standing guard over Cliff while he was in our area. I felt honored to have had the opportunity to have been so close to such a wonderful animal.

**By Paul Hackett**

### Answers to Quiz on page 2

1. a. joey b. puggle c. joey
2. C - it is a large macrobat
3. Mutton
4. True— 'Beak & Feather' is highly contagious as well as deadly so all birds suffering from this disease must be euthanased to avoid it spreading further.
5. False

## HAPPY EASTER

We take this opportunity to wish everybody a safe and Happy Easter.

If you are going away and travelling by car then beware of our wildlife particularly at dusk and dawn. Should you come across an injured or dead animal on the roadside then pull over and check if it is alive remembering to check the pouch for young (don't forget wombats and koala pouches face backwards).

If a dead animal is left on the side of the road it should be 'tagged' with either a bright ribbon or bright paint to let others know it has already been checked. You may want to pack a wildlife emergency bag of

bright ribbon, disposable gloves and a couple of marsupial pouches for any such emergencies.

Injured or orphaned animals and birds can be transported to the nearest vet or wildlife carer (if safe for you to do so) or you can contact the following numbers for more wildlife information and assistance.

**AWARE 0409 360 871**  
Frankston to Melbourne region.

or

**WILDLINE 0500 540 000**  
Will provide you with details of the nearest carer/rescuer anywhere in Victoria.

## DONATION TINS

We are currently looking to place Donation Tins into shops. If you run a business or know somebody who would be willing to put an AWARE donation tin on their front counter we would love to hear from you! Please contact Paula on 9775 8584.

Thank-you.

## YOUR CONTRIBUTION

If you have a:

- wildlife story to tell
- wildlife joke or
- any comments or a letter to the editor

Then just email us, we'd love your contribution.

## BECOMING A.W.A.R.E.

Our first encounter with A.W.A.R.E was at Pets Day Out at Ballam Park late last year. Who would have known then how A.W.A.R.E we would become.

My daughter Kellee & I joined the group early this year as Kellee was keen to help the wildlife and I thought it would be an interest we could share. We attended our first seminar at Bayside back in January which is where we met Sue Beebe who runs the wildlife shelter closest to where we live. Because Kellee wanted to help with transport & rescues I thought that we should get some ideas on what to do so we rang Sue to see if we could drop in to learn a bit more about how to go about the task before us. We found Sue preparing dinner for the various possums in her care, so, not wanting to hold her up from her tasks we rolled up our sleeves to help out while we talked. It was the start of many such talks working side by side.

Sue is amazing she works full time helping as an integration aide at a local school, looks after her 2 teenage daughters, mother, counsellor, taxi driver while her husband Chris works long hours driving trucks. As well as fitting in housework & grocery shopping she devotes vast amounts of time & energy to the care of injured & orphaned wildlife. All this leaves little time for her crafts or social activities.

I was so inspired by all that Sue does that I have looked for ways to make her life a little easier such as collecting branches for the possums to eat. Branch collecting takes about an hour of my time every couple of days but it makes my day when I come across some juicy new leaves or flowers which I know the possums will love. I also gave our husbands a gentle nudge to put up another aviary in Sue's backyard. Cleaning cages, feeding possums even volunteering to work at the sausage sizzle are all ways to help. I find it all extremely rewarding. Since joining A.W.A.R.E I have be-

come aware of some amazingly dedicated people, aware of the incredible variety of wildlife in my local area, aware of how many different species of plant life (and insects) inhabit the local streets, aware of the wide range of skills I have to offer and I would like to encourage everyone to become more A.W.A.R.E.

*by Wendy Ballard*

## BROCHURES

If you would like an AWARE Brochure or have somebody who might be interested in our group and would like to give them one, then just let us know by emailing us at:

[aware.wildlife.rescue@gmail.com](mailto:aware.wildlife.rescue@gmail.com) or contact us by phone.

We also have brochures specifically for people interested in 'Rescuing and Transporting' and 'Becoming a Wildlife Carer.'

# REMINDER - THIS WEEKEND

## S.G.M.

(SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING)

Saturday, 1 April 2006 at 2.00pm

### AGENDA

To vote in "favor of" or "against" changing the A.W.A.R.E constitution, to meet the requirements from the Department of the Environment and Heritage, and be listed on the Register of Environmental Organisations and Endorsement as a Deductible Gift Recipient.

Simplified, 'DGR' means we will be able to issue a receipt for donations which are then tax deductible.

followed by:

## A.G.M.

(ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING)

Saturday, 1 April 2006 at 2.30pm

### AGENDA

1. To receive the President's report.
2. To receive the Treasurer's report and adopt the following Financial Statements:  
Statement of Financial Performance for the year ended 31 March 2006;  
Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2006.
3. To elect the following officers to the Committee of Management:
  - President
  - Vice-President
  - Treasurer
  - Secretary
  - Public Officer
  - Three (3) ordinary members

**BRAESIDE PARK VISITORS CENTRE**  
**Lower Dandenong Rd, Braeside (Melways Ref: 88 D8)**

**WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE.**



Place  
stamp  
here

P O Box 291  
Patterson Lakes Vic 3197

Phone: 0409 360 871  
Web: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~beaware>  
Email: [aware.wildlife.rescue@gmail.com](mailto:aware.wildlife.rescue@gmail.com)



## 24 hour Volunteer Wildlife Rescue Service

Enhancing our environment through wildlife rescue & foster care services.

### HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

#### **Congratulations A.W.A.R.E. on a successful first year!**

For those people who joined us from the beginning, don't forget your membership is due now.

A.W.A.R.E. have had a wonderful year rescuing and releasing over 1,000 animals and birds.

See our next issue on what AWARE have achieved in the First Year!

We appreciate your support and look forward to assisting even more of our beautiful wildlife being rehabilitated and returned to their natural habitat.

**HAPPY EASTER!**