

# Wildlife Whispers

By Nikki Medwell

As we welcome in Spring, please remember that this is a time when most animals are welcoming their offspring.

I've seen a few warnings circulating amongst city friends about "swooping season" for our lovely magpies with their unique warble, but with the magpies here and nesting close to the house, I'm wondering if it's a city problem, because we have never experienced any swooping from our feathered neighbours. Have you?

If it's a space thing, then I feel sorry for what remains of our native animals trying to survive in cities and it makes me appreciate even more of what we have out here in the country. We are the last defenders of our flora and fauna. We must embrace our role as a community and come up with ideas and solutions that challenge modern day answers. As Sir David Attenborough so aptly put it; "How could I look my grandchildren in the eye and say I knew about it – but did nothing?"

Recently a member of the public phoned in a distressing scene of 5 large male kangaroos all vying for the attention of 1 female doe that had a joey in her pouch. The competition was fierce and continued for what seemed an eternity for not only the doe, but the distressed woman witnessing the scene. She tried to scare off the males to give the female some reprieve but they would only return.

When exhaustion eventually sets in, the doe will not have the energy to keep her pouch muscles contracted and she risks her baby falling out and it being trampled by the males. How distressing for any mother to not be able to protect her child.

So why was this happening? The males were not alpha males but large, testosterone filled young bucks. This is the result of the killing of our alpha males, (the largest males who were born with the alpha gene) who are the protectors of the mob. They are wonderful fathers, gentle and loving towards the young and protect the females from situations just like this one.

Recently I spotted an alpha move his family to safety when a fox settled down for a nap nearby. With his young bucks, does and joeys safe out of harm's way he watched over that fox until I chased it away. (I was out for a walk)

After ferocious storms we have witnessed the alphas gather lost joeys and keep them together until the mothers re-appear out of the confusion.

A doe goes into season for about 3 days and if mated with, will give birth to her joey in approx. 30 days. This tiny jelly bean then has to make its way from the cloaca to the pouch. It only has developed hands and fingernails and is totally blind, since it develops inside the pouch, and is the equivalent of a premature baby in the womb. Once inside the pouch it finds the teat and latches on. An incredible feat and incredible instincts for something so small.

Back in March, a young doe named Ney Ney that we had raised and released returned one morning acting distressed. It was 4am so pitch black. With only a phone I followed her into the darkness, knelt beside her and gently asked what was wrong. With her hands on my shoulders I felt her body convulsing, yet did not sense fear. I guessed she was giving birth. In the quiet, the dark and the stillness I could see her mob in the distance illuminated by the outside lights of the house. No-one was moving. They waited as I sat there doing little more than offering support thinking to myself; "If anything goes wrong here, I have NO idea what to do!". Luckily these amazing animals have been giving birth without human intervention for millions of years.



Ney Ney had returned to have the support of her "mum" which in the wild, she would've had. But I was it. A sad substitute for a species that forms incredibly tight family bonds.

For the next few months we got to see Ney Ney's pouch start to fill out. When we last spotted her, her pouch looked like it had a small tennis ball in it.....then on her next visit it was flat. Ney Ney had lost her baby. We don't know why or how but a female Eastern Grey kangaroo is lucky to replace herself once in her lifetime and first-time mums have a high rate of loss. This is how it is in their structure and it could be nature's way of saying; "You are too young," or simply be their way of controlling their own population numbers. Something they have successfully managed over 16 million years.

To be asked to sit in on anyone's birth is a real privilege and I was humbled that I had even been considered.

She did mourn. We could tell. She came "home" more often and would simply put her head on my shoulders and be still. There are no words that can comfort a mother that has lost a child. None. So silent hugs are what we offered.

For the moment she is now Auntie to other does joeys in her mob. All the females are "Aunties" and help each other with their offspring. They make incredible mothers. They are with their babies around the clock and keep them clean and tolerate being jumped all over when the little ones are feeling playful.

The does teach their little ones danger by calling (clicking) them back into the pouch at the sight or sounds of danger. Like if a car goes past, you can hear the does calling their youngsters back to safety.

Our state government seems to think they are nothing more than pet food. How wrong they are. If you'd like to know more, please

email us at [elroos3448@gmail.com](mailto:elroos3448@gmail.com) or Google; “Ray Drew Kangaroos May 2008”.

This is about to commence in Victoria come October 1st. Cruelty and fear on a level seen back in the 60’s. Fifty years later we are still encouraging the suburban sprawl, cutting roads through our land and slicing up properties. Human population and population sustainability need to be addressed for all our sakes. Everyone wants to leave the country to the next generation in a better state than what we inherited. Flora and fauna are the answer to a healthy country. Being in the unique position as custodians, we have a chance to leave the world a better place.

**Isn't our wildlife amazing?**

- Male magpies will protect their nests from the time the eggs are laid until the young birds are fledged. A magpie can recall & remember a person’s face for up to thirty years. If a magpie trusts an individual human they will never swoop. So be nice to your magpies & talk to them in a friendly way or simply take another route for about 6 weeks
- Wombats can breed every two years and produce a single joey. Did you know the wombats pouch faces backwards so the joey is looking out the backend? This is to avoid mum scratching dirt into the pouch when digging
- Echidna’s hibernate over winter (in cold climates) and reappear in Spring to breed. The female will lay a single egg into a small indentation on the abdomen, which forms three days prior to birth. When the youngster (puggle) gets too prickly to carry around, mum will dig a burrow for it to live in & it is weaned at about 7-8 months old.

Following the release of Kangaroo A Love Hate Story on DVD we have had many lovely supporters donate copies to us.

The invitation to watch a screening of it here, away from the main house and in a private setting still stands, but we are now also in a position to loan out copies which can be returned by dropping them in our letterbox or requesting a reply paid mailer so all you need to do is put it in the mail. We can post you a copy or drop one off. Let us know what works for you. It really is that easy: [elroos3448@gmail.com](mailto:elroos3448@gmail.com)

Please slow down on our roads at dusk and dawn and hold your hand on the horn if you see animals near the road. All wild animals have acute hearing and will hop away from the sound of a horn

blasting. This is the peak time for our wildlife to be on the move. Keeping an old pillowcase, a cardboard box and the numbers at the bottom of this article in your car could mean the difference between life and death.

If you suspect our wildlife is being killed (poisoned or shot), please contact DELWP on (03) 5430 4444 and if the shooting is local and close to your home, the Castlemaine Police can be reached on: (03) 5470 4100.

We are also happy to keep track of these events if you wish to inform us. Consistent behaviour is often sought after by DELWP with investigations. I am putting this here as “information only” because I do not suspect our community to be part of such cruelty.

Let these words sink in.....

*“Killing is often the first response to solve conservation problems. But if genocide is taken off the table, a whole new set of creative solutions emerge.*

*The primary responsibility of humans is to change our individual lives so that all other animals can live once again in dignity and freedom.” – G.A. Bradshaw.*

Wildlife groups and shelters are always in need of help from the public. Please consider getting involved. No matter how small the time block is you have to offer.

I hope what we share with you here helps you learn and realise how lucky we are to share this region with such unique animals.

With thanks and gratitude to our readers and supporters, Scott and Nikki Medwell, Red Box Wildlife Shelter, Elphinstone VIC

Have any questions for us? Or topics you would like us to cover? Then drop us a line: [elroos3448@gmail.com](mailto:elroos3448@gmail.com)

**Wildlife Emergency numbers:**  
**Wildlife Victoria: (03) 8400 7300**  
**WRIN: 0419 356 433 (Central Victoria Region)**  
**WRES: 0427 301 401 (Central Victoria Region)**



**Elphinstone Rainfall in mm’s - Comparing 2018 to 2019 end of August**

