



# ‘Bat-Tastic’ Support

Gets Wildlife in Care the ‘Suite Life’

Cornelia Adolfsson | Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter

Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter is delighted to share the exciting news of their enclosure upgrades, all made possible through the generous support of the Australian Wildlife Society. This support was a game-changer, allowing us to enhance the living conditions of the native wildlife under our care. With this funding, we have created more spacious, naturalistic environments that better cater to the needs of animal residents as they undergo rehabilitation and recovery. Every species will benefit from these upgraded enclosures, from the endangered grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) to tiny little forest microbats (*Vespadelus vulturnus*). Furthermore, this support will improve the lives of individual animals and contribute to broader conservation efforts, ensuring a brighter future for wildlife populations.

Since noticing the ever-increasing number of bat cases requiring care, we focused on enhancing our bat enclosures. The upgrades included the installation of bat-safe netting and specialised ropes to create a safer and more stimulating environment for the bats in care. It also included more advanced equipment to support the bats’ rehabilitation needs to ensure juvenile bats were raised in an

enclosure that caused limited harm and maximum enrichment. These improvements also aim to promote better physical and mental health for the bats as they recover and prepare for eventual release into the wild.

Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter is dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing native Australian wildlife. Operating fully as a volunteer-run shelter, we provide a sanctuary for injured, orphaned, and sick animals, offering specialised care tailored to the unique needs of each species. These species include but are not limited to grey-headed flying foxes, ringtail possums (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*), brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), various microbat species, and all native birds, including birds of prey. The Founder, Cornelia Adolfsson, and her volunteer team work tirelessly to ensure each animal receives the necessary medical treatment, nourishment, and enrichment to recover and thrive. Beyond direct animal care, we also engage in community education, vet clinic training, and advocacy efforts to promote conservation and coexistence with Australia’s diverse wildlife.

Flying fox pups at Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter typically stay in care for several

months before they are ready for release. Upon arrival, these vulnerable pups receive intensive care, including regular feedings and monitoring, to ensure they grow strong and healthy. As they develop, the pups gradually transition to larger enclosures where they can practise flying and socialising with other bats. This period of care is crucial, as it allows the pups to develop their survival skills in a safe environment. Once they demonstrate the ability to forage independently and exhibit natural behaviours, they are moved into a creche and then slowly released back into their natural habitats, contributing to the conservation of their species.

In 2023, Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter experienced a significant influx of bat cases, including the endangered grey-headed flying fox and the little forest microbat (*Vespadelus vulturnus*). Initially, temporary enclosures were set

**Top left:** Two juvenile grey-headed flying foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) cuddling in their wraps. Image: Cornelia Adolfsson.

**Top right:** A grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) with a teat. Image: Cornelia Adolfsson.

**Bottom right:** A grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) recovering from an entanglement in their new enclosure. Image: Cornelia Adolfsson.

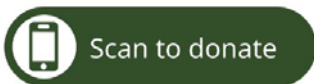
up to accommodate these arrivals. However, thanks to the generous support from the Australian Wildlife Society, the shelter can now provide state-of-the-art enclosures specifically designed for these specialised species. This upgrade is crucial given these keystone species' essential role in Australia's ecosystems, contributing to pollination, seed dispersal, and overall environmental health. Protecting Australian bats and other native wildlife is vital for a healthy functioning ecosystem.

Caring for bats demands a unique skill set and dedication from volunteers. These caregivers must deeply understand bat behaviour, physiology, and dietary needs and take an entire vaccination course for Australian bat lyssavirus. They undergo specialised training to handle these delicate creatures with care and precision, as bats are highly susceptible to stress and injury. The shelter must be vigilant in monitoring for any signs of illness or injury, promptly seeking veterinary assistance when necessary. Patience, empathy, and a genuine passion for bat conservation are essential qualities for those committed to the well-being of these remarkable flying mammals.

At Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter, seasoned caregivers possess a wealth of knowledge gained through years of hands-on experience, enabling them to navigate the intricate needs of the diverse wildlife species they encounter. Each species presents unique challenges, from the specialised dietary requirements of grey-headed flying foxes to the intricate rehabilitation processes for injured microbats that need carefully controlled environments, frequent feeding regimens, and safe spaces to develop their flying skills. At the same time, possum joeys require warmth and constant monitoring. The shelter's dedicated volunteers and staff invest countless hours ensuring these juveniles receive proper nutrition, medical care, and enrichment. Collaborating closely with experienced veterinary teams, these caregivers bridge the gap between clinical expertise and the nuanced demands of wildlife rehabilitation. This synergy ensures that every resident receives tailored care and treatment, maximising their chances of successful rehabilitation and eventual return to the wild.

The need for wildlife shelters is certainly not slowing down any time soon. Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter is dedicated to contributing sustainably to wildlife conservation efforts. You, too, can support Melaleuca Wildlife Shelter's ongoing efforts in several meaningful ways. Financial donations are always welcome and can be made directly through our website at [www.melaleucawildlife.com](http://www.melaleucawildlife.com), which will help fund vital upgrades, medical supplies, and daily animal care. Additionally, volunteers are crucial to our operations, offering hands-on assistance with

animal care, facility maintenance, and educational outreach. Donations of food, cleaning, and animal care items are also greatly appreciated. We have a 'Wishlist' on our website and Instagram page (@melaleucawildlife). Every bit of support helps to ensure these animals receive the best possible care and a chance to thrive in the wild.



Two juvenile brushtail possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) cuddling up in their enclosure. Image: Cornelia Adolfsson.



Two fledgling Australian magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*). Image: Cornelia Adolfsson.



A juvenile ringtail possum (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*) in its new enclosure. Image: Cornelia Adolfsson.