

Oh possum, you are a hero in the heat



A handful of help...a sugar glider joey from an earlier rescue by Wildlife Victoria carer Nalini Scarfe.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] T
[/dropcap]he recent heatwave from hell may have lifted, but the work never stops for wildlife carers who are at the frontline when it comes to caring for distressed, injured or lost native animals.

One of those who willingly volunteer their time to such a task is **Nalini Scarfe**, who grew up in Warrnambool, but who now lives in Melbourne where she studied orchestral percussion and now works as a music teacher. (Nalini's parents are the well-known and prolific authors **Allan** and **Wendy Scarfe**, who still live in Warrnambool).



If you thought wildlife rescue was all about cuddling cute creatures and bottle-feeding abandoned babies, the reality is that caring for wild animals takes skill, patience and a commitment to work around the clock.



Ringtail joeys, like this one, were among the most common rescues during Victoria's recent heat wave, although this little juvenile was from an earlier rescue.

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[/dropcap]uring the extended heatwave from January 14 to 17, when temperatures in Melbourne topped 44 degrees, the [Wildlife](#)

[Victoria](#) hotline went into overdrive with hundreds of calls from people reporting dehydrated and heat stressed wildlife.

Nalini, as a qualified carer, found herself looking after 14 ringtail possums – four adults and 10 babies – with the juveniles requiring feeding every four hours.

“I haven’t been this sleep deprived since I was a new Mum 18 years ago!” she joked in a Facebook post.



Nalini Scarfe assists a wombat on its way: just one of the many native animal rescues Nalini has performed over the past five years.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] W
[/dropcap]hen we contacted Nalini, she also told us about one particular baby brushtail possum that she found on her property during the heatwave...

[quote] I heard this baby joey squawking in the woodpile at home. Sometimes during extreme heat or due to stress, mothers will drop their (suckling) young in order to survive.

I named him Manic as he was a very anxious young fellow. Feeding time involved him throwing his arms and legs around so wildly that more milk ended up being thrown around the room than went into his mouth.

Generally, care in the first couple of days is more difficult as they don't like the taste of the formula or the feel of the artificial teat.

As soon as the cool change came through on Friday night, I took him back out to the carport hoping that his mum was hiding somewhere inside and had survived the heat: it would have had to have been extreme in the carport roof under the corrugated metal roofing.

Manic only had to call out once and there was a very noisy crashing and banging as Mum came out of the roof cavity.

I climbed up the ladder and held him out to her. She charged at me and I thought she was going to take my head off: she was the biggest brushy I've seen. She didn't attack me in the end as she was just so happy to have her baby back.

She spent the next half and hour just cleaning him (I guess he stunk of humans) whilst he put his head in her pouch and drunk like there was no tomorrow...

Apparently the chances of reuniting Mum and joey are good up to five days after the separation, so this was a happy ending." [/quote]



Manic and Mum reunited...with Manic kicking back for a much-needed and long drink.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] M
[/dropcap]anic is just one of many wild animals Nalini has helped over the past five years: the others include heat stressed ducklings, abandoned sugar glider joeys and an echidna hit by a car.

And while Nalini no longer lives in Warrnambool, we think she deserves a coffee next time she is visiting her parents, so Nalini is our second quiet hero for 2014.

[box] The [Wildlife Victoria](#) emergency number is 13 000 94535 or its office can be contacted on 03 922 44290 [/box]



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