

# AJWCEF

NEWSLETTER 2010 April

Vol. 1

## Hello from AJWCEF

**Tetsuo Mizuno, Managing Director**



“G’day!” This is the way that people often greet each other in Australia, and it particularly suits the state of Queensland, known as the Sunshine State, because on most days it is bathed in sunlight. In the cities of Brisbane and the Gold Coast high rise buildings jostle for space and residential development proceeds apace. That’s right; with people pouring in from both within and outside Australia, this is a region with one of the world’s fastest growing populations. It is also visited by large numbers of tourists from around the world and interstate seeking the balmy weather and the natural environment that spreads across an area several times that of Japan’s. How many of those tourists, however, return home knowing what is actually happening to the natural environment and wild animals of Queensland? Even people who reside there are often unaware that over the past ten years there has been a drop of some 64% in the number of koalas living in the southeast Queensland area (estimated to have fallen from 6246 to 2279), or that there are currently only around 130 northern hairy-nosed wombats, found only in the north of the state, left in the world. Even insect species are declining, with the Richmond bird-wing butterfly under threat of extinction because of a reduction in their habitat and the butterfly vine that is their only source of food.

The primary objective of the AJWCEF is to assist in accurately educating people as to what is happening now to our natural environment and wildlife, and to provide an opportunity for everyone to consider “a better way of co-existing.” To this end, we engage in educational activities such as seminars and symposiums, and organize study tours and training courses. AJWCEF also conducts surveys and research, both independently and in conjunction with government wildlife conservation facilities and universities, etc., to provide suggestions for the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem.

These activities, however, may not bear fruit in the short term and, indeed, it may take decades before we find some of the answers to the issues we face. Despite this, I believe we need to at least make a start on what we can do *now* to achieve a healthy world ecosystem. Here at the AJWCEF we do not think that these activities will be completed in our own lifetime; we hope that the result of our efforts will be fully enjoyed by the next generation, and the one after that. I would, therefore, ask that those of you who endorse this approach to show your support over the long-term as members and volunteers.

# *Moggill Koala Hospital Corner*

*No. 1*



The Moggill Koala Hospital (MKH) is the only state government established wildlife rescue and rehabilitation facility in Queensland and the place to which sick and injured wildlife are brought in from the southeast region of that state. Of the diseases that strike koalas, the most frequently seen cases are infectious diseases, such as Chlamydia, which can manifest due to a decline in immunity brought on by the stresses associated with loss of habitat. The main injuries seen in koalas are those caused by accidents involving vehicles or dog attacks. Here, orphaned baby animals (koala young are known as joeys) that have been hand reared are also rehabilitated to be returned to the wild. On staff are two veterinarians, seven rangers and approximately 45 volunteers who work on a roster system to provide milk and medication appropriate to the condition of each of the koalas, cleanse and disinfect affected parts and apply medicine, clean cages and change the eucalyptus leaves on which the koalas feed.

The objective of the MKH is to treat wild animals and return them to their natural habitat, rather than to keep them as in a zoo. This is because their view of wildlife protection stems from the desire to maintain the greater ecosystem. All life in the natural world - be they animals, plants or microbes - plays an important role in the normal maintenance of the ecosystems. By being residents of natural forests, wild koalas also contribute to the cycle of the ecosystem and, as such, it is not wise to allow them to become too used to humans or come to rely on humans during the time that they are hospitalized. "Maximum care with minimum contact" – this is important in the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife. Being wild animals, hospitalization in itself is an enormous source of stress, and the animals frequently become weakened. This is why it is vital to reduce stress as much as possible.

The length of time an animal is in hospital can be from a few days to several years, depending on their condition. Even so, only around 20% of koalas that are hospitalized can be returned to the wild. Not only are there cases of animals that, after being rescued, have died by the time they reach the hospital, but also those who die during hospitalization for some reason; some also need to be euthanased. The MKH formulates a treatment plan based not only on the symptoms with which a koala presents, but also on the anticipated future progress of the disease or injury. Under government policy, in cases in which an animal is likely to suffer and weaken over the long term progress of a disease, the animal may be euthanased. All the staff at the MKH love koalas. As such, they must repress these feelings to perform this difficult measure that spares the animal from a lengthy period of suffering.

For this very reason, all the staff members are extremely happy when a koala returns safely to its home in the wild. “Even if just one more koala gets to go back to the bush...” – that is the wish of the Moggill Koala Hospital.



# Unforgettable Koalas

## ~Raila and Thomas~

*By Toshimi Hirano*

Raila and Thomas are two koalas who left a particularly lasting impression on us. Raila was probably the first koala to be transported to us by railway, coming to the MKH on June 1, 2008. As you have probably guessed, the name Raila comes from the word 'railway.' When Raila first came to the MKH she still had a pinky – a very small, hairless baby - in her pouch.

*Raila's pouch is fit to burst!*



Raila hated milk, and really had her carers at their wit's end. She was probably extra jittery because she had a baby with her. Raila's abdomen

gradually got bigger and bigger. One day, after about one month had passed, we noticed there was a tiny, tiny hand hanging down from Raila's abdomen. The baby has been growing! There is no way to describe the utter joy of the carers when they saw this.



Each day the baby seemed to get bigger, until Raila's pouch looked like it was about to burst.

*The baby's hand quietly hung outside the pouch.*



*The mother's pouch gently cradles the baby.*



*Raila always protects her baby*

After Raila was moved to a roomier place, the baby finally showed us its face on August 2.



It was a mysterious appearance, almost as if magic had turned one koala into two! Since it was the baby of the first railway koala, it was decided to name him after the steam engine, Thomas! We watched over them as Raila recovered and Thomas grew. Every milestone of his was as joyous as if he were our own child – the day he first left the pouch completely, the day he clung to his mother's stomach, the day he

started to ride on his mother's back and the day he first ate gum leaves.



*First time eating gum leaves with mum!*

Even the day Raila decided to make a break from the hospital they were one in body and spirit. Of course, they didn't succeed...



*Mum has a nice broad back...*



*I'm not scared of being a little bit away from mum!  
Thomas' first step towards independence.*

By November 28 Thomas weighed more than 2 kg and he was ready to become independent. Thomas and Raila were placed in separate but adjoining rooms.



*I've joined the MKH kindergarten!  
(Thomas on left) And I've made a friend!*

After having raised her baby, Raila was looking worryingly gaunt, while Thomas was sleeping comfortably surrounded by gum leaves. Even if Thomas could go back to the forest, we could not be sure that Raila also could. The carers had an uneasy feeling as they looked after Thomas who was preparing to go off and face the future and Raila whose life was still tenuous. January 9 – the day of Thomas' departure had finally arrived. Thomas does not understand why he is being put in a cage and starts to call out.

Raila looks toward him anxiously, like she is saying "Be careful in the forest!"



Raila is by herself again. The toughness that she had shown when she was with Thomas has fallen away and she looks a little smaller.

We wonder if she will go downhill from here. But we are determined that Raila will return to the wild as well. With that resolve and to help her on her way, the carers gently feed her the milk that she so detests a little at a time. Maybe Raila knew that we were trying to help her, but either way, it seemed like a miracle.

At the end of January we celebrated the day of Raila's release from the MKH. Words cannot describe the elation of the carers! Joy soaks our farewells to this koala who is going home. One of the rangers tells us that she was released in the same forest as Thomas. Thomas needs to find his own territory, but we hope that he will be near enough for a little longer to keep an eye on Raila!

**STAY SAFE!**



**We still send out silent messages to Raila and Thomas – stay safe!!**

**Watch for more real-life stories of the koalas at Moggill!**

## Hang in There!!

*A Day in the Gentle Life of 'Precious' the Wallaby and Elsie*



Meet Precious, a beautiful little female wallaby with dark chocolate-coloured fur and sparkling eyes. Right now, at 12 months of age, she weighs 1.2 kg. She is being raised by Elsie, a licensed animal carer of many years experience who heads up the Wednesday team of volunteers at the Moggill Koala Hospital (MKH). Precious is thought to be either a swamp wallaby or brushtail rock wallaby, but because her tail won't be fully developed until she is about two years old, it is still too early to be certain.

Because she is still small, Precious needs to be fed a special, low-lactose milk called Divetalac every four hours. When Elsie is rostered on at the MKH, Elsie takes her with her so she can be fed on time.

When Elsie first took her home some six weeks ago, Precious was dehydrated and painfully thin; now, however, she is growing steadily and

bounds energetically around at Elsie's home. Recently she has been gaining around 100g each week in weight. Just put a sweet potato on the floor for her and she hurries over and happily devours it. Elsie laughs as she describes Precious' table manners as being like a powerful vacuum cleaner!

Elsie has been caring for wildlife in this way for fifteen years, all at her own expense. She foots the bill for food and all the necessary equipment, working night shifts as she cares for numerous wild animals. Elsie has become ill and been hospitalised twice in that time, but even then all she does is worry about the animals in her care – that is the depth of her love for them.

Once Precious has reached a weight of around 5-6 kg she will be released back into her original habitat some 275 km from Brisbane. Although she will be a little sad when that day comes, it is Elsie who will be happiest for Precious.

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There are other people who, just like Elsie, pour their energy into caring for orphaned wildlife at their own expense. There are also others involved in activities to save wildlife habitat. The AJWCEF aims to support the activities of people such as these who are on the front line of wildlife conservation. Won't you join us in watching over them?



Text and photos by Toshimi Hirano



## The 2009 Study Tour

by Ryoichi Miyashiro, 2nd year student,  
Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University.



*At Dinmore Abattoir*

I was a participant of the study tour that was conducted from 28 August to September 5, 2009. I took part after I had the opportunity to speak personally with the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the AJWCEF, Dr. Tetsuo Mizuno, at which time I became interested in Australian wildlife and their veterinary care.



*Rock climbing on our free day*

During the study tour, we were able to experience many things that are not possible in Japan – lectures on Australia's unique animals such as the platypus and kangaroo, visit a wildlife rescue centre and inspect the Dinmore Abattoir. It is very difficult to view the inside of an abattoir in Japan for hygiene reasons, so this was particularly valuable



*Learning new things at the Moggill Koala Hospital*

experience. On our free day, we were able to get a taste of the Australian lifestyle – some people went shopping, some did rock climbing and some went whale watching.



*A pod of dolphins (from Point Lookout, Stradbroke Island)*

The greatest benefit of the study tour was being able to experience in person the differences between Japan and Australia. The tour further stoked my interest in Australia and I came away from it well satisfied. I hope to continue my involvement in AJWCEF activities with an eye to one day working in Australia.

# September 2009 Training Course

Text & photos – Mei Takahashi, 3rd year student, Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University



Although this was the very first training course run by the AJWCEF, I was more than satisfied with its content and felt that I was able to receive very significant training. Under the tutelage of volunteers and staff members at the [Moggill Koala Hospital \(MKH\)](#) and [David Fleay Wildlife Park \(DFWP\)](#), I prepared food for the animals, cleaned their cages, watched autopsies and also observed animals being treated.

↖  
*Hospitalized [koala](#) at MKH. Despite being blinded by an infectious disease, she continues to protect the joey in her pouch.*

*A [glider](#) being reared at DFWP. The animal has been anaesthetized for a health check.* →



*An orphaned [kangaroo](#) being reared at Ruth's house.*



↙  
By actually participating in [radio-tracking of koalas](#) I was able to learn that they live closer to people than I had thought, and through visits to [Brisbane Forest Park](#), the [University of Queensland veterinary clinic](#) and to Ruth's house, who has [opened her home up to wildlife](#), I gained a renewed appreciation for the fact that wildlife protection needs the cooperation of many people in a variety of fields. I was also forced to really think about the meaning, and difficulty, of co-existing with wildlife through the [discussions](#) we

had and the [presentations](#) that were given. I would like to encourage many people to take part in this course because there is much to be gained from being on the front line, and much that can only be gained by being at the coal-face.

# 3rd AJWCEF Seminar Report

Text/photos: Yubi Kuroda,  
4th year student, Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University



Dr. Steve Johnston

I would like to tell you about the 3rd AJWCEF seminar that was held on March 30, 2010, at the Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University.

Dr. Steve Johnston and Dr. Tetsuo Mizuno travelled from Australia to give presentations at the event.

About fifty people, including veterinary studies students, gathered to hear their talks, and the response to the presentations was great. Dr. Johnston's main

research focus is reproduction in Australian marsupials and he was the first person in the world to succeed in the artificial insemination of a koala. Actually, in Australia there are places in which koala numbers are dwindling, and others in which there are too many; in either case, their reproduction needs to be managed. During the seminar we learnt of the significance and methodology of artificial insemination as one means of achieving this. We were also able to see footage of actual koala oestrus behaviour and semen collection.

Dr. Mizuno held the attention of the participants with a presentation about the current state and outlook of wildlife conservation in Australia. Australia is home to many unique animals and the protection of those animals ties in with preservation of biodiversity the world over. The interaction of people and nature and wildlife in Australian and in Japan were also contrasted with the difference in approaches brought clearly to light.



A presentation underway at the seminar

## Event Information for 2010

\* Please refer to the AJWCEF website for details

### Seminars in Japan

① March 27, 2010 - Research presentation at Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University  
- "Artificial Insemination in Koalas," Dr. Steve Johnson, Senior Lecturer, the University of Queensland  
(the first person in the world to successfully artificially inseminate koalas)

- "The Evolution of the Digestive Tract of the Koala – the salivary glands," Dr. Tetsuo Mizuno,  
AJWCEF

② March 30, 2010 – Seminar during the Japan Association of Veterinary Students' Convention  
- "Participating in Australian Wildlife Conservation Activities," Dr. Tetsuo Mizuno, AJWCEF

- "Assisted Breeding for Australia's Endangered Species," Dr. Steve Johnson, Senior Lecturer, the  
University of Queensland

③ Early June, 2010 – Information session on AJWCEF study tours

Location: Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University, Musashino City, Tokyo

④ Mid-October, 2010 – COP10 AJWCEF research presentation, forum, quiz-style stage presentation  
on Australian wildlife

Location: Nagoya, Japan

### Study Tours

① August 18 (Wed.) -25 (Wed.), 2010

Australian wildlife study tour for university students and the general public

Location: Queensland, Australia

### Training Courses

① March 7-21, 2010

Australian wildlife training course (introductory)

Location: Queensland, Australia

② August 1 (Sun.) – 15 (Sun), 2010

Australian wildlife training course (advanced)

Location: Queensland, Australia

③ September 5 (Sun.) – 19 (Sun.), 2010

Australian wildlife training course (introductory)

Location: Queensland, Australia

## AJWCEF Staff Members



**Yubi Kuroda** – Hi everyone. I am a student of veterinary nursing at the Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University and work as a publicity volunteer for the AJWCEF. My goal is to take part in wildlife conservation activities all over the world and to work with a variety of animals in many different countries. With an endless supply of curiosity and a ‘have a go’ attitude, I love taking on challenges. Although I am mainly involved in publicity for the AJWCEF and the seminars it conducts, in the future I would like to take part in activities in Australia itself. By the way, my

friend in the picture is the furriest member of my family – KB!

**Mei Takahashi** – G’day mate! Having had the opportunity to participate in the 2009 study tour and AJWCEF training course, I am now a publicity volunteer for the AJWCEF. I am interested not only in wildlife protection, but also in the form and ecology of lots of different and fascinating animals. Australia in particular has its fair share of unique animals which have enthralled me since a visit there some eight years ago. In addition to publicity activities to share the goals and activities of the AJWCEF with as many people as possible, I hope to join with you all in efforts to protect wildlife and educate people about them.



**Ryoichi Miyashiro** – Hi everyone. I am a student of veterinary science at Nippon Veterinary and Life Science University and publicity volunteer for the AJWCEF. Have you ever thought that you wanted to be involved in something but didn’t think it was possible? Just as I was thinking this very thing, I heard that Dr. Mizuno had established the AJWCEF and I decided that I would do what I could to help. I will do my best to make sure that as many veterinary students can learn about Australia through the AJWCEF.



**Toshimi Hirano** – Hello. I will be here to help you all when you come and visit us in Australia. I first saw a television program about the Moggill Koala Hospital in 1998 in Japan. Since then, I have been determined to do what I can for koalas, and it is now four years since I became a volunteer at the hospital. I was born and raised in Osaka, a huge, man-made metropolis where you could be forgiven for thinking that humans are the only animals on the planet. Since coming to Australia, however, I have had the chance to see for myself beautiful and proud koalas in the wild as they enjoy their life under the vast Australian sky, and this is something that you certainly cannot see in a zoo. I was struck by the fact that the habitat of people overlaps with that of animals and that we need to co-exist without excluding those animals. With your help, I want to do

what we can to ensure that the earth is a vibrant, healthy and well-balanced environment for all animals. This may seem an impossible task, but if we keep an eye on the objective and maintain our passion, we will find like-minded people with whom to move steadily forward, step by step.

### Let's work together!

Meetings and study groups are held for AJWCEF members (currently in Tokyo only).

Anyone who is interested can contact Yubi Kuroda ([y.kuroda@ajwcef.org](mailto:y.kuroda@ajwcef.org)) or

Mei Takahashi ([m.takahashi@ajwcef.org](mailto:m.takahashi@ajwcef.org)) for details.

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