

Members aid animals caught in summer's tragedy

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Animal lovers within Federation's ranks stepped in to assist creatures displaced by bushfires.

Nick the wombat was found at the edge of a fire ground without his mother and is being cared for by Donnalene Jones, a member of Monaro High School's Federation Workplace Committee, and her partner Megan.

"He arrived under-weight, with a huge number of ticks and an injured eye. He is now blind in that eye but otherwise is doing really well," Donnalene said.

Donnalene and Megan are members of the Snowy Mountains wildlife rescue group Looking After Our Kosciuszko Orphans and have raised and rehabilitated wombats and wallabies over the past five years. "They need feeding at all hours of the day and night," Donnalene said. "It's just like looking after a baby."

The couple took on long-term care of orphaned wildlife after first volunteering to assess the animals and housing them for 24 to 48 hours while a carer willing to look after them until they were ready for release was found. "There was more demand for carers and we wanted to teach our children about native animals," Donnalene said.



The fires also brought other fauna to their door, for short periods. They minded two other wombats, Happy and George, while their carers were busy fighting fires, plus their first two koalas. Greta was suffering from light burns to her hands and Hayley was suffering from dehydration. The koalas are now being cared for at the Australian National University, as their habitat has been annihilated.

"I'm totally devastated by the total loss of habitat. Unfortunately National Parks and Wildlife could only concentrate on corroboree frog and sugar glider habitats. We've lost so much," Donnalene said. "A teacher friend of ours went on a day walk in the Kosciuszko National Park and didn't see an insect, a snake, a bee, a lizard. Nothing."

The pair is mindful of animals trying to survive in the bush after the fires.

"Where we have permission from property owners my partner and I have set up watering systems, which need refilling every eight or nine days," Donnalene said. "We've also made food troughs for 'roo pellets." The projects have been made possible by donations of hardware and food.

Another of the many cases where Federation members assisted with animals during the crisis was Oak Flats High School's Fed Rep Peter Horsley caring for horses transferred to the school's land.

“As a school, we’re the hub of the community. People were suffering and we had the resources,” the science and agriculture head teacher said.

The school received inquiries following a post on the school’s Facebook page: “Our school farm has a spare paddock and we’re happy to provide a temporary home to livestock needing to be evacuated during the fire emergency on the South Coast. We have bore water available, but you would need to provide feed. However, our awesome staff are happy to do the feeding as they are there each day. Send us a message if we can help you!”

A student’s mare plus a public school teacher’s pony and gelding grazed the school’s land for a number of weeks and Peter facilitated visits by the owners. “They were very grateful,” Peter said.

Kerri Carr is a staff writer