



remains a valid indication of the attitudes of those who own wild animals as pets.”

## **NATIVE SPECIES NEGLECTED BY OWNERS**

Deborah Kerr, Chair of the Board of Directors of Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services Inc, is not surprised by the lack of understanding pet owners have of the native animals in their care.

“This has been proven to be true based on the number of animals we rescue that are clearly escaped or ‘released’ pets that owners don’t want anymore. We also get asked to take into care an animal that is not being cared for properly by its owner,” she said.

Sydney Wildlife is a charity operated entirely by volunteers and licensed by NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service to rescue, rehabilitate and release sick, injured and orphaned native animals and to educate the community, at all levels, about the need to protect native animals and to preserve their habitats.

An example of neglect/improper care involves a Silkback Dragon that had been burned by heat lamps. Silkbacks are similar to a Bearded Dragon but bred so it has very thin almost transparent skin which is quite sensitive, explained Kerr.

“We have been involved in a case where a petting zoo was investigated for neglect of the native wildlife in their care,” she said. “We often assist NSW Police or NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service with removing dead and/or dying reptiles from the owner’s home.”

Also, many reptile keepers do not have the appropriate licence, so Sydney Wildlife is often faced with the difficulty of legally rehoming the reptiles when the owners don’t want them anymore.

“We regularly rescue ‘escaped’ or ‘released’ ex-pet reptiles, or members of the public phone us asking to find a home for the pet they no longer want. This practice has increased over the last couple years and will increase many-fold if people are allowed to buy more species of native animals as pets (as per NSW Government’s proposal). We fully support the Wild4Life campaign,” said Kerr. “We see how poorly some pet owners treat their cats and dogs. I don’t think we should risk adding more species of native wildlife to that animals that people may keep as captive pets.”

## **CONCERNS FOR THREATENED AUSTRALIAN AVIAN SPECIES**

When it comes to birds, such as Rainbow Lorikeets and Cockatoos, the vast majority kept and bred in Australian aviculture are many generations distant from their wild cousins and are considered domesticated, explained Davis.

“The majority would have no chance of survival in the wild. This includes a wide range of both native Australian and exotic (non-native) species,” he said.

CCBFA has sat on a variety of government committees nationally, representing about 250 affiliated avicultural clubs across the country as well as tens of thousands of bird breeders. In 2017, CCBFA formed a threatened species working group of avicultural representatives nationally.

“We have grave concerns for many threatened native Australian avian species and have been lobbying the government to offer our assistance for many years,” said Davis. “Aviculture has an enormous untapped potential to assist with threatened species efforts. It has been difficult to engage government in Australia despite our efforts internationally.”

CCBFA actively opposes illegal take-from-the-wild and supports conservation of wild bird populations through a range of projects and initiatives both internationally and within Australia, said Davis.

“We are absolutely and universally opposed to smuggling of birds and eggs,” he said. “Anecdotally, there is some illegal import and export of captive bred eggs across a range of parrot species. We assume these eggs are largely new colour mutations which are of high value as such colour mutations often appear in countries other than whence they first appeared.”

Davis said having a small number of wildlife crime investigating officers nationally and in each state is insufficient and should be increased.

“We support legal trade in captive bred birds as a sensible and economical way to discourage illegal trade, particularly given the economic reality that state and federal governments will not finance sufficient compliance and enforcement efforts,” he said.

Davis said upgrading the endangered African (and Timneh) Grey parrot species to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix I on the surface appears to be to the advantage of the species; however, it has led to the closure of numerous breeding facilities that once supplied the pet trade.

“Hence creating a potential market for poaching in the species impoverished African habitat. Although CITES permits trade in captive bred birds, many countries do not,” he said.

## **PET STORES SELL SUITABLE PETS**

Fraser said the PIAA is also continuously reviewing and updating standards and guidelines as per legislative changes and the shift in societal expectations. PIAA’s *Standards and Guidelines for Best Practice Trading in Reptiles and Amphibians* does not permit member stores to trade or support the trade of rare and endangered species.

“PIAA does not support the keeping of native wildlife, such as wombats, kangaroos, bats and koalas, as they do not make great pets and belong in the wild,” he said.

PIAA stores sell pets that are suitable for their customer’s lifestyle, said Fraser.

“Native pets, such as budgerigars, cockatiels, bearded dragons and common pythons, that are sold in Australia are not



There are no wild animals sold as pets in Australia and in general, we do not support keeping birds sourced from the wild as pets