



# MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 12 November 2009

## **Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors – Australian Wildlife Hospital Celebrates One Year Anniversary**

It has been almost one year to the date when staff at Australia's newest and largest wildlife hospital officially celebrated the opening of their brand new facilities.

The Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors – Australian Wildlife Hospital will celebrate its one year anniversary on Steve Irwin Day, November 15, but not in the style that it saw when its doors were officially opened.

The opening in 2008 attracted over 150 guests, including VIP guests Terri, Bindi and Robert Irwin and Wildlife Warriors ambassadors The Veronicas, Khaliah Ali and Jamie Dunn.

This year, the anniversary will be just another day at the hospital where staff will be busy treating the average of 30 animals that come through the hospital's doors every single day, and caring for over 80 patients that are recovering from their injuries and illness within the hospital.

The entourage of 26 full time staff which includes veterinarians, vet nurses and admin staff, and over 90 volunteers, have already treated over 6,300 animals this year.

By the time the New Year ticks around, the number of patients treated in 2009 will be almost 40% more (average increase in patients since 2004) than what was treated in 2008.

"We have seen a steady increase in the number of patients we receive every year since the old hospital was opened in 2004," says Gail Gipp, General Manager who was there when the original hospital was opened, along with Dr Jon Hanger.

"The hospital is growing fast, and whilst that isn't necessarily a good thing, as it means that more and more wildlife out there are being injured, we are at least able to ensure that there is less suffering for the animal involved and some positive support for the person involved in the rescue of that animal."

During its one year of operation, the new hospital has seen over 700 koalas, over 2,500 birds and almost 300 freshwater and marine turtles.

The new hospital has seen a number of memorable patient stories, the most notable being Blair, a koala that has been admitted to the hospital a total of three times over the last year.

Blair's first visit to the hospital was the result of a dog attack in July 2008. Two months later, Blair was hit by a car, and a further six months down the track, Blair was struck again.

Blair suffered from a dislocated hip and is now receiving the best 24-hour care available from the staff at the hospital. They have high hopes he will be released back to the wild within weeks.

Future plans for the hospital include an upgrade of the current turtle rehabilitation pools to a full-blown turtle rehabilitation centre; and also the construction of a new raptor rehabilitation enclosure to house large-flight birds during their time in care at the hospital.

The construction of a raptor rehabilitation enclosure has been thrust into a near-future reality following a generous donation of \$58,000 by the Handley family to cover the costs of building.

"We will be forever grateful for this donation, which will allow the hospital to extend its care of raptors, without the need of sending them to the Gold Coast for rehabilitation," says Gail.

"It's incredibly caring people like the Handley family that enable the hospital to continue caring for all injured wildlife and hopefully returning them to the wild sooner rather than later."

The hospital also contributes towards the scientific community, performing research into wildlife diseases, including koala Chlamydia and the koala retrovirus (KoRV).

In September, Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors launched its Koala Crusaders campaign to raise much needed funds for the Australian Wildlife Hospital koala research fund.

To date, over \$25,500 has been raised through this campaign to go towards extensive research to accurately detail what is happening to the southeast Queensland koala population.

But Gail says more money is still needed in order to give us a better chance of saving koalas from extinction.

"It's a good start, and the Australian community, and even people internationally, are realising the devastation we could have on our hands if koalas were to become extinct," says Gail.

"Research and education are two of the key factors in saving this amazing species."

"The Australian Wildlife Hospital was inspired by Steve's mum Lyn Irwin. To help us carry on Steve's legacy for his mother, we are calling upon everyone to help us save one, save the species."

To register to fundraise for Steve Irwin Day or to donate to Wildlife Warriors and the Australian Wildlife Hospital, visit [www.wildlifewarriors.org.au](http://www.wildlifewarriors.org.au)

Call the Australian Wildlife Hospital on **1300 369 652** for all wildlife emergencies.

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**About Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors:**

Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors was established by Steve and Terri Irwin in 2002 who wanted to create a conservation organisation unlike any other. They wanted to involve other caring people to help with wildlife conservation around the world.

Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors conducts and works in partnership with a range of international wildlife conservation programs, helping to protect tigers, elephants, cheetah, whales, orangutans, Tasmanian devils and, our biggest project, the Australian Wildlife Hospital.

Australia Zoo is Wildlife Warriors' major sponsor and covers the administrative costs of the charity so that every dollar donated can be used entirely on life saving conservation projects. Our success relies on the support of the wider community.

Sign up as a Wildlife Warrior! Call us today on 1800 334 350 or visit [www.wildlifewarriors.org.au](http://www.wildlifewarriors.org.au)