

Wildcare's Winter Sleepovers

Wildcare makes every effort to rehabilitate and release injured and orphaned reptiles, snakes and turtles before the winter sets in, to give them a chance to settle down and find somewhere to hibernate. 'Greedy' (picture) is an eastern long necked turtle that was ready to go and was released in early autumn - back into the wild. Wildcare does not have permanent care animals, the idea is to rehabilitate and then release wildlife back into their habitat. But with the best will in the world, some animals have to be kept in care over winter.

Compared to outdoor living, Wildcare accommodation can be five-star. Lesley who is looking after two eastern long necked turtles said, "The turtles have cracked shells, which have been repaired in a particular way. The shells are growing back and healing. The turtles normally hibernate in winter, but these will be kept awake and won't be released until spring. However, with a two-metre long tank of warm filtered water to swim in and overhead lamps they will be in great comfort. On the menu are feeder fish to eat and chopped prawns every few days."

Wildcare rescues and cares for all injured or orphaned species and currently there is a brown snake in care. Wayne, the Wildcare Snake Coordinator, said "This injured brown snake was rescued in Yass several months ago and is still with us. He spends most of his time in a secure specially designed box. With a heat tile to lie on and the occasional mice to feed on - what better way to snooze through winter?" This snake is doing well, but timing was wrong for release prior to winter.

There are a few lizards too. A dog killed a blue tongue lizard, however Wildcare was able to save four live young from inside the mother's body. Belinda, Wildcare's Reptile Coordinator, said "They are too small to be released and will stay in care until spring. They started off at 14 grams and 10 centimetres, but are now much bigger. They are kept in a large, temperature-controlled tank with a hide, water dish and rocks to bask on under an overhead lamp. On the menu are meat, veggies and fruit! The litter was split up to help them all thrive and they should do well."

One thing to think about if we are tidying up around the yard and property is to be aware that there may be a reptile or snake slumbering under old tin or rocks and timber on the ground. Most dams will have a number of turtles loitering in the mud. Take care and if wildlife is disturbed contact Wildcare on 6299 1966 for advice.

With just a couple of weeks to the end of the financial year, how about donating to your local *Wildcare* and get a tax-deductible receipt – visit www.Wildcare.com.au to see how this can be done.

Photo caption: Greedy is released before winter sets in



Philip Machin
62383717