

Flood Affected Wildlife

Many native animals are displaced following extreme stormy weather events and floods. Flood water can inundate and destroy habitat, physically displacing animals and increasing competition for dry ground.

During the record setting 2022 floods across the North Coast of NSW, thousands of injured animals were taken in by wildlife hospitals and carers across the impacted region. The Agriculture and Animal Services hotline took over 1200 calls relating to injured wildlife, including possums, owls and snakes.

Figure 1: The Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital took in animals including freshwater turtles (like this *Emydura macquarii*), echidnas and birds which had been washed into the ocean, become water-logged or suffered generalised injuries as a result of the 2022 floods.



Animals can be injured both during and after a flood, with persistent moisture creating ideal conditions for parasites and softening skin, increasing the risk of cuts and abrasions which are then open to infection.

Supporting Injured Wildlife

If you come across displaced or injured wildlife, always seek advice from trained professionals such as private vets or wildlife carers.

Animals will be assessed and treated with a view to rehabilitation and return to their habitat wherever appropriate.

- Avoid feeding or giving water to the animal unless directed by wildlife carers or vets.
- Keep any domestic animals away from the wildlife.

It is recommended that you do not attempt to approach or handle any wildlife without first seeking advice from an experienced vet or wildlife carer.

Building Flood Resilient Habitats

You can help create flood resilient habitats for wildlife by planting native vegetation on your property. Contact your nearest Landcare group for support in planning species native to your area.

An important part of creating habitat for wildlife is the retention of dead wood and instream woody debris on your property to provide habitat for wildlife. Leave fallen timber in-situ – particularly any timber with hollows, as these can take

hundreds of years to form and are invaluable in both standing and fallen wood.

Figure 2: Species such as this Monitor Lizard (*Varanus spp*) utilize hollows for habitat.



Who to contact

During a natural disaster you can report injured wildlife to the Agriculture and Animal Services Hotline on 1800 814 647 (NB. this number is not active outside these times)

WIRES is Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation and can be contacted 365 days a year on 1300 094 737. <https://www.wires.org.au/>

Emergency wildlife contact organisations for the Far North Coast area can be found here:

<https://byronbaywildlifehospital.org/emergency-contacts>

For more information on helping wildlife during floods, visit:

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/research-and-publications/publications-search/helping-wildlife-during-floods>

<https://www.wires.org.au/wildlife-information/floods-and-wildlife-factsheet>

Local Land Services delivers on ground projects and works that improve habitat and conserves biodiversity. This improves landscape and species resilience to the impacts of natural disasters. To learn more about Local Land Services, visit www.lls.nsw.gov.au

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