



## AWMS POSITION STATEMENT Urban Wildlife

### Background

The Society believes that urban wildlife has become a significant management challenge as communities become more urbanised and cities expand and impact on wildlife habitat. With few exceptions, threatened species rarely benefit from such development, however, some more common and opportunistic species may flourish. Linked to this trend is the desire of many people living in cities to seek to conserve, restore and enhance habitat remnants that attract wildlife (particularly birds) and allow human interaction with it. Whilst the presence of wildlife often improves urban amenity, and meets the desire of many urbanised people to make contact with the environment, these activities can also provide an opportunity for improved education and understanding about broader conservation issues. Conversely, negative interactions between humans and urban wildlife may manifest themselves as health, safety, nuisance and economic conflicts that frequently have animal welfare implications as well as consume a disproportionate slice of wildlife management budgets.

### Focus

This position statement has been developed with the understanding that AWMS supports a scientific approach to wildlife management and the statement excludes care and rehabilitation of wildlife, and wildlife as pets. The focus of the statement is on issues associated with wild, endemic vertebrate fauna and does not include non-local indigenous and exotic species.

### Based on the above, THE AUSTRALASIAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT SOCIETY:

- RECOGNISES that very few urban wildlife species are ones where their conservation status is dependent on the future fortunes of their urban populations.
- ACKNOWLEDGES that, overall, the most important conservation role played by urban wildlife is its accessibility for shaping attitudes in both formal and informal community education programs (the human dimension).
- NOTES that modified habitats in urban areas present a number of hazards that have animal welfare implications.
- RECOGNISES that there may be subtle impacts on wildlife in urban areas that is only apparent after targeted research, for example, on breeding success.
- SUPPORTS the promotion of attitudes and actions which facilitate the development of urban environments that are suitable to sustain populations of native species through such strategies as cat and pesticide free areas, wildlife friendly fencing, and native plantings.
- Is CONCERNED that translocation is a mistaken panacea for dealing with problem wildlife in urban areas and is fraught with animal welfare implications that have been the subject of only limited research.
- PROMOTES a good understanding of the biology and ecology of urban wildlife species for informed decision-making, and research to compare the ecology of populations of wildlife species that occur in both urban and non-urban areas.
- EMPHASISES that support for urban wildlife should not be seen as a substitute for conservation of biological diversity within healthy functioning ecosystems in a comprehensive, adequate, representative and replicated reserve estate.

**ACCORDINGLY, AWMS RECOMMENDS THAT:**

1. As a general principle, the concept of LIVING WITH WILDLIFE be promoted in urban communities with an emphasis on the need to manage populations on the basis of the ecology and behaviour of the species concerned.
2. To achieve this:
  - clear urban wildlife management OBJECTIVES should be developed that address both the species' needs as well as the values, expectations, and actions of the local human community;
  - ecological DATA on the species concerned should be collected and analysed in a rigorous manner;
  - appropriate DATA on human attitudes and behaviour towards urban wildlife is also required;
  - management options and their consequences, as well as PREFERRED ACTIONS, should be developed,
  - targeted, timely and proactive AWARENESS and EDUCATIONAL programs that clearly identify the message, target audience and most efficient form of delivery require development to arm communities with strategies before problems occur, and
  - EVALUATION and REPORTING on the response/s to management action/s are required to determine the effectiveness of the action/s and provide an opportunity to learn from the successes and mistakes of others.
3. Actions that CONSUME SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES, are COSMETIC, or have potential animal ETHICS implications (eg translocation), be avoided when dealing with urban wildlife conflicts until research is conducted on specific situations and species, and results support review of this policy.
4. EUTHANASIA be considered an option for dealing with "problem" animals from a welfare and ecological perspective.
5. Community COMMITMENT to stringent controls, together with their rigorous enforcement, is a prerequisite for threatened species conservation in urban areas.
6. OPPORTUNITIES to support urban wildlife be sought at the commencement of urban planning processes when areas for reservation and corridors, together with offsets in the form of research support or other land for wildlife, can be most efficiently negotiated.

*This position statement reflects the content of cited papers and the opinions of the authors. While the views expressed in this position statement have been circulated for comment within the Society, they do not necessarily reflect the views of the AWMS committee or all AWMS members. AWMS makes no claim as to the accuracy of this document and any party using this information does so at their own risk.*