

FACT SHEET: Feeding wildlife does more harm than good

Although people enjoy feeding wildlife, like ducks and fish, in their local waterway or reserve it can actually be very damaging to the animal's health. Here is why:

- **Malnourishment** – Bread is like junk food for wildlife and it doesn't contain adequate nutritional value for the development of young wildlife, or the health of adult wildlife.
- **Sickness and disease** – Eating unnatural food means animals defecate often, leading to more bacteria and pathogens in the water, which can cause avian botulism and other diseases. Botulism can result in mass death of birds when rotting food causes too much bacteria in a water body.
- **Water quality** – As uneaten bread decays, it releases nutrients like phosphorus into the water, which reduces dissolved oxygen and leads to the growth of algae and aquatic weeds.
- **Behaviour problems** – Wildlife can become dependent on being fed by humans and forget how to forage for themselves. This is terrible for bringing up young, and can result in the animal's death if the hand-feeding stops. Overabundance of food can also lead to overcrowding, and sometimes aggressive behaviour toward humans.
- **Attracting pests** – Leaving leftover food lying around can attract rats, mice, flies and cockroaches.
- **They're protected** – All native animals are protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and it is illegal to 'harm' these animals.



For alternative ways to connect with wildlife and help conservation of our native animals there are many things you can do in your very own backyard:

- ✓ **Plant a native garden** – Native plants will attract native wildlife. Gardens with ground cover, understorey shrubs and trees are particularly good for native animals. For advice on attracting wildlife to your garden, see the information on 'Sustainable Gardening' on Camden Council's website.
- ✓ **Leaf litter** – Leave leaf litter in your garden as it will attract insects, vertebrates and lizards.
- ✓ **Tree hollows** – Leave safe dead trees and hollowed limbs of live trees as the hollows provide nesting sites for possums, birds and bats. Nest boxes can also provide substitute homes.
- ✓ **Ponds** – Native frogs love garden ponds and have been known to inhabit and raise their tadpoles in them.
- ✓ **Injured wildlife** – Call WIRES on 1300 094 737 if you find sick or injured animals.
- ✓ **Bushcare** – Become involved in Camden Council's Bushcare Program to assist conserving the reserves that native animals rely on for food and shelter.

Interacting with native wildlife can be great fun, and an excellent learning tool for kids, but it's very important that we don't interfere with their conservation.

For further information phone 4654 7777 or visit Camden Council's website www.camden.nsw.gov.au



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