WIRES

Animal Rescue Down Under

Intelligent communications help volunteers save injured animals

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> **Kyla Shelley** ▶ Marketing Manager, WIRES

When you find a sick, injured, or orphaned native animal anywhere in New South Wales, Australia, you call WIRES. The largest wildlife rescue service in the country, WIRES (Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service) is about to celebrate 30 years of animal rescue in 2015. In the last financial year WIRES received over 77,000 rescue calls to assist native animals!

To help as many animals as possible WIRES uses a network of volunteer rescuers and caregivers. In fact, WIRES has around 2,500 volunteers involved in the rescue, rehabilitation and release of animals across NSW. WIRES has developed a comprehensive animal database that records information on types of animals, injuries, fates, and locations for rescue and release.

Animal rescue, rehabilitation, and release are more than just a public service for the people at WIRES. It is truly a job born of passion. WIRES' mission is to actively rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife and inspire others to do the same. "We are deeply committed to improving outcomes for native animals. To be able to rescue more animals faster is one of many ways that we do this and our team all put their heart and soul into the work. It is truly a labor of love," says Leanne Taylor, CEO of WIRES.

(x) matters®

Challenges

Each time WIRES received a rescue call, a team member had to find an available volunteer based on the location, the animal, and the type of injury or situation. Depending on those and other variables, the rescuer might need specific training or experience. For virtually its entire existence, WIRES had to match the rescue to the volunteer manually, entering the rescue details into the system and then using a spreadsheet to contact appropriate volunteers, calling them one by one until they found a rescuer.

Response times used to vary considerably due to the volume of rescue calls, the location and the availability of volunteers. During the peak spring and summer seasons, WIRES receives up to 400 rescue calls a day and some calls can take hours to resolve. The number of rescue calls has risen sharply recently because of increased urbanization, sprawl, and a reduction in natural habitat – all of which have increased human-animal interaction.

Solution

To rescue animals faster by reducing the amount of manual work needed, WIRES implemented xMatters. With volunteers in the xMatters system, the rescue team can now contact available, qualified, local volunteers in an instant. All rescues also escalate automatically if not solved in set timeframes and there is no doubt that more rescues are being solved faster now than before. "Literally the first couple of rescues we sent out using the new system were solved in minutes," Shelley says.

Many volunteers, most of whom are not technology professionals, are using the xMatters mobile app in the field. They receive rescue requests through rich content messaging that makes the mobile app intuitive and easy to use, and they can respond to notifications easily through the app. Using push notifications instead of SMS means messages get through even if they are out of any wireless signal. Making notifications easier has helped encourage more volunteers to be involved – and that's good because WIRES is expecting to add up to 900 new volunteers in 2015.

Benefits

While response times used to vary by time of year and rescue specifics, WIRES now achieves more consistent response times. Since volunteers in the field use the xMatters app, text, and email, they can receive alerts and respond from anywhere. Rescue team members can also include custom messages so volunteers understand the specifics of each rescue situation before accepting.

The situation may require someone who is trained to handle venomous snakes or someone trained and vaccinated to handle flying-foxes. With the set-up of the new system WIRES can contact the right volunteers for all rescues across each species, including reptiles, raptors, macropods, wombats, birds and possums.

When WIRES replaces its rescue management system in 2015, it will integrate with xMatters and drive further automation, making rescues faster and easier – and ultimately saving more animals.

Animal rescue is an ongoing priority for WIRES, as is the long term protection and preservation of native Australian animals. As they gain more passionate volunteers, provide more wildlife training for wildlife rescuers and carers, provide more community wildlife education and improve their systems, WIRES can and will help more animals than ever before. For more information about WIRES visit them at http://www.wires.org.au

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