

Director's Report for 2016

2016 was our second year of operation here at the Leigh Valley Hawk and Owl Sanctuary and was even busier than our first with a hectic schedule of displays, some new birds and building work still to be completed. A brief outline of our activities for 2016 (and the first bit of 2017!) are outlined below.

Building infrastructure

The basic elements of the Sanctuary are housing for our birds and constructing these enclosures again took up much of my time this year. A new weathering ground for our trained falcons is now up and running, where they can spend time resting between free flying sessions. Some final work needs to be done on this to improve it aesthetically and increase its durability to adverse weather. Another enclosure completed is our falcon breeding building. This is mostly enclosed to ensure the birds have privacy and feel secure.



The new breeding enclosure constructed in 2016



Cleo the Peregrine relaxes after a flying session in the new weathering completed in 2016

Our Birds

In November 2015, we acquired our ninth, tenth and eleventh additions to the Sanctuary from as far afield as Queensland, the Northern Territory and Warragul. The new birds were (in order of arrival) Jedda - the female Nankeen Kestrel, Yarrum - the male Wedge-tailed Eagle, and Paolo - the male Peregrine Falcon (a bit of trivia for you – a male Peregrine is known as a '*tiercel*')

(see [Our Resident Birds](#) page on our website for photos and more information on each bird).

Rehabilitation of injured wild birds

The other arm of the Sanctuary is focused on rehabilitating, where possible, injured birds of prey. These birds usually come to us via members of the public, who have found the birds injured on their properties or elsewhere and contact us directly, from other wildlife carers or other organisations, such as Healesville Sanctuary. The following is the number and type of injured bird, who came through our Sanctuary in 2016. There were a total of 22 rehab cases representing nine species of diurnal raptor and one owl. Nine birds were successfully released back into the wild. Two birds from the 2016 season remain in care and one (a young Wedge-tailed Eagle that lost 2 toes and talons) was transferred to Healesville Sanctuary and subsequently to Moonlit Sanctuary where it will be retained in captivity.

Rehab cases	Type of bird
5	Wedge-tailed Eagle
4	Collared Sparrow-hawk
3	Peregrine Falcon
3	Australian Hobby
2	Nankeen Kestrel
1	Brown Goshawk
1	Brown Falcon
1	Southern Boobook Owl
1	Black-shouldered Kite
1	Black Kite
Total = 22	10 species

Educational Displays

From February - December 2016, we gave a total of 111 displays. Highlights included 2 shows per day at Sovereign Hill for the September school holiday period and multiple displays for the 'Happy Wanderers' Photographic group. The displays and contexts are outlined below.

<i>Target group</i>	<i>Display type</i>	<i>Number of displays</i>
Narmbool	Meet the Beaks	33
	Outstanding Owl Encounters	8
	Full Raptor Encounter	2
Ecolink	Meet the Beaks & Owls	6
Sovereign Hill	Bird of Prey shows	31
Kryal Castle	'A Kestrel for a Knave'	7
School Incursions	Meet the Beaks	7
Other organisations & community groups	Various tailored presentations	11
Private displays for public	Meet the Beaks	8
Total displays		113

Given that many of our displays were to public audiences at Sovereign Hill and a number of displays were at public venues, it is very difficult to estimate how many people were exposed to our birds and our environmental education messages, but it must be some thousands. We have received heart-warming feedback in the form of letters from some of the students from various schools, in particular. You can read a couple of them on our [Testimonials](#) page on our website.

The Director's More 'Personal' Statistics for 2016	
Number of talon wounds Martin received	6
Number that required a band aid	5
Number that required more than a band aid to treat	2
Number of peck wounds	3
Number of tantrums: (Martin not the birds)	230
Number of nanna naps	361

It should be mentioned at this point that none of our achievements could have been gained without the support of our incredible volunteers (please see our [Friends of the Sanctuary](#) page to see the amazing people who have contributed to the development and ongoing work at the Sanctuary). These contributions took the form of:

- Food provided for critters
- Physical support
- Materials and donations
- Time and energy
- Physical injuries and blood loss from grumpy birds

Special mention is needed for our regular volunteers, Elle Fox, Kate Vlcek, Molly Watchhorn and (welcoming) Bruce Tirrell who have brought great enthusiasm and energy to the Sanctuary. Thanks all!

Challenges ahead

In general

There are still quite a few challenges, which include continuing to create more infrastructure (at least 3 new smallish enclosures are planned), refurbishing our rehabilitation facilities and obtaining birds for breeding and then actually getting them to breed (see below)

Other challenges will include negotiating 'down' periods, marketing to schools to increase school incursions and increasing our team of flight ready birds for free flight shows... And, of course, maintaining a good standard of care for our birds and our own sanity.

But, 2017 will be an exciting year as we enter this next phase and expand our business more. We have shows booked for Kryal Castle over the Easter School Holiday period, at Narmbool throughout the year and our new partner Ecolink in Bacchus Marsh, so it looks like being a busy period.

Breeding

Unfortunately, our breeding program has hit a slight delay thanks to the sensibilities of our female Peregrine, Cleo. Cleo decided that she wanted to be a 'career falcon' not a mother and proceeded to display aggression towards the mate we provided for her. For his safety, she was removed from the breeding enclosure in January 2017. We are now seeking a

younger, calmer female Peregrine for Paolo. Breeding raptors is always a challenge, but we continue to plug away at this important project and have high hopes for the future!

Wishing everybody a prosperous, happy and safe 2017.

Martin Scuffins
Director
Leigh Valley Hawk & Owl Sanctuary



Eglantyne – Barn Owl in flight. Photo by David Whelan.