

Keeping wildlife wild

fact file

Keeping wildlife wild...

Getting outdoors and visiting a park is a great way to connect with nature, its a great opportunity to experience true nature and animal behaviours in an environment where they are undisturbed or changed by humans.

Viewing animals in the wild is encouraged in most parks however it is important to remember not to attempt to feed or touch wild animals, both for the health of people and the animals.

Remember keeping wildlife wild is critical for the health of our environment, our wild animals and park users.

Animals can feed themselves

There are many reasons why humans shouldn't feed wildlife:

Despite many of them trying to convince you otherwise, animals have their own diet of food which they find in the wild, they don't need to be fed by humans.

Many animals have specialised diets and the wrong foods can badly affect their health. For example, feeding Kangaroos and Wallabies human food can lead to mouth and jaw problems and long term problems feeding.

Feeding animals encourages them to associate people with food, as a result they often become dependent on humans for food. As a result animal populations around human visited areas become overcrowded with animals. This can lead to rapid disease spread,



inbreeding and fighting between animals.

Unnatural food sources such as campgrounds and car parks can cause increased wildlife populations that can be damaging to the environment. Some animals congregate around visitor carparks due to people feeding them. As well as being unhealthy this can cause car accidents and damage to cars that hit animals.

Wildlife can become pests, possums and quolls fed in camping grounds have learnt how to steal food and can damage expensive camping equipment while trying to get to your food.

As animals become more familiar with human interaction they can become aggressive and cause both themselves and/or humans injury.

Let nature be natural:

National parks are one of the few places where ecosystems can operate free from the influence of humans. Animals living in the wild have developed an ability to deal with weather conditions, control population numbers as well as their breeding patterns.

The Junior Ranger Way

Know before you go, respect parks and wildlife and leave no trace along your way, that's the Junior Ranger Way!

Feeding and interacting with wildlife not only disrupts these natural processes; it also reduces the chance for people to observe an animal behaving naturally in the wild.

Remember you can help prevent problems by:

Sadly wild animals are usually blamed when people are bitten or "attacked" as a result of an animal encounter. In actual fact in Victoria there are very few if any animals that attack or bite humans unless approached or provoked.

- Remember the bush is their home; you are visiting so keep a respectful distance and try to avoid disturbing them.
- Keep your distance, don't try and hug or pat wild animals.
- Dogs and other pets are not permitted in most major parks, if you have a pet with you remember to observe park regulations, control them and avoid interaction with wild animals.
- Never leave food unattended, even for a short time.
- Store food in a food locker or vehicle.
- Dispose of rubbish appropriately – unless bins are provided carry out what you carry in.
- Report wildlife problems or people feeding wildlife to a ranger.

Other Animals

Remember to use all of your senses to connect with nature, you may not notice but animal homes are all around you, logs, branches, shells, rocks, trees and holes provide homes for a variety of mammals, birds, insects and amphibians.

Dead logs and rocks are critical to the survival of many small animals, providing home and food to an enormous number of tiny living things. Insects and fungi are

often found in dead wood. They play an important role in nature, keeping the natural ecosystem functioning well.

To reduce the impact on animal homes, remember to leave rocks and logs as they are. When camping bring or use a fuel stove for cooking. If you are having a campfire, bring wood from home (or buy it from a petrol station) to minimize the amount you burn.

Remember respect parks and wildlife and only share your food with other people.

Want to Know More?

<http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au>

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>