

Bird rescue water off a duck's back

DAD NETS NINE DUCKLINGS STUCK AT CENTRE

Julia Rabar

A BROOD of ducklings stranded in the middle of Oakleigh was rescued by a passer-by armed with a butterfly net last month.

Yet wildlife experts have warned the circumstances of the rescue were rare, and as a rule people should avoid touching baby birds.

Oakleigh East dad Andrew Perry spotted a duck and nine ducklings trying to cross a busy road near the Centro underground carpark on Wednesday, September 17, about midday.

"Some cars were stopping as they saw them, but not everybody saw them so there were a lot of near misses," Dr Perry said.

Dr Perry managed to guide the birds along Portman St and away from traffic, but when they reached a gift shop they scattered and hid among the stock.

Shop staff gave Dr Perry a butterfly net, and with the help of an elderly man he managed to secure all but one duckling in a basket.

He was forced to dive under a table at a neighbouring cafe to rescue the escapee, which did not appear to faze diners.

"Nobody really stopped and questioned, 'why is this guy climbing under my table?' They just kept eating," Dr Perry said.

Three members of the Monash Pride Crew who happened to be passing by took charge of the ducklings, which were later released in Scotchmans Creek.



Andrew Perry, with son Ben, rescued ducklings that were stranded in central Oakleigh.

Picture: VALERIU CAMPAN

DID YOU KNOW

- Ducks often hatch their young in suburban backyards
- After a few days they will waddle up to 5km to a suitable park, creek or nature reserve
- Most of the time intervention is not required
- People are advised to keep their distance and keep pets and children away
- If you find ducklings in your pool, make sure they have a way to climb out, e.g. a branch or plank angled into the water, and turn off pumps and filters
- If you are concerned about abandoned chicks you can phone the Wildlife Victoria emergency number: [1300 094 535](tel:1300094535)

Monash Mayor Geoff Lake said it was fortuitous that the crew members happened to be there.

"It gave our staff members a real spring in their step to be able to help out in this way," Cr Lake said.

South Oakleigh Wildlife Shelter carer Michele Phillips agreed it was rare, but warned people to avoid approaching baby birds.

Ms Phillips said people often made the mistake of picking up baby birds that appeared to have fallen on the ground.

"Their parents actually put them on the ground to learn to forage," she said.

She said if people came across ducklings in danger, the best thing to do was to walk alongside them to a safe place, such as a park.

Wildlife Victoria chief executive Karen Masson urged people not to intervene if they saw ducks with their young.

In a wildlife emergency phone Wildlife Victoria on [1300 094 535](tel:1300094535), or the South Oakleigh Wildlife Shelter on [0411 600 591](tel:0411600591).