

SPCA® Kids

Kind Matters

News

Issue 24 / Dec 2022

Happy holidays from all SPCA staff and animals!

Another year has come to an end - a year full of helping animals in need get a second chance at the life they deserve.

We want to thank all of our pawesome supporters this year for fundraising, donating goods, fostering, making enrichment toys, spreading awareness, and for adopting. We couldn't continue our life-saving work without you!



In this issue of Kind Matters, we share our top festive season reminders for how you can help your animals stay safe, happy, and healthy - from avoiding dangerous foods, to keeping animals cool this summer - there's lots of important things to remember for this time of the year.

You'll also learn all about how you can continue to help animals, both companion and wild, over the summer months. Summer is a particularly busy time for SPCA so now is the perfect time to volunteer your time.

Plus, don't forget to read all about the tiny, rare bird that was voted Bird of the Year for 2022.

We hope you enjoy the last Kind Matters of 2022 - see you again in 2023!

What's Inside



Festive Season Reminders

Tips to remember for your companions this summer.



Helping Animals

Learn how to help companion animals and animals in the wild this summer!



Craft: Animal Ornament

Get creative with these fun animal ornaments!

and much more...



Visit [spca.nz/kids](https://www.spcanewzealand.org.nz/kids) for more animal information.



Festive Season Reminders

From holiday foods and beach adventures, to decorations and the summer sun - there are lots of things that pop up around this time of the year that are important for guardians to remember when it comes to animals. Check out SPCA's festive season reminders below for important tips and to learn about how you can keep animals safe, happy, and healthy:

Animals as gifts

Although it may seem like a great idea to surprise someone with a animal as a gift, welcoming an animal into the family is a big decision. Animals require years of time, money, and care, so it is important that the person receiving the animal is fully prepared for the commitment and that they are ready to provide that animal with everything they need to be happy and healthy.

Animal guardianship can be a wonderful experience and very rewarding, but only if everyone involved thinks through the decision very carefully. [These questions](#) can be a huge help when deciding if it's the right time to welcome a animal friend into your life.

Once everyone is ready for the responsibility, SPCA recommends adopting an animal from your local SPCA Centre or other reputable animal rescue - this gives animals in need a second chance at the life they deserve, allows rescues to help more animals in need, and helps with the companion animal overpopulation problem.



In the meantime, you can prepare by buying supplies and reading all about how to care for an animal on SPCA's Kids' Portal [here](#).



Dressing up animals

Dressing up animals in costumes has become a popular trend. However, this is often a negative experience for animals. Costumes can be uncomfortable, stressful, and can cause animals to overheat.

It's important to remember that animals are sentient - this means they have their own thoughts and feelings. As animal guardians, it's our responsibility to ensure we're not putting our animals in situations where they are unhappy, uncomfortable, or unsafe.

In some situations, clothing may be appropriate for your companion. For example, a coat to keep your dog warm in the winter. However, clothes that stop your dog from moving normally or restricts their legs, muzzle, ears, or tail should be avoided. Clothing should never stop your companion from eating, drinking, sleeping, or moving freely. If your dog is walking funny or showing signs of discomfort, you should remove the clothes immediately.

Alternatives to costumes can be festive collars, safe bows on collars, and/or comfortable bandanas. You can learn more [here](#).



Festive food safety

Did you know that the below list are some examples of human foods that are very dangerous for animals?

- › Chocolate
- › Onions and garlic
- › Bones
- › Grapes, sultanas, and raisins
- › Mushrooms
- › Avocado
- › Xylitol (sweetener)



If you think your companion has eaten something dangerous, an adult should call a veterinarian immediately. You can find a full list of dangerous foods that you should never give your companions [here.](#)



Decorations and animal safety



Decorating homes is a tradition that comes with some holidays. If you and your family are decorating your home and you have animals, there are some things you need to keep in mind so they stay safe.

- › Make sure your tree is safe and secure
- › Avoid toxic plants
- › Cover power cords and choose LED lights
- › Use safe ornaments made from plastic, wood, or paper
- › Monitor lit candles
- › Skip the tinsel to avoid accidental ingestion

You can find more info [here.](#)



Keeping animals cool

Just like us, animals feel the heat. It's important for animal guardians to remember to avoid situations in which their animals can overheat, and to provide their animals with plenty of water, shade, and opportunities to keep cool.

Cars can get extremely hot during the summer. Never leave your companion in the car on a hot day (this is very dangerous, even for short periods). Pavement and sand can also become dangerously hot during the day. It's best to exercise companions early in the morning or in the evening. Even then, don't overdo it with the exercise and ensure your companions are not in the sun for too long.



You can learn more summer safety tips [here.](#)



Helping Animals

The summer holidays are a great time to help animals - both companion and wild! There are heaps of ways you can get involved. Below are just some of the ways that you can help animals in need at your local SPCA Centre and protect wild animals in your community! You can learn more on [SPCA's Kids' Portal](#).

How You Can Help SPCA's Animals



Make toys

Enrichment toys allow animals to express their natural behaviours, an essential part of their welfare. Enrichment also helps prevent negative welfare by providing physical and mental stimulation.

There are heaps of fun enrichment items and toys on SPCA's Kids' Portal that you can make and donate to your local SPCA Centre.

Instructions can be found [here](#).



Collect and donate goods

Donating much needed items is a great way of helping the animals at you local SPCA.

Things you can collect:

- Canned pet food, particularly wet puppy or kitten food
- Old/clean towels, blankets, and sheets
- Newspapers (standard size only)
- Pre-loved large sports balls (soccer, rugby).
- Donations of money



Foster

Many of the animals that come into our SPCA Centres across the country need additional care, treatment, and socialisation before finding their new forever home.



Our volunteer foster families provide a temporary home for these animals and help them recover from surgery, give them medicine for an illness, or work with them to improve their behaviour.

You can learn more [here](#).

How You Can Help Wildlife



Help Fight Climate Change

Below are some ways you can help fight climate change:

- Encourage your family to walk or bike instead of using the car.
- Hang your clothes to dry instead of using a dryer.
- Limit your use of electronics.
- Unplug electronics when they are not in use.
- Turn off lights when they are not necessary.
- Conserve water.
- Reduce, reuse, recycle, and repurpose old items.



Get Gardening

Planting specific bird friendly trees, plants, and flowers is an effective, kind, and compassionate way to promote native species. Many native birds rely on nectar, fruit, and/or insects for the nutrients they need to be happy and healthy

You can plant species from the [urban, backyard, and garden flora list](#) or ask your local garden centre what the best plants are for your area. Just be sure that you do not plant too close to your windows to help prevent bird strike.



Organize a clean-up

We can all agree - rubbish does not belong in the wild!



Not only does rubbish pollute environments, but it can seriously harm wildlife. Animals can ingest, become tangled in, or be seriously injured by rubbish.

You can encourage your friends, family, and to come together to do a clean-up of your local forest, park, or beach!

You can learn more [here](#).

Bird of the Year 2022: Rock Wren - Pīwauwau



Each year, Forest and Bird run Bird of the Year – Te Manu Rongonui o te Tau, a competition that helps people learn all about New Zealand's wildlife and how we can all help protect both them and their habitats.

This year, one of New Zealand's smallest birds, the rock wren, or pīwauwau, has won the title!

Rock wrens can be found only in the mountains of the South Island of Aotearoa.

Male rock wrens have green, yellow, and grey-brown coloured feathers, while the females are more dull in colour.

Rock wrens are super small birds. So small, in fact, RNZ reports that they weigh about the same as a Mallow Puff biscuit - that's roughly only 16-20 grams!



*Photo from NZ Birds Online
© David Boyle*

Their small size isn't the only thing that makes rock wrens so interesting. Check out some of the incredible facts below:

> Rock wrens have super short tails, so short that it can look like they don't have one at all.

> Due to not being good fliers, rock wrens spend most of their time on the ground.

> Rock wrens are generally 10cm in length.

> Even when temperatures are freezing, a rock wren's nest can be toasty warm at 30 degrees.

> Rock wrens' relatively long legs and large feet are perfect hopping on rocks and for walking on snow - similar to snow shoes.

> Rock wrens live about 500-2500m up in the mountains.

> The main diet of rock wrens is insects. They also eat spiders and certain fruits.

> Rock wrens build complex nests.



*Photo from NZ Birds Online
© Craig McKenzie*

Rock wrens, along with the rifleman, are the only wrens still alive in Aotearoa. Unfortunately, rock wren are nationally endangered and need our help to ensure they do not become extinct. A big challenge rock wrens face is loss of habitat due to climate change.

You can help protect rock wrens by fighting climate change. Use the tips found on page 4 to get started!



Alpine Habitats

Pīwauwau are the only true alpine bird in New Zealand and can only be found in the mountains on the South Island of Aotearoa. These alps are examples of alpine habitats.



Alpine habitats (or mountains) are where many different animals live. The high altitudes (heights) of the mountains have created conditions where several different plants and animals have adapted to living.

Incredibly, both alpine animals and plants have developed amazing traits and characteristics that allow them to survive in the harsh alpine environments. Plants tend not to grow tall so that they can protect themselves from the intense winds, and some animals have developed dark colourings so that they can preserve their heat in the cold conditions.

You can learn more about Alpine Habitats and how you can help protect them and the animals that live there [here](#).

Craft: Animal Ornaments

Follow the directions below to make some awesome animal ornaments that you can hang in your window, on your tree, or on your wall!

- Materials needed:**
- > Needle & thread
 - > Craft felt
 - > Scissors
 - > Felt tip pen
 - > Hot glue or PVA
 - > Stuffing material
 - > Googly eyes or buttons



Instructions



1 Draw and cut out the above shapes from white and pink felt.



2 Glue the ear pieces together and glue them on one circle, along with a piece of string.



3 Place the other circle on top and sew the circles together around the edges.



4 Before you finish sewing, stuff a small amount of stuffing material between the two circles.



5 Finish sewing the circles together and tie the thread at the back to secure.



6 Glue on your rabbit's eyes and nose and you're done!

Have you adopted from SPCA? Tell us about it!

Email education@spca.nz with your story and a photo of the animal you adopted!



Let us know what you want to see in the 2023 issues of Kind Matters!

Email education@spca.nz

