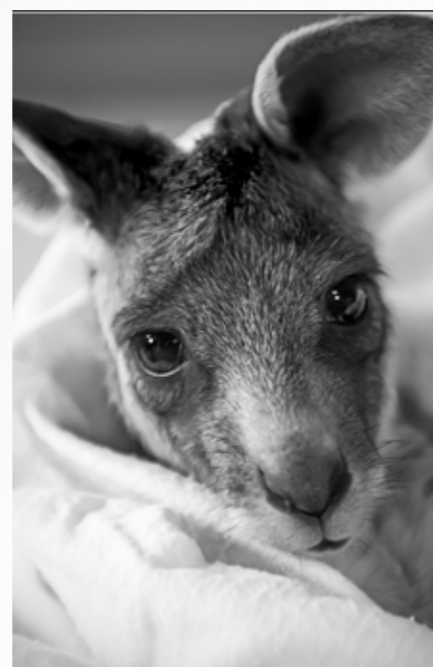


PHOTOGRAPHY

Second chances

Photographer Warren Wilson captured portraits of injured native wildlife in care, all while undergoing a recovery of his own.



Road to recovery.

Winston the flying fox was orphaned when his mother flew into powerlines. Anton, an eastern grey kangaroo, was rescued after his mother was hit by a car.



WHEN Warren Wilson retired in 2008, the last thing he expected was an abrupt halt to his plans, forced by a devastating health problem. For 42 years in the military – many as a

physical training instructor for the army – Warren had led a very active life. He and his wife lived in Sydney's Manly and were planning to follow their retirement dreams to a house in the bush at Jervis Bay. But all these plans were dashed when in 2009 Warren suffered a major stroke, leaving the right side of his body paralysed. He spent three months in hospital, and was finally discharged confined to a wheelchair.

Although the stroke had dealt a major blow to Warren, a new opportunity presented itself amid the resulting depression. He'd had a keen interest in photography, particularly wildlife photography, since his youth in the '60s, but his career meant he'd never had the chance to pursue it.

Following the stroke, he hit upon the idea of using photography as an aid in his recovery, both physically and mentally. "I wanted to make beautiful pictures – but I had to physically be able to do that," Warren says. "So my wife, Yolande, and I worked together very, very hard recovering the use of the right-hand side of my body, so that I could simply operate a bigger camera." Their hard work culminated in a trip to Africa, where he took a series of images that were later exhibited in Australia.

With his faith restored, Warren set about creating a new project – one that was inspired by a local newspaper article on Wildlife Rescue South Coast, which rehabilitates injured and orphaned wildlife. He began to capture portraits of animals in their care – animals that were helpless and totally dependent on their carers, much as he had been following the stroke. "You just look at them, and you think these little guys really do deserve a second chance," says Warren, who feels he can relate to some of what they are going through.

He says his most memorable portrait is that of a tiny eastern grey kangaroo (above). His mother was killed in a road accident, and 'Anton' was brought into care shortly afterwards. "The look on his face – so sad, and so dependent on a human being for his well-being. That's what [this series of photos] was all about I think," Warren says.

Warren's Rescued exhibition will be shown at the Arthouse Hotel in Sydney until 11 July, as part of the Head On Photographic Festival.

JESS TEIDEMAN

FIND more of Warren's images at: www.australian-geographic.com.au/issue126



Lucky escape. This southern boobook owl was picked up from the roadside after it was hit.