



MEDIA RELEASE

Raptor Keepers Train Army Cavalry to Handle Birds Of Prey

Teaching birds of prey to fly is not a skill most soldiers learn as part of their training, but it is all in a day's work for some members of the Army's 2nd Cavalry based at Darwin's Robertson Barracks.

Sergeant Courage, an adult male Wedge-tail Eagle, is the mascot for the 2nd Cavalry Regiment and with the help of Territory Wildlife Park Raptor keepers, some soldiers have been trained as bird handlers to resurrect Courage's parade career.

Territory Wildlife Park animal trainer Priscilla Leeson said the Park has formed a close partnership with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment over the years, teaching Courage's army handlers training techniques and general husbandry.

"Many of Courage's handlers have taken part in Raptor training at the Park with the assistance of our keepers," she said.

Ms Leeson said that Courage could be a 'rat bag' and have a bad attitude towards new handlers, while many of the birds at the Wildlife Park were easier to handle.

"Using some of our birds of prey for initial training helps new handlers establish an understanding of free flight training," she said.

Ms Leeson said during the 14 years Courage had been staying at the park, the 2nd Cavalry has helped the staff, to build some of the raptor enclosures and 2 new flight aviaries, which are near completion.

Courage's head handler and Trooper Daniel Whitfield-Jones of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment said Courage had not flown at parades for more than a year because no one in the regiment had enough experience to handle the eagle after his old handlers moved on from the Cavalry Regiment.

Trooper Whitfield-Jones said if courage is to fly at parades again 2nd Cavalry would have to start from square one to retrain the eagle with staff at the Park.

"Staff at the Territory Wildlife Park have a great deal of experience with teaching birds of prey to free fly so they can help us with developing the skills and confidence to handle our mascot," he said.

Trooper Whitfield-Jones said Courage's current stay at the park is the first time he has been allowed out of the quarantine area so he could be handled by the Raptor keepers.

"The keepers at the Wildlife Park are able to spend more time handling him and get him familiar with handling and flying again," he said.

He said the Territory Wildlife Park often baby-sits Courage while his handlers are on training exercises or deployed overseas.

The Eagle was adopted by 2nd Cavalry at six weeks of age from Taronga Park Zoo and will be 19-years-old in August.

The 2nd Cavalry was originally based in New South Wales, relocating to Robertson Barracks in 1993, with its mascot Corporal Courage in tow.

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Media Note – For more information contact Priscilla Leeson on 8988 7240 or Trooper Daniel Whitfield–Jones, c/o Major John McPherson on 8935 2019 or 0416 257 454.

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