

Rubbish choking wildlife

By **Cameron Lucadou-Wells**

A DEVICE as simple as a rubber band has become a regular choking hazard for wildlife in Monash waterways, says volunteer animal rescuer Michelle Phillips.

In the past two years, the Oakleigh South resident has cut free about six ducks that had rubber bands wedged in their beak and wrapped around their neck.

Last week, she and fellow rescuer Paul Hackett received several calls to save a duck that had ingested a rubber band in Melbourne's south-east.

"The band would have choked [it] eventually.

"It's so easy to throw [a rubber band] in a bin. It can do so much damage to animals and causes them

Rescuers sought to meet growing demand

to suffer unnecessarily," Ms Phillips said.

She said she freed wildlife several times a week from stray rubbish such as fishing lines and plastic bags.

"It's mainly birds that are caught because they forage on the ground and pick up things for their nest."

She's seen a bird with fishing line entangling its beak and preventing it from eating for a week.

"It had struggled to get it off after it became caught around its legs.

"The indentations on its gums were amazing.

"As it thrashes around, it gets more entangled."



Safe and well: A duck snared by a rubber band last week.

Ms Phillips said there was plenty of room for extra wildlife rescue helpers in Melbourne's south-east.

"I can't be in 10 places at once. I've worked 14 hours straight some days just feeding everything at home."

Her main patients are possums that have been injured by cats.

"So many problems start from people not locking up their cats at night.

"I've started taking records of the number of injuries caused by cats, and it's about three in five," Mrs Phillips said.

Anyone interested in helping as a wildlife rescuer can call Ms Phillips on 0411 600 591.