

Wombat Protection Society of Australia Ltd

Bulletin Number 10 - July 2007

This bulletin gives a summary of activities the society is involved in and invites members to join the interest groups associated with these.

Environmental Register

The Society received notification from the Environmental Register that it has been entered on the register and is now eligible to receive tax deductible donations. When the required authorisation codes are received from the Australian Taxation Office the website will be updated to include donations.

World Society For the Protection of Animals

The Society became a member of the World Society for the Protection of Animals.



Some of our members are individual member's of the World Society for the Protection of Animals and through their recommendation the Board accepted and approved the society's application for membership. To read more about this group visit their website at <http://www.wspa-international.org/>.

VOICELESS

Mange Information Project An expression of interest for funding the project, "Mange Can Be Stopped" to "Voiceless" resulted in an invitation to develop the proposal further. Members and Associate members are invited to join the working group. The proposal is to develop a booklet/DVD or similar media on mange in wombats and to showcase different methods available to eradicate it. The intention is that this resource be supplied to all organisations working with wombats and other relevant community groups to encourage the development of task specific groups to help eliminate mange. Be quick to get involved in the submission stage as the submission is due in by the 24th August.

Donations

We would like to thank the Furini Family for their kind donation of a G.P.S. navigation device. The device is to be used for mange mapping and monitoring and can be borrowed from the society for that purpose. Call or email research@wombatprotection.org.au.

We would also like to thank Lenore Taylor of Tanja NSW for her donation of the book “Wombats” edited by Wells and Pridmore to the society. We thank the Wynan family of NSW for their donation of the DVD “Ken’s Valley” to the society (see Joey’s pages for more).

Skills

Audit The Society employs voluntary staff and is undertaking a skills audit and available time register to develop working parties of members to work on particular projects. The idea is to work out what you enjoy doing, how much time you have on offer and let us know. Our job is then to work out how to use your generous offer. Remember you may have contacts with people who have special skills who may be willing to offer an hour or so to the society. The society has a backlog of work and needs the enthusiasm of members to inspire and collect around them others to do it!

Current Projects include;

1. Wombat Watching Project

This program was road trialed recently and received press coverage in the Triangle, a paper covering the region where wombat watching was held. There are interested farm owners/property owners for the overnight and weekend stay versions of this program available. We want an interest group to develop the means of implementing this program throughout wombat areas. This will tie into, as well as develop eco tourism. The Society wants to develop guidelines for how such tours are conducted. Done properly, this project will lead to invaluable information about the conditions for free living wombats in various regions and may become a way of monitoring mange and other problems for wombats. The opportunity to see a wombat living free is a rare experience. The lack of contact between people and wombats tends to disadvantage the wombat or create misleading stereotypes. This project also targets the need for farmers and others who have wombats on their properties to view them as an asset. The project aim is to target farms and regions where improving attitudes to wombats will help protect them.

2. Mange Eradication Project

The mange eradication program has completed a review of mange and potential treatments for wombats. These papers have been published on the web site and are undergoing a final edit. The research suggests that foxes are not the vector involved in distributing mange, that mange is not passed on by casual contact or even by burrow sharing but is passed on to any wombat using or visiting a burrow where a wombat with mange has died within the past three weeks and is passed by mother to joey. Mange is caused by a mite and is called scabies in humans. You can read the fifty pages of report on site www.wombatprotection.org.au for more information.

There are two directions in the next phase of this program, the first being the treatment of wombats with mange and the second the ongoing research that may lead to better methods of treatment . We have monitored member’s treatment of wombats with mange and have a wealth of material available to researchers. It would be useful if those of you who are actively treating wombats with mange put yourselves forward to be involved in the mange eradication interest group . We want to develop a simplified presentation of the information about mange and have links on site to relevant research for those wanting more information. Mange and how to treat it, ranks as one of the highest requests for information to the society. In addition,

the ongoing mange mapping project needs people interested in playing with Google maps and getting this information into an easy to follow format. This project collects information from people about where wombats are seen with mange.

Mange Case Studies (continuing a regular update of reports to the society regarding efficacious treatments of mange). A wombat treated with Cydectin rated as 75% manged (using modified Lee Skerrat (2001) scale) at Candelo N.S.W. was monitored over 8 weeks and was reported to have shed all keratinised skin (scabs) and was showing early stage hair regrowth.

Wombat at Brogo N.S.W. previously raised and released by a rehabilitation group had returned with mange on a number of previous occasions and was treated with both IVOMEC pour on and sulphur in oil a number of times. "Milly" was described as having scabs so thick in her ears they were completely blocked. Her body was scabbed and she was underweight. The release carer was contemplating euthanizing her. They report after one application of Cydectin six weeks later scabs falling off. Three months on from initial treatment they report the wombat is clear of scabs, ears clear and skin now normal, good hair regrowth and weight gain.

Reports from release sites where wombats return and are treated and able to be seen (and recognised) some time in the future are valuable. The difficulty in treating free living wombats is that you may never see them again. The apparent problem of released wombats returning to their carers with mange provides an opportunity to observe treatment efficacy.

The focus now is how to treat free living wombats, many of which suffer mange without being seen. The on site mange reports developed a scale of doing the least harm and using the least intrusive/ stressful means of treatment. A field trial ruled out the suggestion that all burrows in a given area be supplied with an organic treatment. Technology may aide this work.



Photo courtesy of Phil Borchard, a Phd candidate studying wombats and the riparian zone. Here, one of his subjects is caught in full scratch by his movement sensitive cameras!

3. Road Kill Prevention Project

Road kill has been responsible for a large amount of communication to the society. Deaths of wombats on roads cause many people to suffer. We are looking for people who would like to be part of an interest group to manage this work. It involves responding to reports of road kill (over the net or telephone, not physically attending) and advising the society where letters to relevant councils or RTA need to be sent. Driver education and monitoring road kill mitigation research are issues for this project.

The NRMA recently released insurance information that indicated after kangaroos, wombats were the most hit animal on Australian roads. As a result the NRMA ran publicity advising people how to use their cars' ABS system and how to practise this before needing to stop in a hurry. This information needs to be made broadly available. There is a myth amongst drivers that it is safer for them to hit an animal than to brake sharply or attempt to miss it. This group works in conjunction with such campaigns and develops other campaigns to reduce the number of wombats killed on our roads.

4. Fencing Design Project

A lot of society time is spent inspecting properties and advising on suitable fencing for wombats. This involves two different rationales - fencing wombats in for sanctuaries and pre release situations and fencing wombats out for agriculture reasons. The fencing designs are simple and a booklet on fencing for wombats is underway. This needs to be finished and more members for the existing working party would help this be achieved. Learning about fencing for wombats is simple and straightforward so members do not need prerequisite fencing experience for this group. This information is intended for wide distribution and members who feel confident to talk at Field Days or similar events may want to join in this group. The aim of this project is to reduce the friction between landowners and wombats by explaining wombat behaviour and providing means by which perceived problems can be managed.



5. What's In A Name Campaign

The move to change the name of *Vombatus ursinus* from "Common" to Bare-Nosed or at least one of its other commonly used names (Forest, Coarse-Haired) has raised a lot of interest. The society put up a voting issue on "envirotalk" a web based environmental forum to get input from the public . You can visit this forum at <http://www.envirotalk.com.au/>.

Members who haven't are welcome to respond directly to the society about this name change. The society received advice from Steve van Dyck, mammals curator at the museum of

Queensland that there is no set protocol for altering commonly used names of animals, unlike with scientific names. This means getting the name preferred out there and used. The rationale for the society's support of Bare-Nosed was canvassed previously in Bulletin 8. A Group to continue with this work to strategise how best to achieve this aim would work well at this point. The Society received only two objections to the suggested Bare-Nosed; one from a member and another from a member of the public. It was previously decided that this project would achieve the best outcome if the names offered were ones already listed as being in common use for *Vombatus ursinus*. These are common, forest, coarse-haired and bare-nosed.

Bulletin 8 had more details. The project is to remedy the false perception the word "common" creates.



Who are you calling bare-nosed?

5. Erosion Education Project

Wombats are killed on farms through ignorance based on the myth that wombats cause riparian zone erosion. An interest group to consolidate and develop information in this regard and to develop a brochure which can be used at field days and given to farmers and others is planned. The society has documented a number of sites where despite there being no wombats, severe erosion has occurred by cow tracks alone. It is also likely that cow track erosion creates the necessary invitation for a wombat burrow. There are examples where erosion mitigation work has led to wombat burrows being left and not causing any problems on properly cared for Riparian zones. A site inspection recently looked at the replacement of willows with native vegetation planting linked to a wild life corridor on a N.S.W. dairy farm. The river had risen higher in the weeks before the inspection than at any time in the previous ten years and there was no erosion because the plantings held burrow entrances together.

6. Speak Out Advocacy Project

The society is increasingly receiving reports of cruelty and illegal killing of wombats. Our policy is to support the reporter and provide them with advice and resources to have the matter addressed using all legal means despite believing that wombats are afforded little protection under current laws in Australia.

The society received a report of a licence to a landowner at Yowrie NSW to kill six wombats . The licence is legal . The society will follow through on each case and keep records of all matters reported to us. We were very disappointed to hear that two wombats were found killed, hit on their heads, on a property near to a release site again in NSW. The release site had become home to an already displaced wombat and she had to be moved again as a result of the potential risk to her. When the release site property owners went to take photographs the bodies had been removed. No evidence, no case. The society spoke of this case on ABC radio where following a conference on animal cruelty the ABC broadcast a talk back program on cruelty issues.

Cruelty issues are emotive, governed by time and place and perspective, cultural norms and legal precedents. The Society selectively publicises certain issues of cruelty wherein doing so it may help stop further cruelty.

A slightly different area of this work occurs when people are concerned about the living conditions of wombats or how someone or some organisation is managing their welfare. The Society would like to put together an interest group who would look creatively at how concerns can be addressed. The Society sponsors “no blame problem solving” and would want members of this interest group be interested in that approach to these issues.

The society wishes to maintain focus on the fact that by far the majority of wombats live on private land and efforts to reduce risk and protect these animals is a priority.

Research and Education Project

The Society would like to develop its library of books and documents and organise these in such a way that people can access them. There are many articles which need to be rewritten or made into power point presentations to be effectively used by schools, field days etc. There are a number of research projects being conducted which may have benefits to wombats. A member dedicated to maintaining contact with such projects and reporting back to the society would allow us to highlight work with wombats more effectively.

Corporate Governance

As the Society moves towards its first full year of operation (November 2007) a review of what the Society is achieving and where it needs management strategies in place to achieve outcomes is underway. We would like the advice and suggestions of members in building these strategies.

Company Structure

Wombats are the stakeholders or moral owners of the Wombat Protection Society. Their needs are interpreted by members and others and represented to the society. Methods to meet these needs are designed and conveyed back to members and others.

This process is summarised into stages; Wombats-needs/issues - members interpret - society's interest groups design solutions - board ensures solutions are constitutional and meet agreed protocols - solutions put back to members and the public - members and others apply solutions for wombats .

The board is made up of members and others chosen to handle specific areas of Corporate Governance. The board sets policy to ensures that the constitution and other relevant

protocols are used to guide decisions. The board follows the rule NIFO. Noses in, fingers out. The Board's focus is about corporate governance not day to day operations. In addition to the Board are the Public Trust Fund Members who monitor and approve the use of donations to the society. There are requirements set by ASIC for membership of the Public Trust Fund . Boards can meet in cyberspace and techniques to allow members from long distances to be involved in the Board or the Trust Board are available.

Technical and computer Wizardry Team

A "tech team" of those people interested in gadgets would be helpful. Technical questions range from what can we use to remotely view wombats in burrows to what is the best program to use to develop a member's forum and how can non computer folk be involved. Members of this group would enjoy a challenge and while not necessarily having all the answers, but would enjoy searching for them .

Emailed bulletins will include the survey on the cover email and postal copies will have it on the last page. Thank-you in advance for your help.

Member's Queries / Comments

Clare Davis sent this picture of an albino wombat. She writes that she has reared a number of these albino wombats over the years and wonders whether anyone else has come across albinos? Does anyone know whether they appear in all species of wombat?



Response of the Month

Following last Bulletin's comment that wombats don't do structural damage to houses, we received a few examples of exceptions. The favourite report was of a brick chimney watched slowly subsiding into a wombat's burrow. The cautious adjective "rarely" will be used in future. The mirth with which members reported such "rare exceptions" and the response speed after the bulletin was out to let us know was phenomenal.

In another query for the month; Charlotte Pole asks "Why would a wombat scratch/mark/scrape the surface soil next to a pellet feeding place backwards in a strip about 3 metres long? And then come back the next night to do it again close by, about 2 metres long? No poos. She writes " I've seen plenty of territory markers with surface scrapes and a poo, but

never anything like this! Looks like a plane overshot a runway! Any theories?" and "is there anywhere left where wild wombats are free of mange altogether? In NSW, VIC or TAS.?"?

JOEYS' NEWSPAGE

We received a fantastic DVD made by Jake and Jarred Wynan this month and we want to thank the boys and their mum for sending the Society a copy to keep. This DVD shows great love and affection between the boys and a collection of wombats living on their property. The family was soft releasing a wombat they had reared and during the process the boys became accepted by the free living wombats on their property and in particular a large male called Ken. The DVD, "Ken's Valley" is testimony to the patience and time the boys spent with the wombats to be accepted and ignored....mostly. The film contains some amazing scenes of Ken's behaviour and interactions which we suspect haven't been filmed previously. What shines out of the filming is the enthusiasm and joy that wombats generate and the respect and concern the boys have for them.

Our favourite intake occurs when Ken head butts the camera man who keeps filming and commentating as all dedicated camera men should. If you'd like to borrow the DVD contact the society. The boys earned themselves a society t-shirt for their efforts.

We were also very fortunate to receive a maze drawing from Eva Davis- Jones who receives a membership for her efforts. In her maze Eva has worked out a number of threats to wombats, like cars and dingos that have to be avoided as you help "Womb" the wombat go from burrow to grasslands.

Last time we had a picture of a burrow with some sticks leant on it. Your job was to guess which way the sticks fell if the wombat went in or came out? How did you go? If the wombat comes out the sticks fall in so the top of the sticks will be near the burrow entrance. If the wombat goes in the bottom of the sticks will be pushed into the entrance of the burrow and the tops will be further away. Some people use a piece of cardboard near the entrance to the burrow to see whether a wombat is living in it. One wombat we know didn't like sticks being put near their burrow entrance and they scratched the sticks right away...metres and metres away so there was no way of telling whether they came out or went in.

WOMBAT PROTECTION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA MEMBER SURVEY

Do you have any of the following-legal knowledge/ contacts, publishing experience, web site development, web sales, telephone skills, editing skills, research experience, ability to read, power point presentation production, graphic design, photography skills, card making skills, data entry skills, general office skills. Do you feel able to talk on radio or T.V. ? Do you write a good letter. Can you keep a group motivated? Can you type? Do you enjoy searching the web? Are you a student looking for research ideas or do you know of one. Can you make cards? Do you have photographs/information about wombats? Do you notice articles, media presentations. Can you draft letters/documents? Do you enjoy a chat on the phone?

Which of these projects interest you?

1. Mange Project Proposal

2. Allied organisations relations
3. Wombat Watching
4. Mange Eradication
5. Fencing / enclosures for Wombats
6. Road kill mitigation
7. What's in a name campaign
8. Erosion Education project
9. Cruelty / mistreatment forum
10. Research and Education library
11. Board Involvement
12. Public Trust Fund involvement
13. Technical Wizardry team

How much time do you have

How much time can you give?

A. 1-2 hours..... B. 2 to 5 hours..... C. more than 5 hours

X. Weekly..... Y.monthly..... Z. occasionally

Eg: You may be interested in doing one thing regularly, and being involved in another project occasionally. 4AX means someone wants to be involved in the mange project for up to two hours weekly while 10CZ indicates an interest in doing an occasional five hour block of time for the research/education project.

Your Name _____

Your choices _____

Are there skills would you like to utilise or learn?

Email to research@wombatprotection.org.au or mail copy to:

Wombat Protection Society
PO Box 6045
Quaama NSW 2550.