

WOMBAT PROTECTION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA BULLETIN 19  
April 2008

Welcome to Bulletin 19.

It has been a busy month for those members directly involved in wombat care throughout the country. The South Australian drought and the movement of mange into the Murraylands wombats in South Australia is a major concern. As in all states there are insufficient facilities and no co-ordinated programs to assist reduce the impact of this mite caused death for wombats. The Wombat, National Icon; Mange, International Disgrace cards will be put on site soon. You can download and send to politicians and anyone else you think may care. It is imperative that we educate the public that mange is killing wombats. The Wombat Awareness Organisation in South Australia has reported great success in reversing severe mange in wombats using weekly injections of ivermectin for four weeks followed by weekly injections of trisoprim (antibiotic) for another four. They also use a feed supplement. See the Wombat Awareness Organisation [www.wombatawareness.com](http://www.wombatawareness.com). This group is also trying to raise money for a dedicated wombat hospital and facility and already has hospital facilities for wombats. They mainly work with Southern Hairy Nosed wombat but have recently taken in a bare nosed wombat with mange from near the border. They were interested to note that this animal had a white flakey type of mange seen regularly in N.S.W. Hair loss with this is quite dramatic but the deep brown scabby parakeratotic plaques and fissures which are present in the mange they normally see on the Southern Hairy nosed wombat absent.

In N.S.W. members reported successful treatment achieved through weekly pour on cydectin for a period of 8 weeks. We have received mixed responses from people in N.S.W. who have treated free living wombats monthly with Cydectin. There is initially a

report of the condition not worsening after the first application, reversing or improving by the end of month two and improved ( crusting gone) but still bald in places by the end of month three.



Wombat Showing Scaly “white” mange, typical is large hair follicle loss without brown deep fissuring and scabs.



Photo Courtesy Pat Helmore

Often it seems that free living wombats feel better at this time and many observers report not seeing them for some time. Unfortunately when the same wombats are seen, often five or six months later, they are showing clinical signs of mange again. This suggests that not all

mites have been removed. The male mites and nymphs are external, clinging around the hair follicles. It is likely that five to six months on from removing the female mites from within the skin, the external nymphs have matured and bred and are now a reinfestation.

This suggests that working to eliminate mange in areas by some regular treatment of wombats may be the only way of ensuring a healthy wild population. We have heard of a successful area treatment program conducted on the border using roller bars and Cydectin and will cover this in more detail in future bulletins. Issues related to chemical impact on native animals need to be reviewed before any widespread programs are recommended and these need to be part of a broader research and monitoring process. At the current point in time, however, is that much like the facial tumour that has now wiped out 50% of the Tasmanian Devil population, by the time the general public are informed of a crisis it is often too late to do more than maintain a small number of the species. We have to decide whether, like with the Devils, we are satisfied to say that when there are only 115 left (Northern Hairy Nosed wombat), then we'll begin "saving wombats".

The young male bare nosed wombat featured previously in the Bulletin was found to have active mange mites on him. It had been queried whether his condition was a fungal infection due to him having previously a biopsy and deep skin scrapings fail to locate mites. Howard Ralph from N.S.W., one of our Honorary members was able to identify active mites in this case using very superficial skin scrapings taken with a safety razor. This case again confirms the recommendation that if it looks like mange whether mites are identified or otherwise, treat for mange mites first.

Historic reports of more wombats with mange being seen at the end of summer in the Gippsland area of Victoria 40 years ago correspond with a large number of reports from



Skin of bare nosed wombat after treatment with Cydectin pour on monthly. Photo courtesy Lesley Revell.

N.S.W. this month of very keratinised, emaciated wombats suffering late stage mange. Last year one of the Wombat Watching tours sighted healthy but young wombats in the Brogo area of N.S.W. This year there have been reports and sightings of severely manged wombats extending from Gulaga National Park right through the entire ridge line to Brogo and Wadbiliga including on the property adjacent to the Bush Heritage's Society's Brogo Wilderness conservation area and onto Eden. Victorian members also report mange throughout and extending into South Australia as the previous discussion indicated.

#### Mange Map

We are seeking someone to take over entering the mange sightings and comments onto a Google Map site the Society has created. This won't involve a great deal of time and the idea is to have this able to be accessed by members who can then make entries using their membership numbers. This map system allows you to go into great deal of written detail as well as flag an area right down to a specific property if that amount of detail is available. It begins with a map of Australia and you click on progressively smaller and smaller areas until you come down to the region, suburb, property or road you want to indicate. This mapping system will allow members across

Australia to begin to provide the only accurate monitoring of mange reports available. If you are interested in being the map co-ordinator for the Society, please let us know. This is an exciting project and one that someone who can't be hands on with wombats can run and by doing so, do them a great service.

## Rehabilitation for Adult Wombats

South Australian Wombat people were shocked to discover that N.S.W. has no facilities suitable for treating and rehabilitating adult wombats. They were even more amazed to find that groups in N.S.W. often need to euthanise wombats that are considered unreleasable, even if they have been raised from joey's. N.S.W. Parks and Wildlife reminded carer groups this month that native animals can only be kept in care for periods of 6 months. It is a specific attitude that dictates how wombats are cared for in each State. These attitudes get enshrined in Government Policy and become dominant. Wombats have been a resource commodity in the early part of settlement in Australia where they were shot for food and pelts and then a declared agricultural pests. Fortunately, in most areas of the country, attitudes to native animals are becoming the province of a broader range of concerned citizens and their influence over what happens and the rules and regulations government and its licensed groups work under will eventually change. It is totally irresponsible to insist that healthy mange free animals be released into areas where mange is prevalent, as an example. Equally, it is ethically unreasonable to then conclude that an animal should be euthanised because its habitat has been or is being jeopardised by human activity. That attitude is within the same ethical thought pattern as the attitude that allows native animals to be exterminated as pests. It could be the work of government departments concerned for native animal welfare to support and supply and ensure adequate and appropriate places for native animals to exist and to be working on ensuring animals within their lands receive the health care they need. This is not however the current

dominant paradigm and only through people expressing their views about what should be happening will change occur. Native animals are still "managed" in Australia as a resource rather than having any rights to exist. These animals are the responsibility of all, not only government departments.

Government policies and procedures are in need of review and input ; otherwise small existing coalitions, often with negative or unethical attitudes to native animals, become the dominant voice in dictating policy. Speak up.

### SANCTUARIES, HOSPITALS AND CARED FOR COMMUNITIES

One of the projects we will try and raise awareness and donations for is the provision of facilities to care for adult wombats. Part of the original aims of the Society was to provide a series of sanctuaries within 50 km of one another throughout the wombat regions of Australia. Sanctuaries will be defined differently in each state, in South Australia a Sanctuary is a non release site, where most Sanctuaries in N.S.W. due to the laws pertaining to keeping wombats captive require that there be a release site. The situation varies in Victoria and the completely different Department of Primary Industries Management of Zoos and Wildlife Parks provides different standards and rules as well. All this aside what we want to do is let the public donate to either planned centres or facilities or start to sponsor ones that the Society may contract to have built. These need to be networked to existing facilities allowing a range of options for the care of adult wombats requiring rehabilitation. Younger wombats going to pre release sites and sanctuaries will also be addressed in these endeavors but they usually have a group or person who is intensely involved in their long term plans. Sanctuaries or communities for free living wombats where their health is monitored and their welfare protected would also be eligible. In some cases this may mean working with existing groups such as land care and catchment authority or bush heritage and other

conservation groups as well as the broader animal welfare groups. We are currently looking at a "pay it on" scheme where the Society raises money and helps one group build a facility and they in turn then help the next group do the same. If you have already a project planned or want to develop this idea, please contact.

## Research

Jack Lighten is undertaking a PhD. on mites and we are attempting to support his work so he can study the background of the *scabiei* mite on wombats. While some research has been conducted it is limited and in some areas unproven. It is still not clear whether mites on wombats are of the primate or canine subspecies, whether they have genetically changed and whether wombats actually get infested by both. The term variety *wombatis* which implies the mites are genetically distinct is not a proven term and the adequate D.N.A. analysis has not been undertaken. The importance of this is that if effort and resources goes into vector control and the wrong vector is targeted, a great deal of time and resource will be wasted and still wombats will be dying. A proper understanding of the mite and certainly whether it has changed genetically will allow for better targeted treatment and perhaps alternatives such as vaccines. If you are aware of donors interested in supporting research we can approach them and send Jack's budget and proposal . We will also promote his work on the How You Can Help section of the site.

## Education

### Wombat Mania at Mangrove Mountain

Last Sunday saw wombat mania at Mangrove Mountain as wombat conservationists from all around the district – and beyond - met for the Fauna First Aid course, A Guide to the Care of Bare-Nosed Wombats.

Linda Dennis of Fauna First Aid and course co-presenter Shirley Lack hosted the full day course to 45 eager wombat enthusiasts from all corners of the wildlife community. The hugely successful event was attended by members of Native Animal Trust Fund, Wildlife Aid, Professional Australian Wildlife Services, Wildlife Wanderers Carers Group (Queensland), WIRES, Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers, Waratah Park, Habitat for Wildlife, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Cedar Creek Wombat Rescue, Brynmawr Wombat Rescue, Wildlife Arc and the Australia Wildlife Walkabout Park as well as caring members of the public who just want to learn more about our wonderful wombats.

*"I must congratulate you and all involved, in what must be called a very professionally, well organized and run informative course." Bruce Mulligan, Wildlife Aid.*

The day was made even more special with a guest appearance by Dr Anne Fowler – well respected Sydney wildlife vet - who presented an informative two hour session on the veterinary aspects of wombat care.

A Guide to the Care of Bare-Nosed Wombats is a road show - Shirley and Linda are prepared to travel anywhere to present the course. Dr Anne will also tag along when her busy schedule allows!

For more information on A Guide to the Care of Bare-Nosed Wombats please visit Fourth Crossing Wildlife at [www.fourthcrossingwildlife.com](http://www.fourthcrossingwildlife.com) or email Linda at [linda@fourthcrossingwildlife.com](mailto:linda@fourthcrossingwildlife.com)

On education, the Society previously asked for people interested in steering and belonging to various types of sub committees to let us know of their interest. These committees are being "restocked" currently and if you want to review your interest or did not let the Society know of it previously, please email . Shirley Lack of N.S.W.; Claire Davidson and Linda Sauvouron of Victoria



have offered to write information on rearing very small wombats and Linda Dennis of N.S.W. is interested in getting regular wombat education and training available to all groups and interested parties. We also want to develop a guest list of speakers for regular enquiries from schools, radio stations and community groups for talks about wombats. It is also important that the harder side of wombat education, material pitched to those who see them as a pest, and want them removed or exterminated be developed and a strong confident group of speakers able to work on solutions with people who feel that way about wombats is developed.

The minutes of the A.G.M. will be sent to all members as PDF files and to mail members as a print out. Would anyone nominated as a Director (not present at the AGM) who has not done so already reply in writing of their acceptance or otherwise, so formal announcements can be made.

#### NATIVE ANIMALS AND THE LAW

Laws in Australia are not adequate to protect or promote the wellbeing of native animals or to honor our role as stewards and guardians of native animals. Bulletins have given examples where 193 parishes in Victoria still allow wombats to be killed and the ease with which permits for multiple wombats to be shot are given to N.S.W. Farmers without any land inspection or wombat counts or alternatives offered. Community attitudes and information is the best way to bring pressure to bear on changing policy and all efforts to help, educate, provide options and work with other groups who may have complimentary aims and goals all help save wombats. Animal law and the training of legal students will have an impact and we commend the work of Brian Sherman and the Voiceless team in promoting this area of animal welfare.

Animal Law is scheduled to take centre stage in universities across Australia and New Zealand next month as the University of NSW/Voiceless Animal Law Lecture Series makes its 2008 debut.

Later this month, Raj Panjwani, one of India's foremost animal advocates, will present a series of public lectures addressing some of the big issues facing legal advocates for animals and the status of animal protection in India.

Mr Panjwani has over 25 years experience in the High and Supreme Courts of India where his work has changed the lives of countless animals from tigers to turtles to buffalo.

Please visit the Voiceless website for more information. By clicking the "Lecture Series" button on the homepage, [www.voiceless.org.au](http://www.voiceless.org.au), you will find details of Mr Panjwani's speaking schedule and answers to frequently asked questions. Be sure to check out if Mr Panjwani is speaking at a university near you and don't forget to SAVE THE DATE!

To RSVP, please email your full name and contact details to [events@voiceless.org.au](mailto:events@voiceless.org.au)

Finally a reminder that the N.A.R.G. group in N.S.W. Is hosting a day to look at issues and options involving wombats and particularly the idea of sanctaries and cared for communities of wombats. Everyone is welcome to attend and to input and as mentioned in the last Bulletin if you as a Society member cannot attend and would like your viewpoint put forward, contact us and we'll ensure it is included. May 17<sup>th</sup> at the Serviceman's Club Braidwood N.S.W. . Please contact Phil and Lesley Machin [machin4@bigpond.com](mailto:machin4@bigpond.com) for bookings.

## Joey's Page



How many words can you make from the letters in the word WOMBAT.?

Arrange the letters in the word wombat in alphabetical order. Write a sentence using each letter to begin a word.

### A Letter from A Wombat

My name is Watson and I am a wombat. I'm not one of your fat, bumbling , scratchy, lazy type wombats. I am a super charged gumboot eating, knee chewing, chase and climb wombat. I keep myself in good condition rounding up the gumboots.

Some gumboots don't move very fast. I jump at them as soon as I see them move. Sometimes they move very fast. But I always catch them.

Let me tell you about how the world looks to me. Take your hand and put the palm of it on your nose. Notice how you just see a bit out each side of your eyes? Notice how there is a bit missing in the middle? Well that is how things look to me. To make it more real now you need to do the same thing laying on the ground looking straight ahead. The way my eyes work is very different to the way your eyes work .I've only got a small area where I see roughly level with the top of my eyes. Now add this to the gap in the middle and me being on the ground and you can see we don't see things the same way.

Now you've practised seeing like a wombat, you can get off the ground and you can try something else. Put your

palm on your nose again and hold your other hand against it at a right angle. Can't see your other hand can you ? Now move your other hand back and forth. Did you see what happened? The moving hand becomes very obvious and that's what happens with gum boots.

If the gumboots keep still it is hard for me to see them, but when they move it is very easy. Things have to be pretty close and move for me to really see and that's why some of my mates get killed on the road. By the time something moves near me close enough to see I have to run off or run at it.

I don't even use my eyesight for getting around, I use smell. I do scats (poohs) and wees on sticks and stones and logs and doorways and gumboots if they are laying around. That's how I know where I'm going and where I've been.

At my place I do a scat on top of my burrow, on the gateway coming out of my yard, on the gateway going into the gumboot's yard, on the verandah downstairs, on the ramp upstairs, near the log near the garden, on the stone near the hollow log and on the retaining wall near the tap. I do a scat near the waterbowl and if anything is moved from where I inspected the night before, I'll do a few scats on that too. I forgot, I also do one on the step and one on the stone near the bird bath. Three along the track going to the bush and in the bush I mark stones, logs, and every new path. So I'm very busy at night and know my way around very well.

Someone once said nothing eats wombat scats but that is a nonsense. The Australian Museum identified a moth that uses scats and where I live within 24 hours my scats are being eaten by little black beetles and within 48 are "exploded" and softened. So I have to keep working very hard to keep knowing where I'm going.

So next time you see a wombat, think about how differently he is seeing you. And, if he poohs near you, it's a compliment, he will be coming back your way soon.



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