

## New Look Website

The Society's Website is set to change in the coming months. Steve Cole has accepted the challenge to convert the site. As the Society has grown the amount of information and action that runs through the site has increased. Members and members of the public will be able to complete more things on line, access links and apply, update membership, manage reports and maps using simple on line forms. As this work progresses you can help by reporting material needing changes.



## News From Girraween National Park Queensland

Hi, I'm a Queensland national park ranger at Girraween National Park which, in case you don't already know, is also home to the most northern population of common or bare nosed wombats.

For over a decade I have studied and kept a close eye on Girraween's elusive and not so common wombats. Since 2005, with the help of other Girraween staff and more than 40 volunteers, 380 burrows have been surveyed and monitored for activity twice-yearly. More recently, I have used motion sensor infrared



Illustration 1: Girraween wombat 20 years ago

camera systems to record amazing video of the secretive ways of our elusive wombats, which, up until now, have been a mystery. I am extremely interested in attending the conference, but my enquiry is to ascertain if you would be interested in me giving a short presentation on our findings thus far. While my intention for the footage is to lead us to bigger and better and more in depth studies, it could be very entertaining and informative for your audience.

Please let me know if you are interested and would like to discuss this further.

Regards Jolene McLellan

GIRRAWEE NATIONAL PARK.

The 11,800 hectare Girraween National Park in Queensland, is home to a remnant population of bare nosed wombats. In her 14 years there, Jo has only recently seen wombats as movement activated cameras were installed in the last 18 months. Jo believes that one burrow has seen 21 different wombats use the burrow.

Jo believes the wombats have mange but said "its not like what they get in the Southern States" .She believes it doesn't spread, she uses their "patches" to identify them. We discussed how unusual this would be, to have wombats develop clinical signs of mange but for it to not develop and hoped perhaps digitalisation maybe making the wombats appear mangey. We asked for some photographs, and



*Illustration 2: Girraween wombat today showing signs of mange*

sadly, the one sent confirms this is indeed mange. If Jo is correct about mange not spreading something quite different to the Southern States experience is happening at Girraween. Jo will try and monitor humidity. Jo has used the cameras to assist the protection status of the wombats; recently they had to make the case for this group to be maintained as having a more protected status. (Near threatened/ rare). We discussed predation/ harm, the park is away from roads and foxes, while present have not been found to have wombat in their gut. Jo will be attending the Wombat Conference and able to present material about this group.

### **Mange Treatment Programs**

It is wonderful to hear from so many people successfully treating wombats with mange throughout Australia. In NSW a group of members want to pursue treatment programs further because in that State some wildlife groups do not treat wombats with mange.

### **NSW Meeting**

NSW members are invited to a meeting to be held at Braidwood Services Club at 11.00am on Friday October 8<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Society supporting a Scientific License Application in that State to treat wombats with mange and run a number of preventative programs.

In NSW what was once the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and is now the Department of Environment Climate Change and Water, (DECCW) , licenses groups to hold and rehabilitate native animals. In NSW a variety of groups exist, some like NANA and WIRES have groups in different areas and others like LAOKA and Sydney Wildlife have always been area specific. In some areas like Far South Coast and

Kangaroo Valley two groups, NANA and WIRES overlap. NSW has been geographically divided up into areas by DECCW where current policy requires people to join the group that "holds" the area in which they live. DECCW doesn't want people from outside the area group working with native animals in any other than their own assigned area. There are a number of positives to this approach; people know who is doing what in an area, native animals are released back into their areas and local people get a say in how their local wildlife group runs. However, many NSW members and members of the public believe this arrangement is counterproductive to assisting wombats, and in particular, assisting wombats with mange. There are not enough members in wildlife groups to manage the rescue work they do already, let alone having enough members to do proactive or preventative work. To date, none of the other environmental groups using volunteers are able to do this work. The Society is assisting a group of NSW members to apply for a Scientific License which could enable existing and new treatment programs being licensed. This may lead to a range of treatment options becoming standard practice. It may also overcome major problems with wildlife groups in some areas being unable to assist wombats with mange or being unable to assist larger wombats or assist manage problems on farms.

There is no doubt that members of the public are both distressed and upset when they discover no- one in their area does anything about mange in wombats, other than send out shooters out to euthanise. Many of those who have the unenviable task of shooting these wombats are deservedly frustrated that this will not end until more is done.

We found this guy just inside the main gate of cedars cottages in kangaroo valley at 4pm today. We suspect he was dying but there may be more. Please help.



*Illustration 3: James French visiting holiday cottages at Kangaroo Valley NSW was distressed to see this wombat .*

Members of the public have immense compassion for injured wildlife but current NSW laws do not allow them to help unless they belong to one of the licensed wildlife groups, (though it is possible that people not belonging to such groups could be authorised by a veterinarian to assist). The benefit of being a member of a wildlife rescue group in NSW is insurance. Members of the public, whether acting under veterinarian advice or otherwise aren't insured should they harm themselves while undertaking this work. Many of them are highly skilled in working with animals and certainly the majority would be able to follow the simple treatment strategies that the members have pioneered in treating mange in wombat populations. Many are farmers who regularly dose and treat their stock and many are more than willing to "do anything" to stop seeing the pitiful state wombats are in. Many, as one NSW member pointed out, have better chemical handling knowledge and skills than many wildlife group members. So there is a big resource in the community which needs to be activated to really have impact in NSW. Additionally, to belong to existing wildlife groups you need to live in their area as a general rule. This rules out people who reside elsewhere or interstate getting involved with treatment programs and is preventing treatment programs occurring in areas where the local group doesn't undertake this work. It is losing NSW invaluable resources and inputs to assist its wombats as this letter reporting mange in Kangaroo Valley NSW indicates.

Please find attached my completed mapping form with records for three animals I observed closely last week in Kangaroo Valley. All animals appeared to be adults.

I am a wildlife researcher at the University of Queensland working on the ecology of wild koalas using GPS tracking collars. I was visiting some family in Kangaroo Valley last week when I saw the recorded wombats grazing in the adjacent paddock. As noted, two were affected by mange (which I knew nothing of, but have since done a lot of reading about). I was appalled at the state of these two poor animals and was very pleased to find your website and the document named 'Mange Can Be Stopped'. I desperately want to assist these animals and so am seeking your advice.

Your document states that the WPSA supplies pre-measured Cydectin<sup>1</sup> containers to treat scabies-infested wombats. Am I able to purchase some of these kits? The document also states that you have a list of people experienced in working with free-living wombats. I would be very grateful to be put in contact with someone suitable. While I am very familiar with catching, restraining and handling various marsupials (incl the wombats closest rellie!) I would like to receive some advice on the best way to try and apply the treatment to the affected wombats. I was able to get close to the animals and am sure I could get a net over them (as in one of your pictures) but perhaps this is not the nicest way to apply the treatment for the wombats.

Do I require permits (ethics or National Parks) to do what I am proposing? All advice is greatly appreciated.

Many thanks for your assistance. I will also be joining the Society – you are doing great work.

Kind regards  
Sean

Dr Sean FitzGibbon Wildlife Researcher Koala Ecology Group  
School of Biological Sciences The University of Queensland St Lucia QLD 4072.

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<sup>1</sup> At one point premeasured syringes containing donated Cydectin were available to wildlife carers to assist treatments.

## Statistics

A researcher is interested in ascertaining the number of wombats released each year in NSW and the Society is generally interested in this question across States.

## Members' Letters

Dwight and Alla from USA recently joined the Society, following them contacting the Society as they were finding it difficult to see wombats when visiting Australia. As overseas visitors they had been taken on a tour only to see a road killed wombat. Members with release sites were asked if they could help and Ray and Marie Wynan were kind enough to do so. Ray and Marie's home sits in the middle of wombat country and they monitor burrows so have intimate knowledge of their free living wombat population.

Thanks very much. We are happy to become members of the Wombat Protection Society. I ,personally, want to thank you for all your help and efforts while we were searching for wombats in Australia this last February and March! Your assistance proved to be invaluable to us while in your country. We had an unforgettable wombat experience at Ray and Marie Wynan's place. We were and are amazed at the warmth and hospitality we received there. I tell you-----all of you, that what it is you are doing is nothing short of a blessing both to own selves and your country! Taking care of these "divine" creatures is a necessity; not only for species itself but also Australia. You all should be commended. It is interesting to note that organizations such as this one are "seemingly" of little interest or even ignored. For example, we are members also of the Wombat Foundation. We found out this year that there are only 52 members in it, two of which are supposedly foreigners,us! And they need a minimum of 50 in order to be recognized by the Australian government. Therefore, I am glad that we can "do" something to promote and prolong these animals . Again, thank you for your help and assistance; I hope we can return the favor! Dwight and Alla Dahl.

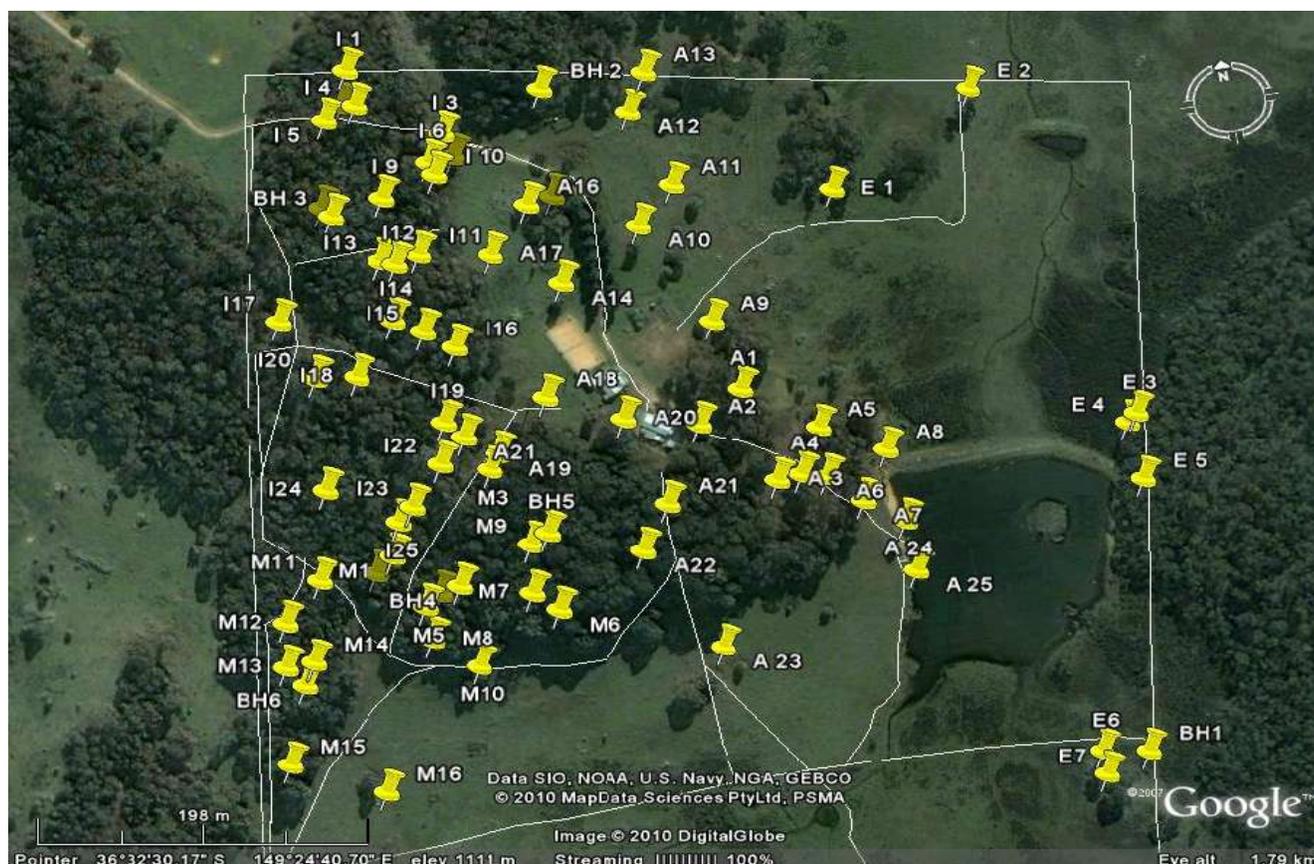


Illustration 4: Edala, the Wynans' property with burrows marked, movement activated photography will assist them monitor their use by wombats.

Following the NSW State of the Wombat reply which suggested that Southern Hairy Nosed wombats could still be found in NSW (see Bulletin 32); one of our wittier members wrote; Read a story in today's Daily Telegraph -it had a photo of a wallaby with a bottle, it went on to interview a carer who said that in one area of Sydney 30 Hairy-nosed wombats had been killed on the same road!. I think I will contact the Journo to see if he can get some photo's of these dead 'Hairy-nosed wombats, must be the same ones that DECCW know about.

**Volunteer Available** [alpz62@hotmail.com](mailto:alpz62@hotmail.com)

Hello !!

My name is Alejandra, I am 18 years old and contacting you from Mexico. I was interested in your organization because I am planning to spend my gap year (or maybe 6 months) taking care of animals and look for their welfare, after finishing high school in 2011, before I go to University in Melbourne. I will really appreciate if you contact me and tell me if it is possible for me to work taking care of wombats as a volunteer with you, although maybe just be provided of food and house?

Thank you so much for your time and I will wait for your answer. Sincerely Ale.

**Six Months at the Burrow**

It is 8.30am on a cool but sunny August morning. Roos scatter as the ground



*Illustration 5: One ear ,the mum, and her fat joey outside their burrow.*

crunches. The remote camera has been monitoring the burrow now for three days. I blunder down through the bush, head down, avoiding sticks and logs, checking for scats. When I finally look up towards the log on which the camera was placed I am disappointed. The camera lens points upward, probably, I think, having taken hundreds of picture of moving branches and blue sky. A large stringy lies across the path as I approach I see a dark wombat. Then another. A big mottled silvery grey one. What are they doing? Why are they out at this time? Why is the camera not where you want it, when you want it?

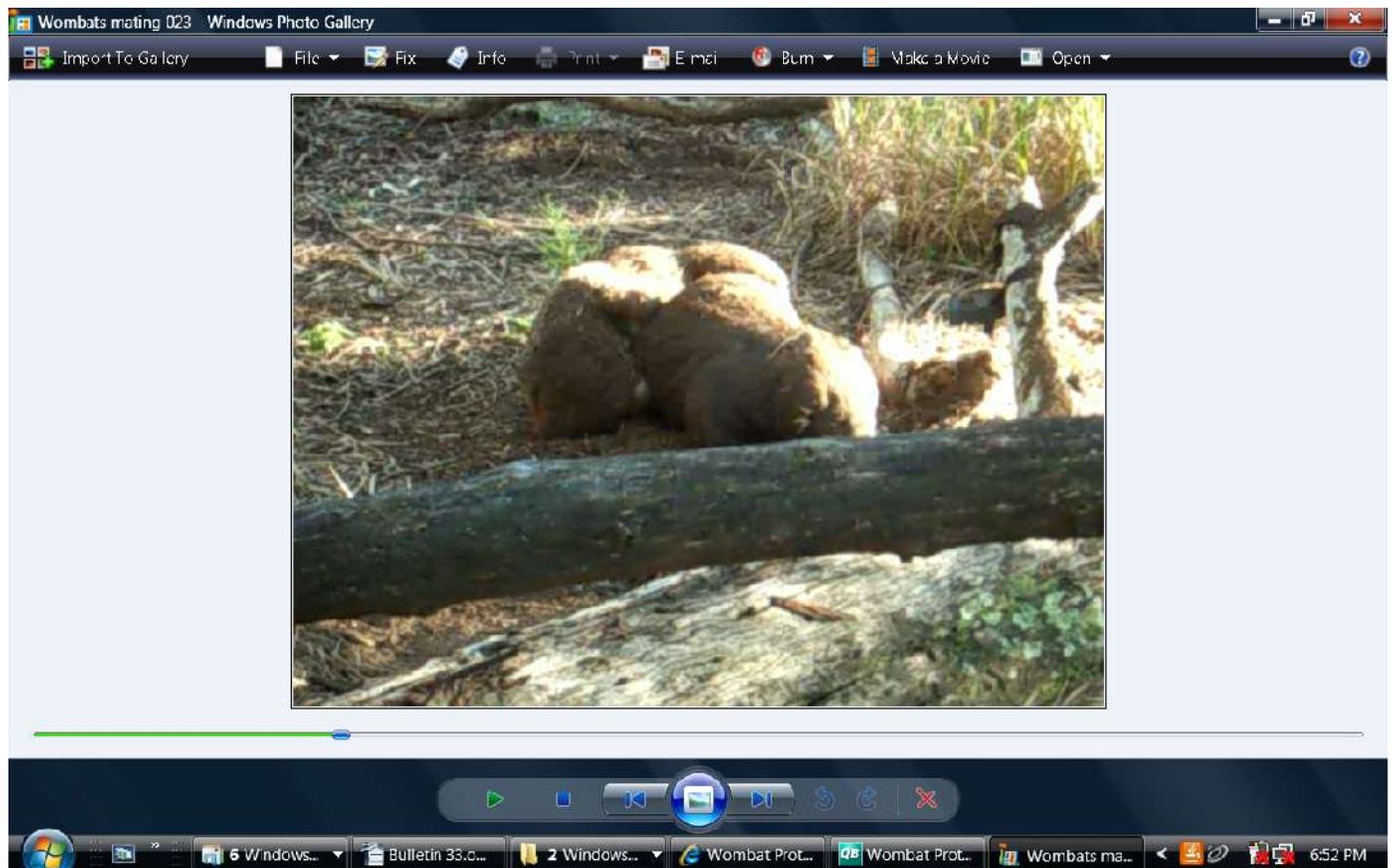


*Illustration 6: Dad nosing around before entering the burrow*

I stop breathing. I stand about three metres from the stringy and watch as a clod of dirt lands on the remote camera lens. At least that will end the shots of trees and sky. The big silvery wombat is flicking dirt out of a shallow furrow near the stringy on which the camera hangs. Pffff, another spray of dirt lands on the camera. The silvery wombat approaches the dark one, there is no sound other than birds, none of the slickery chickering and hannibal lectre sounds involved in a wombat disagreement. And that is because these two are making love, not war.

I am torn between remaining here galvanised to the scene unfolding and my desire to document this amazing sight. I recall with envy the few occasions where people have described seeing this, usually from long distances and often by remote camera only. I am rapt, I am honored, but I am also determined to be able to share what I get to know about. I make the decision to make a run for the house and get a hand held camera. I'm old and slow but I manage to do the half kilometre and grab a small digital camera. I am quieter on my return and relieved that the action is still going on when I get back. I start shooting on movie. I start from my original spot about three metres back but as the wombats are totally engrossed in their activity I advance cautiously. I am on one side of the stringy and they are on the other. I can smell them, I'm so close. That rich, composty bush smell of wombat. It is like nothing else.

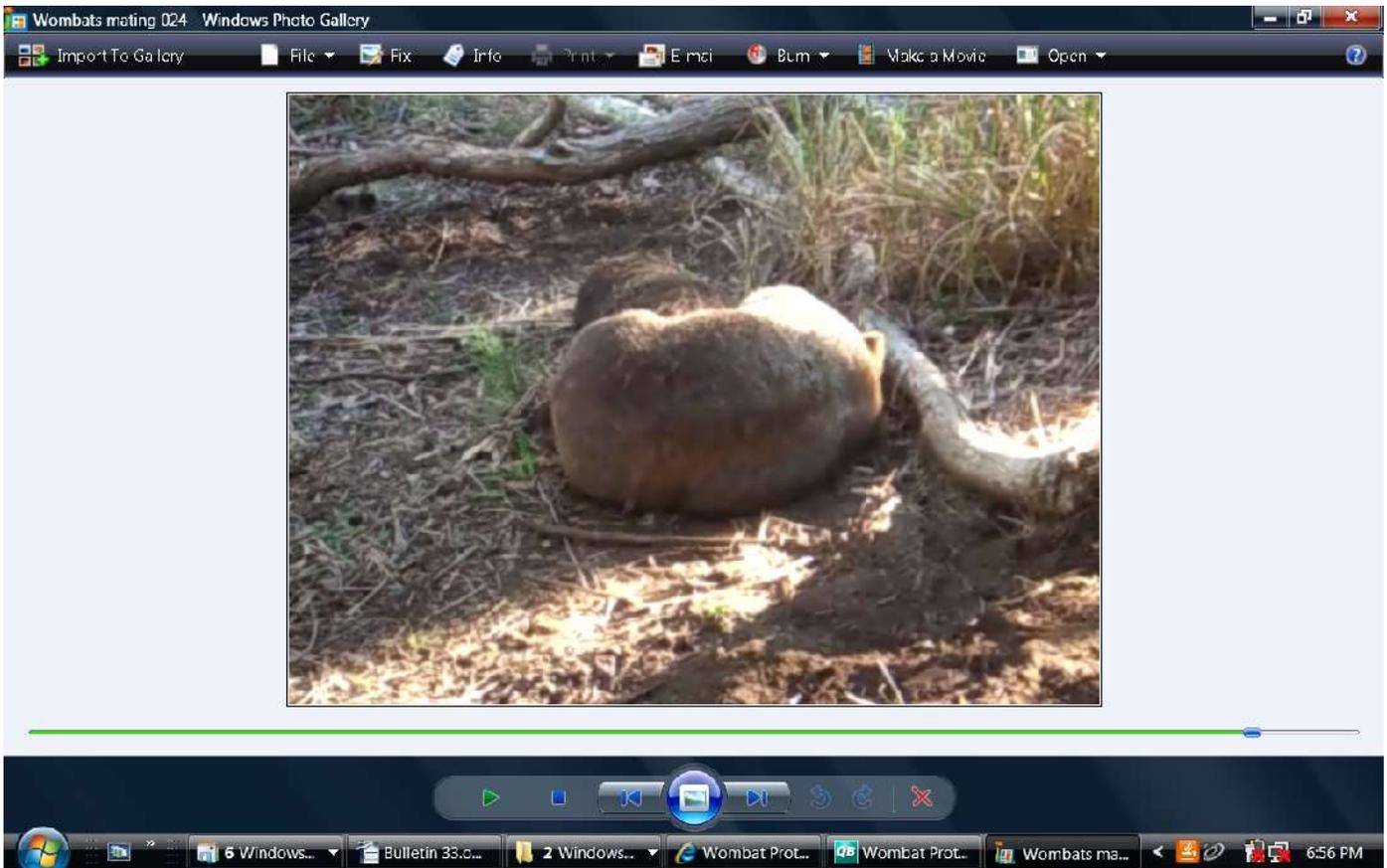
I have been monitoring the burrow now for many months and only the weekend before had taken film to an old and dear friend Candy Craine of Umbi Gumbi, a NANA stalwart. Many years ago she raised a lovely little wombat, Wilma, who had come to me for soft release. I had last seen Wilma a couple of years back when she and another female dug into a wombatorium where a new adult male was acclimatising. So much for the boys hunting out the girls.!!



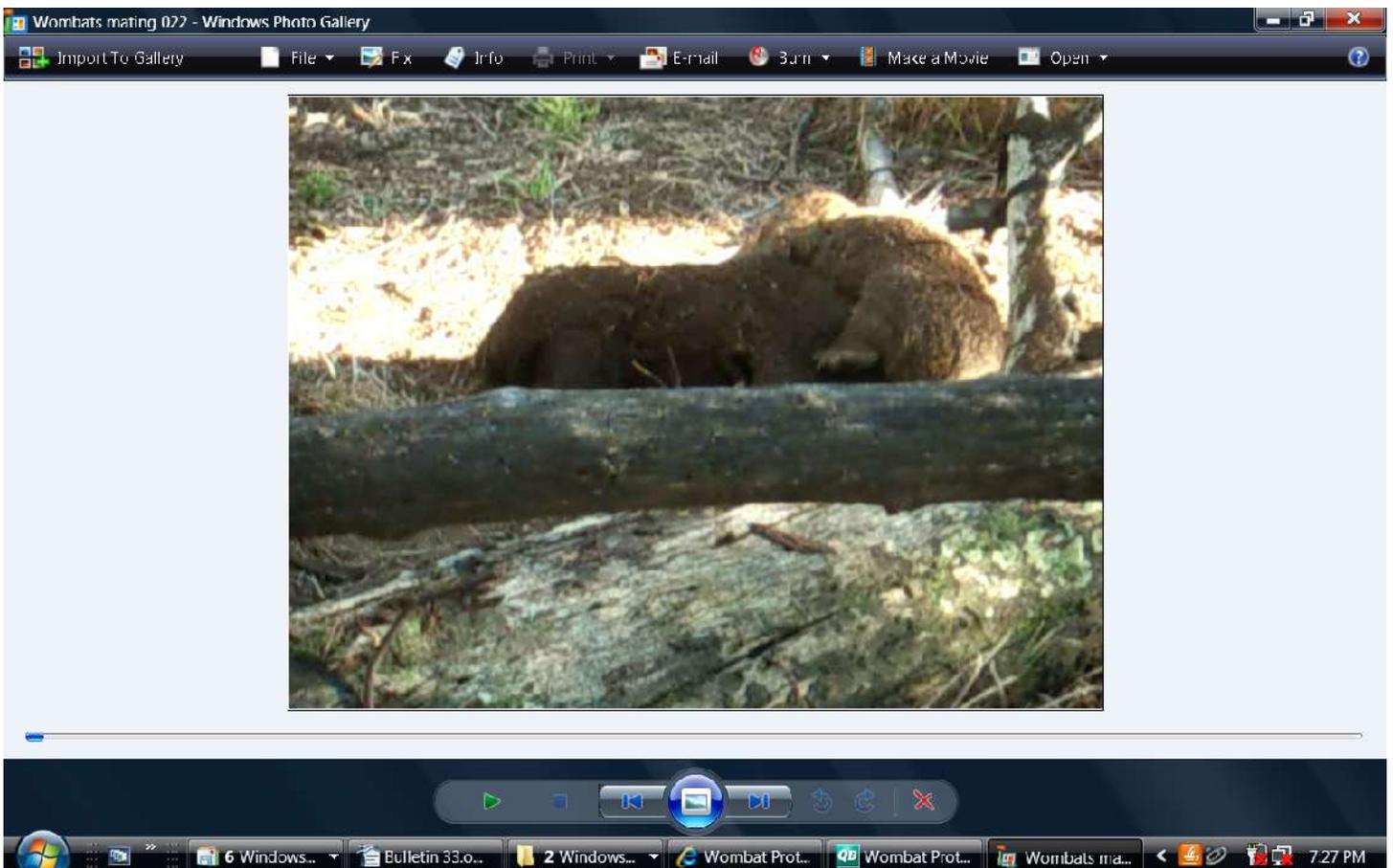
*Illustration 7: Wombat Love, notice the movement activated camera on the right disabled shortly beforehand by dad.*

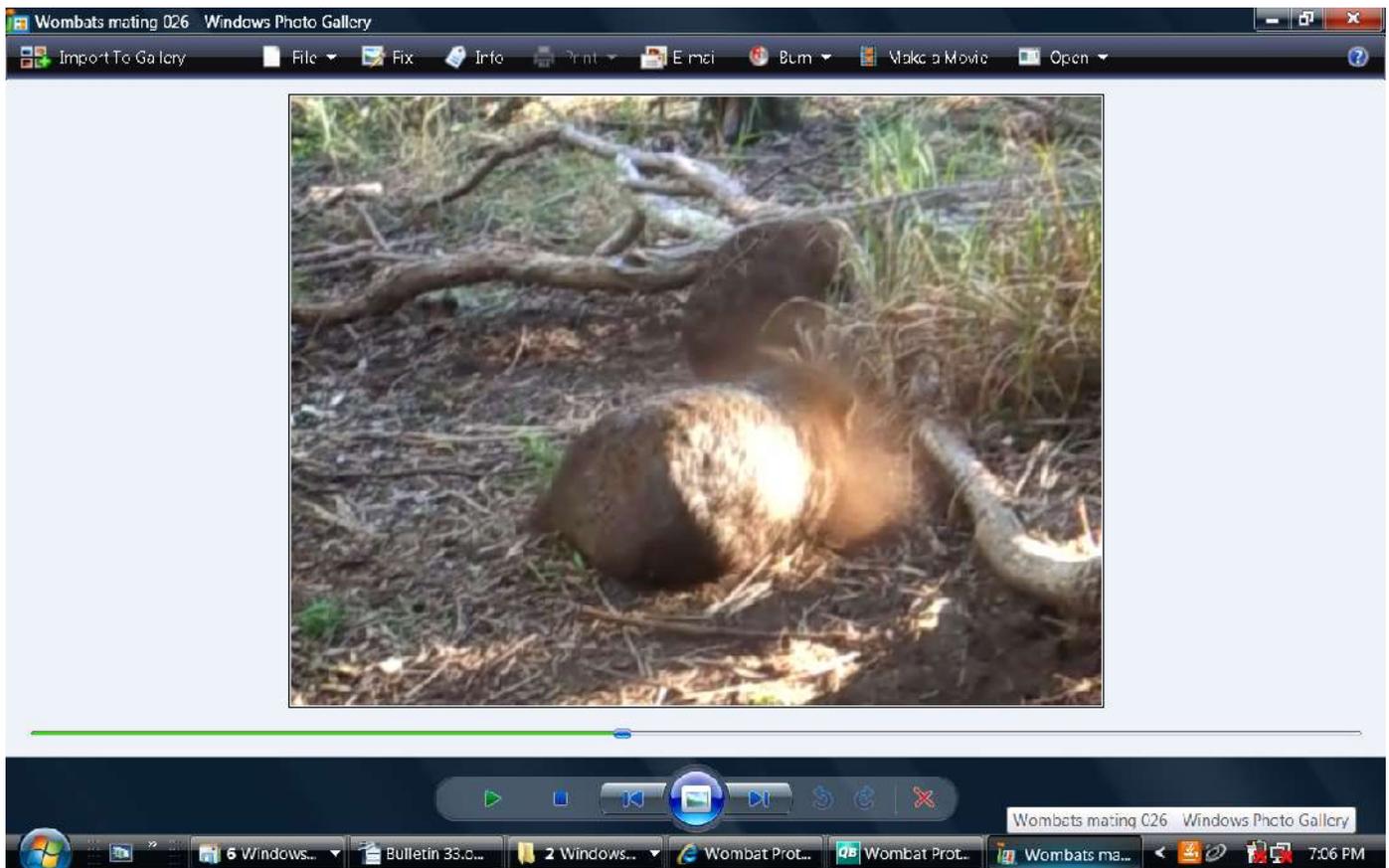
At Umbi Gumbi, three of us looked at the film of what I thought was the grown up Wilma at the burrow raising her joey. I recalled when Lenore Taylor, the local WIRES wombat co-ordinator described how hard it was to recognise wombats you had raised when they were grown. At the time I thought I'd always recognise MY wombats.!!! Lenore, of course was right. Wombats, like kids, change dramatically as they grow, often not only physically, but psychologically as well. From my close position near the fallen stringy I realise two more things. The big silvery wombat is blind in one eye and the darker slightly smaller wombat is missing an ear. As they couple I realise another. The big silvery wombat is the male and the darker ear-less one the female. So much for either of them being Wilma! So much for our observation skills.

So often when we observe things, we fail to look. I have been watching footage from the remote camera now for months, since March 2010 when a small dark coloured joey was able to be seen. - recording the big silvery wombat at the burrow and believing him to be the joey's mother. I had thought that the darker colouring was a result of certain light. The mum and her joey and the big silvery male were all users of this burrow over the months. Other wombats were seen visiting the burrow but only mum, joey and the big mottled silvery fellow were seen entering and leaving the burrow.

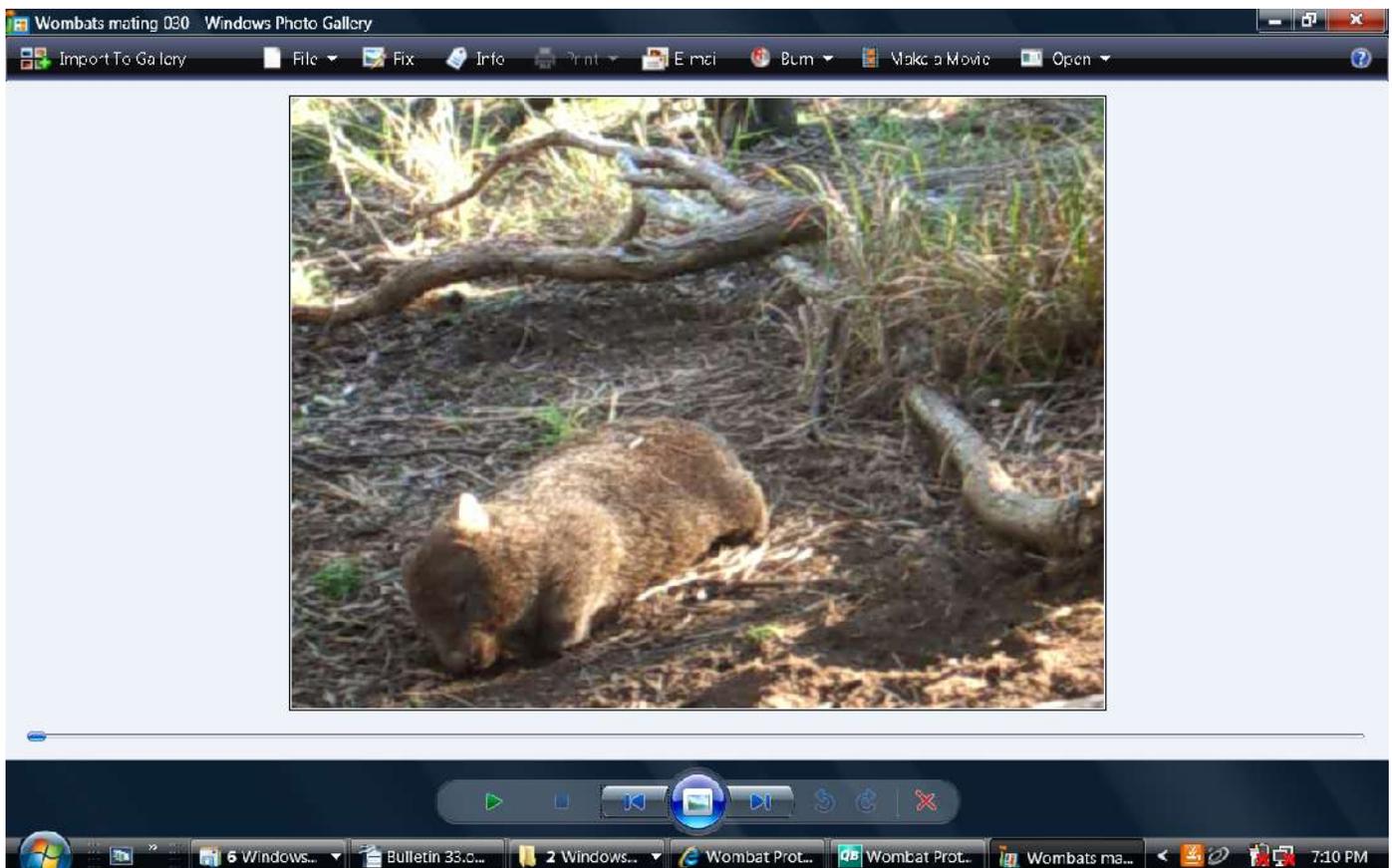


*Illustration 8: I realise the big silvery wombat is the male and the darker wombat the female*





*Illustration 9: With a flick of dirt to dads' face; mum is off. She eats some grass about 3 metres away from the exhausted male and then quietly enters the burrow .*



*Illustration 10: The exhausted male makes no move to follow her. He flips cool dirt over himself and lays in the open panting and puffing for another 20 minutes.*