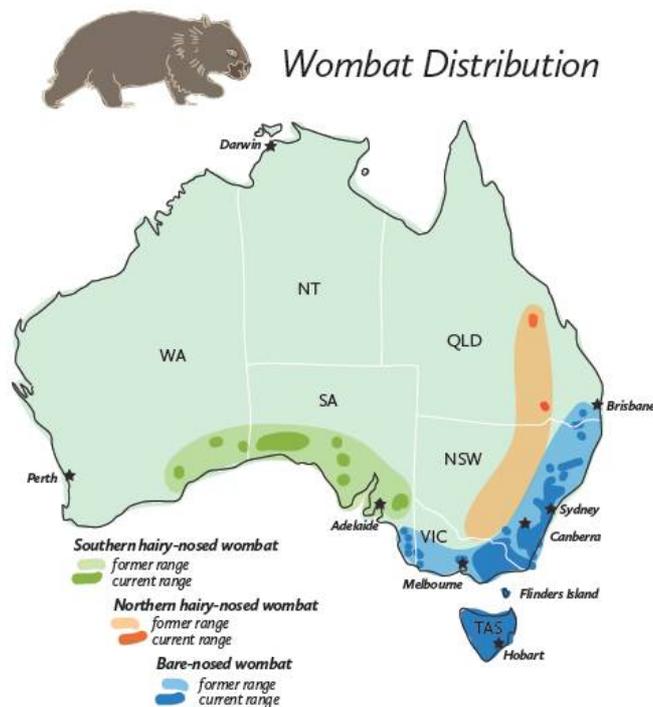


Welcome to Bulletin 38.

Bulletin 37 received a lot of comment from wildlife observers throughout Australia totally unimpressed with the lack of support to assist wombats from government departments and the convoluted bureaucracy which potentially makes it illegal for ordinary landholders to help wombats on their properties. Most wildlife carers, were unaware of the complexities in trying to have treatment programs supported by government bodies and most agreed that the lack of concern for wombat welfare has grown out of their previous reputation as “nuisances”. One comment was that trying to get help for wombats from government authorities is like trying to get help for rabbits or foxes. The only help suggested is a bullet or a bait. Despite all the material and case studies that have been published and even after, in some cases, reading Dr. Lee Skerrat's work (2001) government authorities and their representatives cling to unsubstantiated claims such as “mange doesn't affect population numbers”, “mange is an animal welfare issue- this is apparently code for we'll give you a permit to shoot them”, “mange is episodic”, “you can't treat mange”, “if you treat mange they only come back infested so there is no point”. One comment from NSW was “If NPWS wish to maintain the sole right to care for ill and injured wildlife, perhaps at some date we need a passive resistance campaign- inundate them with calls of animals that need treatment, with notifications cc'd to a central point so the media can be informed, perhaps suggesting that local vets be allowed to license and landowners for mange treatment.”

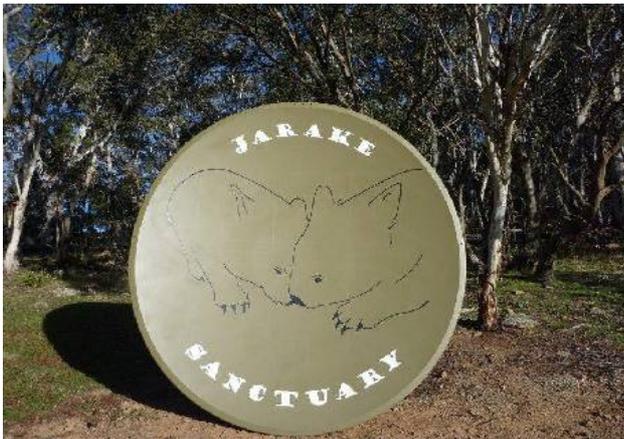
Something is very wrong for Australian wombats. The map below is sobering when read carefully. Huge areas where once were wombats, relatively short periods of time ago, they are no more.



Our thanks to David Alder, Diane Bricknell and Louise Coghill for this wonderful graphic.

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In Bulletin 37 a wombat sanctuary in NSW, Jarake, in Nimmitabel N.S.W., and the efforts there to manage and control mange was mentioned. Jarake is a successful model upon which broad area treatment programs for wombats can be developed and we are pleased to feature its work. Jarake became a supported project when a donor linked to Macquarie Bank's Foundation offered to assist their work. In time this may see the Sanctuary receive a grant of \$10,000.00. The Macquarie Foundation encourages staff to become actively involved in the work of charities and if this support continues over 12 months, sponsored projects become eligible for grants.



GPS technology is used to mark out existing burrows and movement activated photography used to document treatment efficacy at Jarake Wombat Sanctuary

The property on which Jarake Sanctuary is located recorded a twenty year history of wombats suffering with mange; on it and on the surrounding properties , covering around 1000 acres. A dedicated treatment program using Cydectin pour on, both directly and via flaps, on the Sanctuary, has resulted in two years of no wombats with mange. An adjacent property was included in the dedicated treatment program as Jarake's wombats recovered and it now has its population of wombats clear of mange. Two more properties are now being included. In total 1000 acres of high wombat habitat will be protected across four properties owned by different landholders.

Movement activated photography assists monitor the progress of individual wombats being treated and to assess others. One wombat, Mr Millpost, was treated with Cydectin pour on (red cattle and deer) at a rate of 1ml per kilogram weekly for 8 weeks and fortnightly for a further 8 weeks and monthly thereafter to successfully reverse clinical signs of mange. Mr Millpost had both sides and in particular the wrinkled areas near his forelegs heavily “scabbed” and “scabbing” around his eyes was well developed when treatment began.

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Marie Wynan from Jarake told us that when they first became interested in wombats they were told to treat wombats monthly and found that was “useless” so the Sanctuary understands why people believed that mange couldn't be treated. For seven years they tried that approach and had concluded it was of little benefit. Four years ago they began treating with increased frequency and started to see benefits, though Marie is at pains to say that even then there were times when they felt the battle against mange was overwhelming. Marie explains that they decided to use the approach of treat everyone showing any signs, not just those with obvious infestations, (often the most frequently seen wombats), following the first mange symposium in 2007. This she says was the turning point, along with using flaps and increasing the frequency of treatment application.

Establishing a precise dose rate regime was discussed at the symposium and in communications with members. Carers who were treating wombats overwhelmingly indicated that whatever was being used, it needed to be used more frequently than recommended dosages for preventing infestations and continuously. Carers having success treating mange were using products like cydectin, revolution and advocate at 7-10 day intervals, rather than the monthly application rate used to prevent parasites.

Marie prefers when she can to directly apply the pour on to the wombat, either via a long pole with a measured container on the end ,or if the wombat can be approached, tipping directly onto it. She says the flaps are invaluable and,where wombats cannot be approached, the only method to get a dose on them, but she prefers the pole or tip method because “psychologically it makes me feel better, I know how much and where I put it, and I'm absolutely sure that wombat has received its dose. The flaps can be a bit hit and miss and sometimes you don't get a nice clean movement activated photo reassuring you that the the wombat got treated.”



Mr Millpost captured on movement activated camera during treatment with noticeable scabbing

The “scabbing” seen on wombats suffering a mite infestation is para keratotic plaque not a true scab as we would see in humans. It includes dead mites, skin exudations and because the mite interferes with the keratinisation process (the process through which hair and nails grow), keratin. It can become very thick, up to an inch and can fall off in chunks. It can also become a bacteria breeding ground, particularly when severely infested wombats become wet.

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The Wynans, Marie, Ray, Jake and Jarrad have worked hard to achieve the success they have had at Jarake and on surrounding properties. They have worked as a group to manage munge and along the way come up with a range of tools to make the job easier, including the “munge mobile”, an electric golf cart converted into a moving treatment unit, and the “skate camera” a camera attached to a roller skate and plumbers' poles which allows a look into the burrows.

Movement activated cameras able to be left in the field are the mainstay of remote monitoring at Jarake, though the Wynans spend a lot of time “in the field” observing wombats.

While night shots are good, they are fairly general and often the condition of the wombat is



KEEP GUARD

7.08.2010 15:36:32



KEEP GUARD

7.08.2010 15:36:29

Mr Millpost looking much better during treatment. The scabbing has gone, good hair regrowth can be seen over the forelegs and body sides. His eyes and ears, often the most keratinised body parts are clear.

not seen as well as when the occasional day shot is achieved.

Jarake took up the opportunity to purchase a movement activated camera through the Society's “Camera Action” projects for support in 2010. Wombat behaviour around burrow flaps has also been documented at Jarake.



KEEP GUARD

4.13.2010 4:03:38



KEEP GUARD

4.12.2010 23:52:22



The healthy wombat inspected the flap at different times over the course of a night and eventually pulled it down. This behaviour has been recorded elsewhere and with a variety of flaps and containers. Once the wombat gets used to the presence of the flap, unless major burrow renovations occur, they are generally ignored.

Marie recently explained their system to another wildlife carer in NSW who is trying to organise members of their group to become involved in a treatment rather than euthanasia program. They had sent a photograph of one of the wombats they were concerned about.

“Hi Marie, Have put my first wombat hole flap in position. Also saw the poor thing, it was grazing and was aware of me when I got to about 10mt away. So took a few photos to compare with later. Do you think this animal will respond to treatment.?”

“Thank you very much for the photos. He will definitely respond to treatment, it will take a very long time before he looks fully recovered. He needs weekly doses (of Cydectin pour on) for at least 8 weeks, I would suggest weekly as long as you can before you start him fortnightly. I would keep filling wombat flaps in all surrounding burrows to protect others or treat them .M.

Thanks for the photo, How big a hole do you put in the bottle top to dispense the fluid.? I take it you remove the flap each time you have given a weekly dose to prevent the flap from getting damaged? Doesn't the wombat ever object to going in with a flap over its burrow? Best Regards

No hole in the bottle top, the Cydectin needs to sit in the bottle top until the wombat decides to



go out of his burrow. (Can be many hours). When the wombat walks under the flap he has to swing it forward (push it out) so the flap will swing outwards and the full dose of cydectin in the bottle top will pour on to his back (over the edge of the bottle top). We prefer to go back the next morning to remove the flap if it's one made of plywood. (Some wombats do not seem to mind a flap and some will totally tear it apart). We find flaps made of see through material like plastic is better as wombats like to see out of his burrow. Small flaps are also good as there is less for the wombat to worry about but you need to make sure the wombat has no choice but swinging the flap as he goes through otherwise he will try and avoid it. If you put a large ply wood flap in front of an empty burrow, it's possible the wombat will move on to next burrow. It's ideal if you see the wombat go down the burrow, then put up the flap and he will eventually go back out.

We really find flaps made of milk bottles are good as they are very cheap to make, less intrusive for the wombat (and less likely to be destroyed by the wombat). As we spoke about over the phone the problem (with light flaps) can be windy weather. One milk bottle will make two flaps. Easy to cut, easy to cut and insert the bottle top and two holes for a string to hang it from. The wombat can't really destroy it more than rip out the bottle top. Mostly they really don't take notice of them. Take Care Marie"

The Jarake treatment project now has a wealth of information about treating free living wombats where they live and achieving good outcomes. The main factors that appear to lead to this overall success are;

1. Proactive monitoring of wombats
2. Treating all wombats showing any clinical sign of mange weekly
3. Treating wombats until no clinical signs are present fortnightly
4. Treating wombats in the field
5. Treating wombats nearby others likely to have contact monthly
6. Concentrating on wombats in one area until all wombats are healthy
7. Extending program to new areas as time / labour permits
8. Consider bi-annual preventative treatment

THE SHOP is open for business, please consider buying a Christmas present for someone from the shop to help us help wombats. www.wombatprotection.org.au

Monitoring chart of treatments of manged wombats at Jarake

First Cyd	Last Cyd	x Cyd	outcome	description - place
7-Oct-08	24-Nov-08	seven	recovered	"Helen" by Hospital paddock, early signs of mange
14-Apr-09	10-Sep-09	eighteen	recovered	Mr Millpost, Millpost house
30-Jul-09	3-Dec-10	twelve	not seen	Helen Dundas Dam, treatment with flap only
28-Jul-09	19-Aug-09	four	not known	young at Millpost yard fence
30-Jul-09	2-Sep-09	six	not known	above dam at Millpost, deep wounds on sides
20-Aug	10-Sep-09	three	died	found dead 1-10-09, near pump Edala, tear in right ear
2-Sep-09	3-Dec-10	six	not known	Helen's creek
14-Apr-10	6-Dec-10	nineteen	recovered	Edala, E6, fluffy ears from State Forest
4-Oct-10	3-Dec	nine	not known	Old Bega Highway, Matt French place
15-Oct-10	22-Nov-10	six	recovered	Edala, left front leg
2-Nov-10	3-Dec-10	four	not known	Brown Mt Tower
3-Apr-11	3-Jun-11	four	recovered	right back leg
4-May-11	26-May-11	five	died	died 5 June 11 after a week of snow, Helen's home
5-Jun-11		three	not known	Mother and 10 kg joey, Helens creek, joey died
6-Jun-11		three	not known	shy, attacked far valley between Helen & Millpost
6-Jun-11	12/07/2011	six	died	blind in left eye, Millpost forest, died after 110mm rain in a week
01/08/11	07/09/11	six	recovered	Top internal fence gate, Helen's place

Jarake sanctuary keeps records of the wombats treated and while they are now able to use their burrow location system, their early efforts observed the wombat to allow recognition and the area where the wombat was usually seen to manage treatment. The chart above is interesting as it documents a number of obviously infested wombats who were treated and followed up on. The most frustrating issue for the sanctuary in the early days was not being sure that a treated wombat fully recovered, as many were seen and remained around an area for four or five weeks and then moved on. These observations reinforced the sanctuary's current method of treating broader areas rather than only affected wombats.

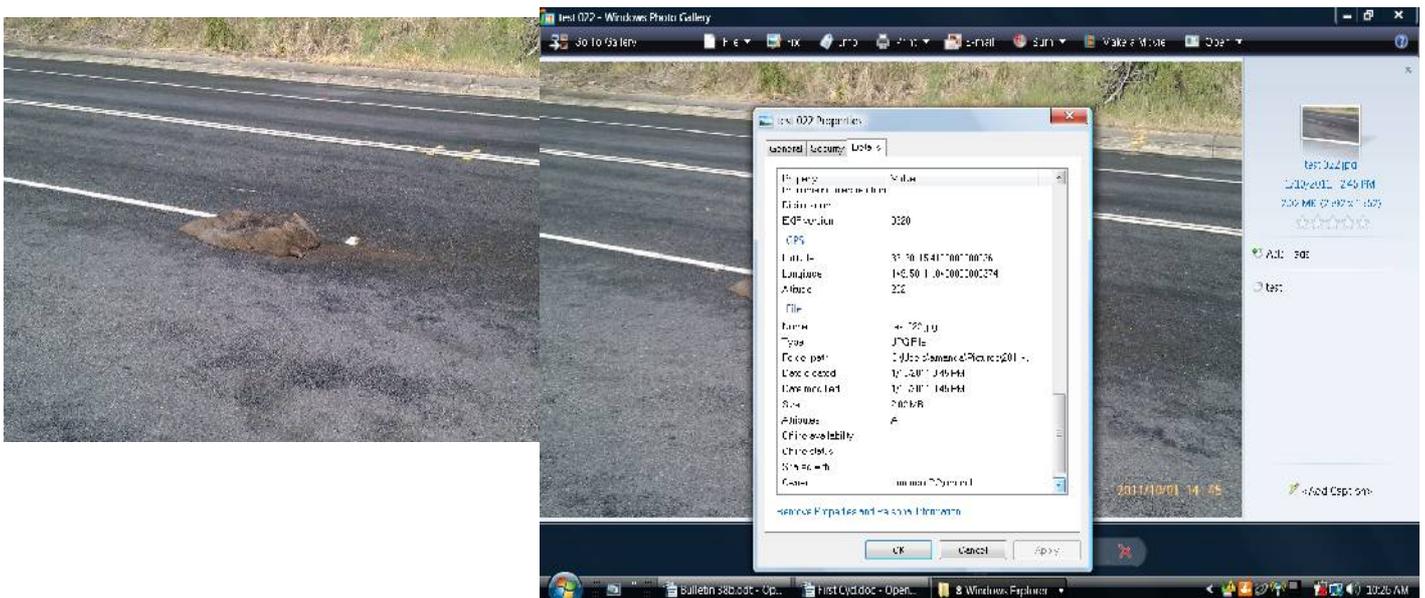
The tendency for wombats to move on after four or five weeks is reported in many areas. It is reasonably simple where property owners have only one or two wombats and one or two burrows and the resident wombat stays put for a number of months. It is where good wombat habitat exists there is more movement and use of burrows for short periods of time or where weather conditions alter forcing wombats to move burrows. Marie notes that after severe weather conditions such as heavy rain flooding burrows or unseasonable cold snaps (it will snow at Jarake) wombats that are well on their way to recovery from mite infestation die, perhaps of hypothermia. Well furred wombats are sometimes found dead after freak weather conditions, also suggesting that burrow location is of great importance to protect wombats, well or otherwise.

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Marie commented that it is only when you realise that targeted treatment of any wombats with mange in and near the sanctuary has led to a lengthy period where all wombats remain uninfested that you realise how successful a treatment program can be. She recalls looking at the table in the early days and “losing heart” as she says, particularly when wombats that appeared to be making good their recovery were found dead. “It definitely was not mange that killed those wombats”, she said, “that was most upsetting having worked so hard and seen them recovering, only to find something else killed them.”

In NSW following some mysterious deaths and apparent paralysis of some wombats at a waterboard reserve, Bendeela, during a treatment program, dead wombats were confirmed to have died from toxoplasmosis. This parasite which needs the domestic cat as a host, is now endemic throughout many native species and the death toll from it has not been established. It is most likely the cause of otherwise unexplained deaths in otherwise healthy animals and few early clinical signs are evident. Hypothermia following freak weather conditions may also be implicated following Jarake's observations.

Movement activated photography is now well developed and relatively inexpensive compared to a few years ago. A good camera able to take stills and video at night and during the day can be purchased with memory card for under \$250.00 making it a tool most care groups can afford. Members are reminded that they can purchase such cameras through the Society on the basis of making a donation for that purpose or claiming a donation reimbursal when they purchase elsewhere.



In recent correspondence it was pointed out that many of the new android mobile telephones have the capacity to take photographs which have GPS locations embedded. A society member recently trialled one of these phones as a potential tool to assist monitor wombats, in particular road kill.

The photograph is taken as usual having turned on gps locating on the telephone. On the photograph only the date and time is printed. Either on the telephone or when pictures are downloaded go to photograph properties and scroll through to find gps location.

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The major advantage of this method is that all that needs recording is whether the wombat was male or female, the precise location being determined by the gps co-ordinates. As many people carry these telephones with them, it is probable that more accurate monitoring will be able to occur. These telephones also allow photographs to be immediately downloaded and accurately placed into a google map and they can also be emailed directly from telephones. The Society has for many years used google mapping to plot locations of wombats with mange and also to monitor road kill. Previously, hand held gps devices were used to determine gps locations but these were separated from photographs as these devices were locators only. The use of these telephones will greatly assist the accuracy of work to monitor road kill areas, wombat locations and mange distribution.

Roadkill and its devastating effect on wombat populations throughout Australia remains an area where insufficient research occurs. The Society has a road kill mitigation group who primarily monitor and report road kill areas and observations. One anecdotal observation from a far South Coast of NSW member is that where “cow tunnels” have been installed in two locations which cross the Princes Highway and were previously high wombat road kill areas, there appears to have been a reduction suggesting the wombats may be using the tunnels to cross the road in preference to the road itself. A MAC camera in a cow tunnel could be used to explore this hypothesis. Another observation from the Waterhouses who are based in the Braidwood area of NSW, (though they feel this observation is of wombat areas generally), is a predictable pattern of higher incidence wombat road kill which appears to follow a monthly cycle. The ability to use the telephones in a community project that encourages people to take photographs and submit them to a map, would be able to explore this hypothesis as well.

Meanwhile, on the most practical levels, roadkilled wombats was the subject of a “contact us form” from the website sent to the Society by Jai Price. Jai wrote;

Subject: Wombats - Message: I travel on the Topdale Road which starts at the top of Port Stephens Cutting not far from Nowendoc in NSW North West & this stretch of road I often see dead wombats along this piece of road. I was wondering if you would be able to organise some signage for this area. As I feel the locals up there have no idea. Thank You for your help Regards Jae Price.

Lenore Taylor co-ordinates the roadkill mitigation work and she wrote to the council and was pleased to receive the following response.

Thursday, October 20, 2011 4:51 PM **Subject:** Proposed Installation of "Wombat" Warning Signage - Topdale Road Tamworth

Dear Ms Taylor,

I refer to your E-mail dated 17 October 2011 regarding the proposed installation of Wombat warning signs on Topdale Road south-east of Tamworth.

Council has arranged for a number of warning signs to be installed on Topdale Road as part of Council's ongoing signage maintenance program.

It is anticipated that works will be undertaken during early November 2011.

Yours Faithfully

Craig Orvad

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Sometimes we wonder whether one person or one group can do much to change the fate of an individual, group of, or species of animal. Jai, by writing to us, shows that any action, even taken once, can make a difference. Good on Tamworth Council too and let's hope travellers to the *2012 Tamworth Country Music Festival 20 - 29 January 2012* - www.tcmf.com.au will WATCH OUT FOR WILDLIFE and SLOW DOWN DAWN TO DUSK. Some of you will know this is the warning on car stickers available from the newly on line SHOP. Lenore Taylor, our road kill mitigation co-ordinator donated 100 of these stickers to kick start the campaign to get the message "out there".



BDN XTRA Bega District News, Tuesday, October 4, 2011 - 7

Motorists urged to watch for wombats

FOLLOWING reports of a number of dead wombats on the Princes Highway this week, two local wildlife rescue organisations have urged motorists to be vigilant.

WIRES and Wildlife Rescue Far South Coast (formerly NANA) volunteers get hundreds of phone calls each year from people concerned about different native animals, and they say callers have been distressed by the amount of recent animal deaths by car accidents.

Long-term WIRES volunteers Dan and Lois Katz said one lady reported two wombats lying dead on the Princes Highway between Wanatta Lane and Bega.

"The lady said she had driven in the Bega Valley about six months ago from a large city and she was shocked at the roadkill that she witnessed since living here," Ms Katz said.

"Sadly, this is a common occurrence.

"WIRES agrees that the amount of roadkill we see on our roads is terrible but the question is what can be done about it?"

Ms Katz said while accidents happened and sometimes can't be avoided, motorists could save themselves from the trauma of killing a native animal, damaging their car and perhaps even injuring themselves or their passengers.

The key is slowing down when driving at night, when many animals forage for food.

Ray Alcock of Wildlife Rescue Far South Coast said there were a ways a lot of wombats killed around Bemboka and on the highway to Bega because they move so slowly.

Just lately there has also been equidae roadkill.

Both Wildlife Rescue Far South Coast and WIRES urge all motorists to take care when driving at all times but particularly after dusk.

Ring WIRES hotline on 6495 4150 to report an injured or orphaned native animal and a volunteer will help as soon as possible.

The Wildlife Rescue Far South Coast hotline is 6477 238 921 and Ray Alcock's number is 6493 0357.

*This naked nose baby wombat was found clinging to its dead mother on one of Bemboka's back roads and rescued by Wildlife Rescue Far South Coast (formerly known as NANA). The baby wombat paid a visit to the Bega District News office with volunteer Cheryl Kemp.

We would also like to commend to combined efforts of LAOKO (looking after our Kosciusko orphans), WIRES Far South East and NANA Wildlife Rescue South Coast who cover the same and adjacent areas on the NSW South Coast across the Monaro for what has become a rolling campaign of advisory information about road kill.

A story from Christine Watts



Have you ever had the surreal experience of looking deeply into the eyes of an animal and *truly connecting* with what lies beneath the feathers, fur, skin or fins? My family and I have, and we would like to share with you a love story of Shrek the Magnificent and Fiona the Fearless. Shrek and Fiona, *two beautiful orphaned wombats*, came into our lives after their mothers were killed on the road. We trust that this story helps you to understand that there is much, much more to the tough outer shell of our precious native marsupial, THE WOMBAT.

RESCUED

Shrek was the *first of two wombats* to come into our family in 2010. This tiny ball of fur was rescued from the middle of the Princes Highway, (Victoria), after he lay curled up in his dead mother's pouch for almost three hours. Hundreds of cars and trucks sped heartlessly past the evident bloodshed and carnage that was once Shrek's mother's body.

A beautiful young woman, named Jasmine, had the *heart and the courage* to stop. Jasmine chose to find it within herself to face the reality of a wombat crash site. Inspecting the pouch of the stiff and cold mother wombat, Jasmine was delighted to "feel" that the tiny ball of terrified fur was indeed still *warm and alive*. Two huge brown, fearful eyes connected with *Jasmine's heart*, pleading with her to hold him closely and give him a second chance at life.

Jasmine bundled this divine little creature into a jumper, and took him to her vet, who then contacted the local *wildlife shelter*. Through the wildlife network, Shrek came to our family to be nurtured, rehabilitated and released.

Shrek's obvious fear of humans soon turned to an understanding that we indeed were his *second chance at life*. Over time, Shrek's eyes changed from large, hard, fearful marbles of glass to softer, smaller and trusting windows that connected us to his soul. *By looking into his little eyes*, we knew he was happy to be alive.

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Yet this is just the beginning of the story of how two baby wombats showed their human family just how *intelligent and sensitive wombats* are.

A LOVE STORY

Within two weeks, we received a phone call that we had another wombat coming our way, (a female wombat about the same size as Shrek, who had also lost her mother). We welcomed Fiona with open arms and were privileged to witness *her eyes change* from a stormy ocean of fear, to a calm sea of contentment and happiness.

Shrek and Fiona became *inseparable* – as the left hand “did”, the right hand followed. Wherever brave Fiona ventured, shy little Shrek followed with absolute faith. Watching these two little creatures live and play was an absolute delight. Their antics and expressions were priceless, yet difficult to explain. *By looking into their eyes* and watching their furry little bodies, we were able to *see* for ourselves, that *wombats feel much more* than most people would ever dare to imagine.

When they slept, Fiona and Shrek snuggled together, nuzzling each other with one paw touching a part of the other wombat. Their faces revealed relaxed whiskers, and ears gently folded back, with soft *expressions of pure bliss*.

Shrek and Fiona showed my family that *wombats LOVE to have fun*. SOUNDS CRAZY? Not so crazy when you have witnessed the antics and frivolities of two happy wombats. Fiona would hide from Shrek behind a bush, and wait for him to realize that he was on his own. Shrek’s urgent hissing indicated to Fiona that he would soon be on the lookout for her. As Shrek anxiously zoomed past *Fiona’s hiding spot*, she would leap out at him with great gusto and “frighten the pants” off of him. The expression on Shrek’s face and his body language was always a mixture of “bother, you got me again”, and “*thank goodness that you are there.*” In response, Shrek would lunge wildly at Fiona and pretend he was not frightened, “not one little bit.”

UNIQUE AND INTELLIGENT PERSONALITIES

As with humans, Fiona and Shrek revealed that each *wombat has a unique personality*, exclusive to them. Fiona was always a little bigger in size than Shrek and fiercely independent. She was not afraid to throw her weight around in the name of frivolity and friskiness. Shrek, being the smaller member of the pair, was much more subdued and happy to play follow the leader. He knew, (from experience,) how far he could push Fiona in their *childish games* and if he chose to “cross the line”, Fiona would soon let him know with a swift lunge or a carefully placed chomp.

Dear little Shrek was always on the lookout for a human cuddle or pat. He would often request a cuddle by climbing up your leg, and once in the “central cuddling position”, Shrek’s eyes would *connect with” the cuddler”* and express thanks. Conversely, Fiona was always very aloof, too grown up to show that she enjoyed the odd cuddle. If you were able to entice Fiona into a cuddle, it was always on her terms, the length of time SHE required and with an air of “if you must!” (This is in fact, *what all carers strive for in the rehabilitation process.*) Before Shrek became ill, Fiona was the “brave and fearless” member of the wombat clan. If we were lucky, we would receive the odd brush on the legs as she zoomed past with *gleaming, mischievous eyes*.

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Through our time spent with wombats, we have come to realize that *each wombat has their own unique likes and dislikes*. For example, Fiona simply loves seeds on the stalks of any types of grass, whereas Shrek preferred the long stems of the native grasses. Shrek loved lucerne hay whereas Fiona's favorite is plain grass hay.

A HEARTBREAKING END

This *idyllic wombat world* changed as Shrek's life unfolded. After seven months of health, vitality and growth, the galloping and romping of two frisky wombats gradually became that of one excited female wombat and a slightly lethargic male wombat. Both pairs of *wombat eyes* began to lose their delightful sparkle, and whilst Fiona's health and vigor remained strong, Shrek's physical body began to fade. Something in Fiona's eyes told us that she "*knew*" of the impending darkness we could not face. As Shrek's health deteriorated, Fiona's behavior toward him became more gentle and respectful, her whole demeanor towards her soul mate changed. Precious time and Shrek's life force were slipping away before us. His will to live was strong, yet despite expert veterinary care and advice from the experienced wildlife carers, we *could not determine the cause of his illness.*

After many weeks of intensive care, we lost our struggle to save one of *Nature's divine creations*. Shrek died in our arms. On the evening of Shrek's passing, my family and I visited Shrek's grave. We looked skyward and delighted in a beautiful formation of stars in the most unlikely shape – *a huge love heart of stars twinkling upon the earth*. In our hearts we knew this was a message from little Shrek – that indeed wombats are capable of connecting with us on a very deep level and that they feel much, much more than most people take the opportunity to understand.

FIONA GRIEVES FOR SHREK

Immediately upon Shrek's death, Fiona's eyes changed and the sparkling, cheeky glint disappeared. Our once independent wombat, destined to be released, was now too frightened to be left alone and Fiona let us know, in no uncertain terms, that she needed to be with us at all times. She insisted on placing a paw on one of us, so that she could "feel" we were still there, and that we would not abandon her, as her *soul mate* had done. There is no doubt in any of our hearts that Fiona *grieved* for little Shrek.

No matter how tired Fiona was, she would try to stay awake, to make sure we did not leave her, (just as some babies and toddlers do, when they do not wish to be left alone.) Fiona's body language became very clear – her shoulders slumped, her head hung closely to the ground and she did not move faster than a slow amble, if she moved at all. The health of our beautiful Fiona quickly deteriorated and her appetite changed from one of ravenous feeding frenzies to a disinterest in any food. Fiona's weight plummeted and her digestive system shut down. We feared for Fiona's welfare and made many trips to our local vet to ensure her survival.

OUT OF THE WOODS AND BACK TO THE BUSH

Thankfully, we have been able to enliven Fiona's *will to live*, with 24 hour care and nurturing. Whilst we are confident that Fiona's health has returned to normal, her road to independence will be a long one. My family and I are committed to ensuring Fiona is released back into the bush, strong, healthy and independent.

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HUMANS ARE THE REASON FIONA CAME INTO CARE, AND IT IS HUMANS THAT WILL TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HER LONG TERM WELLBEING.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

Whilst many people have at some point chosen to “**switch off**” their innate connection to nature, there are those of us who remain connected and truly understand “sentience in animals”: that animals do “feel” many things other than pain, heat, cold and hunger.

Now is the time, for all of humanity to look purposely into the *eyes* of our precious domestic, native and farmed animals. Animals have much to teach us, on so many levels, not the least that we can **connect with them through their eyes and hearts**, if only we have the courage and CHOOSE to take the time.

Many people would agree that there is an *essence in dogs* that connects deeply within the *hearts* of humans, yet they find it difficult to **unearth the words to describe this connection**. Horse lovers may also be of the same opinion. Cows, sheep, pigs, farmed animals – surely not! I strongly suggest that - **SURELY YES!**

Animals of all descriptions, shapes and sizes are longing for more humans to “**make the connection**” – perhaps this is one of the ways we can all help to make the *world a greater place*.

I CHALLENGE YOU – please find the courage and the time to look deeply into the eyes of an animal and look beneath their outer shell. Gaze into the eyes of a dolphin, a whale, and make the connection to these divine creatures. Visit a zoo and connect with the heart of a Chimpanzee or Orangutan by looking into their eyes. I know that you will be glad you did!

As I complete this heartfelt communication with you, I trust that I have encouraged you to find the courage to look within and

LOOK INTO THE EYES OF AN ANIMAL.



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