Wombat Protection Society

Bulletin Number 6 – March 2007

Welcome to the Sixth Bulletin of the Society and a warm welcome to all our new members and supporters. Barbara Trigg, whose book "The Wombat" sits on many of our member's bookshelves, became an Honorary Member this month.

Mange Eradication Options Available

Our work on developing a means of eradicating mange in the naturally raised free wombat population has progressed well. Thanks to all those who provided input to this work and to the mange mapping project. The (draft) interim report is in the Research Section of the website and was summarized in last month's bulletin. This has been received positively. It appears that many people were not aware that mange is a parasitic infestation or that many options for dealing with this scourge of wombats exists. It has been particularly good to hear of people encouraged to take action and to investigate further. Many carers had been of the opinion that once an animal had mange there was nothing that could be done to help it, so even before the work of the Clearing House is complete, positive outcomes for wombats have begun. The next phase of our work involves finding treatment modalities suitable for use on the naturally raised free wombat population. This brings with it many ethical issues as many treatment modalities involve procedures that may cause stress to free wombats. The work to date examines existing products both commercial and naturally occurring and gives them a ranking based on the criteria determined in the first report.

A young wombat with mange

A self (wombat) applied mixture of sulphur and oil was the clear winner receiving the highest ranking to date of 23 out of a possible 25 points. Selamectin in Revolution spot on for dogs, received 18, Moxidectin in Cydectin cattle pour on received 18, sulphur in oil applied by humans rated 16, Eprinomectin in Ivomec-eprinex pour for cattle received 15, moxidectin in combination with imiprocloprid in Advocate spot on received 13, Ivermectin as Ivomec pour on received 11, Fipronil with methoprene in Frontline Spot on 10, imiprocloprid alone in Advantage spot on for dogs received 9, ivermectin injectable-7,amitraz in washes such as miticide and ectodex -7 and phosmets such

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as poron and porect received 0. Fermented lemon juice also rated well as a miticide but we have no evidence of its use on wombats so have not included its ranking .For further information contact the society. The report discussing these findings will soon be on site in the Research Section. A pdf copy will be sent to anyone who would like to receive it before it is available on site. As with the first Report, we welcome comment and critique and will take these into account before finalising the report.

Thumbs Down to South Australian Government

We were disappointed in following up on the South Australian Government's efforts to manage the impact of mange on its Southern Hairy Nose Wombats to discover what their environment minister, Gail Gago, had described in a letter to the Society as a "task force" comprising Adelaide University, Adelaide Zoo and her Department turned out to be a task force of one. Dr David Taggart, who has been monitoring the population and the impact of mange on it, has been good enough to correspond with the society about his work. We wish him well in his work and hope that the South Australian Government will take their responsibility to these vulnerable animals seriously and actually create a task force before it is too late.

Thumbs Down to New South Wales Government

The New South Wales Government finally responded to the Society's letter asking what it was doing about mange. A policy advisor wrote on behalf of the Government and disclosed that nothing was being done in New South Wales to study, manage or protect wombats from this insidious infestation. In the letter of reply, they suggested that anyone hearing of wombats being killed illegally should report this. It shows how far divorced from the real world such policy advisors are. In New south Wales members report farmers and others openly talking about spotlighting and killing wombats on their land in public meetings such as Landcare Meetings. Part of the problem is that N.P.W.S. (National Parks and Wildlife Service) give out permits, generally in lots of 10, to kill wombats without any investigation of the real impact of wombats on land. Bodies are meant to be tagged and left, however, no inspection occurs and no check occurs as to whether the cull is done humanely. When no checks and easy access to permits occur, it is not surprising that many farmers don't bother about permits and not at all surprising that they know they can boast about spotlighting and killing wombats without worrying about any repercussions. It is clear that the type of system that relies on penalizing people is simply no way to provide protection to wombats.

Better Ways of Dealing with Conflict

The Society hopes that over time we can work with farmers and others to develop positive relationships with wombats. Fencing the riparian zones, one of the main areas of contention between farmers and wombats, is a real option, and one that due to other environmental events is likely to become a pragmatic possibility. We note Federal funds available now to create a major wildlife corridor and funds available to farmers to protect endangered species as well as Landcare funds for repair work in riparian Zones.

Farmers are less concerned about wombats and more concerned about the holes they dig, and specifically scared that they will drive their bikes into those holes. As the majority of burrows are in riparian zones, fencing stock from these zones minimizes the need for agricultural equipment in areas where wombats may have burrows. This simple step would serve to greatly reduce the friction between wombats and farmers. We are also following up on concerns expressed by some people that fencing riparian zones could create problems for other animals accessing the water in these areas. As stock watering points are necessary outside the fenced zone, this option exists, but there are also fence options that can allow access for wildlife while limiting stock access.

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Wombat Watching Begins Soon

The Society has begun to look at developing a "Wombat Watching" program similar to "Badger Watching" in England. There, badgers, which, like wombats, were not liked by farmers, have proven a benefit to farmers who now receive stipends by allowing people onto their land to watch badgers. We would like to see a similar scheme developed in Australia and are beginning to collect a list of farms where wombats can be watched. The idea would be to develop a range of options for people from tenting to farm stay to local hotel/motel accommodation with night watching tours. Farmers would receive a payment for each participant and in this way wombats would become part of farmer's diversification and profit and this can be extended to whole areas where wombats live as tourist attractions.

Gift Memberships

We were pleased to find that members are buying memberships for children and others as gifts. This works nicely because if the society is made aware of the gift nature of the membership, we can send a card out explaining that a friend has bought them a membership.

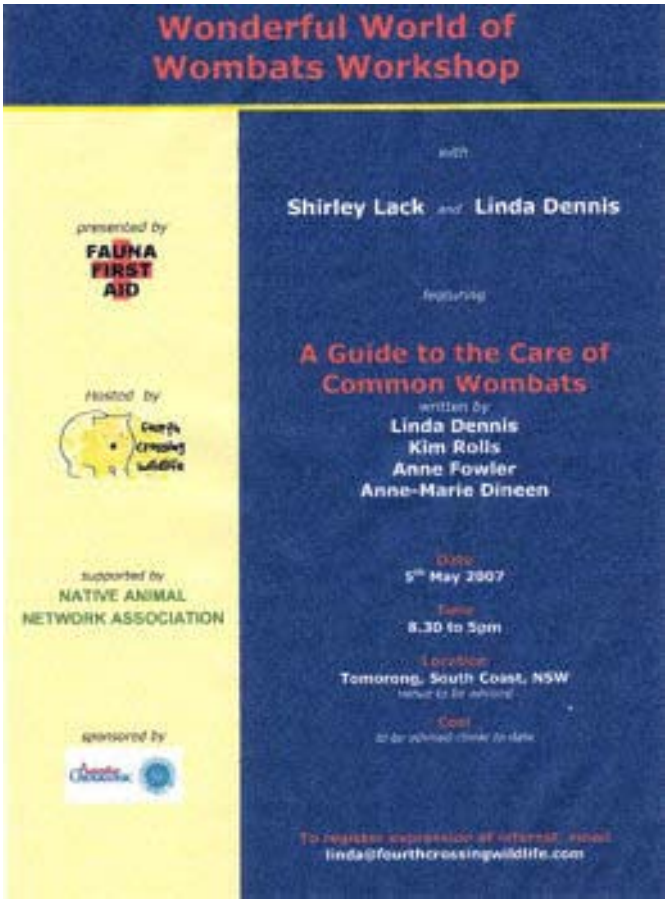
Education, Participation and Wombat Watching

The Wonderful World of Wombats Workshop will be run on May 5th 2007 at Tomerong on the NSW South Coast from 8.30 to 5.00pm.

Linda Dennis, runner-up for this years' Serventy Conservation Award and Shirley Lack, long time wombat carer and recent volunteer for the Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombat conservation project, will present the workshop based on the manual, A Guide to Care Of Common wombats written by Linda Dennis, Kim Rolls, Anne Fowler and Anne-Marie Dineen. For details and bookings email: linda@fourthcrossingwildlife.com.

For those of you attending this workshop who would like to extend your stay and assist in Conservation work with free wombats, the Wombat Protection Society has organised a "Wombat Watching" evening on May 5th.

For those of you with enough energy after that, a morning making self delivery devices to hang over burrows is planned for Sunday May 6th. For more information about these events contact the society or telephone us on Ph: (0264) 938 245.



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Joeys' Newspage

Our first "Joeys" Newspage has been produced and is attached to the Bulletin. The Joeys' newspage targets our associate members in particular, but hopefully will contain items of interest to our adult members as well.

JOEYS' NEWSPAGE

A big warm wombat welcome to all our associate members. You can write into your page and have your drawings and letters published. Contact us here.

Some of you have tried the Children's Activities on the site at www.wombatprotection.org.au and we have seen some great colored in Poa's and some very clever working out of the mazes. Some of you are finding it very hard to spot the ten differences and have had to get older folk involved who seem to be having just as much difficulty finding the differences as you!!! We have been asked about the wombats on the Society's letterhead.

The first picture is of a hairless baby wombat. Baby wombats are called joeys and before they get hair they are known as pinkies. The pinky on the letterhead weighed about 400grams when the photo was taken and would have been about four months old. When baby wombats are born they are the size of a jelly bean and are about a month old. They have to crawl up from their mum's cloacca (the name for where everything comes out of a wombat) into mum's pouch. There they suckle onto one of her two teats.

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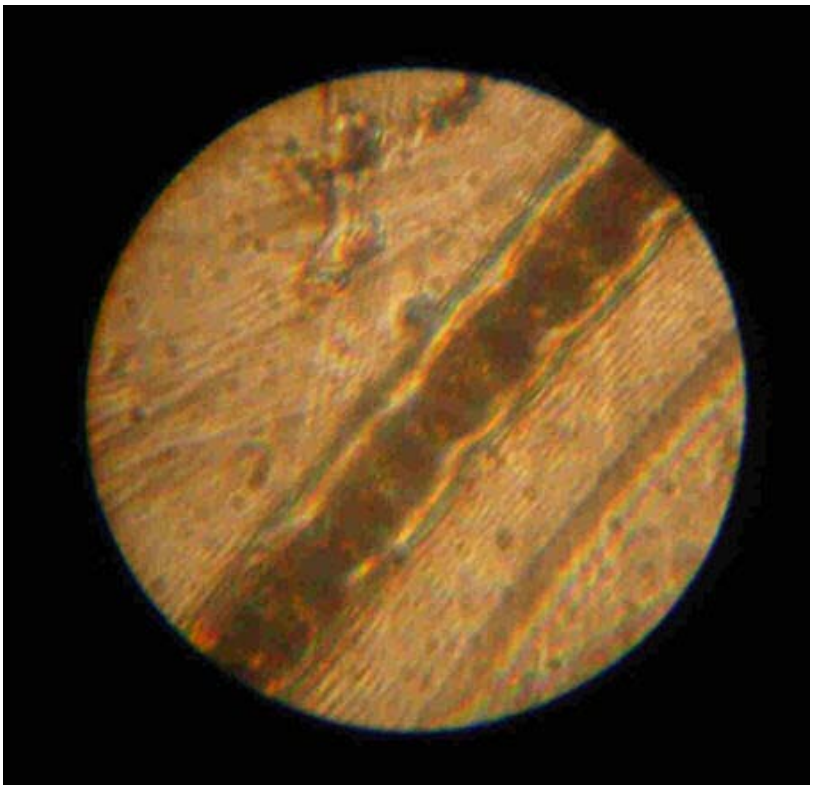
The next two wombats are a little older and now have their hair. When a pinky begins to get hair it is known as a "velvet" because that's what the new hair feels like. It is very soft and silky. You don't see baby wombats together in the wild. These two were together because their mums had car accidents and the joeys were being raised by people. People put two joeys together to help them feel safe.

The little grey wombat Wilma-Flint used to suckle Matilda's ear. Baby wombats need a lot of attention and would normally spend all their time with their mother.

We will tell you about the next two, **Poa** and **Basil** next time.

Your question for the month is to work out what this picture shows.



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