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# Mammal Survey Group of Victoria

## NEWSLETTER

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April 2005

### Last Camps:

#### March 12-14: Strathbogies.

We revisited a site in the Strathbogies near the crystal mine where we caught eastern horseshoe bat a decade or so ago. Last time the mine was operating but now it appears abandoned. With overnight temperatures not dropping below 18°C for both nights, bat trapping was phenomenal and we caught almost everything except the horseshoe bat. The 115 bats included all three *Vulturinus* (forest bat) species, Lesser Long-eared and Gould's Long-eared Bat, Gould's Wattle Bat, Chocolate Bat and Great Pipestraw. A hole found in one of the bat trap bags (repaired for the second night) means that we would have caught even more! Spotlighting revealed 25 ringtails and 34 greater gliders at a rate of 15 animals/spotlight hour. Our previous visit also revealed large numbers of greater gliders. The mixed age forest, only lightly logged, with considerable numbers of very large Mountain Grey Gums probably has something to do with this. Trapping was more subdued with only a couple of bush rats and *Antechinus agilis*.

#### Easter : March 25-28 - Youngs Forest

An attractive forest enjoyed by all including brown stringy bark heathy woodland, grassy yellow gum woodland and areas of buloke including much healthy regeneration. The area may be targeted for sand-mining in the next decade. Mammals were much harder work here with 224 trap nights for 1 *Antechinus flavipes* (Yellow-footed Antechinus), 2 house mice and one young brushtail possum. Spotting revealed 1 ringtail, 2 brushtails, a fox and 10 Western Grey Roo at a rate of 4 animals/spotlight hour, Sugar gliders were heard and red necked wallabies were seen during the day. Birds were more rewarding with 56 species seen or heard. Neil McCumber visited for one day and enthusiastically increased the bird count. Most notable were the Red-tailed Black Cockatoos which feed on the Brown Stringybark and Bullock in this forest and came into roost every night near our camp.

### Next Camp

#### April 23-24<sup>th</sup> : Wedderburn

Next Camp will be on Australian Bush Heritage's new Property, the Judith Eardley Reserve adjacent to Wychitella Flora and Fauna reserve. Apart from the usual cage trapping and spotlighting, we will discuss other more permanent survey methods that could be set up here e.g. nest boxes and pitfalls. At this stage, it appears we will not be able to have a fire so please bring your gas stoves.

Bush Heritage's Judith Eardley Reserve is located in north-central Victoria, about 3.5 hours drive from Melbourne. It is approximately 100 km northwest of Bendigo and 15 km north of Wedderburn.

From Melbourne or Bendigo follow the Calder Highway until you reach the town of Wedderburn. There are public toilets available here as well as cafes and service stations. From Wedderburn continue on along the Calder Highway for about 11 km (distance taken from the Mobil service station in northern Wedderburn). Turn right into the Wedderburn-Buckrabanyule Rd and follow this sealed road for a further 10 km. Turn right into O'Briens Road. Follow this gravel road until the end (about 2 km) where you will come across a gate that is usually locked. There will be flagging tape to mark the track into the reserve (about 2 km).

As it now gets dark near to 6 pm - please arrive well before 3 pm if at all possible.

Access into the reserve is possible with a conventional vehicle although you will be travelling across unmade farm tracks that are a little rough. Travel around much of the reserve requires a four wheel drive vehicle.

### Howard's Way:

**MEETINGS:** 2<sup>ND</sup> Tuesday of Feb, April, June, August,

**ENQUIRIES:** c/- Arthur Howard ph. 9481 4196

**NEWSLETTER:** Jenny Barnett ph: 9689 5883 or 9341-6505 fax: 9347 5199 email: [jennyb@vnpa.org.au](mailto:jennyb@vnpa.org.au)

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## WILDLIFE in CRISIS

The most destructive single creature that has been the most effective by far, in the alteration of world's natural landscapes and the extinction of other species, is the Homo sapien. Ironically he is so unique because of his ability, not only to save but to destroy all species as well. After discovering Australia he quickly went about devastating this virgin land, and still does in this Twenty First Century with more efficient tools, the thrill he gets of possessing and exploitation is close to the passion of vandalism.

After reading the Federal Government's Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment report, it seems that Victoria is destined to become the extinction centre of Australia. One third of the world's recent mammal extinctions, 22 species were in Australia. More than 2800 Australian ecosystems which are mostly eucalypt forests and woodlands are under threat. Land clearing has destroyed native animal habitats and triggered a new wave of extinctions in Victoria, the report said. Some of the threatened species mentioned in this state included Leadbeater's possum, Powerful owl, Long-footed potoroo, Spotted tree frog, New Holland mouse, Spot-tailed quoll and Eastern Barred Bandicoot. Areas with high numbers of threatened species include the Murray Darling Depression, Victorian Midlands, South east Highlands, Riverina, South coast Plains and the Volcanic plains region.

In the Volcanic plains of Victoria's west, more than 95 per cent of native vegetation has been cleared, only 1 per cent of the region plains grasslands and grassy woodlands are left. More than 70 per cent of the native vegetation in the Goldfields region in Central Victoria has been cleared, and the remaining vegetation is declining. Land clearing and logging has led to more extinction, making Victoria Australia's most damaged state, mostly in the west and central west, but the endangered species occur right across all the landscape. Under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, 231 plants, 214 animals and 35 ecological communities are listed as threatened. We have really changed the face of the Victorian landscape during the last Century, now barely into the Twenty First Century more and more clearing is happening right across this state. When white man first came to live in Victoria the balance of nature was undisturbed. The Aborigines had adapted themselves to the environment to ensure survival of all species that were important to them. Since then the spread of white settlement has left very little of Victoria undisturbed. Wildlife conservation is too often regarded as a sentimental matter; to us it is much more important than most people are inclined to think. It seems to me that few Australians have been taught to appreciate this country in which they live, and its original inhabitants of flora and fauna. For all native species we need to accept that every living thing has a permanent place in this state, no matter how unattractive they are we should ensure that they will survive. I am quite frequently asked this question. "Why should we set aside reserves of land, just to keep alive a few creatures that are probably doomed anyway?" My answer to these people is. "Australia is populated by unique animals not like those found in any other country. There are 140 species of marsupials and 2 monotremes, it is a living museum, once gone they can never be replaced. The only other country in the world where marsupials occur is the Americas with 75 species. One in the North and 74 in South wet tropical forests. Australia is regarded as the natural home of marsupials."

Maybe I am too sentimental about our wildlife. It is most urgent while there is still time to have areas of land set aside, untouched or little altered so habitats for wildlife can be planned intelligently, to help restore the natural balance. As I write this story habitats are being destroyed of many species of flora and fauna, in ignorance of their natural living conditions, which can never be replaced in this great living museum. Nature Reserves and National Parks are far too few and far too vulnerable; they do not represent one tenth of the kinds of habitats needed for the survival of the Victorian flora and fauna. I am aware that some species compete against man's economic interests, but is this an argument for it not to exist. For thousands of years they were untouched, till the Homo sapiens took charge. Our wildlife is interesting, beautiful and unique, and as far as I know there is no one in the Victorian or even in the Australian Parliament that has members that are genuinely vocal in the interests of our wildlife crisis.

ARTHUR HOWARD