



Mammal Survey Group of Victoria NEWSLETTER

March 2008

Next Meeting April 15th

See you at Arthur and Jess Howard's house, at 8 pm,

Last Camps

January 26th-28th Cambarville

This is our fifth camp at this site, but the first for 14 years. Over the long weekend, we encountered many of the species found previously but not Leadbeaters Possum. Bush rats were particularly numerous with 53 caught in 100 traps but Antechinus were reduced – 3 *agilus* and no *swansonii* – but they would have had trouble beating the rats to the traps in some areas.



Juvenile fantail cuckoo



Striped Xenica



Southern Forest Bat *Vespadelus regulus*

Spotting found Bobucks, Greater Gliders and Ringtail Possums, with a Sugar Glider heard. One bobuck (right) was particularly keen to pose for cameras. Batting was particularly successful with 34 captures of 6

managed to find an over-grown dam on the second night.



Feb 23rd-24th Bunyip

At a cool and, in the morning, damp camp, 56 traps resulted in 17 bushrats, 6 *Antechinus agilus*, one *A swansonii* and a square Brushtail Possum. Spotting revealed 4 Greater Gliders and one Sugar Glider while Yellow-bellied Gliders were heard in camp. The Harp traps caught several Chocolate Bats and Little Forest Bats

May 17-18th

June 7th -9th

possibly Grant
Wychitella

Next Camp – March 21st -24th Providence Ponds

This will be our 2-yearly survey for New Holland Mouse at Providence Ponds Flora and Fauna Reserve. We hope that we find more than the single specimens of this species found at our last two camps here.

Future camps

April 25th -27th Kings Flat Reserve, Bald Hills near Cape LipTrap

MEETINGS: 2ND or 3RD Tuesday of Feb, April, June, August, October
ENQUIRIES: c/- Arthur Howard ph. 9481 4196
NEWSLETTER: email: jennyb@vnpa.org.au
WEBSITE: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~msgv>

all photos taken at camps
by Andrew Mc Cutchen and Jenny Barnett



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Howard's Way:

NATIONAL EMBLEM

Kangaroos have bounded into the international arena again, by courtesy of the Animal Rights Activists a known conservation group. They are claiming that the kangaroo is in danger of extinction because of the continuing drought, and the commercial shooting. They also say there is the unseen cruel side to this slaughter, where countless numbers of baby joeys are wrenched from the dying mother's pouch to be decapitated, clubbed or stamped upon. A representative for the group said. *"This is the reality of the Australian meat industry, the continuing slaughter of the kangaroos has a great potential to cause the extinction of a number of remaining species."*

The Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia, and the Australian Departmental of Foreign Affairs, say there are more than 30 million kangaroos across Australia, and there is no danger of any of the harvested species becoming extinct. The killing of kangaroos has always been an emotive issue here as well as overseas. I am apposed to the slaughter of any of our native animals, because of the inherent potential for cruelty. I prefer to shoot with a camera so I can have a picture of the animal forever. Knowing that greedy people would kill every kangaroo they could sell, the Federal Government has set yearly quotas covering Australia, in an attempt to limit the killing that would manage the growing kangaroo populations, and protect the environment. Basically the legislation is -- *To cull or harvest is to hunt and kill them, only the most abundant species are to be hunted, by accredited licensed hunters following the guidelines of humane culling. It requires that the kangaroo be shot in the head, and no more than 100 per shooter a day. They must check the pouches of dead females for joeys, and kill them too.* Licensed shooters making great profits by killing kangaroos will not admit that their methods could be cruel, even though it is very difficult to kill nocturnal animals in the wild humanely.

Kangaroos have been hunted for thousands of years by the Aborigines and then the early settlers for their meat and skins. Now kangaroo meat has become increasingly popular here and overseas because of its low fat and high protein content, yet only 18 percent of meat is sold for human consumption, the rest goes into pet food. Kangaroos have been harvested at a growth rate of around 8 percent a year for the last 25 years. The commercial kangaroo industry kills millions of kangaroos a year, and I strongly say that exploitation of wildlife for commercial gain in this way is, however, inconsistent with the conservation of wildlife.

Kangaroos are ancient and highly evolved Australian marsupials that are in perfect balance with the Australian ecology. They serve to replenish native grasses, and in drought they will stop reproducing and remain stable until conditions improve. Their populations naturally rise and fall in number, and this is an important part of their evolutionary process. This serves to maintain the survival of the fittest, whereby only the drought resistant and fitter kangaroos survive, and pass their characteristics onto the next generation. Before the 1950s there was no money to be made by killing these agricultural pests, as the farmers named them, when they became a nuisance the farmers readily dispatched them. Towards the end of the 1950s professional shooters, furriers, pet-food producers and cool-store operators, realized that money could be made by killing these animals. With refrigeration, four-wheel drive vehicles, improved roads throughout the outback, the markets for kangaroo meat and skins were quickly growing overseas. The demand for meat and skins had now become very profitable; it was no longer a matter of population control. An industry, based on the cruel exploitation of our National Emblem was born.

After the Statue of Liberty, the kangaroo is the most globally recognised and tourist-friendly symbol in the world. At first the Red kangaroo was the main target of the industry, because of its ability, biologically and ecologically, to multiply fast given favorable conditions. This was made possible because the species had greatly increased in numbers, as a result of European settlement providing dams for farm animals. As more overseas markets were found for kangaroo products the more animals were killed. Soon there were not enough Reds to satisfy the demand. The Eastern and Western Grey kangaroos and also the Euro were just a few victims added to the list. By the mid 1970s over one million kangaroos were killed each year, today it is 7 million plus, which is worth about \$300 million annually. It makes this industry a powerful force able to convince government decisions. It also makes industry the biggest slaughterer of its own wildlife for profit in the world, 20 times more than the controversial Canadian Harp Seal slaughter. Getting emotional or hysterical about the future of our largest marsupials will not help. I think the only constructive things we can do are already being done, but we still need to keep an eye on the situation and see that commercial shooting is regulated, and the fauna laws are rigorously controlled.

ARTHUR HOWARD



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