



March 2016

Biodiversity is Life - Building Resilience in the Community

This issue clearly demonstrates the community resilience-building work of the Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby. It reveals a wealth of compassion for the rock wallabies and native biodiversity made evident through donations of beautiful art for fundraising, through the considerable hours devoted to conservation by dedicated volunteers, and through the momentum gained by collaborating.

Volunteers came together to promote the desperate plight of the Shoalhaven rock wallabies at the Kangaroo Valley Show in February, to lend a hand at the monthly working bees held at Waterfall Springs captive breeding centre, and to facilitate another rock wallaby release in the Shoalhaven. Experts came together at a recent community information day where neighbours met and learnt how to tackle weed and pest problems together to boost farm productivity and to conserve dwindling native biodiversity.

The Kangaroo Valley pest day audience was impressed by the Friends short film 'On the edge,' as was Exeter CWA, Mittagong Probus and Moss Vale Rotary Club when the documentary was presented to each group in January and February. Students at Kangaroo Valley and Glenquarry schools developed an understanding of the global biodiversity crisis and how it is impacting human society and life as we know it. So the Friends have shown many more people how to 'act local' and help save species.

Unfortunately, however, the majority of people appear to remain ignorant of the extinction epidemic and with such an overwhelming deficit of political will to protect biodiversity it is literally a 'life saver' to work alongside such an inspiring team of conservation-minded people. Thanks Friends.

Before we get into the stories, many thanks to the following wonderful people:

- Mim Merrick for painting and donating a remarkable rock wallaby portrait
- Karen for making and donating a unique RARE bag including artwork from Victorian wildlife artist Elizabeth Cogley
[Rare Bags Recycled](#) aim to raise awareness of the destruction humans are doing to the very planet that allows us life
- Keith Woodney for making 100 rock wallaby cut-outs for KV school students to decorate
- Sue Prescott for her fabulous habitat-themed artwork on Keith's extra-large rock wallaby
- Greg Thompson, Lorraine and Di for building a very impressive representation of the local rock wallaby habitat for the Kangaroo Valley Show display, aka 'the diorama'
- Jillian Naidu and Belinda Stewart for assisting with the BTRW education and painting at KV PS
- Dean and Troy Bagnall for being the best pest shooting and trapping professionals in the valley
- Scott Gailbraith from Shoalhaven City Council for sharing his weed expertise at the info day
- Graham Cochrane for his impromptu presentation on KV history and the significance of fox, wild dog and weed control from a local long term farmer's perspective
- Charles Signorelli from Local Land Services for sharing his expertise on invertebrate pest control
- Belinda Stewart for her presentations on local Landcare groups and the LLS leadership program
- Paula and Mike Woodney for selling the Friends travel mugs in their awesome KV fudge shop
- Friends President Chris Pryor, Secretary Melinda Norton and Treasurer Michael Irving for the incredible amount of time and effort they continue to give whole-heartedly
- All the Friends (especially Gavin, Zoe, Rick, Emma & Matt) who have volunteered so much time.



Community Information Day – Vertebrate Pests and Weeds

The Friends of the BTRW hosted a very successful pest awareness and solution day in Kangaroo Valley on Saturday 12th March with funding from the NSW Environmental Trust. Over 30 landholders attended the event with ten presentations on a range of pest animal and weed topics and control techniques.

It was a great opportunity for attendees to get advice and answers to their 'pesty' questions and be introduced to those who can help them progress in their future pest issues. A follow up pest information and training session was also held on 24th March to give landholders an opportunity to get free training in 1080 and Pindone baiting to control foxes and rabbits. These poisons cannot be used without the training.

Charles Signorelli from Local Land Services encourages all landholders to undertake the half day training, even if they have no intention of conducting baiting themselves. There is much handy information to know if your neighbours are baiting and the training dispels many fears and misconceptions about 1080 baiting.

The Friends gained several more local members through the community resilience-building event and really appreciate the support received from the Environmental Trust as well as all the presenters and those residents that have shown an interest in pest, weed and responsible pet ownership issues in our local area.





Congratulations are also in order ... for Derrick, proud winner of Mim's delightful rock wallaby painting, to Warren Perry for winning the lush RARE bag, to Keith and Barbara Woodney for winning third prize in the raffle (a symbolic adoption) and to Jasmin Knight for winning the pest day marble guessing competition – representing the 225 foxes shot in the last 3 years by the Bagnalls in Kangaroo Valley, Budgong & Illaroo.

Best Cat Enclosure

With the rise in popularity and creativity surrounding cat enclosures, the Friends are joining forces with Kangaroo Valleys Responsible Pet Ownership Group to run an annual competition – CAT SAFE – for the best cat enclosure, cat run or 'catio'. Contact the Friends for ideas on how to build your own or where to buy cat enclosure products. *Enclosed cats live longer and happier.* The only limit is your imagination ...

Australian Wildlife Society Award

The marvellous work of the Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby has been recognised by the well-respected Australian Wildlife Society (AWS). The award acknowledges the group's success in providing support to NPWS over the past 21 years to halt the slide to extinction of Kangaroo Valley's BTRWs and turn around their prospects for survival. At a convivial lunch in Sydney in early March, Chris Pryor, President of the Friends, was delighted to receive the Community Wildlife Conservation Award for 2015.

The AWS was formed in 1909: its mission is to 'conserve Australia's fauna and flora through education and involvement of the community' which is a perfect fit for the work of the Friends. Wayne Greenwood, a KV resident, is a member of the AWS Board. Please follow this link to find out more about the great works and achievements of the AWS www.australianwildlife.net.au



The Friends celebrated President, Chris Pryor, accepting the Community Wildlife Conservation Award from AWC Vice President Clive Williams.

A more detailed report will be included in a forthcoming Valley Voice.

THE FOLLOWING LINKS ARE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO CARING NSW RESIDENTS:

www.biodiversityislife.org
www.standupfornature.org

And if you missed it on the Friends Facebook page, check this link out for a cute surprise:

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/brush-with-death-but-a-tail-to-tell-for-pebbles-the-little-rock-wallaby/news-story/06cda0aae150262f4f6755dbf998a70a>

(No, joeys don't get a brushy tail till they're older)

The Famous Kangaroo Valley Show

Well, that was quite a show! We didn't have any rain this year, but the enervating persistent heat was quite challenging! The Friends were delighted to collaborate with the KV Environment Group to build a very colourful diorama populated by Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies – miniature painted ones, that is.

The teachers and pupils of Kangaroo Valley Public School were very keen to paint up some rock-wallabies ...with fantastic results! Each pupil in the school painted a 30cm high cut-out, so it was quite a challenge for the judges. And the school visit was a great opportunity for Juliet to engage with the children about the local endangered species and how everyone can help save native biodiversity.

The diorama represented the Kangaroo River, the escarpment and creek where the three colonies are located. The BTRW were placed on the landscape in the numbers that are actually present. It was a stark reminder of how precious the remaining rock-wallabies are and how critical the work is that the Friends undertake with NPWS to control that terrible scourge of our environment – the European Fox! Grrrrrrrr.

Many local children dropped by the diorama and were delighted to be able to recognise the BTRW that they painted. The diorama gave us a wonderful opportunity to talk to visitors about our goal of building the local wild population - now 30 - to at least 100 for self-sustainability, and to provide information on their main predator species (the introduced fox, dog and cat) and how they must be controlled if we are to succeed.



Chinese tourists at the Kangaroo Valley Show in February learning about how the Friends, NPWS and KV community are battling to save the local rock wallaby from extinction – they bought two plush toys!



Hooked on Fieldwork by Emma Davidson

My name is Emma and I was introduced to the plight of the Kangaroo Valley rock wallabies by a neighbour and now friend, Ali Hartman. I have been fortunate enough to volunteer at the three surviving Shoalhaven colonies over the past two years and have learned much about the animals and the dedicated work of both NPWS and the Friends directed towards the survival of this unique species. I understand the 'Friends' have now been active for over 20 years! I am proud to call myself a member.



Sibling winners Georgina & Jasper - KVEG presented book vouchers to the best rock wallaby painters: a girl and boy from each year K-6 KVPS



KV students, Max and Ryan, at the Show with their painted rock wallabies and the 'giant' rock wallaby artfully decorated by Sue Prescott

Enthusiasm is Contagious by Jillian Naidu

Early February and the kids brains are just clicking into gear. Great time to introduce them to something new and exciting to think about and explore. So we did - Jules, Belinda and I set off to KV Public School, class by class, to get the creative juices flowing and add some insight about the creatures that we share our beautiful with. It was evident when Jules showed photos, that many of the children were unaware of the rock wallaby.

Now we had their attention and they were all busting to share their many wildlife stories with us. Belinda also distributed a great brochure called 'Go slow for me in KV' which highlights the importance of driving with awareness and consideration for all creatures. What a delight as you could imagine to inspire and educate the next generation and give them ideas to assist in the protection of local native wildlife.

Thank you to the KVEG team for providing the cute rock wallaby cut-outs that were distributed to each student with the attraction of a prize to be won for the best painted in each class.

The initiative brought all the students to the KVEG and Friends stall at the KV show, where their brightly coloured and creatively displayed rock wallabies certainly attracted attention to this important local cause. These little natives are as important to the Valley as we are and the more knowledge we can spread the better chance the rock wallabies have of survival.

Why I joined the Friends Swan

by Gavin

I've been asked a few times now why I joined Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock wallaby and my simple answer is... *It's a conservation project close to home that I can be involved in.* Australia has an extremely poor record when it comes to extinct and endangered native species and it would be a tragedy to see another amazing animal slip away into the history books because I/we did nothing.

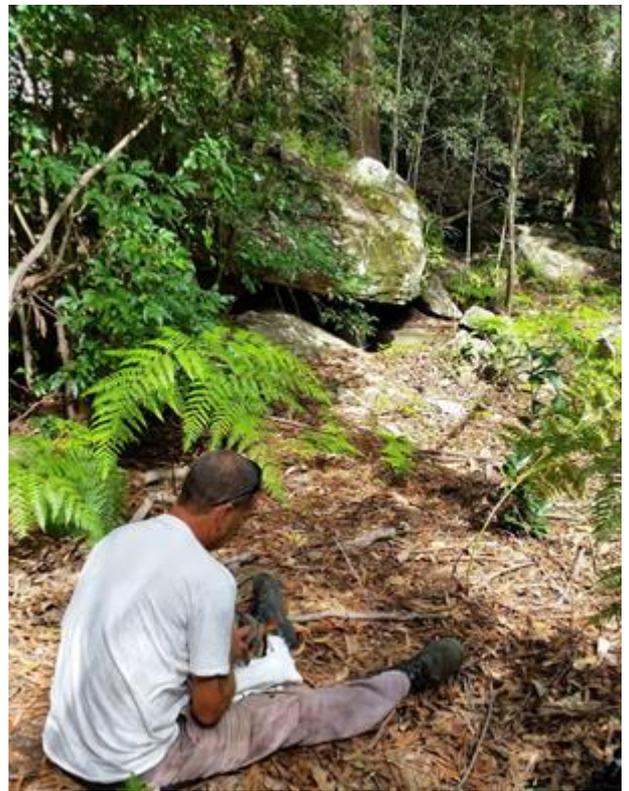
I had heard about the 'Friends' but didn't really know much detail. That was until I saw a trailer for the screening of 'On the Edge.' I attended the screening in Kangaroo Valley and was so moved by the film and the people I met, I knew right then and there that I wanted to become a member and get involved. Not even a full year has passed since I joined, yet already I have been fortunate enough to experience a field trip with Melinda from NPWS in a stunning part of the Shoalhaven where some of the rock wallabies live.

I was also totally amazed the first time I travelled to Waterfall Springs for a working bee. I have since been back twice and plan to be involved in many more working bees. I'm a hands-on type of person and not afraid to get dirty. So if raking away rocks to lay turf, or trimming branches near fences or washing a gate makes just one ounce of difference for the wallabies and the people such as Celia, Mel and Jules at the forefront doing wonderful work, I am blessed.

But there are so many other little things that make the whole thing come together and work. Anyone can play an important role ... little or large. Just getting the word out about the wallabies on social media has its benefits.

When I posted about the Friends on social media a friend of mine in Germany adopted a rock wallaby!

Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me onboard and allowed me to help protect these amazing Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies. Thank you to the Friends that kicked the whole thing off and to everyone over the last 20 years that has contributed. I do hope I am around in another 20 years as a Friend and that the wallabies are so abundant in the area, that the only thing to write in the history books is a success story ... because a wonderful collective of people did something!



Gavin releasing Tyson in the Shoalhaven soft-release enclosure after helping to trap him at Waterfall Springs



Left: Gavin Swan's grand kid at Ian Chambers KValley 'Music in the Garden' fundraising event last December
Right: Juliet at the Exeter CWA presentation in February



NPWS Shoalhaven BTRW Colony Report

The main news since December is the trapping of several wild dogs in Kangaroo Valley and Illaroo. And, of course, the release of a male, Tyson, and three two year old female captive breed rock wallabies into the Shoalhaven soft-release enclosure. With daily radio tracking visits, it was a prime time to set traps in the Creek colony to catch Jewel and Wendy to remove their radio collars now that they have established themselves amongst the other residents. We decided not to set traps targeting Ariel as she is sharing territory with Nibbler who currently has Pumba's precious joey emerging. Ariel will have to wait another month or two before we can take off her radio collar. It would make our year if Nibbler's joey survived and the four newcomers adjusted to their wild home without tragedy. With at least two more wild dogs, foxes and cats still showing up on monitoring cameras strategically deployed throughout the area, we will undertake another round of fox, cat and dog trapping before the enclosure gates are opened. Rosie, Pinot, Fiona and Nala are all well and eagerly awaiting Tyson's attention, I dare say.

Wallace, Merinda, Irene, Pangari, Pindari and the two cheeky youngsters are safe at the Mountain colony.

At the River colony, Flower's young at foot is bouncing with energy. Brigalow is spending time with Ray and Wirra. We are yet to confirm if Pia, Yaringa and Bangarra still have pouch young. Bangarra's Blackthorn is gaining independence. The three sub adult males, Bindi, Gingernut and Barralen are almost impossible to tell apart without any unique markings. They will sexually mature over the next six months and have been observed 'practice' fighting. It will be interesting to see if their affectionate father, Brigalow, loses his cool as the young lads begin to pursue his females. A few war wounds may at least set them easier

to identify! Below are two lovely photos of dear old Yalgoo and joey snapped by a very lucky Friend.

There are considerable changes to OEH SOS funding allocation for threatened species, but we are yet to understand the implications for the Shoalhaven BTRW Recovery Program. Fingers crossed.

We had another landholder sign up to the Friends/NPWS fox shooting program as well as a few more to the NPWS 1080 baiting program as a direct result of the Friends community engagement efforts at the Kangaroo Valley Show and the Pest Info Day. This exposure is so important to the security of the species.

Photos from the colony cameras are attached in a pdf. Enjoy catching up on your adopted wallaby!



Wild Weekend

Last weekend involved a lot of trapping, some trapping and... more trapping, with the aim of capturing the four wallabies chosen to be translocated to the Shoalhaven. Gavin and Melinda travelled up to Waterfall Springs on the Friday evening and trapping with Celia started the moment they arrived. It was encouraging to get all three females on the second trap check. Tyson, on the other hand, proved a bit more difficult to catch. A 'Brushy' of the arboreal variety wasn't making the situation any easier by setting off traps himself.

On Saturday morning the female wallabies had their radio collars fitted and were loaded into the car in their hanging pouch-like bags for the trip south with Melinda. She met up with more Friends volunteers to help carry them to the release site (pictured above). Gavin stayed up at Waterfall Springs to help John with building new frames in the Waterfall Springs Wallaby sheds that termites had eaten out over time. Joe Roo kept a close eye on the work to make sure it was all up to scratch and that OH&S policy and procedures were adhered to (pictured below).

While the three blokes hammered away in the sheds, the traps were set again in the hope of capturing the illusive male, Tyson. Celia worked through mountains of paperwork and organised and cleaned the Vet room. The sun went down and so did the tools, but still no Tyson. Gavin stayed a second night in the hope Tyson would be trapped. Trapping also continued in other enclosures as some wallabies needed to be checked and moved within the facility. After dinner on Saturday, Gavin and John trekked up yet again to check the traps. Tyson was finally caught in the hardening-off enclosure.

He made the long journey south to be reunited with his three girls in the Shoalhaven soft-release enclosure. Gavin, his wife Cherryl and daughter Zoe assisted Melinda with Tyson's release. Let's hope they all live happily ever after.





Here is an excerpt from Animal Control Technologies Australia Pty Ltd Newsletter Issue 34, Oct 15

Foxes are beautiful animals... **but they don't belong in Australia**

The European Red Fox is a magnificent animal. It has keen eyes for day or night vision, an amazing sense of smell, acute directional hearing and powerful jaws to capture and kill even quite large prey. Foxes are agile and fast (search YouTube under "fox chases wallaby" for a great example of a fox attacking a wallaby on the run) and they can even climb trees and fences. Females can breed in their first year and typically raise 5 cubs each. Given these formidable attributes, one cannot but have respect for such a sophisticated apex predator.

The sad thing is that this predator was mistakenly introduced to the Australian continent that had very few such predators. Australia was full of small mammals in the 1860s. Adding European rabbits at the same time provided even more food for foxes.

The introduced foxes quickly spread and now colonise almost every available habitat including city parks, grasslands, swamps, coastal dunes, alpine areas and forests from our southernmost coast to the tropic of Capricorn in Queensland. Their range is probably still expanding. They have a very adaptive diet that includes berries, fruits and insects, and they have thrived on a continent full of wildlife over the last 150 years. They are a key factor in our loss of species diversity with small mammals, marsupials and ground

nesting birds at particular risk. Even worse, they would be a vector for rabies, should this virus enter Australia, and they already carry hydatids and mange which are problems in rural areas.

The fox is a great animal but it is not a great animal for Australia!

Foxes also kill young livestock. Lamb marking percentages are easily increased by 20% or more with effective fox control. Effective fox control programs, involving area wide approaches, are one of the highest benefit/cost exercises any sheep grazier can undertake. With lamb prices high in recent times, the benefit of a fox baiting program is more than 50 times the cost of even an intensive program, with bait replacement over 4 weeks at a bait density of 1 bait per 5-10 Ha. With increased lamb marking percentages at a payback of 50 times the cost and with a direct benefit to native fauna, baiting really is a win-win!

The war on foxes must continue and we urge all governments to increase facilitation of landowners so that more landowners can join in to defeat this critical pest. Minimising impediments to enable increased community participation is a critical factor in managing this widely dispersed pest in Australia.

FOXOFF® & FOXSHIELD® baits are a proven method for fox management and are available to approved purchasers from local government authorities (such as LLS groups in NSW or NRM Boards in SA) or from accredited rural merchants in other states.

Prof Linton Staples

Director Animal Control Technologies (Australia) Pty Ltd

[Click to Read More and view Newsletter as PDF](#)

Photos from the colony cameras are attached in a pdf. Enjoy catching up on your adopted wallaby!

THAT'S ALL UNTIL NEXT ISSUE FANS. HAPPY AND SAFE EASTER FROM THE ROCK WALLABIES!



The wallabies loved their Christmas card thanks Evie