



September 2015

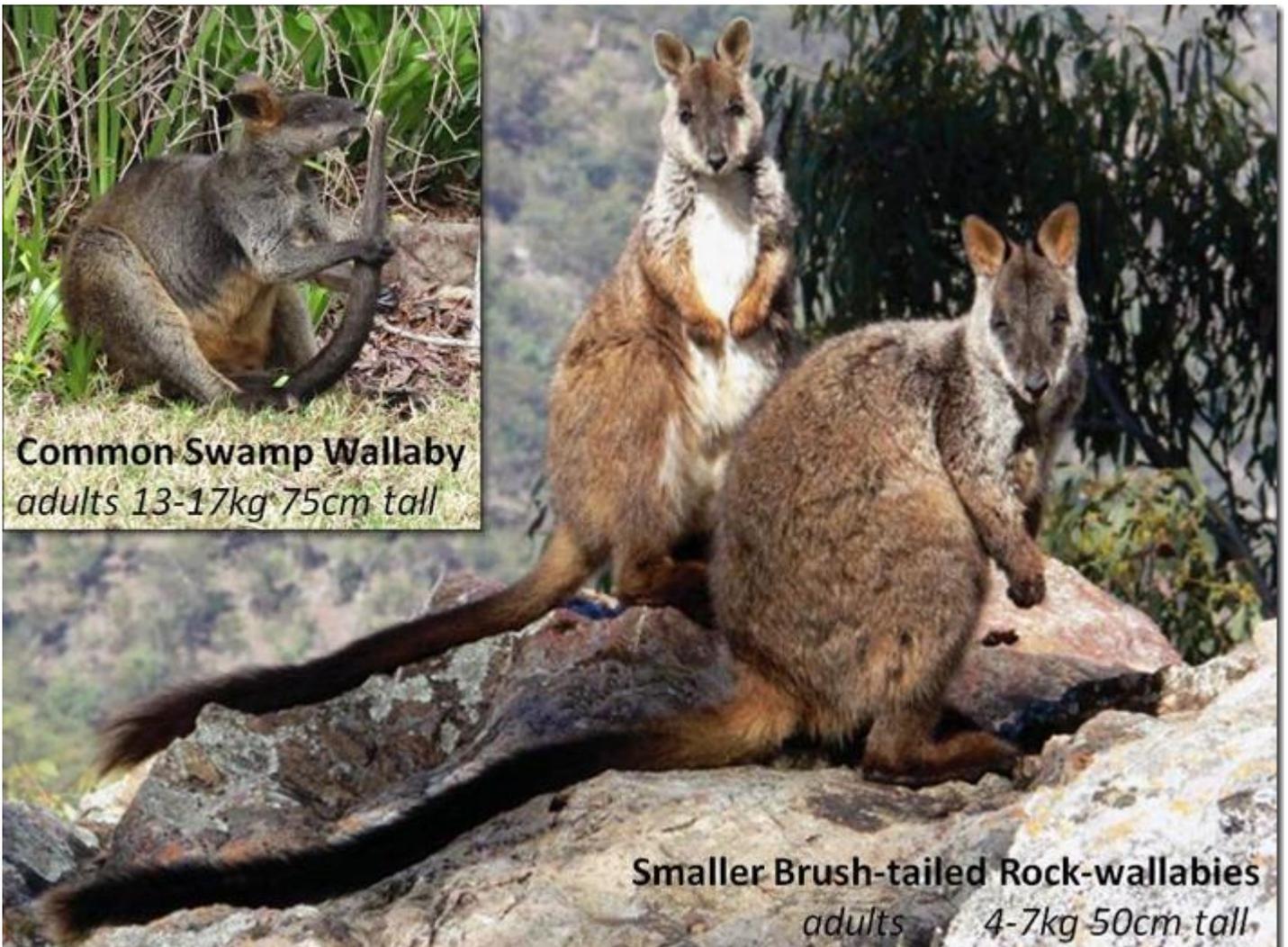
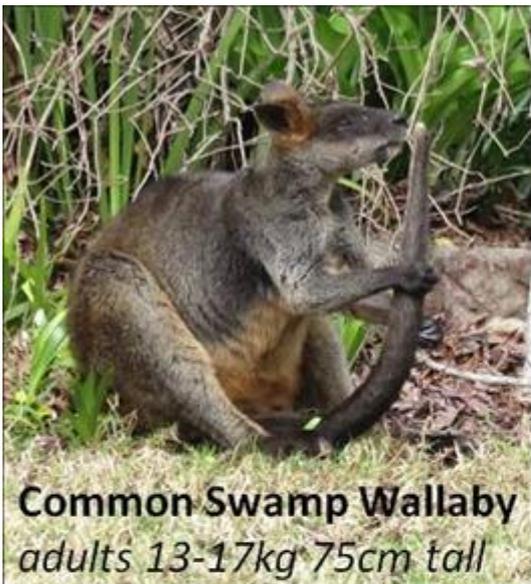
Have you liked the Friends on Facebook? Not only do we post articles about Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies, but we also let you know about other environmental issues and share stories that we think our followers might be interested in ... like this! You can join us by simply clicking here ... or search for us on Facebook.

Threatened Species Day is a national day held each year on 7 September to commemorate the death of the last remaining Tasmanian tiger (also known as the thylacine) at Hobart Zoo in 1936.

It is a time to reflect on what happened in the past and how we can protect our threatened species in the future. A day to celebrate our success stories and ongoing threatened species recovery work.

View film clips of thylacines in captivity, including the last film footage of the species.

Can you tell the difference between a Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby and a Common Swamp wallaby? While their coats are similar, not only are they different in size, but their tails are very different.



SPECIAL COMMENDATION FOR THE FRIENDS

The Friends were honoured to receive a *Special Commendation* in the *Community Award* category of the prestigious United Nations Association of Australia 2015 World Environment Day Awards in Melbourne on June 5 for “their amazing longevity in their commitment to the preservation of the Brush-tail Rock-wallaby in southern NSW ... their work across education, pest control, monitoring and partnerships.” Here is what the judges said: “This group has spent the last 20 years educating the public and engendering community support to protect and increase the population of this endangered species in the Shoalhaven area of NSW. Working in long-term partnership with local community, landowners and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the group’s efforts have begun to bear results. Numbers of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby in the area are now increasing.” Congratulations to all the *Friends* over the last twenty years.

WHAT NEXT

Having stabilised the remnant southern NSW rock wallaby population, the Friends and NPWS now have their sights set on reaching the ultimate goal of a self-sustaining Shoalhaven population. Such a population is estimated at 30 individuals per colony. At present we have 30 individuals over the three isolated colonies. The plan is to continue releasing captive bred sub adults to reinstate the lost genetic diversity vital to species resilience, and to continue to reduce the number of introduced predators which prey on joeys. Unlike other macropods which retain joeys in their pouch while they feed, rock wallabies are forced to hide 6-12 month old joeys in rock crevices for short stints to forage safely in their vertical habitat.

In an effort to ramp up the fox control program within a 5km radius of the three Shoalhaven BTRW colonies, the Friends and NPWS have contacted many more properties in Kangaroo Valley, Budgong and Illaroo to ask them to consider joining the community fox shooting program by allowing our loyal and professional shooters, Dean and Troy Bagnall to shoot foxes on their property. Landholders are contacted prior to every shooting visit, which occur at night with the aid of spotlights, fox whistles and a perfect aim. Remember that it is really helpful if you can report your observations of foxes and wild dogs around Kangaroo Valley, Budgong and Illaroo directly to Dean Bagnall on 0427 462 044.

The benefits of reducing the number of foxes and wild dogs in the Kangaroo Valley area flow on to residents with chickens, farmers with livestock and, of course, our unique native biodiversity.

The Friends Fox Shooting Contract is good value but not cheap. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to support this worthy program. Tax-deductible donations are now available online via Pay Pal.



NPWS REPORT

It has been a busy three months for passionate NPWS staff, Melinda Norton and Juliet Dingle, with the translocation of another four captive bred BTRW from Waterfall Springs breeding facility. After being closely monitored in the soft release enclosure, the male and three females are now free to roam the Creek colony. Radio-tracking and camera monitoring of BTRW and feral activity continues, as does supplementary feeding with special pellets. There is a good chance the three new females, Wendy, Ariel and Jewel, are now carrying tiny joeys, having spent six weeks fenced in with the unrelenting attentions of Pumba, the stud. It has been almost a year since the passing of old Adam and the resident females Nibbler, Pinot, Fiona and Nala are desperate for some male attention. Hopefully we will have some joey action to report over the summer. Nala, released into the colony a year ago, has been recently trapped to have her radio collar removed. Rosie's male joey is now well over a year old and has been named *Gumnut* by a young adopter, Sasha Pratten.

The two wild females at the Mountain colony, Merinda and her adult daughter, Irene, are both carrying joeys. There is no shortage of replacement males at this colony with at least two sons of old Wallace having been allowed to remain around the colony instead of being muscled out. It is normal behaviour for the dominant male to force young males to move out in search of another colony when they reach sexual maturity. Not so long ago, young aspiring males would have had hundreds of local colonies to choose from. Now, the only three that still survive are too far apart to allow natural gene flow.

High rates of joey survivorship at the River colony over the last year is an encouraging testament to the success of the fox control program. Wirra's year old joey has been named *Gingernut* by another young adopter, Phoebe Pratten. Yalgoo's Yaringa, Bangarra's Bindi and Blazey's Barralen are often seen playing with each other and Daddy Brigalow on the monitoring cameras. These mums as well as the other River adult females, Flower, Ray, Pia and Gundaroo, have new joeys on the way – photos in the next Newsletter.

NPWS has, once again, expanded its 1080 fox baiting program in the Kangaroo Valley, Budgong and Illaroo areas. Local residents are urged to regularly check the 1080 fox bait station location maps updated by NPWS on the Friends website *fox control* page.

NPWS has conducted several weeks of soft leg-hold trapping at the local BTRW colonies over the last three months targeting foxes, wild dogs and cats. Soft leg-hold trapping is very labour intensive as traps need to be checked daily. It is however, another vital weapon against the destruction *unleashed* by introduced predators on Australia's endemic fauna. Introduced predators can be extremely wary of taking 1080 baits, so specialised lures and humane traps is just another method of controlling these tricky ferals. Hopefully, one day, research and technology will find a long term solution to this overwhelming problem facing our native biodiversity ... before it's too late.

It is our job to act locally and concentrate on the survival of the few joeys born each year at each of the three Shoalhaven colonies, with the knowledge that our intensive management of introduced predators is also saving thousands of local animals every year.

SOS: SAVING OUR SPECIES IS GOING TO TAKE ALL OF US – WORKING TOGETHER. JOIN THE TEAM!

Our endemic species are being decimated. We can bury our heads in the sand, but it's happening all around us. And not just the species we know about like the Tasmanian Devil, whose numbers have declined by 90% over the last 20 years. Every day millions of native animals are killed by over 20 million feral and domestic cats now inhabiting Australia's shores. Foxes and other feral animals are having an equally devastating impact. And so are we as we expand our communities, industry and farms further into animal habitats. The problem is our wildlife can't fight back.

But we can! And surprisingly, it's the little things that can make a lot of difference. But only if we all work together. None of us can do it alone, but all of us can do it together. Welcome to the world of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby in Kangaroo Valley. Ten years ago, the species were under major threat of extinction in this area. However, the colonies are now re-establishing, thanks to the help of the local Kangaroo Valley community, the Friends, Waterfall Springs and dedicated team members from the National Park & Wildlife Service (Office of Environment & Heritage). Together they have formed a partnership to make a difference to the Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies - and it's working.

It's an ambitious program that is attracting the attention of institutions such as the Australian National University and TAFEs. And you can be part of the team. Every month the Friends and other volunteers join with the Waterfall Springs team to further develop the specialist breeding facilities, established by a passionate and entrepreneurial business man. Fox baiting and shooting makes a big difference to creating a safer environment for the wallabies in the Valley, as does reporting feral animals sightings. Yes, it's every little bit that counts. Don't be part of the problem, be part of the solution. If you'd like to know more, contact the Friends.



Friends, volunteers and the Waterfall Springs team working together at the monthly Working Bee.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

With the resounding success of year 1 of our three year Environmental Trust Community Education grant, the Friends have just received a cheque for our year 2 funds. Year 1 saw the design of an engaging school education program on biodiversity conservation and the threats to the BTRW. Programs were rolled out to 255 primary students from 3 local schools and 130 secondary students from 3 local schools and were really well received with very positive feedback from teachers and students alike. Year 1 also saw the creation and launch of our educational documentary *On the Edge* which provides a wonderful insight into the *Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby* and the works being undertaken to protect the rock wallabies in the Shoalhaven. Year 1 of our grant-funded educational efforts has contributed 32 new members to the group, numerous symbolic adoptions and some very generous donations. We look forward to year 2 of the grant funding where our school education programs will be taken to another 6 or more local schools. Education of our future generations is vital for the protection of our threatened species.

Springtime Song of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby

Winter's over - Spring is here!
It's my favourite time of year.
I wake, I stretch, I yawn.
I follow the light of dawn
Leave my crevice on the edge
For my sunny north-face ledge,
Through brambles of stunted figs
To nibble on rock-orchids.
Wriggling pouch on lap ... I bark ...
"Where is Dad?" little joey asks.
Rainbows in lazy lashes
Out the corner of eye, flashes:
"Here he is!" We sniff and kiss.
He lets us know we've been missed.
To check us he hops a mile;
Above white cheeks, dear eyes smile.
Fluffy russet back aglow,
Sun behind still hanging low.
Shoulders and chest are grey, strong;
His tail dark, lustrous and long.
To the tune of Grey-shrike Thrush
Time to give my tail a brush.
Gets a comb between the legs
To the cheap of hatching eggs.
The Rock Warblers feed their clutch
Busy bird work: looks too much!
For milk and pouch I'm so grateful.
Oh, but flying looks so graceful.
Each and every escarpment bird
Through the Lyrebird is heard:
"What on Earth will this day bring?"
Alas, Marsupials cannot sing!
Sweet, floral cocktails aloft
On Mother Nature's' breath they wait.
Fairy skirts are in season
Blueberry Ash is the reason.
Argh! But then: stench of goat.
Joey says: "We need a moat!"
Leap around and way up high,
But only a one goat we spy.
A herd of goats we do fear
Would end our very future here!

Our own family, alone, so small.
Ancestral stories we still recall:
When Glossy Blacks flew in flocks;
Our kind ruled throughout the rocks.
Interbreeding colonies;
Thousands, even climbing trees .

But then began the end:
Terrible things, hard to mend.
White people with thunder sticks
Murdered us for fur and kicks.
Our nurseries the foxes found,
So too did moggies and hounds.
Baby Rockies stolen away,
Same threat continues today.
Only know how to hide them
Out of sight of wedgy, python.
How can we keep joeys safe
As we feed and navigate?
Not a problem for flat-land roos
Born without our special shoes.
We've more grip than Nike, New Balance!
But nothing takes away our balance
Like a fat joey in the pouch.
Vertical leaps end with: "Ouch!"

We wonder why our family's here
When all others have disappeared.
Only hope with cats, dogs, foxes
Is the one that brought 'em in boxes.
Our brushy tail makes us distinct
Will you watch us go extinct?
Friends are helping beat the odds,
Your donation gets our nod.
Many species being lost.
We can't comprehend the cost.
Greed stripping them from the Earth;
Human's ignorant from birth.
Wiping biodiversity;
Destined for adversity;
Earth's resilience disabled,
Everyone's tomorrow unstable.

