SOMETHING DIFFERENT: Meet the Mareeba Rock Wallabies by Jann Mattick

In early August Terry and I travelled to Granite Gorge Nature Park on the Atherton Tableland to view the gorgeous Mareeba Rock Wallabies (*Petrogale Mareeba*). Granite Gorge is a spectacular area where visitors are able to roam freely amongst the wallabies. Beautiful multicoloured fur of grey brown and dark brown to almost black with paler underside, forearms, hind legs and tail base. Tail darkens to a magnificent bushy end which may have a grey white tip. It was wonderful to sit and observe the rock wallabies antics.

This species is endemic to north-eastern Queensland, restricted to a small area with discontinuous colonies. Mareeba Rock Wallabies (MRW) shelter in rock piles and caves during the day and emerge late afternoon to feed on grass and browse. Granite Gorge Nature Park allows feeding of the rock wallabies which, unfortunately, has changed some of their behavioural patterns – making them a bit too friendly and sometimes aggressive when they smell macropod pellets!

Although there is limited research available on the MRW it is believed the habitat quality is declining due to impacts of fire, weeds and non-native herbivores. On these grounds it is listed as Near Threatened by the IUCN. In Eastern Queensland a complex of 9 rock wallaby species forms a virtually unbroken chain from Cape York to the NSW border. Terry and I will certainly be busy visiting them all!

We were also thrilled to have great views of a Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo. It was sitting in the fork of a tree high above watching us with great interest. This area also has 7 possum species – some much friendlier than others. **Quiz Questions:** How many rock wallaby species live in Australia? How many are threatened?

Please email member articles of interest for inclusion in the Friends of the BTRW quarterly newsletter to juliet.dingle@environment.nsw.gov.au
Community Awareness and Fund Raising

For Friends school education this term, Juliet headed twice down to Milton to teach Shoalhaven Anglican College primary students about our biodiversity dependence and how to fight the extinction crisis. The students learnt how to use radio tracking equipment in the playground and monitored for native animals and introduced predators using motion-detecting cameras. This class is making their own documentary about the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby. Juliet will present to St Johns High School students later this month.

To mark National Threatened Species Day on September 7 the Friends conducted a special edition of our Environment Trust-funded school education program to the awesome kids at Kangaroo Valley School.

Since June the Friends have presented ‘On the Edge’ to Wollongong U3A and Lions and received a generous donation from Moss Vale Rotary Club as a result of the road show. And ... roll out the red carpet ... the Friends have won an Award of Recognition at the Doshima International Film Festival 2016 with their Environment Trust Documentary. Congratulations to the films’ producer, Stewart Cohan.

From think global back to act local: the NPWS BTRW technical officer attended the Kangaroo Valley Markets last month along with our professional feral fighters, Dean Bagnall (shooter) and Charles Signorelli (Local Land Services) to promote Kangaroo Valley community coordinated seasonal fox baiting, where land owners and managers are encouraged to work together to strategically control foxes with 1080 for two weeks during critical periods in September and March. The Friends gained a member, a new property for our fox shooting program and a generous donation as a side benefit. Thank you to Greg Thompson of Kangaroo Valley Landcare for organising this community service.

Another two Kangaroo Valley residents have signed up to the Local Land Services half-day 1080 training course to begin their own fox control and join the Kangaroo Valley community seasonal fox baiting program which effectively complements the NPWS multi-tenure permanent fox baiting program and the Friends/ NPWS feral shooting/ trapping program expertly deployed by Dean and Troy Bagnall. The Friends subsidise KV 1080 training, so please contact friends@rockwallaby.org.au if you wish to find out more.

The Friends committee wish to extend their appreciation to all the new rock wallaby symbolic adopters – especially Jamberoo Public School, who raised $200 to help out the Recovery Program with four adoptions – and to the generous end of financial year tax-deductible donors. Thank you for helping save our joeys.

And while we are on the ‘Thank yous’ a big shout out to members Emma, Gav and Ali for their wonderful job running the Friends stall at Huskisson’s special Environment Day markets and to our devoted members Pat, Jann and Terry for raising precious funds and awareness for the plight of the endangered Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby at Bundanoon’s Winterfest. If you can help spread the Friends word, please don’t be shy.
The Friends held an exciting brainstorming workshop on July 19. We have a mountain of awareness- and fund-raising ideas to implement ... we just need more committee members and friends to help make these plans a reality. Many hands make light work and a few individuals have been carrying most of the load.

Please consider giving up some of your talent and time to help us progress and secure the future of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (especially in the south!). The rock wallabies need your energy and creativity.

Come along to the Friends of the BTRW Annual General Meeting at Jing Jos in Kangaroo Valley from 9.30am on October 22 ... and help us help them!

See new footage of the Kangaroo Valley rock wallabies and hear from local expert threatened species guest speakers. Share a morning tea with some long-standing volunteers. Everyone can help in some shape or form.

Please email friends@rockwallaby.org for a proxy form if you are unable to attend.

Kangaroo Valley’s own fundraising guru, Frank Howarth, NPWS BTRW technical officer, Juliet Dingle and Friends president, Chris Pryor, joined enthusiastic representatives from a number of government and non-government conservation agencies for a productive meeting organised by Deb Ashworth, threatened species coordinator, Office of Environment and Heritage. Inspirational staff from Taronga, Waterfall Springs, Conservation Volunteers Australia, National Parks Foundation and OEH marketing and community engagement met and exchanged ideas at Taronga Zoo on July 28. Working together we hope to strengthen the NSW BTRW Recovery Program with solid strategy and innovative revenue raising.

Jann Mattick has been a Friends member for more than 10 years!

She is a dedicated volunteer at the Waterfall Springs monthly working parties (and several other regular places including Jenolan).

Jann is releasing a Brushy here straight after trapping and pouch-checking.

Jann and partner Terry have been a wonderful help at the working parties ... give them some paint and a brush each and they will paint all day!

Photo courtesy of Cheryl Swan
NPWS Summary

No sign that Tyson has commenced breeding with Pinot, Rosie, Fiona, Nala, Jewel or Bianca at the Creek colony. Spring is definitely in the air at the other two colonies with plenty of pouch action, although no photos of heads peaking out yet. Merinda gets the 'tolerant mother of the month' award exhibiting patience and generosity to cheeky subadult son Cliff while carrying a large pouch young. He is pictured tweeking mum’s nose below. Irene is also juggling Jessie with a large pouch young at the Mountain colony, although Jessie has been hanging out with dad a fair bit. Brigalow is spending more time reinforcing is alpha male status up the east end of the River colony, while Wirra’s sexually mature son Gingernut has become rather friendly with a heavily pouched Flower down the western end. Brigalow is not looking too flustered, but Gingernut and Bindi are bearing the signs of male warfare. Flower’s daughter Pebbles is still a little young for romance and is more interested in play-fighting – she was caught on camera biting Gingernuts foot in response to his advances. Similarly, Bangarra’s Blackthorn is still more interested in a tickle-fighting her father Brigalow. Bangarra is keeping her pouch contents secret, while Pia’s joey is well and truly out now. Yalgoo’s Yara is independent, but still unsure if Wirra is carrying. Barrelan is still being tolerated by Brigalow, while Bindi is keeping a low profile or has moved on from the eastern end of the River colony.

Merinda and Cliff, Merinda and Cliff, Bangarra and Blackthorn, Bangarra and Blackthorn, Pebbles, Flower and Gingernut, Wirra, Gingernut

Here are short video links to the Friends Youtube channel: Wirra, Gingernut1, Gingernut2, Bangarra, Blackthorn1, Blackthorn2, Blackthorn3, Blackthorn4, Blackthorn5, Blackthorn6, Bangarra and Blackthorn1, Bangarra and Blackthorn2, Bangarra and Blackthorn3, Brigalow leap, Brigalow playing with Blackthorn

Juliet presented on the Shoalhaven BTRW program at a Southern Highlands Threatened Species Seminar.

Thank you to John Wright for signing up his new Kangaroo Valley property to the fox control program. Although Dean and Troy Bagnall were previously authorised to enter and shoot foxes on this 170 acre property between the River and Mountain colonies, it now fills a critical missing link in the NPWS 1080 program with up to 9 fox bait stations. This summer, the emerging pouch young will be even safer.

Waterfall Springs News

The monthly volunteer working parties have continued at Waterfall Springs with all benefits flowing on to the Rock Wallabies. Plans are afoot to further support the BTRW cause by lifting the profile of the Breeding Facility in the public arena.

Steven, the son of Waterfall Springs property owner Lloyd Oldfield, is commercialising the Guest House and non-BTRW facilities. This has long been the plan for the sections of Waterfall Springs not pertaining to the Licensed Animal Establishment and is the reason the facility has held a B&B License. The property is awash with underutilised assets, some poorly maintained, which were constructed with the intent of commercialisation for the purpose of funding/maintaining the property. It is intended that the B&B Operation will both utilise and maintain these assets/facilities. Steven will work closely with Sanctuary Curator, Cella Thomson as well as NSW Recovery Team leader, Deb Ashworth of the Office of Environment and Heritage who ‘own’ the rock wallabies and manage the strategic breeding program.
SPECIAL FEATURE
Recognising the remarkable conservation efforts of Gerroa Environment Protection Society GEPS:

GEPS to raise banners to highlight new ‘endangered’ status of Greater Glider at Seven Mile Beach

The Gerroa Environment Protection Society GEPS will erect its bum tree protest banners, featuring pictures of Greater Glider possums, along Crooked River Road in the run up to the council election to remind residents of the threats to this species and the destruction of its habitat in the past by Shoalhaven Council. In the well-known Bum Tree protest of 2014, GEPS (http://geps.happenings.id.au) along with hundreds of Kiama and Shoalhaven residents demonstrated against the removal of over a hundred large old roadside trees, including the 400 year old bum tree, that were the homes of an isolated colony of Greater Glider Possums at Seven Mile Beach.

The underside of a Greater Glider possum. This rapidly declining species has finally been recognised nationally as a vulnerable species and the Seven Mile Beach population has preliminary listing as an endangered population in NSW.

GEPS Secretary Howard Jones said, “our banners are intended to raise awareness of the vulnerability of this species and the importance of voting for a council that listens to the community and cares about protecting wildlife.” He suggested the community’s actions at the protest had been vindicated by the recent recognition of the endangered status of this species. He said the State Government has now made a preliminary determination to list the Greater Glider population at Seven Mile Beach as an ‘endangered population’ under the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

In its preliminary determination the NSW Scientific Committee has echoed what the local community tried to explain to an indifferent Mayor Gash in the bum tree protest a few years ago, that this “population is facing a very high risk of extinction in New South Wales in the near future.” Mr Jones referred to the Committee’s comments that the Seven Mile Beach population “has undergone loss and fragmentation of habitat over the last decade as a result of clearing associated with agriculture, golf course expansion, sand mining, sewage treatment plant construction and roadside clearing, resulting in loss of hollow-bearing
Mr Jones pointed out that in May the Federal Department of Environment also listed the Greater Glider as a ‘vulnerable species’ under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. He said this warns us that this wonderful species is now at risk of extinction, not only at Seven Mile Beach but also across the country. Extinction results from the accumulated loss of small remnant populations.

GEPS president Warren Holder stated that Shoalhaven Council’s roadside tree clearing contributed to the fragmentation of Greater Glider habitat. The cumulative impacts of the widened road corridor in combination with the sand quarry dredge ponds have resulted in a barrier to the east west movement of this species. It also resulted in the death of at least one greater glider and the relocation of a family that lived in the bum tree, and no one knows if they survived or not.

Shoalhaven Council was disinterested in the pleas of residents to seriously reconsider the implications of their operations on the known Greater Glider population in these trees and refused to listen to locals who had a better understanding of the impact they were inflicting on this unique animal community. Mr Jones said that some time after 1982 the Koala appears to have become extinct at Seven Mile Beach and we are now looking at the potential loss of another iconic species unless we have a more community-minded Council that listens to residents and ensures development and council activities don’t continue to impact on the survival of this iconic species at Seven Mile Beach.

Gerroa Environmental Protection Society – a short history of another vital community group

GEPS was formed in 1986 after community outrage over sand mining company Cleary Bros clearing of about 40ha of Littoral rainforest, swamp forest and bangalay/ blackbutt sand forests on Baileys Island Gerroa, (currently the Sewage Treatment Plant STP site). The company said that the clearing was for agricultural purposes and at the time there was no Council laws protecting this vegetation. The Nationally ecologically significant vegetation associated with Seven Mile Beach SMB comprises National Park and private estate and bridges Kiama and ShoalhavenCouncils.

Community anger over Councils weak environmental laws in relation to this clearing led to a significant change in the makeup of Kiama Council and two environmentalists were elected and for the next 20 years the Council was considered “green”. The 1994 Kiama LEP recognised this SMB vegetation as an Area of High Conservation Value with a highest level of environmental protection.

Lots 22 and 23 adjoining Baileys Island at Gerroa had escaped the Clear Bros 1986 clearing and in 1991 Council engaged Ross Muston and Associates to undertake an environmental assessment of these two lots which led to a special Environmental Protection (scientific) zoning. This special zoning was disallowed by the Labor government’s LEP template so in the 2011 Kiama LEP and this special zoning status was lost. The seeds of future environment problems were sown by this zoning change.

In 1990 Cleary Brothers lodged an application for a sand quarry on the above mentioned cleared Baileys...
Island site. In 1991 Cleary Bros appealed Council's refusal in the Land and Environment Court. GEPS joined with Kiama Council to successfully oppose the application and the quarry application didn't proceed, (GEPS shared costs of this defence with support of legal aid and funds raised from the local community).

In 1992 Cleary Brothers established an unauthorised sand quarry in highly sensitive vegetation including Littoral rainforest and bangalay sand forest (EECs) south of Lot 22 Gerroa. The company claimed 'existing use rights' but after a few days in court agreed to withdraw and was required to rehabilitate the site.

In 1998 Cleary Bros made a further application to the minister to extend the current mine into highly sensitive EEC swamp mahogany and swamp oak forest west of current mine site. GEPS appealed to the Minister Dr Refshauge who refused the application.

In 2002 when the State Government was negotiating with the community regarding the site of the Gerroa Gerringong STP GEPS supported the STP location on Baileys Island and negotiated agreement to rehabilitate a large part of the land which Cleary Brothers had cleared in 1986. In 2003-05 GEPS obtained $120,000 in funding and in kind support and members planted 20,000 trees on this previously cleared land on Baileys Island. This rehabilitation has been very successful with little loss of plantings and substantial natural regrowth. Today most of the plantings are in excess of 10 meters high.

In 2008 Cleary Brothers lodged a Part 3A application to extend the current quarry north through Blackbutt forest and EEC Bangalay sand forest. Our Society attempted to negotiate with Department of Planning to obtain more consequential offsets to compensate for the fragmentation and loss of vegetation but these appeals fell on deaf ears. Minister Sartore approved the application with minimal offsets and without considering issues of vegetation fragmentation and ground water impacts. GEPS successfully took the minister and Department of Planning to the Land and Environmental Court. This appeal was upheld and the company was required to provide significant offsets to create a habitat corridor to connect the vegetation that the mine dredge pond had isolated. The company was also required to monitor groundwater movement and provide remedial action if and when the dredging works altered the water table. The Environmental Defenders Office and pro-bono contribution of two biological scientists supported GEPS in their appeal. The cost to GEPS and this small community for this court case was $22,000.

In February 2014 GEPS unsuccessfully opposed roadside clearing of 145 large trees (including the 400 year old Bum Tree). This clearing contributed to the ongoing reduction of connectivity within the Seven Mile Beach National Park, limiting wildlife access to important winter flowering swamp mahogany forests and the only permanent water at SMB in Foys and Coomanderry Swamps on the western side of the road. Shoalhaven Council did not consult with the community over this clearing. The widened road corridor and the north/south dredge ponds now largely divide the vegetation at SMB into western and eastern sections with insufficient connectivity. This has serious repercussions for Greater Glider feeding patterns.

Recently GEPS has held meetings with Department of Planning and local member Gareth Ward to highlight concerns regarding the continuation of the Cleary Bros sand mine into some of the most biologically significant vegetation in the Illawarra south west of the Gerroa caravan park. This vegetation consists of a rare assemblage of 5 Endangered Ecological Communities EEC within the last remaining sequence of beach/dune/rainforest/wetland vegetation in the Illawarra (possibly on the south coast).

The Draft Illawarra Growth and Infrastructure plan has identified this vegetation as a key asset – High Conservation Value vegetation within the Illawarra Biodiversity Corridor, but it also identifies it as being within an extractive resource area. Unfortunately the Draft Plan also has a provision for consideration of ‘offsets’ and other mitigation mechanisms where it’s not possible to avoid the impact of development on such key assets. This provision will enable sandmining into this significant vegetation.

Our Society has always had regard for due process when fighting local environmental issues, however, after 25 years of watching 80 hectares of mostly Endangered Ecological Communities cleared for sand mining at Seven Mile Beach we realise that we have to make this a political fight to make any real difference.

Contact Howard H Jones 42323173 / 0434400466 or Warren Holder 42340024
**Social Media**

**Friends Facebook**


... and weekly videos of our very own Kangaroo Valley Rock wallabies coming soon to [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com).

**Sharing Interesting Biodiversity News Links**

The Friends Facebook page includes links to rock wallaby news articles and more. If you are not on Facebook don’t fear ... the Friends E-newsletter gives you another chance to connect to such links. If you find any biodiversity conservation-related stories, please feel free to email though to us at [friends@rockwallaby.org.au](mailto:friends@rockwallaby.org.au) ... and enlighten us all ... or at least make us smile 😊. Hope you enjoy these:


**Springtime Poem**

*by an anonymous Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby*

```
Winter’s over - Spring is here!
It’s my favourite time of year.
I follow the light of dawn.
Leave my crevice on the edge
Up to sunny north-face ledge,
Through brambles of stunted figs
To nibble on the rock-orchids.

Wriggling pouch on lap … I bask …
“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 poucch 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 Natures’ breath they waft.
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 the 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 ‘n’ 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!
Nothing takes away our balance
Like a load 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, ‘n’ foxes
Is the species 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 the nods.
```
Above: Emma signing up a new Friends member at Huskisson World Environment Day markets

Left: Thank you to Sean Scott Photography for this fantastic Fraser Island photo.