Friends Come of Age … Celebrating 21 Years

Kangaroo Valley Hall was all spruced-up for our 21st Birthday Party on Saturday May 13. Thank you to all those who attended – from near and far. It was a wonderful event and well attended – a perfect chance to reflect on our history and our goals ahead. And a great excuse for a well-deserved social event with cake and champagne! Hard-working Friends executives and volunteers were recognised by the NPWS Volunteer Program and Community Engagement Coordinators with a presentation of beautiful certificates and pins. And once again the Friends documentary ‘On the Edge’ received a sincere round of applause.

A huge thank you to those who spoke at the event, including NSW BTRW Recovery Coordinator, Dr Deborah Ashworth, as well as to Kangaroo Valley Preschool for catering, to Gavin and his coffee, Peter Swain for his Acknowledgement to Country and Didgeridoo tunes and Allan Stone for his superb MC skills. The rock wallabies will benefit directly from the merchandise and raffle ticket sales – thanks to prize donors.

A cute article by Di Jaffray featured in the Valley Voice and is attached, as is the ‘OPERATION REBOUND’ DONATION FORM for our TAX-DEDUCTABLE end of financial year fundraising appeal. Thank you for your amazing support, without which our aim to save our Kangaroo Valley rock wallabies would not be possible.

Deborah Ashworth, a senior threatened species officer with the Office of Environment and Heritage, explained that the Kangaroo Valley rock wallabies are one of ten sites considered to have the greatest chance of persistence into the long term and have therefore been a focus of the NSW ‘Saving our Species’ Program.

The Jenolan Caves site, having risen in population from 6 to 100 over the last thirty years, gives us confidence for the other Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby priority sites.

“"The Jenolan Caves example gives me real hope we can do this at other colonies and we can have this animal surviving and thriving in the wild for many years to come," said Dr Ashworth.

She said the rock wallaby was a unique species:

"Their bodies are amazing they've got these soft grippy foot pads that allow them to bounce up rocks without slipping, their bodies can twist in mid-air and their tail they use to counter balance."

Read the full story at this ABC News link:

Belinda Stewart and her daughter Sharni (centre) sold a pile of raffle tickets at the Friends 21st Birthday Party at Kangaroo Valley Community Hall, and the new NPWS South Coast Branch Director, Kane Weeks, was evidently impressed as he has joined as a Friends member. More photos of the 21st Celebration:

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipMxd1J7VlZ1bLupMphqtiSnRhVu7we_O27RKpmIPcZzZsD-fEF6A3c5Qrt2aGYL4w?key=T3lUb0xXdTZnalWMd5S29sSTFPRFNvXhhejBR

Alastair and Molly Stevenson of Upper River were there to help us celebrate and generously donated $5000 towards ‘keeping the foxes and wild dogs at bay.’ These funds will cover two predator monitoring cameras and two weeks of soft leg-hold trapping to keep our joeys safe and sound this spring and summer.

The ‘Saving our Species’ Program values partnerships with active groups like the Friends. Our President Chris Pryor was interviewed by the Office of Environment and Heritage last month. Follow this link: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/in-the-spotlight-chris-pryor

Throughout 2016 and 2017 monthly working parties at Waterfall Springs have been organised and well attended by members of the Friends, maintaining and improving the NSW BTRW Captive Breeding Facility.

Interested in getting involved and meeting the captive breed rock wallabies?

The working bees at Waterfall Springs Sanctuary at Kulnura, Central Coast, are on the following dates:

- Fri arvo 16 and Sat 17 June
- Fri arvo 14 and Sat 15 July
- Fri arvo 18 and Sat 19 August
- Fri arvo 15 and Sat 16 September
- Fri arvo 13 and Sat 14 October
- Fri arvo 10 and Sat 11 November

This is a great chance to help the sanctuary with trapping the rock wallabies and giving their various enclosures some TLC. If you are keen to participate please contact: melinda.norton@environment.nsw.gov.au
NPWS Report

While we are still getting an economically justifiable amount of bait takes after 20 years of intensive 1080 baiting around the rock wallaby colonies, it is only natural for the fox population to evolve more foxes that are weary of buried baits and ejectors over time. Successful introduced predator programs must include a range of control methods. And that’s what the partnership between the Friends and NPWS does best!

Bait-shy foxes, wild cats and foxes are being humanely trapped around the rock wallaby colonies by Troy Bagnall and Mark Sobierański, while Dean continues to keep the fox numbers as low as possible within our strategic buffer zone by night shooting.

Our extensive predator monitoring camera network is making a massive difference and we thank the landowners who are making the effort to check the cameras regularly and report sighting to us in a timely manner, thereby saving the lives of juvenile rock wallabies and allowing the Kangaroo Valley colonies to gradually grow. By helping the Friends financially, you are helping our collective, holistic, creative and science-driven management activities.

Continued funding cuts to NPWS renders the recovery of the rock wallabies increasingly reliant on fund raising and community engagement made possible by the Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby. If you own or rent a property in Kangaroo Valley, Budgong or Illaroo please consider contacting Evelyn at Local Land Services and becoming a Feral Fighter: evelyn.osborne@lls.nsw.gov.au or 0409 541131

Bianca, Ariel and Tyson had their radio-tracking collars removed in May after a successful targeted trapping session by NPWS at the Creek Colony. Nibbler, Fiona and Jewel couldn’t resist the sweet potato, apple and corn, so we also had the opportunity to check their health and pouch condition.
For some reason Tyson is not breeding yet … However, Dumbledore is making all the right moves with the three new Waterfall Springs females – Emerald, Frankie and Pinto – over the last two months whilst safely adjusting to their new wild home inside the soft release enclosure.

Although no predators have been caught on camera sniffing around the enclosure, we have delayed opening the gates due to the presence of dogs and foxes within a couple of kilometres. Mark is currently trapping these introduced predators and the gates will soon make a breeding male available to Pinot, Nibbler, Rosie, Fiona, Jewel, Nala and Bianca. So we should finally have some joey news to report at the Creek Colony next newsletter.

On that note, a fluffy winter coat cannot hide a small pouch bump developing on Irene, our sole female at the Mountain Colony. Fingers crossed this joey survives as we lost the two joeys here last year. Jessie and Cliff have reached maturity at two years of age, but are still smaller than Pindari and alpha male Pangari. The males at this colony are still not showing any sign of fighting … we look forward to the chance of releasing captive breed females here too.

Our little rock wallaby friends at the River Colony - Flower, Ray, Wirra, Bangarra, Brigalow, Pia, Yaringa, Gingernut, Pebbles, Barellan, Blackthorn, Paroo, Yarra and Perilla - are all well. With extra Friends-sponsored predator trapping here, we are aiming for a higher success rate than last summer when we lost half of the emerging young to a sudden influx of wild dogs and foxes. Everyone can make a difference!

Meet ‘Pinto’ (not to be confused with Pinot) checking out the view of her new enclosure at the Creek Colony immediately after being released by Lisa O’Neill and her student assistants: Marieka, Brynn and Jarrah.

Meet Lisa Marieka Brynn Jarrah

The ‘student team’ has been taking turns helping Lisa radio-track the new arrivals from Waterfall Springs and have enjoyed monitoring themselves … and the rock wallabies on photos and video cameras.
Environment Trust Grant Wrap-up

The Friends provided funds to NPWS (via the Foundation for National Parks) to employ the BTRW technical officer to design and implement two school education programs – one for primary students and one for secondary students. The programs investigate the importance of biodiversity conservation and examine the local BTRW project as a case study highlighting the crucial roles of science, technology and community assistance.

740 primary students from 15 schools and 380 secondary students from 4 schools have been educated and engaged over the last three years by the tailored school education programs which include two online multimedia presentations, hands-on fieldwork components and creative group work. Hundreds of children have been nurtured as ambassadors for our local threatened species. A handful of students have volunteered their time to assist with monitoring the translocated rock wallabies and topping-up their pellet feeders and water in the soft release enclosure. Students from Jamberoo PS are learning to process predator monitoring cameras, with a view to taking on some of the work load. The Friends have pledged $2000 per year to continue the school education program and two schools are already booked in.

This is what Andrew Smee, Principal, Kangaroo Valley Public School had to say about the Friends school education program:

*The students of Kangaroo Valley Public School have been positively engaged with the environmental presentations Juliet has delivered over the past few years. Juliet's commitment to help the students understand the true meaning of biodiversity and how it relates to her conservation work with the local population of threatened rock wallabies, has provided the students with an understanding that they can all make a difference and be champions for their local and greater environments. The students’ creation of puppet plays, rock wallaby displays for last year's Kangaroo Valley Show, threatened species dioramas and a video has embedded a deep understanding of the need for environmental awareness, conservation and continued environmental education.*

The Environmental Trust grant has also helped the Friends gain new members and donations, particularly as a result of the “On the Edge’ documentary launch and 21st Birthday celebrations held at Kangaroo Valley Community Hall in May 2015 and 2017 respectively, through the documentary roadshow taken to 15 local community clubs/groups, the two well-promoted public screenings organised by the NPWS Fitzroy Falls Visitors Centre and the two screenings at the Empire Cinema at Bowral. Over 300 DVD copies of the documentary were distributed and the film was well received by three international film competitions.

The Community Pest Information day was held by the Friends on Saturday 12th March 2016. Presentations were made by National Parks and Wildlife Service, Local Lands Services, Landcare, Shoalhaven City Council and the Friends, covering a range of topics including invasive animal and plant species threats and control techniques, responsible pet ownership, the local BTRW protection program and local landcare projects. The Friends ‘On the Edge’ documentary was also played followed by a Q&A session. A second pest information session/training day was then held on Thursday 24th March 2016 for those unable to make the Saturday event and for those completing 1080/pindone chemical training. A total of 45 people attended these sessions.

The Friends have distributed all 5000 colour brochures produced in year 1 of this grant – thank you to all the businesses that support us through displaying these alongside our donation boxes.

The Friends Survey Monkey Pest/ BTRW Awareness Questionnaire was completed online in February 2017 by 100 respondents and clearly demonstrates a rise in community awareness of the plight of the Kangaroo Valley rock wallabies, pest problems and the work of the Friends relative to a comparable 2010 postal survey by NPWS. If the Friends could make the rock wallabies themselves available for local public viewing then we would be ticking all the boxes voiced by the community to promote the group’s attractiveness.

Congratulations to all those involved in administering the $40,000 grant over three years.
Jamberoo School Students participated enthusiastically in the biodiversity conservation presentations, fauna monitoring and radio-tracking ‘fieldwork’ in April, marking the completion of the *Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby* three year NSW Environment Trust Grant for the popular School Education Program delivered by NPWS BTRW technical officer, Juliet Dingle. The Friends are continuing to fund this valuable program, shaping young ambassadors to protect our local threatened species well into the future.

**Friends Spreading the Word   by Emma Davidson**

The World Environment Day Market is becoming another fixture in the ‘Friends’ calendar. Held annually at the Lady Denman Maritime Museum Complex at Woollamia in Jervis Bay, the day is an opportunity to consider the state of our planet, its inhabitants and what more we could achieve for the future. Gavin and I had a great day with the Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby stall which was a real stand out and drew a steady stream of well-wishers, new members and the curious.

These events are always a great chance to meet like-minded people and just have a good yarn as well as let those who are unaware of the plight of our local rock wallabies know about the colonies, our successes and challenges and keep hope alive for the future!

Thanks to Gav for the good company and pizza and to Jules and Mel for the transfer of the ‘travelling road show’ into our safe keeping.
New Friends Merchandise available at Rockwallaby.org.au

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New Habitat Clearing Laws at Odds with ‘Saving our Species’?

"Given the Government's actions around land clearing and the intent to devastate native forests under the new logging laws, the Saving Our Species program is a hugely expensive band aid," says Oisin Sweeney, a senior ecologist at the National Parks Association. Radical changes to NSW Native Vegetation and Threatened Species Conservation Legislation were passed last November, despite significant public outcry.

Now the NSW Government's Draft Regulations, Biodiversity Assessment Methodology and other products associated with the new Biodiversity Conservation Legislation are on exhibition. If you wish to view these documents and make a submission by June 21 please visit https://www.landmanagement.nsw.gov.au/

There is plenty of information available at this Governments website, plus the following links:


If you haven’t had has your fill of conservation news, here’s some more articles of interest:

You're a red-neck wallaby, not a rock wallaby!!!
You're a bandicoot, not a rock wallaby!!!