

The Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Newsletter September 2014



President's Report – More *Friends* join the Management Committee at our AGM

The Friends have just held their 19th Annual General Meeting, which means that they have now been working on the conservation of the BTRW for 20 years. The Friends of the BTRW and all its members, past and present, have persistently and tirelessly worked to save the BTRW from extinction. Twenty years ago the BTRW in its southern most range of NSW, and with its specific genetics, was in rapid decline in population numbers. It took at least 10 years of continual fox control and the monitoring of colonies, to be able to determine that the Friends, NPWS and the Recovery Team, had been just in time to turn things around for this endangered species. Well done everyone. The Shoalhaven BTRW's future is still a long way from being secure, and there is still much work to be done, however, they are now out of the precarious situation of 20 years ago.

The Management Committee for 2014/2015 is: Susan Robertson, President; Chris Pryor, Vice-President; Melinda Norton, Secretary; Michael Irving, Treasurer; John Rowntree, Carla Jackett, Juliet Dingle, Matt Haidn, Lisa O'Neill, Celia Thompson, Ian Chambers, and Rosemary Johnson as Ordinary Members. I sincerely thank Brian Care for 10 years of being the Friends' Treasurer, and Ernie Dumbleton for 20 years of being a Friends' Committee member. Their contribution is much appreciated.

I welcome the four new Committee members: Celia Thompson, Michael Irving, Ian Chambers, and Rosemary Johnson. We look forward to working with you.

The Friends recently participated with NPWS in a captively-bred BTRW release at the Creek colony of three young females. This release was quite different to the previous releases in that the wallabies were brought to a newly built, predator proof, enclosure for a hardening off period before they venture into completely wild habitat. We are all hoping that these three little females will be well and truly "street-wise" when they leave the enclosure for the last time, and have the best chance of survival.

More recently, the Friends hosted along with NPWS, an Environmental Festival called Tails, Whales and Scales in the Kangaroo Valley. It was a celebration of environmental volunteers, and it was very heartening to see that in this small part of the world there are so many people working on environmental protection. I especially thank Pat Hall, Chris Pryor, Melinda Norton, Juliet Dingle, Ian Chambers and also Shirley Kirkwood from the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, who came from Sydney to help with the event, for their considerable efforts.

In the love of Nature.
Susan Robertson,
President.



MELINDA & SHIRLEY SPORTING TAILS AT TAILS, WHALES & SCALES

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The Friends wish to
thank *Jing Jos* of
Kangaroo Valley for
providing a comfy
café venue for our
meetings.

New members are
always welcome at
our meetings.

Any skills or support
you can offer will
contribute to local
biodiversity
conservation.

Please email us to request your
next Newsletter by email



YARINGA FREE-RIDING WITH YALGOO

DONATION BOXES & ADOPTION POSTERS

... are available to any business interested in supporting the local biodiversity conservation initiatives of the *Friends*



NPWS OFFICERS MELINDA NORTON AND JULIET DINGLE WITH FRIENDS PRESIDENT SUSAN ROBERTSON, MEMBER PAT HALL AND CONTRACTOR SCOTT HARTMAN AT THE RECENT BTRW SOFT-RELEASE

THANK YOU TO

SCOTT HARTMAN OF

ENVIROQUEST

FOR BUILDING THE NEW

SOFT RELEASE ENCLOSURE

NPWS have been very busy with the rock-wallabies these past 3 months. We have surveyed two sites where Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies-like scats were reported. Unfortunately, like all similar surveys over the last decade, no evidence of rock-wallaby habitation could be found.

We now have a wonderful enclosure built by *Enviroquest* to temporarily house captive-bred rock-wallabies prior to releasing them into our local colonies. The habitat and vegetation within the 30x40m enclosure offers a taste of what's to come on the outside. A secure 3m high fence surrounds a beautiful rock-stack for the wallabies to shelter in and sun themselves upon. This new enclosure allows captive-bred wallabies to adapt to the local climate and diet without undue pressure from the wild wallabies, possums and predators. After being housed in the enclosure for 2 months, we will open the gates and let them move out and mingle with the locals. We will continue to radio track the new recruits until they establish their own territory within the existing colony. This approach of easing the animals' transition into their new environment is called a *soft-release* approach.

We are really excited to be able to report that we have just kicked off our first soft release of 3 female rock-wallabies bred at Waterfall Springs Sanctuary (Jennifer, Nala and Priscilla). All signs on the monitoring cameras suggest the girls are making themselves at home. But translocation for most species is stressful and it is still early days. Their diet is being supplemented with the same special pellets they received for 2 months in the Waterfall Springs hardening-off enclosure. We can only hope that they adapt well to life in the Shoalhaven and help our local of rock-wallaby population recover.

NPWS have recently trapped at the Creek colony and removed the radio-collar from Fiona – a captive-bred female who has resided in the colony for over 18 months. Fiona has a small joey in her pouch which is very encouraging. And no trapping at the Creek colony would be complete without a visit from the charming Pinot. She is such a plucky female, totally un-phased by the whole trapping experience. She has a large pouch young who can't be far off poking its' head out of the pouch occasionally to catch a glimpse of the outside world. Nibbler and Rosie are carrying joeys at a similar stage. Rosie's joey from earlier this year is large and agile enough to stand a good chance of survival against feral foxes, cats and dogs. We think it's a boy - any name suggestions?

Funny little Waratah has shown no sign of carrying young again this year, in spite of dear old Adam's affections. The young male Ilyroo continues to be occasionally spotted on a camera at the far end of the Creek colony.

We will soon be checking the monitoring cameras at the Mountain colony, where we expect to glimpse the first shots of Merinda's and Irene's emerging joeys. At last months' camera roll call, Pindari, Pangari and Wallace were also accounted for. NPWS have quickly responded to local landholder reports of wild dog activity in the vicinity of the Creek and Mountain colonies, implementing targeted 1080 baiting and shooting. Fingers crossed, we get this far-ranging culprit before it preys on any precious rock-wallaby joeys.



YARINGA IS NOW COMPLETELY OUT OF YALGOO'S POUCH

At the eastern end of the River colony, Bangarra is proving to be an attentive first-time Mum. Joey's Bindi and Yaringa (by old Yalgoo) have so far avoided predation, despite reports of a very large black cat roaming nearby. This destructive predator has managed to avoid all professional trapping efforts to date. Flower, Wirra and Corowa are carrying good size pouches up the western end. Alpha male Brigalow continues to be very active throughout the colony! No other males have been spotted on the spy cameras, however Twelve has been observed hanging around on the colony perimeter.



Keep those fingers crossed *Friends*, and stay tuned for the special Christmas edition with plenty of joey photos from the spy cameras.

"Cherish the land that no one owns" Li Po 750 B.C.

"It is a somewhat sobering thought that we know more about the number and position of stars in our galaxy, places that none of us will ever visit, than we do about the myriad of small animals that live in our backyard. This is despite the fact that these creatures eat our plants, sometimes bite us but most importantly contribute to the cycling of nutrients that sustain life."

Mark Dangerfield

"... humans are interesting. With all the wonders there are in the Universe, they invented boredom."

Terry Pratchett, Hogfather

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed."

Albert Einstein

"Stuff your eyes with wonder ... live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories."

Ray Bradbury



My BIG Day Out....

by Roxy, Kangaroo Valley's only ROCK STAR!!!!

Well, wasn't that a lovely day out! Last Sunday my humans, known as Friends, took me to a glorious green place called the Kangaroo Valley Showground for the **Tails, Whales and Scales Festival**.

They brought my fave old rocker and helped me put on my sunhat and sunnies. I could sit there watching all the big people and little people having a wonderful time around me... and so many of them stopped by to say hello, especially all the lovely little ones. I like children: they stroke my very special, brushy tail....

First of all, a young man called Jacob told us about his people who used to come to the valley to hunt a long, long time ago (my family would have kept well out of the way then). Then a lovely lady (Susan Robertson, the biggest 'Friend') with a beautiful red hat helped everyone understand why the work of all the humans there was so important. She said a lot of her Friends are helping me and my friends to expand our families. That's really wonderful because we need some help to make sure our joeys grow up to have their own babies. I really liked her!

There were lots of beautiful, caring humans, called *volunteers*, from different places showing how they look after our precious environment and all the other amazing animals and birds that live *in the wild* with me. How beautiful is that! They all think that where we live is so special that it needs special care so we can all keep living there. There was even one man there, called Dean, who works with the Friends and kills foxes, those horrible creatures with big teeth that take our joeys before they can look after themselves. Go Dean!!!

Some of the people there were so clever that they showed pictures and talked about all the interesting work that they do or the animals they love.... And the other people were really fascinated. Wow! They heard about snakes (I don't like them), frogs (jumpy things), birds that live by the sea (what's that?) and injured animals (some like me) that need help..... and other animals called foxes that fly – what?????

Some other people were giving away plants, the right sort of plants for my furry and feathery friends, for people to put in their gardens – some of them looked quite tasty! The people looked like they were enjoying their foraging too. Music and singing people filled the showground with sounds as sweet as bush birdsong on a spring morning. What a *Friendly* atmosphere!

And, best of all, there was this amazing TALL rock that little humans were climbing up!! I so-o-o wanted to show them how it's really done - *without ropes* - because I have a lo-o-ong tail that helps me jump safely around the rocks and special grippy feet but they said it wouldn't be fair. Grump! Maybe I'll get a chance to climb that rock next year...?

But the most important thing was ... a nice lady with a small box thing took my picture to put in the paper which just goes to prove I really am a ROCK STAR!

Editor's note: there are so many wonderful people to thank for putting on this great festival: a report will appear in the November KV Voice to thank them all appropriately. So, for now, thank you to everyone and please look out for that article.



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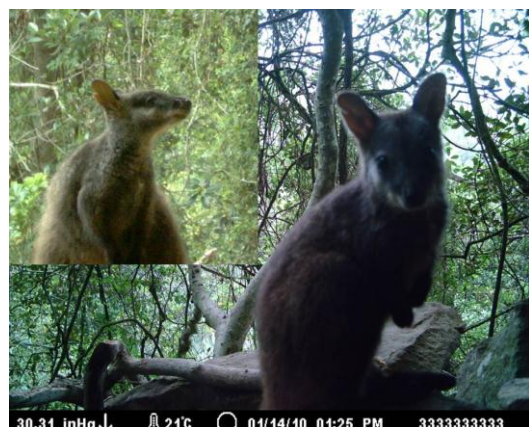
www.rockwallaby.org.au



ADOPT ME ???

Each Newsletter features a *personality profile* ... based on known history and NPWS expert camera surveillance ... of one of the endearing Shoalhaven *Rock-stars* available for adoption.

The adoption packs make a meaningful gift ... with all proceeds directed towards education programs and conservation measures that help implement the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Recovery Project.



Meet Bangarra

I was born at the River colony in 2009 to two wild Shoalhaven parents, *Blazie* and *Yalari*. I am still very close to my old Mum and share overlapping ranges with several other females. My Dad moved away when some younger males started fighting him for dominance. It is tough being a male Macropod – only the strongest ones get to hang around with the females. I guess it's a good way to make sure our joeys are strong.

People often get us endangered Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies confused with common Swamp wallabies. Although we share a similar range, our habitat is very different. *Swampies* hang around the edge of the bush, roadsides, paddocks and even peoples' gardens. *Brushies* like cliffs, caves and boulders! Other wallabies just cannot perform the necessary acrobatic tricks to live in our vertical habitat. It is difficult to imagine the way we leap up and down rocks and trees. We are like hopping possums!

Living in rocky escarpment is our way of trying to keep joeys safe from feral foxes, cats and dogs. These predators are native to other countries and were brought to Australia by early European settlers. Australian native animals have not had time to evolve adaptations to avoid the hunting skills of introduced predators. Unfortunately, humans sometimes make silly choices that have horrible long-term consequences for other species. Humans need to remember how precious the variety of life is.

I am one of the easier Rock-wallabies for our NPWS friends to identify on the monitoring cameras, as I have had a rather large tear in the side of my right ear ever since I was a joey (see top right picture). I am really excited about having my own joey. You could be one of our first human friends to see photos of it emerging from my pouch. For a month or so, all you see is a skinny little head occasionally poking out. Then the joey starts jumping in circles around me, between pouch rests, to help its muscles grows strong.

The Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby newsletter will keep you informed about our *ups and downs*! There are heaps of Rock-wallaby facts and cute pictures in your adoption pack. Thanks for helping to save us!



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**CHECK OUT AND POST
THESE LINKS TO ONLINE
BIODIVERSITY AND BTRW
EDUCATIONAL
PRESENTATIONS**

<https://slidebean.com/p/aq2iRQi6cI/Brush-tailed-Rock-wallaby-Saving-our-Species>

<https://slidebean.com/p/lK2QZgNReF/Growing-Resilience-in-our-Community-with-Biodiversity-Conservation>

**Meet another
one of the
Friends
Management
Committee**

**(and NPWS
BTRW
Technical
Officer):**

Jules



What motivated you to become a Friend?

I think I was *born* a Friend of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby! I spent my early childhood climbing trees and rocky creeks above Jack's Corner in Kangaroo Valley. My farmhouse was perched on a cleared bench between rocky escarpment and I felt *on top of the world* ... looking over a sea of fog! Now I feel completely at home scrambling through the rock-wallabies habitat, looking for fresh scats to send to the lab for genetics analysis.

It has been almost ten years since I started as a NPWS technical officer working with the lovely Melinda Norton (NPWS project officer) on the Shoalhaven BTRW Recovery Program. My work includes strategic multi tenure 1080 fox baiting and fox monitoring using sandpads, BTRW monitoring using several techniques – permanent rocky scat plots, infra-red remote cameras and radio tracking. It makes my day if I manage to spot a rock-wallaby in the flesh, as they are very camouflaged, secretive and quick. My job only gets harder with less foxes and more rock-wallabies, but that's *exactly* what I'm pinning my hopes on. The Friends supports this NPWS work by raising funds, receiving grants and promoting awareness. I cannot imagine my life without the fulfilment of volunteering for community action groups.

What do you do as a Friend?

I am the Education Officer on the Friends' Management Committee and attend meetings to give an update on the Shoalhaven Rock-wallabies and NPWS Recovery Program. It is my NPWS job to keep track of the individual rock-wallabies. I rapidly flick through over twenty thousand photos a month on my laptop, searching for the occasional shot worthy of the newsletter or that allows me to identify individuals for roll call – let's just say I have got my *eye in* on recognising each individual from ear notches, blazes and other distinguishing features. My intel on the individual BTRW is responsible for the fundraising adoptions, and I help out with the Friends admin, newsletter, merchandise and community awareness events.

What do you enjoy most about helping the BTRW?

I love getting to know the individual physical and behavioural characteristics of the Shoalhaven Brush-tail Rock-wallabies from watching them on remote camera. One thing they all have in common is that they are experts on passive solar – they live amongst north-facing rocks warmed by the winter sun, seeking refuge from predators and summers' heat in deep rock crevices and beneath rock orchids and fig trees. Who likes temperature extremes?

I have grown absolutely besotted by these unique agile little creatures – I love their shyness, their cheekiness, their acrobatic abilities, their pretty faces, their brushy tails and their russet rumps glowing in the sunshine. I thrive on sharing my passion for biodiversity with school students. I enjoy working with the community to conserve biodiversity. And I appreciate the fact that all the effort I put into the NPWS and Friends fox control program benefits an array of native fauna species, including possums, gliders, bandicoots, potoroos and spotted-tail quolls. And I really love working with Melinda Norton – she is a champ!



**Thanks to the Friends that
helped on our weeding day**

**FRIENDS OF THE BRUSH-TAILED ROCK-WALLABY
INCORPORATED**

ABN 71 795 420 274

www.rockwallaby.org.au



OUR VISION: A future where Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies thrive in the wild in a biodiverse Australia.

Dear *Donor*,

The Friends have recently been endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient by the Australian Taxation Office and, as such, donations to our Public Fund of \$2.00 or more are now tax deductible to the donor. If you would like a receipt for your donation in order to claim it against your tax then please complete this form.

Your generous donation is very important to us, supporting the *Friends* work to secure the future of the Endangered Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby. Our efforts to date have received recognition both locally and nationally and are seen as an excellent example of what a community group can do to help preserve a threatened species.

Your valuable support is an integral part of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Recovery Plan to save this species from extinction.

Thank you for your support,

Susan Robertson

President

The Secretary

Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Incorporated

PO Box 6182, Kangaroo Valley NSW 2577

I would like to make a tax deductible gift to the *Friends* to the amount of: \$ _____

My Name (as donor) is: _____ Date: _____

My Address is: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

My Email is: _____

I would like to pay by:

☐ Direct deposit into the Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Public Fund Account

Westpac Bank, Nowra: BSB - 032 691 Account Number – 41 1322

Deposit reference donor name: _____ Date of payment: _____

☐ Enclosed cheque

All donations into our Public Fund of \$2.00 and more are tax deductible. In order to receive a tax receipt for this donation you **must** return this form to the Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Incorporated:

btrw@fastrac.net.au or PO Box 6182 Kangaroo Valley NSW 2577.