



The Shadow

November 2008

Number 20



Newsletter of Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Conservation in Victoria

Special Edition

GRAMPIANS RELEASE



Caitriona Fay from the Ian Potter Foundation releases one of the sub-adult 'bachelors'.

Photo: Debra Main

Almost ten years after the removal of the last known Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby from the Grampians National Park, they once again roam the rocky cliffs of Moora Moora Creek.

On November 12th, ten rock-wallabies (plus one pouch young!) were released at three locations in Moora Moora Creek in an attempt to establish a second wild population in Victoria.

With over 88 hectares of suitable habitat, 4.25km of cliff line and flowing water within 100m of the release point, the Moora Moora Creek site should provide the perfect home.

Two 'family groups' consisting of one male and three females were 'hardened off' together, one group at the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve near Canberra and the other at the Dunkeld Pastoral

Company's purpose built facility in Dunkeld, just south of the Grampians National Park. A bachelor group of two males were also housed here prior to release.

Each of the rock-wallabies will be monitored for the next six to twelve months using radio collars. Preliminary observations (a week after release) have shown the animals have stayed relatively close to the release sites with the bachelors choosing a group each to bond with.

The trial release was followed by a dinner at the Royal Mail Hotel where guests were entertained by the MC Rob Gell and contributors to the Recovery Program were acknowledged for their efforts.

This trial-reintroduction is a critical step in the recovery of this species. It will be considered successful if the rock-wallabies breed in the wild and the species is secured in the Grampians National Park.

"Green 89" checks out his new surrounds.

Photo:
Debra Main



Some background...

- Due to hunting for the fur trade and pressure from introduced predators Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies in Victoria were thought to have gone extinct by about 1916.
- They were rediscovered in East Gippsland (EG) in 1937/38 by local landholders Keith Rogers and Clyde Sykes. These findings were then documented by Norman Wakefield.
- By 1974, 16 active colonies had been identified in EG.
- Unconfirmed reports in 1984/85 suggest that small scattered populations may have survived in the Grampians until the late 60s and 70s.
- A re-visit of the EG colonies in 1986 resulted in only 3 of the 16 colonies being active but an additional site at Mt William was discovered.
- In 1988 a study of the Grampians details only one active site at Red Rock and several unconfirmed sightings
- In 1996 the Victorian Recovery Team was formed to design and implement a strategic wild monitoring and threat abatement project and to initiate a captive breeding program.
- In 1999 the last animal in the Grampians National Park was trapped and taken into captivity for the captive breeding program.

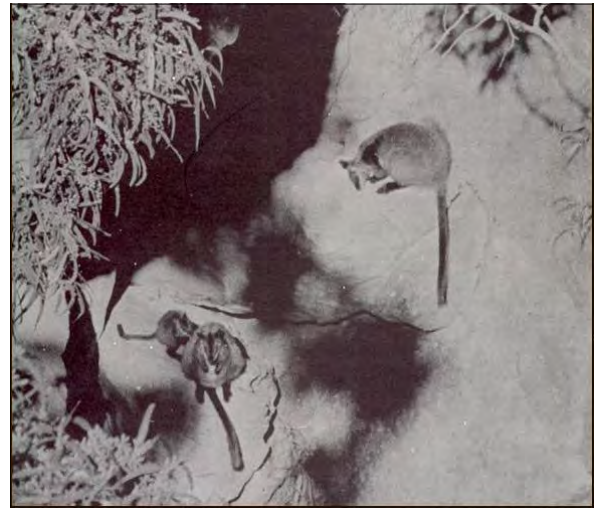


- In 2000 only 2 colonies are known to remain in East Gippsland

"Grampians Granny", the last Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby to be located in the Grampians National Park...

... until recently!

Photo:
Raz Martin



A photo from the late Norman Wakefield's collection, circa 1970.

- Two years later, a third colony was discovered about a kilometre away from the known sites in East Gippsland.
- Also in 2002, the captive breeding program achieved success with accelerated breeding by cross-fostering with similar species.
- In 2003, the Alpine bushfires destroyed all the Victorian animals and the breeding facilities at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve near Canberra.... the wild population in East Gippsland survived.
- 2005, a translocation strategy is written, recommending a re-introduction to Grampians National Park
- Major financial sponsorship from Mervyn Jacobson and Genetic Technologies is offered which greatly increases the rate at which the recovery program can achieve its goals.
- In 2006, individual numbers reach a milestone of 50 (wild and captivity)
- In 2008, the most successful trapping session numbers are achieved in EG, with 9 adults and 2 pouch young recorded over three weeks.
- A trial-reintroduction takes place with 10 captive-bred Rock-wallabies released at Moora Moora Creek in the Grampians National Park.

And it couldn't have been achieved without...

The Sponsors...

- The Myer Foundation and Myer Family Company;
- the Dunkeld Pastoral Company and Nature Conservancy;
- Dr Mervyn Jacobson;
- the Ian Potter Foundation;
- the Ross Trust;
- Lady Lou Dawson;
- the Bristol-Myer Squibb Foundation;
- the Future Environment Fund;
- Genetic Technologies
- Iluka Resources.



The Partners...



Department of Sustainability and Environment

Grampians trial reintroduction



& dinner to celebrate!



Left: Sponsors receive public acknowledgement for their support over the years.

Photo: David Taggart



Above: Jen Moffitt and Dr. David Schultz of Adelaide Zoo

Photo: Lucy Clausen



Above: Caitriona Fay (Potter Foundation), David Taggart (Adelaide Zoo) and Debra Main (Myer Foundation).

Photo: Paul Taggart



Above: Cecelia Myers (Myer Family) and Colin Wright (CVA).



Above: Margo Siestma (Grampians NP Advisory Group), Netti Corrigan and Sam Stofell (Halls Gap Primary).

Right: Mike Stevens of Grampians NP Program Coordinator, Parks Victoria.

Photo: David Taggart



Below: Dr. Mervyn Jacobson (Jacobson Family) and David Dobroszczyk (TNR)

Photos: Lucy Clausen



Above: Dr. Chris Dickman (dinner speaker), Rex Beveridge (Mirranatwa) and Kevin Bowell (Grampians NP Advisory Group) .

Photo: Lucy Clausen

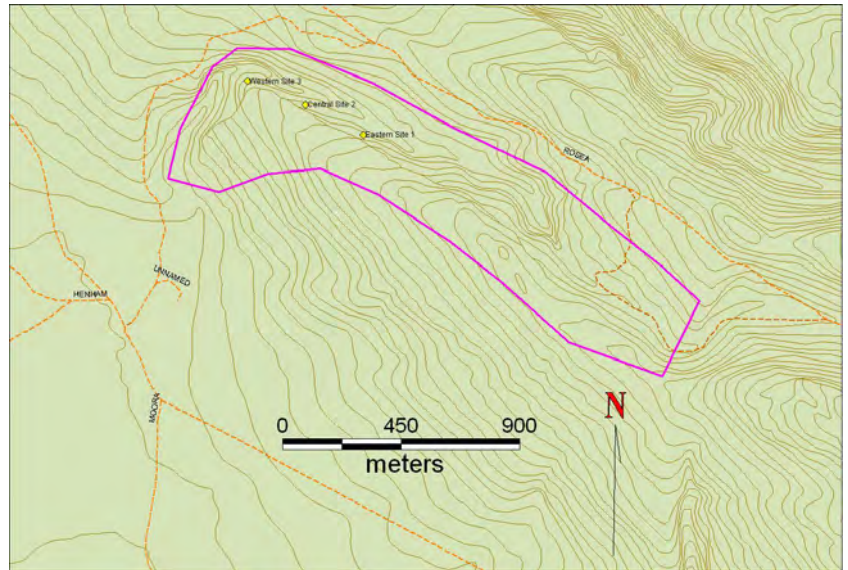


The Latest news as @ Dec 1st...

After two weeks in the wild all the rock-wallabies movements have remained within one kilometre of where they were released.

Interestingly, movements have been detected on the north side of the creek, indicating the animals have been coming down the cliffs at night to forage on the other side of the water and then returning to the rocky refuge to shelter through the heat of the day.

Most activity has been recorded occurring after 6pm through to early morning - as is observed from remote camera work on the wild population in East Gippsland.



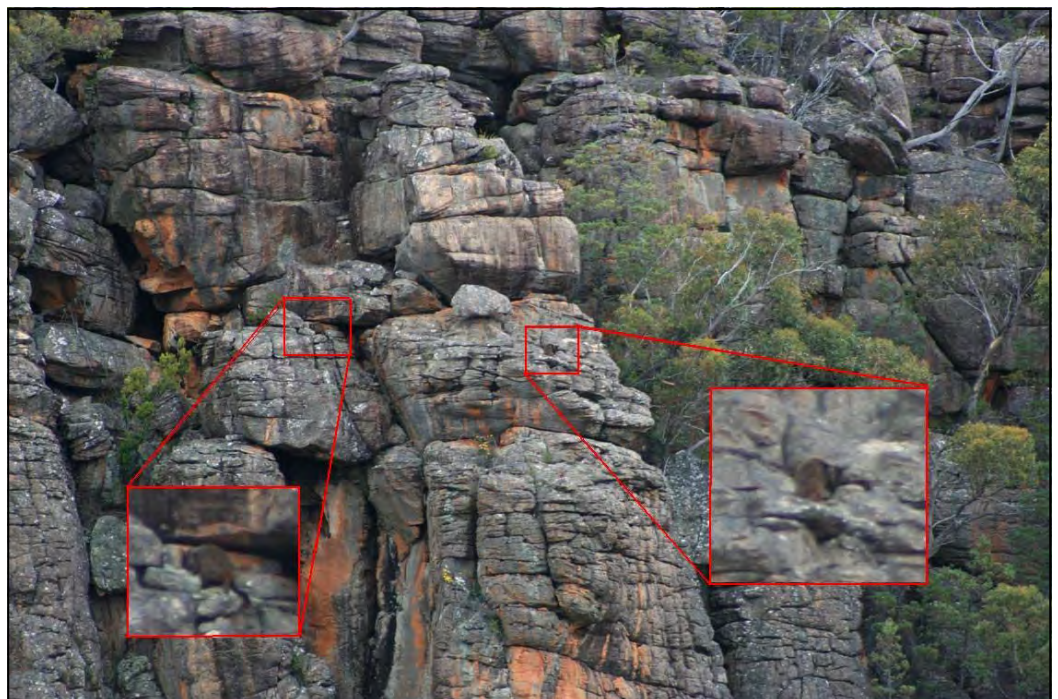
Dunkeld rock-wallabies were released at the western site, the two sub-adult males in the middle and the TNR four at the Eastern site.

There have been some difficulties in getting signals from three animals in particular, but their presence has been confirmed by visual observations obtained through spotting scopes and remote surveillance camera use (which have recently been baited with lucerne).

In just the last few days a death has been recorded. The event unfolded when the signal on one of the sub-adult males had changed from active to mortality. This signal activates when the collar has been stationary for more than 24 hours.

A team went onsite in an attempt to locate the rock-wallaby and were sorry to find the sub-adult male had been crushed by a rockfall, possibly caused by the recent the wet weather.

The Recovery Team will review whether the possibility of replacing this male is achievable in the short term.



This photo was taken when the rock-wallaby on the right was spotted with binoculars... it was only back in the office that Glenn noticed the second wallaby in the photo!

Photo: Glenn Rudolph

The Shadow Newsletter

The Shadow is the official newsletter of the Victorian Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby Recovery Team. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or provide information for future editions please contact:



Design by Rhyl Mathews

The Editor - Lucy Clausen
Flora & Fauna Officer
Department of Sustainability and Environment
574 Main Street Bairnsdale Vic 3875

Tel: 03 5152 0600 Fax: 03 5152 6865
email: Lucy.Clausen@dse.vic.gov.au



Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies for all Victorians!

Victorian car registration labels for 2009 are now being distributed. Voting showed the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby as the most popular choice. It was a clear winner over the other three nominated threatened species. Receive your rego with a smile. 😊



Saving the Shadow

"Saving the Shadow" is the motto of the Victorian Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby Recovery Team which brings together all the organizations involved in the recovery of this species in Victoria. The team includes representatives from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, Healesville Sanctuary, Adelaide Zoo, Melbourne University, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Waterfall Springs Wildlife Sanctuary, the Waite Animal Institute and private ecological consultants.

The recovery team meets regularly and has captive-management and field-management sub-group meetings as required.

The convener of the team is **Mick Bramwell** of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). For official correspondence with the team, contact Mick at;

574 Main St, Bairnsdale, Victoria, 3875
Tel: 03 5152 0400
Email: Mick.Bramwell@dse.vic.gov.au