

*voluntary wildlife conservation*

## Newsletter of The Land For Wildlife Program Spring/Summer 2016



[\(Link to 2015 Edition\)](#)

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**LAND  
FOR  
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VOLUNTARY WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

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# Letter from the Editor

I am often asked how Land For Wildlife differs from Landcare. In many ways they are very similar. Both programs involve individuals with a passion and commitment to managing private land values. Landcare is largely about communities tackling shared interests, such as pest plants and animals and revegetation. On the other hand, Land For Wildlife attracts individual property owners who also feel it is their responsibility to manage and protect habitat for wildlife— but it is on their own patch. Of course, Land For Wildlife members may also be members of their local Landcare group, in which they also contribute and receive support.

Our first article is a fitting example of Landcare and Land For Wildlife members cooperating to achieve an outcome for a threatened species. In this case, involving fox control to help revive the Southern Brown Bandicoot in south-west Victoria.

Round The Bend Conservation Cooperative is a community on 132ha of regional-ly significant bushland next to the Yarra River, in the Bend of Islands area, 33km NE of Melbourne. It consists of a community of conservation-minded property owners combining Landcare and Land For Wildlife principles with their own unique approach. Their story is on page 4.

As you know, Land For Wildlife is about individual property owners doing their best with little support. On page 10, we hear from Libby Woodward about their amazing approach to using small, artificial ponds to support wildlife and at the same time, observe wildlife displaying their natural behaviour.

Also in this edition, there are stories from landholders about their observations and encounters with wildlife. The Tale of 6 Goannas on page 7 shows how several males goannas competed for mating rights with a female goanna.

I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and New Year. I look forward to hearing about your encounters with wildlife, or how you solved a problem in 2017!

*All the best,*

**Peter Johnson**  
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## Land for Wildlife Property Statistics, July 2015

LFW Membership	Total Property Area	Habitat Being Retained	Habitat Under Restoration	Total Retained and Restored Habitat
5,101	526,273 ha	140,459 ha	22,457 ha	162,916 ha

**Cover Images:** The images show some of the many wildlife using artificial ponds installed by the owners of a 142 hectare (350 acre) ex-grazing property near Violet Town, in NE Victoria. The habitat is Grassy Woodland and Box-Ironbark Forest. [Read the story on pages 10 to 13.](#)

# Brown Bandicoot: Fox Control

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**Article by: Lisette Mill.** Fox control to protect the Southern Brown Bandicoot is a tried and tested model in large areas of public land – but such activities are significantly harder to coordinate on private land, especially land that contains little apparent habitat for the species. However, [The Basalt to Bay Landcare Network](#), in partnership with local Landcare members, Land For Wildlife landholders, government, private farmers, and private forestry plantation managers, has been able to achieve that since 2012 in the St Helens area of South West Victoria.

Four years on, the ongoing pest monitoring using remote sensing cameras has shown a positive change in both fox frequency and bandicoot use of non-traditional habitat. What we are seeing is the bandicoots using the farm land adjoining the reserve – actively feeding on insects and fungi in the same places the sheep eat the grass. This is good evidence that a local initiative can in time have a flow on result for an endangered species that doesn't require predator fencing, huge amounts of land locked into reserves, or restriction of agricultural businesses. By controlling the impacts of foxes and now feral cats in an agricultural landscape, we have enabled the bandicoots to occupy that same land and shown to the wider community that they can help keep the species from extinction locally.

During those four years we have also personally tested a lot of different baits to attract carnivores to a remote sensing camera. I don't think there was much we didn't try, including a particularly nasty range of fishing trip left overs. Over the summer of 2015/16 we set up trials during temperatures of 45 degree plus – to confirm how many foxes were around and whether the fox effort encouraged the bandicoots to leave cover over what was regarded as a time of year they stayed in the reserve to feed and hide. The bait holder most effective was shown to be plumbing fittings (refer image) cable tied to a stake, and the baits into these devices most effective for securing images of foxes and cats was shown to be either Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) or tinned smoked fish (oysters/mussels/sardines). Both are very portable into the field and resist meat ants and flies.

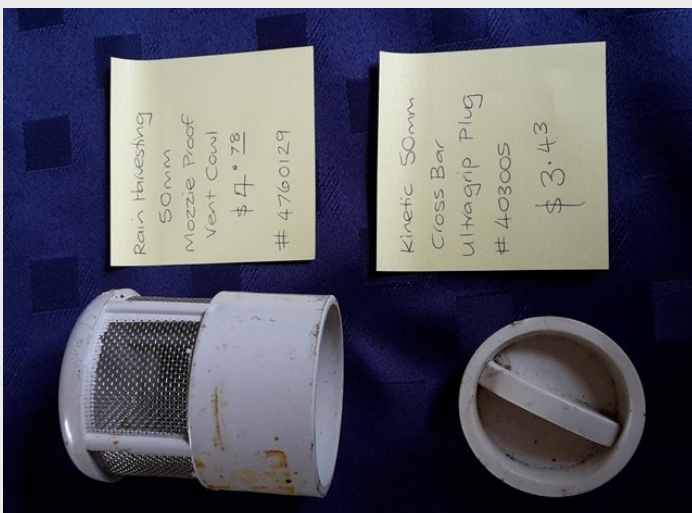
Some of the less successful baits were fresh chicken necks, fish bait, liver, and fish berley. Clean up after these in the bait holders was very unpleasant, they were bombed by flies and they did not hold the interest of the ferals for long – on some cameras less than two days and visits stopped, while a nearby KFC bait was visited often by different individuals over weeks without change of bait (must have been the “secret spices and herbs”...Ed.).

[The St Helens Biolink Project](#) that this activity is part of, will shortly commence an extensive bandicoot habitat audit – testing the evidence that the animals that used to stay in the 38 ha St Helens Flora Reserve, are now radiating out from the adjoining farm to occupy former range in both private and public land.

For more information about methods and techniques for remote sensing cameras contact Lisette Mill at [The Basalt to Bay Landcare Network](#) on 0408712713 or email: [basalttobay@gmail.com](mailto:basalttobay@gmail.com)

**Bait Holder:** 50mm Mozzie proof vent cowl and plug.

Fox examining bait holder attached to tree.



# Round The Bend Cooperative

## Article provided by Round the Bend Conservation Cooperative – A Land for Wildlife Property

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The [Round the Bend Conservation Cooperative](http://www.roundthebend.org.au) is a residential conservation community living on 132ha of regionally significant bushland in the Bend of Islands. The property, 33km NE of Melbourne CBD, is within the Shire of Nillumbik's Special Use Zone 2 (Environmental Living). The property was registered with *Land for Wildlife* in 1991 in recognition of our commitment to integrate nature conservation with residential living.

The Cooperative, established in 1971, is limited to 32 shares which can be owned jointly or individually. Each share entitles its owner/s to a long term lease of an area of 1500sqm for the purpose of building a house and a kitchen garden within guidelines. Living independently of each other, shareholders come together for:

- Monthly meetings
- Working parties focussed on land management matters
- Informal social occasions

The land is part of an important network of remnant bush blocks forming the wildlife corridor link between Kinglake National Park and Warrandyte State Park.

The property supports a range of 6 vegetation communities including Box Ironbark Forest, Creekline herb rich woodland and Valley Grassy Forest, with a rich diversity of flora species, particularly orchids where over 50 species have been recorded.

This diverse habitat, recognised as being of State significance, not only supports a range of rare flora but also a number of threatened fauna, including Tuans and Powerful Owl.

Our ownership structure gives us the opportunity to effectively manage such a large property. Over the years our conservation management has focussed on control of many of the common weed invaders including blackberries, pine trees, boneseed and thistles.

We have ongoing monitoring programs relating to nest boxes, dunnart tiles, orchids and bird records.

In 2012 Consultants were engaged to prepare a cohesive weed mapping and management strategy for the whole property.

Our current Flora Management Strategy comprehensively covers all flora issues and prioritises those that are realistically within our capacity to protect the areas of highest habitat quality. Each house-site also has an individual weed management plan.

For further Information check the **Website**:

[www.roundthebend.org.au](http://www.roundthebend.org.au)

Contact **Secretary**; [shayne.parris@bigpond.com](mailto:shayne.parris@bigpond.com)



# Kookaburra Nesting Box

**Article & images provided by a Land For Wildlife Member.** Suitable nesting hollows for birds and marsupials are in short supply in many urban fringe areas. We have made many attempts to construct and install nesting boxes on our property abutting the Canadian Forest at Ballarat, but generally we have had limited success in terms of actually seeing chicks emerge from the nests.

One apparent reason for the failure of the boxes is they have been too popular with our feathered and furred friends. They all want to use them and resulting squabbles mean that eggs are lost. The images below show Kookaburras successfully using nest boxes.

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**Image above:**

*Box in place (hauled up on a simple wire attachment)*

**Image below:** Young chick growing fast.

*"Hey it's a long way down mum!"*



## *Our observations were:*

*1. Kookaburras would initially take interest in the box and would often lay eggs.*

*2. Possums would enter the boxes and take them over.*

*3. Other birds, including wood ducks would also try to use the boxes.*

*4. I developed a design with top and sides covered with clear acrylic extending out past the box with the aim to make it less accessible to other creatures but still OK for Kookaburras.*

*5. The acrylic is too slippery for possums especially with the overhang and we have not seen any possums in this box.*

*6. Other birds such as wood ducks don't seem to have the agility to fly up underneath the overhang but the Kookaburras manage this with ease.*

*7. We installed the box in early spring 2014 and it was immediately claimed by the Kookas with the successful rearing of two chicks. And another batch of three chicks were successfully raised in 2015.*

# Are Magpies Declining?

## Editor

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Love them, hate them, or just plain fear them! Most of us know what an Australian Magpie is, especially when we wake up to hear them calling. The scientific name for Magpies is *Cracticus tibicen*, where tibicen means ‘flautist’, welcoming the morning sun like a melodious flute.

The latest [State of Australian Birds report](#) from Birdlife Australia indicated that in the East Coast Region of Australia, Magpie numbers have declined by 31 per cent since 1998. The State of Australia's Birds Report analysed data collected in more than 400,000 surveys across the country, the majority done by volunteer “birdos”.

Birdlife Australia reported that a lot of birds we assumed were really common are showing significant declines. It is notable that of these two species, only the Australian magpie showed a consistent pattern over time in one region — its reporting rate declined significantly in the east coast during each time period. While magpies appear to be declining in some regions, they are increasing in others.

Click here to read more about the [State of Australian Birds](#) report. (Or copy & paste link into your browser: <http://birdlife.org.au/education-publications/publications/state-of-australias-birds>)

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## Sounds of a Night in the Forest

### Ann Jones, ABC Radio “*Off The Track*” program

David Lindenmayer, from the Australian National University, is an ecologist and conservation biologist who has spent over 30 years studying the Mountain Ash Forests of Victoria.

[Click here to hear the sounds of the evening shift change in the Mountain Ash Forests of Victoria in this episode from the ABC’s Off Track program.](#) (Hint: You will need to be reading this in PDF format in order to hear the podcast.) Alternatively, copy and paste the following link into your web browser to listen to the podcast: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/a-wild-night-in-the-forest/5947778> Below is an extract from the podcast:

“There’s a little mixture of things that always want to have the last word. The Lyre Bird is one and the Kookaburra is the other and the Eastern Yellow Robin and the Pilot Bird are the others.”

“The birds are calling less than in the morning, but still nevertheless calling, and they’re just confirming their territories before these and extraordinary change in the light this long dusk period.”

“But there are lots of other messages going on with the calls, particularly with the male birds. The amount of calling that you do is a reflection of how much energy you have... and that’s a signal to a female that this bloke is fit and he lives in a good place, and it’s probably the right place for me to have my babies.”

“Then later, the possums and gliders come out. Then the nocturnal birds start their calls.”

# The Tale of 6 Goannas

By Leisa Clarke

It was New Year's Day 2016, sitting on the deck after lunch at the front of the house with a cold drink, we overlook the Woolshed Valley so it is always a pleasant outlook.

There was movement in the bird bath some 5 metres from us, the water was moving but there were no birds present, as we watched a Goanna surface and proceed to climb out of the water and down the tree stump that the bird bath sat upon. We were fascinated -we had known that goannas swim but had never seen it nor witnessed one in taking a bath on a hot day!

She proceeded to move over under one of the gums, we estimate her length from nose to tail to be about a metre long.....we were astonished to see a much larger goanna amble out of the scrub towards her – based on its manner, size (at least twice the size of the female) and antics over the next short while we decided he was a male and the other still slightly damp one a female.

He proceeded to display, by stiffening his legs thereby raising his body off the ground – pointing his nose skyward and puffing out his throat – the male spent much time following the female who finally found an appropriate site and there they mated.

This went on for at least an hour and after several mating sessions they each rested in the nearby trees. We estimate they coupled at least four times the initial meeting, but then as the day went on they moved apart and came back together again a couple more times.

It was after one of these sessions that we noticed the males body language change – he became much more alert and was tasting the air. Flicking his tongue out rapidly and raising his neck and front part of his body off the ground. (Continued on page 8.)



# The Tale of 6 Goannas

## (Continued)

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As we looked on a larger male came into view over the granite and the two proceeded to square off and then moved into battle. The sound of the grunts, thumps of their bodies hitting the ground was very audible where we sat – meanwhile the female had climbed a nearby pine and watched on with interest.

The battle finally came to an end when the larger of the two pushed his opponent over the end of the granite – a drop of approx. 18 inches – we heard the thud and the loser hit the deck, the winner climbing down obviously to continue – however, the loser had decided that enough was enough and with one eye on the winner made his sore and sorry way into the scrub – we believe this was the initial male suitor!

The winner then started his advances on the female sniffing out her scent – initially climbing an adjacent gum and then realising his mistake- climbing back down and following her up the pine, she allowed him to come reasonably close and then descended the pine – again moving over to her preferred location with her new suitor following – they coupled under the same trees at least a couple of times, then moved to rest in the gum, it was very obvious to us that the male had sustained injuries from his fight, he had some puncture marks at the base of his tail and on his back, there was some bleeding and a mark on his right rear leg – he was a little stiff and appeared to be favouring a leg.

After an hour, they proceeded to saunter across the grass at the front of the house to another stand of trees.



By this time it was getting late in the day and we thought that they would wander off and that would be that, this proved to be a very large miscalculation.

As the day progressed to evening, we had these two goannas wandering around at the front of the house – making it very awkward to feed ourselves and our animals as we were never certain how close they were or whether they might get interested in the smell of the dog’s dinner!!!!

Next morning, we went to the veranda thinking it doubtful that we would see any activity – no one appeared until late morning – obviously requiring a few extra zzzz’s after the previous day’s exertions.

At this stage, we thought we could recognise the large male as he was still walking stiffly and favouring a leg, she was no worse for wear, both took up their preferred positions under the trees near the birdbath – with the male going there for a drink.

There was movement at the edge of the scrub to the right of the house. As this was the direction the loser had taken the day previously, we thought it was him coming back for a second innings, then there was movement on the granite to the left of the house and then again to the right – we had extra visitors coming to the female – who had started playing hard to get with the large male and was interested in meeting the newcomers, the male was kept busy for at least 40 minutes chasing the others around. As he chased one – another would attempt to get to the female – at one point we believe we had 6 goannas, we are assuming 5 were male as they were all very interested in the female and at least one other managed to get lucky whilst the large male was bust chasing another!!!!

My goodness they can move quickly, we would hate to have to outrun one!

Over the next couple of days, the number of goannas around the house dropped until we were left with the “original” female – who is still in residence in the tree to the left of the house some 5 metres away – we saw her several times – she was not bothered by us and came close to the garage and carport in her wanderings. She is still here this year, obviously the room with the view is still to her liking – so we wonder what the New Year will bring for 2017.

Based on our research – she will have laid eggs within a couple of weeks of mating – these eggs will likely have been buried within a termite mound not far away to incubate and hatch some 90 days later – we haven’t sighted any small ones!!!!



# Using Small Ponds to Monitor Wildlife

By Libby Woodward.

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We own a lovely 142 hectare (350 acre) ex-grazing property called Thorpewood, located north of Violet Town, in north eastern Victoria, and has a mixture of Grassy Woodland and Box-Ironbark Forest. Two like-minded families joined forces and bought the property.

We were attracted to its range of diverse native species- some threatened and some near threatened. We hoped to conserve and improve the property and hence, extend the range of species on the property and increase the numbers in the threatened species. At the time of purchase some very good improvement work had been started by Trust for Nature who had bought the property through their revolving fund. It was a requirement that we put a Trust for Nature covenant on the property and we were very happy to comply with this.

Even though some improvement work had been started, a great deal of important work still needed to be done. This included dealing with the rabbits, weeds and foxes, which were there in high numbers and which were increasing.



We felt frustrated because our visits to the property were taken up doing all this work, which we found very fulfilling, but which did not allow us time to survey the threatened species and to learn more about our native wildlife. Also, we are not skilled birdwatchers and felt constrained because our knowledge of calls and identifying features was often not good enough to tell species apart. So we developed a strategy to identify and monitor the wildlife on Thorpewood. This strategy runs alongside our conservation work and has proved surprisingly successful.

First we decided to try putting a birdbath in the bush with a motion sensing camera on it. We got some fascinating results, but the birdbath always dried out between our visits. So then we bought a few small plastic ponds, placed them in various differing sites around the property and put some newer/ better cameras on them. The results exceeded our expectations. The movement sensing cameras are not obvious, so we saw wildlife behaving in ways that we seldom see if we are there and affecting behaviour because of our presence.

We have decided that others, on similar journeys, might be interested in our stories and might find our experiences helpful in their own situations. So we have put this article together to start tell these stories.

We have had most of our ponds up and running for over a year now and we have also had cameras on two dams. We now have videos of 95 different species of native birds, 6 species of native reptiles and 15 species of native and introduced mammals.

We have been fascinated by the detailed information we have obtained. Different species use different ponds and we are learning which species are resident on the property and whether they are successfully breeding. We are also able to monitor the effectiveness of our environmental work; the rabbits are no longer seen, the foxes are greatly reduced and numbers of small reptiles and ground nesting birds have increased.

It is hard to know where to start telling this story because there is so much detailed information. So, we have decided to start by telling the story of one pond (the most successful one) and we can then later add the information on the other ponds and the dams, so the data can be compared. We will also explain how the ponds are set up and maintained.



### **The North West Pond Story**

Our best pond is in the North West corner of the property, so we call it the North West Pond (NW pond) and we have videos of 55 species of birds, 10 species of mammals and 4 species of reptiles from this one pond. On the next page is a summary list showing the visitation to this one pond over a year. (Continued on page 12.)



# Using Small Ponds to Survey Wildlife

## (Continued)

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First we need to explain how the ponds are setup. Our advice and accompanying illustrations follow:

- Choose a spot that has a good range of wildlife and is not close to water.
- Make sure that the area is easy for you to regularly access as pond and camera will need regular maintenance.
- We prefer to put the pond in shade or semi shade on the south side of a tree so the camera can be attached to the tree or stake near tree and will face south. The tree needs to be so big that it will not move in the wind. We attach a solar panel to the north side of the tree to help power the camera.
- The pond needs to have many rocks and logs in it, so wildlife can't be trapped in it, no matter what height the water is. Rocks and logs around the outside provide habitat for reptiles and small mammals and increase their visitation.



The pond should include pots containing water plants. This will help to keep the water clean and fresh and mean that water creatures (such as backswimmers and waterboatmen) can be added to eat mosquito larvae. It is very important that the water stays clean, if it becomes dirty or turns green then the whole pond may need to be emptied and refilled.

- If too many visits occur from Wallabies and Kangaroos then a netting fence with big spaces will stop these species and give lots of perches for approaching birds.

### List of Wildlife Which Have Visited the NW Pond:

<b>Brown Goshawk</b>	<b>White-winged Choughs</b>	<b>Grey Butcherbird</b>
<b>Black-chinned Honeyeater</b>	<b>Crimson Rosella</b>	<b>Red Fox</b>
<b>Blue-faced Honeyeater</b>	<b>Crested Shrike-tit</b>	<b>Grey-crowned Babbler</b>
<b>Eastern Brown Snake</b>	<b>Crested Pigeon</b>	<b>Grey Shrike-thrush</b>
<b>Brown-headed Honeyeater</b>	<b>Diamond Firetail</b>	<b>Hooded Robin</b>
<b>Brown Treecreeper</b>	<b>Dusky Woodswallow</b>	<b>Lace Monitor</b>
<b>Brushtail Possum</b>	<b>Short-beaked Echidna</b>	<b>Hooded Robin</b>
<b>Superb Fairy-wren</b>	<b>Eastern Rosella</b>	<b>Sacred Kingfisher</b>
<b>Common Bronzewing</b>	<b>Eastern Yellow Robin</b>	<b>Yellow-footed Antechinus</b>

# Using Small Ponds to Survey Wildlife

## (Continued)

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- Some soil is dug out and the pond is levelled. Adding a small amount of water and making sure that it spreads evenly across the base of the pond confirms that it is level.
- Rocks and plants are added. The rocks create a shallow area that the small birds love to use. It is best to put these rocks closest to the camera. The bigger birds and animals often prefer the deeper parts of the pond.
- Water plants are planted in squat pots with soil and slow release fertilizer. Two centimetres of river sand is placed over the soil, sealing it, so that the soil does not mix with the water. We use two main native water plants, which are found widely across Victoria. They are Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum salicifolium*) and Swamp Stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*). It is important not to use introduced plants because birds can spread them and they can become weeds.
- At least one substantial stick is put into the water so wildlife can climb out, no matter what level the water is.
- The pond is surrounded with habitat features such as rocks and sticks. This pond is particularly favoured by the Yellow-footed Antechinus which live permanently in and around the big stump and enjoy the additional habitat.
- Water is added and this needs to be regularly topped up. This is a considerable commitment in summer. Depending on rainfall, the ponds usually remain full in winter but have to be topped up with about 20 litres of water every 6 days during the hottest days of summer. We have a few 10 litre containers and reach our ponds by vehicle or ATV.
- The total set-up with camera and solar panel and branches placed to deter the approach of Kangaroos; this has been quite successful so far.



Link

to a general video that of a mixture of different birds using the ponds:

<https://www.facebook.com/VictorianNative/videos/1122407784502826/>

(This is the order of first appearance: Black-chinned Honeyeater, Grey Shrike-thrush, Eastern Rosella x3, Rufous Whistler (female), White-plumed Honeyeater x7, Willie Wagtail, Crested Shrike-tit, Common Bronzewing, Red Wattlebird, Diamond Firetail x2, Noisy Miner x2, Grey-crowned Babbler x6, Noisy Friar-bird, Magpie, Little Lorikeet x2, Red-rumped Parrot x3, White-browed Woodswallow, Peaceful Dove and Purple-crowned Lorikeet)

# Antechinus Or Rat?

Article by Tanya Loos.

14

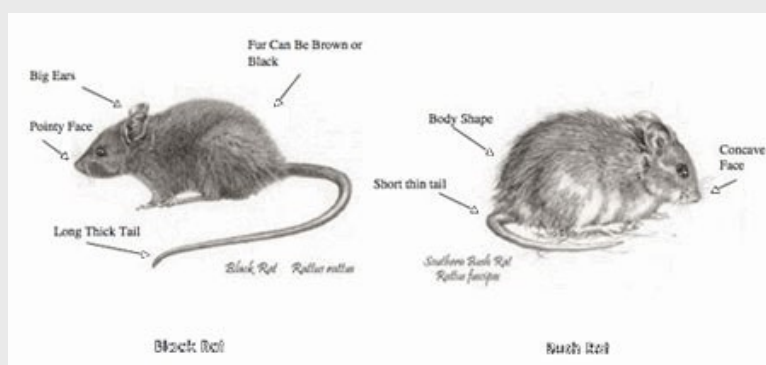
I was standing at my window looking out at the gathering dusk when a small mammal popped out of the shrubs and darted down the rock wall, and across our paved verandah. Antechinus! I have lived in this house on a small bush block for 15 years and this is my second sighting of this little animal. The antechinus is a carnivorous marsupial, in the same family as the Tassie Devil, quolls and the rat-sized Brush-tailed Phascogale.

The last time I saw our resident antechinus was also at dusk, as he or she drank deeply from a bird bath that is set on the ground. But how do I know they are here all the time? Their scats!

Antechinus scats or droppings are the key to identifying whether your scuttling brown mammals are rats or native marsupials. In most bush houses and gardens around here we have a mix of introduced Black Rats, Agile Antechinus and possibly native Bush Rats.



Agile Antechinus by Mel Williams



Visual difference between Black Rat and Bush Rat:  
Tail is longer in Black Rats—shorter in Bush Rats.

Source: Taronga Zoo

To

tell the difference between a Black Rat and a native Bush Rat – look at the tail. The Black Rat's tail is twice as long as its body and is nearly naked, almost segmented like a very skinny earthworm. The Bush Rat's tail is shorter than its body and quite furry.

Scat identification is a fun hobby – it is all about textures, and knowing a bit about the animal's diet. Black Rats and Bush Rats are omnivorous – indeed Black Rats will eat nearly anything. Their scats are hard, cylindrical pellets that are pretty uniform in size and shape, often with a little point at one end. When you break them open they are compacted and simply break in half. Mouse scats are similar in texture, just smaller.

Agile Antechinus, on the other hand are insectivores – they eat mostly insects, with hard chitinous exoskeletons. The antechinus has long pointed jaws full of many sharp teeth which chew their insect prey up very finely. So when you pick up an antechinus scat and crumble it slightly between thumb and forefinger the whole thing breaks up into a zillion tiny brown fragments which may have a bit of iridescence. In scat parlance, they are known as 'friable'.

Article by Tanya Loos – [Click here to read more on Tanya's blog.](#)

# Sap Sucking Sugar Gliders

Article by Tanya Loos

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Tanya Loos sent in these images of scratchings on a Silver wattle on her property in Porcupine Ridge. They occurred all the way up the small tree, to about five metres high. Just a few exploratory marks had been made on the other side of the trunk.

There was no evidence of bird droppings or sugar glider scats at the base of the wattle. The only evidence on the ground was the shavings of wood that had come off the tree.

According to “Tracks, Scats and other Traces” by Barbara Triggs, Sugar gliders “gouge out the bark with their lower incisors, leaving vertical or horizontal gashes from which they lick the sap that exudes”. The depth of these gouges and the beautiful curlicues that have formed look like they had incredible strength in their lower jaw!

Some of the marks do look very much like it may have been made by a lower jaw and pair of sharp teeth scraping upwards. There was a small insect or two on the exposed wood, but nothing that looked like a sap site. But I admit I have not had the chance to see a glider sap site up close!

Another possibility is parrot damage – but usually a Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo makes exploratory marks for a beetle grub or borer, and then when the beetle is located, the bird really hacks into the bark and wood to locate and extract the grub. There was no evidence of this occurring.

*“The diet of Sugar Gliders comprises invertebrates, acacia gum, eucalypt sap, nectar and pollen, manna and honeydew. Acacia gum, a clear viscous substance, is rich in carbohydrates and produced by wattles...in large quantities and may be a very important food source for some populations. Sugar Gliders also obtain eucalypt sap by chewing holes in bark and licking the exudate.”* In Mammals of Victoria, edited by Peter Menkhorst, 1995 (pages 110 -111) .

Photos by Tanya Loos – [Click here to read more on Tanya’s blog.](#)



# Hyacinth Orchids

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## Editor.

The Hyacinth Orchid is a large terrestrial orchid with stems to three quarters of a metre tall. The flowers have a superficial resemblance to a hyacinth flower, hence the common name. It produces clusters of pink flowers in summer from November to March.

The individual flowers are star shaped and about 5 cm across with darker pink or purple spots on the petals and sepals. The plant has very small insignificant leaves.

The fruit is a capsule containing fine dust like seed. It is similar to the Rosy Hyacinth Orchid (*Dipodium roseum*), and produces a mass of pink flowers covered in small dark pink spots.

Hyacinth Orchids obtain nutrients for growth from dead and decaying matter (saprophytic orchid). For this reason, it is impossible to grow in a horticultural setting.

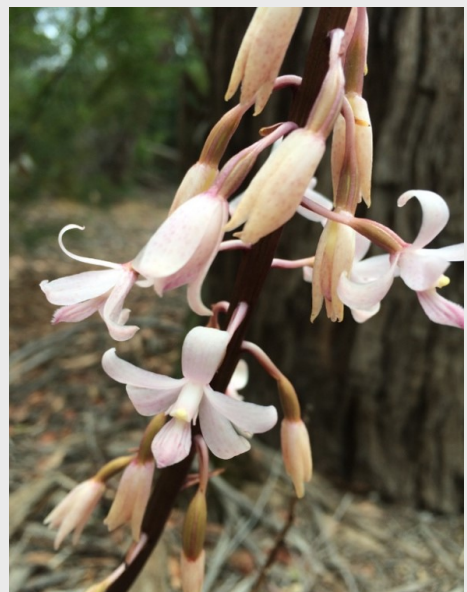
These unique orchids can be found in grassy forests where there is ample leaf matter including the lower slopes of Mount Macedon and forests around Bul-lengarook.

*Dipodium punctatum* is a native orchid of Australia. It is commonly known as blotched hyacinth-orchid or spotted hyacinth orchid, though both names can refer to other species.

*Dipodium punctatum* prefers protected shady positions in dry forests or woodlands and is drought and frost tender. The flowers are about 20-25 mm across and are pink with dense purple-red spotting on segments.

They appear in hyacinth-like racemes between November and March on a green to blackish scape that grows to a height of 40-100 cm.

**Images from top:** Rosy Hyacinth; Spotted Hyacinth; an unusually pale form of the Rosy Hyacinth Orchid (Source: [Tanya Loos](#))



# The Grebe And The Platypus

## VIDEO OF A PLATYPUS INTERACTING WITH A GREBE

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### Australian Platypus Conservancy

To see a fascinating video by Joanne and Tony Leggo that shows an Australasian grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*) interacting with a platypus at Peacock Creek in New South Wales, you can go to

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4cswIyaRHw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4cswIyaRHw)

So what's going on with the platypus and grebe?

The video documents the grebe approaching the platypus very closely on four occasions, with the two animals then diving in close synchrony. However, the dive is initiated on each occasion by the platypus, with the grebe following the platypus's lead within a second or less. On one occasion, the grebe gives the platypus a little peck on its back, as if to say "Hurry up then, get on with it".

Australasian grebes feed on many of the same prey items that are eaten by a platypus, including aquatic insects, small crayfish and snails. They sometimes forage on the water surface (as shown at one point in the Leggo's video) but are also well adapted to finding food by diving. They have also been observed associating at times with other waterbirds apparently for the express purpose of capturing prey that the other birds flush out.

It therefore seems likely that the grebe at Peacock Creek has learned that a platypus excels at locating live edible items on the channel bottom, at least some of which will elude capture by the platypus and thus become potential prey for the grebe. It would be interesting to know what the platypus thinks about this activity – in the video, the platypus doesn't look too fussed, but perhaps things would be different if a platypus was better equipped (for example, with sharp teeth) to object to the bird's behaviour.

Source: *Australian Platypus Conservancy (Issue 65, August 2016)*

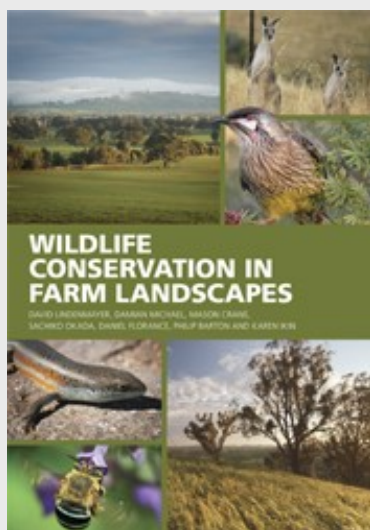
*The Australian Platypus Conservancy is a non-profit, non-government organisation.*

[www.platypus.asn.au](http://www.platypus.asn.au)



# Recent Publications

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***Wildlife Conservation in Farm Landscapes*** communicates new scientific information about best practice ways to integrate conservation and agriculture in the temperate eucalypt woodland belt of eastern Australia. It is based on the large body of scientific literature in this field, as well as long-term studies at 790 permanent sites on over 290 farms extending throughout Victoria, New South Wales and south-east Queensland.

Richly illustrated, with chapters on birds, mammals, reptiles, invertebrates and plants, this book illustrates how management interventions can promote nature conservation and what practices have the greatest benefit for biodiversity. Together the new insights in this book inform whole-of-farm planning. Authors: *David Lindenmayer et al.*

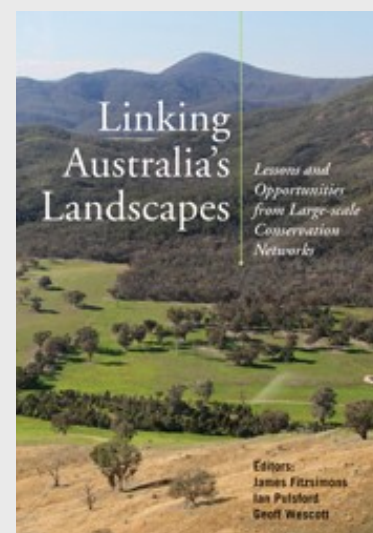
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***Linking Australia's Landscapes*** is a critical examination of networks of land managed for conservation across Australia.

Networks of land managed for conservation across different tenures have rapidly increased in number (and popularity) in Australia over the past two decades. Their aims have been to protect the integrity and resilience of many Australian ecosystems by maintaining and restoring -scale natural landscapes and ecosystem processes; to lessen the impacts of fragmentation; to increase the connectivity of habitats to provide for species movement and adaptation as climate changes; and to build community support and involvement in conservation.

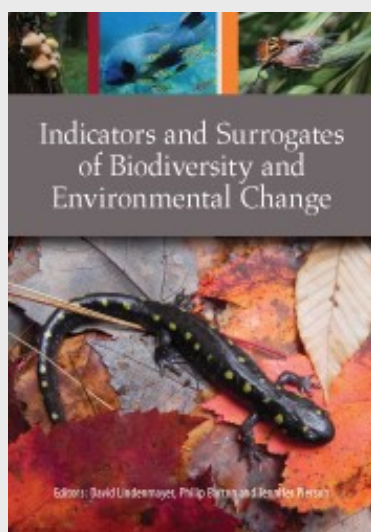
Authors: *Jamie Fitzsimons et al.*



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# Recent Publications

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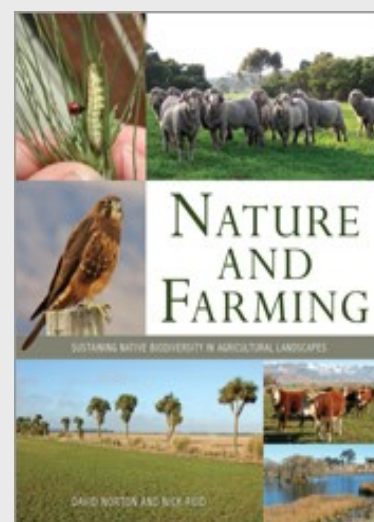


*Indicators and Surrogates of Biodiversity and Environmental Change* provides insights into the use of indicators and surrogates in natural resource management and conservation – where to use them, where not to use them, and how to use them. Using an ecological approach, the chapters explore the development, application and efficacy of indicators and surrogates in terrestrial, aquatic, marine and atmospheric environments. It is the first major synthesis of learnings about indicators and surrogates and will be a critical resource for the vast number of people developing and applying them in ecosystems around the world. Authors: *David Lindenmayer et al.*

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*Nature and Farming* explains why it is important to sustain native plants and animals in agricultural landscapes, and outlines the key issues in developing and implementing practical approaches to safeguarding native biodiversity in rural areas. The book considers the range of ecological and agricultural issues that determine what native biodiversity occurs in farmland and how it can be secured. Many inspiring case studies are presented where innovative approaches towards integrating biodiversity and farm management have been successful, resulting in win-win outcomes for both nature and society. Authors: *David Norton and Nick Reid.*



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## Land for Wildlife Contacts

Land For Wildlife Extension Officers and Contacts are at the following Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning Offices:

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### Ballarat

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# Resources & Events

## Statewide Integrated Flora and Fauna Teams ([SWIFFT](#))

[SWIFFT](#) aims to maintain and develop knowledge and skills in relation to the protection of threatened species and biodiversity across Victoria.

### How to Participate:

You can attend quarterly [SWIFFT](#) video conferences held around Victoria. Contact your local LFW Extension Officer for your nearest centre to participate. Book early as seating is limited.

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## Report environmental crime

DELWP receives **more than 300 calls each year** from members of the public with information about environmental crimes.

These calls range from wildlife smuggling, keeping or selling native or high risk invasive species without the relevant permit, and the removal of native plants and animals from the wild.

However, there are still people illegally removing, killing and trading animals from the wild.

Please help put a stop to it.

**Report environment, wildlife and forestry crime to 136 186 or email [customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au)**

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## Photographic Exhibition

Kim Wormald is an ethical bird photographer. Her photographs have won awards nationally and internationally. Her work is pure birds in their natural habitat, highlighting the detail of their plumage and personalities.

Where: Mont de Lancey Historic Homestead, 71 Wellington Road, Wandin North 03 5964 2088

Open Wednesdays to Sundays, 10am – 4pm

Kim Wormald Lirrallirra Bird Photography 0435 359 625

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Phone the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning on the following freecall number if you have any questions relating to natural resources and the environment: **136 186**