



FriendsNET

Newsletter of the Victorian Environment Friends Network

ISSN 2206-5709 (Online)

Number 115 November 2021 email: friendsvic@hotmail.com

See our web site <https://www.friendsvic.org/> .

Nina Earl – Best Friend for 2021

Best Friend for 2021

Nina Earl is the VEFN Best Friend for 2021. Nina has been awarded a Best Friend for her work with Bradshaw Bushland Reserve in Mordialloc which she has been involved with since 1999. Nina is also involved with a number of other groups including: Friends of Mordialloc Catchment which covers Mordialloc Creek, Yammerbook Nature Reserve and Epsom Grassy Wetland; Member of City of Kingston Public Spaces and Environment Advisory Committee; Member of Mordialloc-Beaumaris Conservation League, Kingston Conservation and Environment Coalition, Friends of Braeside Park, Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands, Kingston Residents Association, Australian Conservation Foundation, Environmental Justice Australia.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of VEFN's Best Friend Award. The inaugural award went to Don Marsh in 1991 for his work with Friends of Organ Pipes National Park. FoOP will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year. Don March passed away recently and you can read about his extensive environmental volunteering work in an article in FriendsNET #114 August 2021.

Read more about the award here <https://www.landcarevic.org.au/landcare-magazine/spring-2021/victorian-environment-friends-network-best-friend-award-nina-earl/> .

The Best Friend Award was announced in association with the Victorian Landcare Awards on 26th November and you can read about the landcare awards here <https://www.landcarevic.org.au/landcare-magazine/spring-2021/> .

More than \$4m for landcare grants

The Victorian Government announced grants of over \$4m to support environmental volunteering groups and networks for on-ground works, education, and capacity building projects that protect, enhance, and restore our land and natural environment.

A total of \$4.09 million was provided for 206 project grants and 282 support grants across Victoria in 2021.

Grants were awarded to Landcare and environmental volunteering groups and networks that have a focus on on-ground land and natural environment improvement work.

You can view the lists of successful applicants here <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants/vlg> .

In this edition

- Friends of Terrick Terrick NP win \$20,000 Minister's Award.
- First Friends of Dandenong Creek win Premier's Sustainability Award.
- Parks Victoria & volunteers.
- Fight of the Brolga.
- Echidnas: ecosystem engineers.
- The end is coming for Trad.

Suggestions for articles for FriendsNET are welcome. Please email to ecosystems@bigpond.com . If you want to include photos, please send as separate files in jpeg format, preferably in landscape.

Disclaimer: Content in this newsletter does not necessarily represent the views of the VEFN committee. Articles are the responsibility of authors as named. All other content is the responsibility of the editor, Stephen Derrick.

Friends of Terrick Terrick NP win \$20,000 award

Friends of Terrick Terrick NP success in environmental volunteer funding

Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio has awarded the first Minister's Award of \$20,000 from the Environmental Innovation Fund to Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park. The group has been awarded the grant for a project capturing the environmental and cultural history of the Park using murals and information boards.

Minister D'Ambrosio also announced that eleven groups will share in almost \$421,000 through the Volunteering Innovation Fund to reinvigorate volunteering on parks and other public land.

- Biolinks Alliance, Spring Plains, Northern Victoria
- Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria, Dandenong, Lysterfield, Main Ridge and Red Hill
- Cairnlea Conservation Reserves Committee of Management, Cairnlea Conservation Reserve
- Connecting to Country Program, Dandenong
- Friends of Newlands Reserve and Edenhope Flora and Fauna Reserve Committee of Management, Boikerbert, Edenhope, Western Victoria
- Horseshoe Bend Community Garden Group, Maribyrnong Valley Parklands
- Merri Creek Management Committee, Merri Creek Park
- Southern Otway Landcare Network, Otways, Western Victoria
- Werribee Park Farm Community Hub, Werribee
- Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare, Westgate Park
- Victorian High Country Huts Association, Alpine, Howqua, Lake Eildon, Eastern Victoria

The Minister also announced that the first Youth Volunteering for Nature Fund is also open for applications – offering Victorians aged 18-29 up to \$1,500 each for ideas that respond to challenges facing the environment.

Successful recipients will also receive a 6-month mentorship with an expert, take part in skills workshops and learn about career pathways with Parks Victoria. Applications should focus on concepts that will protect and preserve Victoria's precious natural and cultural landscapes for future generations.

A pilot Volunteer Growth Fund will also award up to 100 existing groups up to \$2,000 each to enhance their work and help them attract new volunteers.

Submissions for the Volunteering Innovation Fund and Youth Volunteering for Nature Fund are now open. For more information on these projects visit parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/volunteering/volunteering-innovation-fund.

First Friends of Dandenong Creek win Premier's Sustainability Award

FFDC is the winner of the 'Healthy Environment - Community Champion' category for the Premier's Sustainability Awards 2021.

FFDC won the category for its film 'The Eels of Dandenong Creek', which highlights the short-finned eel's amazing lifecycle, their importance to Australia's indigenous nations, and to educate the wider community around the consequences of pollution. All of which is not just unique to Dandenong Creek, but covers the creeks and waterways across Victoria and the eastern seaboard.

You can watch FFDC's film here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umZINGATyOE>

With education at the forefront of FFDC's thinking, the group has been able to bring together a story that discusses how the actions of urban society have impacted the eels – a species many were unaware of. The film is but a starting point for discussions around pollution, and the inappropriate use of insecticides around our homes, and how they will find their way into our waterways.

Anthony Bigelow, FFDC President thanked Sustainability Victoria for hosting the event, and gave a special thank you to the following people and organisations, who without their support, passion and expertise, their film could not have been made:

Uncle Dave Wandin from Wurundjeri

Dr Dave Sharley and Steve Marshall at Bio2labs

Wayne Koster at Arthur Rylah Institute

Knox Environment Society

Kirsty Heiner's fantastic animation work

Michael Portway at Remember the Wild

Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation and Living Links for sponsoring this film.

Parks Victoria & volunteers

In May FriendsNET reported on new requirements by Parks Victoria to require all volunteers in PV estate to have a Working with Children Check by 30 June 2021. While that requirement has been delayed to 31 December 2021 some interesting issues have emerged about the requirement for volunteers to be fully vaccinated.

An email from PV to volunteers in one park states:

Please see the below info with the CHM link and other information on vaccination requirements for volunteers. Let me know if you have any other questions on this.

Volunteers required by Parks Victoria to have mandatory vaccinations

Those volunteers that are directly engaged in a Parks Victoria program and/or activity that is delivered by Parks Victoria staff are required to have mandatory vaccinations. Examples of these include: statewide programs (e.g. Volunteer Track Rangers, Trail Rider, Parkwalks Campground Hosts, Seasearch), individual volunteers or cohorts that are directly engaged by Parks Victoria staff. The directions also include specific categories of activities that volunteers may be engaged in that would require mandatory vaccinations including; retail, tourism, horticulture and animal husbandry.

2. Other Volunteers

For volunteers that are working under the auspice of a volunteer group or volunteer involving organisation, it is the responsibility of each of these groups to follow CHO directions for vaccinations. These may include; Friends groups, Landcare and Recreational User Groups. In addition individuals undertaking 'informal volunteering' as part of their park visit are not included (e.g. individuals using a citizen science app).

Next Steps - Volunteers required by Parks Victoria to have mandatory vaccinations

Volunteers who are required by Parks Victoria to have a mandatory vaccination are subject to the same timelines and will follow the same process as Parks Victoria staff.

- From 15 October 2021 volunteers must have; received at least your first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or have a booking to receive your first dose by 22 October 2021, or have a medical exemption evidenced by an authorised medical practitioner.*

- Volunteers will not be able to participate if they are not fully vaccinated by 26 November 2021, unless an exception applies.*
- We have provided a template letter for staff to send to volunteers immediately that are engaged directly and fall into the above category of requiring a mandatory vaccination, attached.*
- Parks Victoria is using Corporate Health Management (CHM) to collect, record and hold information about volunteer vaccination status. Volunteers can be provided **the link to the secure CHM database to submit their information, this is included in the template letter.***

One Friends groups has pointed out that a similar set of policies could equally be applied to the need for Working with Children Checks and suggested the following wording:

Volunteers required by Parks Victoria to have a WWCC

Those volunteers that are directly engaged in a Parks Victoria program and/or activity that is delivered by Parks Victoria staff are required to have a WWCC check. Examples of these include: statewide programs (e.g. Volunteer Track Rangers, Trail Rider, Parkwalks Campground Hosts, Seasearch), individual volunteers or cohorts that are directly engaged by Parks Victoria staff. The directions also include specific categories of activities that volunteers may be engaged in that would require a WWCC check including; retail, tourism, horticulture and animal husbandry.

Other Volunteers

For volunteers that are working under the auspice of a volunteer group or volunteer involving organisation, it is the responsibility of each of these groups to follow CWCC Victoria guidelines. These may include; Friends groups, Landcare and Recreational User Groups. In addition individuals undertaking 'informal volunteering' as part of their park visit are not included (e.g. individuals using a citizen science app).

Why not indeed? That is a good question for Parks Victoria.

DEWLP has similar policies on the requirement or otherwise for vaccinations. See

<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/volunteering/volunteers-and-covid-19-vaccinations> .

\$10m Environment Restoration Fund closes 13 December

The Federal Departments of Industry, Science, Energy & Resources and Agriculture, Water & Environment will provide \$10m in grant funding for the Environment Restoration Fund Threatened Species Action Plan - Priority Species. The fund covers a wide range of both fauna and flora. Details are in the program [guidelines](#).

Environmental Volunteer groups that are incorporated not-for-profit entities are eligible to apply. The minimum grant amount is \$50,000 and the maximum is \$250,000 and the grant can be for up to 100% of eligible costs. Funds must be spent by 31 March 2023 and the maximum project length is 13 months. Applications will open on 1 November and close on 13 December.

Read the program [guidelines](#) and learn more about the fund here <https://business.gov.au/grants-and-programs/environment-restoration-fund-threatened-species-strategy-action-plan-priority-species> .

Loose ends: Battery recycling challenges – Electric vehicle and solar system batteries

Previous editions of FriendsNET have drawn attention to the emerging challenge posed by electric vehicle and solar system batteries that are at the end of their life for one reason or another.

An investigation by ABC noted that recycling of these types of batteries is a new industry for Australia, but that there is currently no code of conduct that governs this. Read the report here <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-25/electric-car-solar-battery-storage-waste-recycling/100564234> .

An earlier study released by CSIRO earlier in 2020 noted that:

- only 2 per cent of Australia's annual 3,300 tonnes of lithium-ion battery waste is recycled
- this waste is growing by 20 per cent per year and could exceed 100,000 tonnes by 2036
- if recycled, 95 per cent of components can be turned into new batteries or used in other industries
- by comparison, of the 150,000 tonnes of lead-acid batteries sold in 2010, 98 per cent were recycled, and

- the majority of Australia's battery waste is shipped overseas, and the waste that remains left in landfill, leading to a potential fires and environmental contamination.

Read the CSIRO reports here

<https://www.csiro.au/en/research/technology-space/energy/energy-storage/battery-recycling> .

Fight of the Brolga: wind turbines or Brolga or both?

Hamish Cumming draws our attention to new standards that DELWP is trying to force through which will threaten the Brolga and its habitat. It is important that as many people as possible get involved and comment on the proposed new standards.



Brolga resting on a salt lake with no protective vegetation

DELWP have written a Draft standard to supposedly protect the Brolga and it is intended to be made law, but instead of protecting, it will allow the extermination of the Endangered Southern Brolga, so that wind farms can be built in the Brolga breeding home ranges. How can a Victorian Environment Department allow the destruction of a 10 million year old species for a project with a life of 25 years, when all they have to do is mandate a 5km buffer from turbines. Turbines have displaced over 50 nest sites in the past 8 years, and with only around 200 nesting pairs left, this draft standard must be stopped. DELWP have refused to publish the submissions made on this draft for nearly a year now, yet wind farm companies are proceeding with plans as if the standard is already in place. It makes no sense that's why I have embarked on a Twitter education program on @HamishCumming, telling people to demand the Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio mandates a 5km buffer, and not adopt the ludicrous draft standard.

History of Brolga protection and Buffers from wind Turbines.

When wind turbines were proposed for the landscape of Victoria, the threat they would have on the Victorian Brolga was quickly recognized and the DSE / DELWP Brolga experts of the time raised the alarm, and one in particular Philip Du Guesclin, wrote a report in 2009 saying 10km was needed as a buffer from flocking sites and 3km from nesting sites. See Suggested Brolga Exclusion Distances for Windfarms.

However, this was not welcomed by senior Planners, the wind industry or the consultants working for the wind farms. So a Technical Reference Group / Scientific Panel was created to produce a guideline. As this group was heavily weighted by vested interests, the guideline was 5km from flocking sites and 3km from nests. This was however ignored by Planning Panels and the wind industry, because it was only a guideline.

A DSE staff member told me there was a 1982 Brolga nest site report done by Don White, a department staffer, but DSE refused to put the data on the Biodiversity Atlas because it would restrict wind turbine locations. I asked for the report

and was refused, even under Freedom of Information. I searched and found the author, and he provided me with the full data set and the report. To cut the story short it took nearly 2 years to have all the Brolga data restored.

In January 2010 DSE staff told me they left due to the goings on there and were told not to object to wind farm applications, and also said information and reports written by them were changed before they were submitted to high level DSE. And data was still being removed from the Biodiversity Atlas. Changed to support development applications etc.

I then tried to get DNA testing done to show the Southern Brolga was independent from the Northern Brolga and had not interbred with Sarus cranes. DELWP fought me at every step, as that would have proved the Southern Brolga was critically endangered rather than Vulnerable. I had to raise the funds and get a university to do the testing. DELWP had 30 years of Brolga DNA stored at Serindip, but instead of passing that over, they incinerated it all on the excuse that they didn't have the financial resources to keep storing it. I got zoos and field naturalists. and other groups to collect feathers from NT, QLD, and in Victoria. The NGT had a Brolga project on my property at the time and said they would facilitate the DNA test and write a report. The final report showed our Southern Brolga were genetically isolated and had not bred with sarus cranes. DELWP were not happy and instructed the groups and Universities that did the testing not to accept any money from us for any further work. But they still get funding from DELWP now for other projects!!!! (D) NGT preliminary assessment DNA report.

We had the same interference with other NGO's that were helping me, but then withdrew their help. One classic was the Chepstowe wind farm, VTFN did a submission to the planning department showing their surveys of the 7 Brolga nesting sites within 3km of the proposed turbines. VTFN gave me a draft copy to check facts etc, so I have a copy. It appears they were told to withdraw their submission and not attend the hearing, which they obliged. Funding seems to be a big stick!!!!. Turbines were built within 300m of one nest site and all 7 sites were displaced, no successful breeding within 5km since.

There are 12 post completion reports from wind farms built in Brolga habitat areas, all show displacement of nesting Brolga for 5km, one wind farm claimed successful nesting on one occasion, but after scrutiny, the birds were found to have nested 5km away and only ventured into the windfarm when it was not running after the chick was more than 2 months old. Brolga deaths have been observed at several Victorian wind farms, but DELWP refuses to hand over autopsy results even through FOI requests, but they continue to claim the birds were not killed by the turbines.

The TRG, headed by DELWP decided a study should be done to determine the home ranges of Brolga during the breeding season June to December, so buffers could be accurately developed. The same GPS tracking of cranes was done in Canada and USA during the same time. The Whooping Crane nests in Canada, nowhere near turbines, but migrates through USA. They found 95% of the cranes were displaced 5km by turbines. Displacing cranes from their feeding grounds. In this case the cranes could feed elsewhere. The international Crane Foundation put me in touch with the author and he sent me a copy. See Pearse et al. In the case of displacement in Victoria from nesting sites, there is no other habitat for the Brolga to go to, so they fail to breed and will die out in time simply due to no new chicks. The post completion reports of the 12 wind farms confirm failure to breed and displacement of more than 50 nest sites in the past 8 years. All reports are available from the companies or through DELWP.

In the USA the GPS trackers ran and were recording for 6 years, in Victoria however, the receivers were switched off after just 2 years, (2012) allegedly due to insufficient funds to keep recording. But the data that was recorded was only available to the TRG, being wind farm company consultants and DELWP, and I don't think they liked what they saw. The data collected was suppressed until an ABC journalist got hold of it in 2019 and passed it to me for mapping. Very quickly it became obvious that the Brolga breeding home ranges were a minimum of 5km radius from the nest, and as the Government requirement was not to have turbines in the home range, that would have meant a minimum 5km buffer. This also corresponded to what was happening in the field, where Brolga were failing to breed within 5km of turbines. But all of the data and the findings were suppressed, even the PHD study was delayed from publishing for many years had the scope changed so it only reported on walking chicks. The consultants and DELWP tried to reclassify the home range during the breeding season as the area where chicks walk before they can fly. We would have never known any of this except for the work done by the ABC.

In June 2021, the threat level of the Southern Brolga was raised from Vulnerable to Endangered, and the annual counts have shown a decrease in population. https://www.swifft.net.au/cb_pages/sp_brolga.php
If you read the wording carefully of each of the counts, you will see SA birds were added for a few years then removed again, and the count in Victoria is between 450 and 650. When you take out juveniles and birds too old to breed, I

estimate 200 breeding pairs left is generous. You will see one year with an extremely high count, I thought that odd and submitted a FOI request on the input sheets, (which took well over a year to get) and I believe I found double counting of the flocks I knew of and recorded around my area. The same 90 or so birds were recorded as they moved during the day in different locations. No previous or subsequent year has a count anywhere that large since the 1970's.

So after all this history and evidence stacking up over the past 17 years, DEWLP say they want to have a new Brolga standard and enshrine it in law so it cannot be challenged in planning panels or permit applications.

The Draft Standard makes ludicrous claims that they want to make law, they include things like:

- Brolga don't use saline wetlands, so they do not need buffering at all. (False)
- Brolga records only in the VBA at time of permit application will be allowed. (This is very bad as we know DELWP remove records and have had Ombudsman's inquiries into that very practice in the past forcing DELWP to return over 5000 historic records)
- Brolga have not been affected or killed at any Victorian wind farm. (False)
- As no Brolga have been killed or affected, no post completion monitoring will ever be required again. (a false assumption used to let companies off the hook)
- As there are no impact on Brolga, no mitigation is required. (False)
- Local land holder or non-wind farm consultancy information or evidence that was not collected prior to the permit application will not be allowed at Panel hearings etc

So a Draft standard to supposedly protect the Brolga could be set in law that would allow the extermination of the Endangered Southern Brolga, so that wind farms can be built in the Brolga breeding home ranges. In Nebraska crane fossils have been found 10 million years old, the Australian Brolga is likely to be as old or older. How can a Victorian Environment Department allow the destruction of a 10 million year old species for a project with a life of 25 years, when all they have to do is mandate a 5km buffer from turbines. people must demand the Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio mandates a 5km buffer, and not adopt the ludicrous draft standard.

Hamish Cumming

@HamishCumming

Conservationist, engineer and farmer passionately protecting Brolga habitats from inappropriate developments.

In the news recently: <https://defrock.org/2021/08/17/brolga-backer-hamish-cumming/> .

And fund raising for Brolga <https://www.gofundme.com/f/Save-Southern-Brolgas-from-Extinction> .

Echidnas: ecosystem engineers

By Tanya Loos

Echidna train. Photography © Patrick Kavanagh.



In late winter and early spring, Wombat Forest residents may notice an increase in echidna diggings, as on warm north-facing areas the virgin queens of Meat Ants *Iridomyrmex* are closer to the surface. These queen ants are a rich source of fats, and most welcome for echidnas coming out of the lean winter months.

Short-beaked Echidnas *Tachyglossus aculeatus* are well known for eating ants and termites - but they are not strictly myrmecophagous. A truly myrmecophagous mammal, such as anteaters or pangolins, has over 90% of their diet composed of ants and termites. As well as ants and termites, echidnas also prey upon moth and beetle larvae, and earthworms.

The Echidna CSI project asks citizen scientists to send in their echidna sightings from across Australia, via a smartphone app of the same name. This data will build up a much better picture of their numbers and distribution. The project also asks echidna enthusiasts to send in any echidna scats for analysis, as the project research team are investigating the DNA and hormones within echidna scats: “DNA will indicate the echidna diet, population genetics and microbiome while hormones can show if echidnas are stressed in particular environments and help us better understand their reproduction”.

This kind of scientific detective work has already thrown up some surprising findings; recent DNA analysis of the echidna gut microbiome adds two other dietary items to the usual insect fare - fungi and even plants!

Foraging for food by digging is assisted by the echidna’s powerful musculature, long claws and their uniquely backward facing hind feet. Echidnas dig in soil, and also move surprisingly heavy rocks and logs to get to their tiny

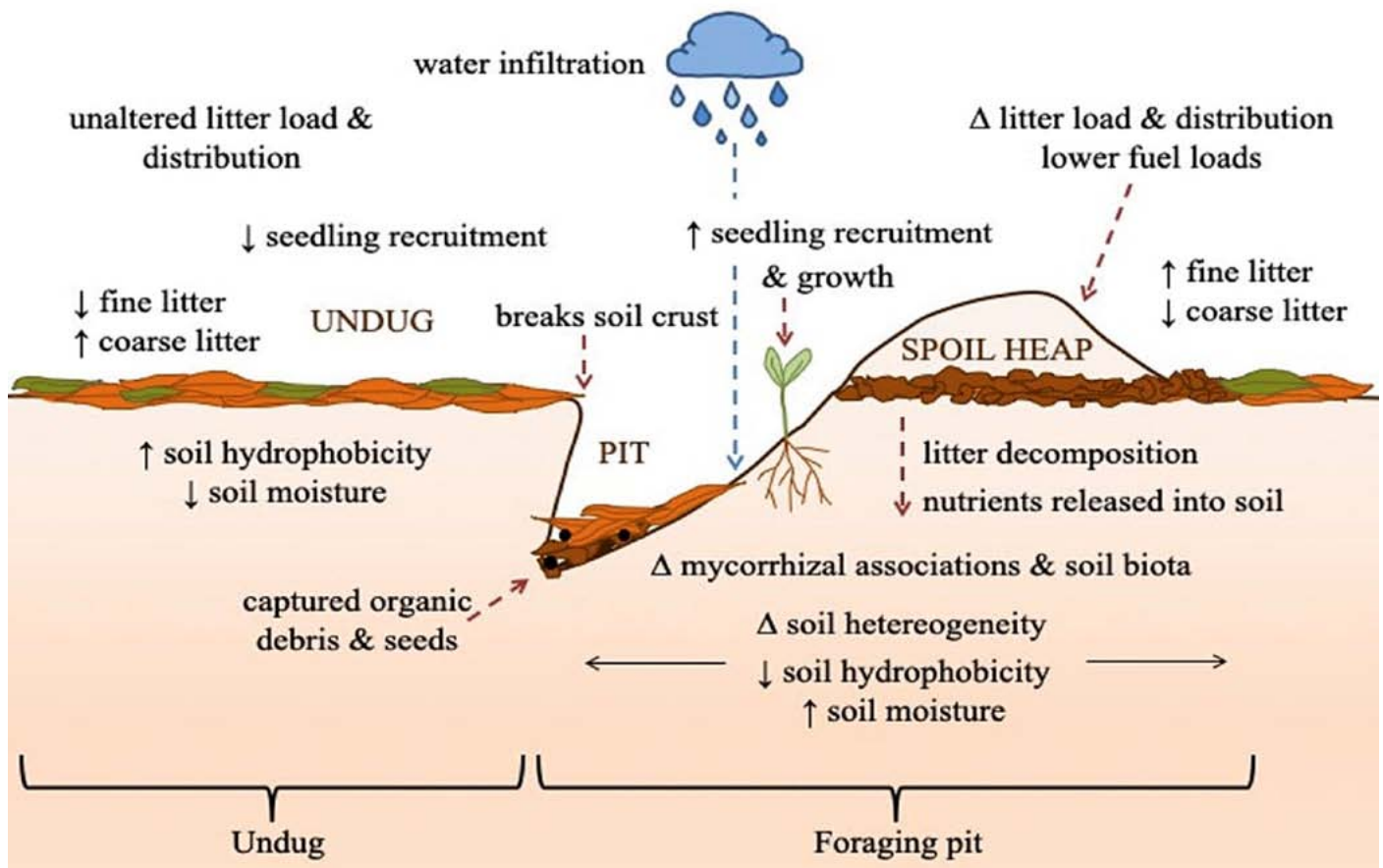
quarry. One study estimated that echidnas spend 12% of their time digging and had the potential to move 204m of soil per year. Our spiky little ecosystem engineer!

We have seen the importance of Superb Lyrebirds in moving large amounts of soil and leaf litter, and also well studied is the role of bandicoots. Here in the Wombat Forest our remaining ecosystem engineers are echidnas, and of course wombats, doing the digging - a vital action for ecosystem function.

The characteristic digging pits of echidnas (often with a little round snout-hole impression at the deepest point) create microclimates and diversity in the soilscape. A study in the arid and semi-arid areas replicated the size and shape of echidna diggings and found that these pits had greater rates of seed germination and leaf litter decomposition than in soil without diggings.

Echidnas are Australia’s most widespread mammal, ranging from alpine areas to deserts, and even beach habitats. As long as there is food to eat, and sites to shelter in, the echidna can survive. They are absent from cleared farmland, upland rainforest, and the deepest fern gullies. This means that their distribution would be patchy through the Wombat Forest region. With a home range of 30-40 hectares on average one echidna can cover a wide variety of habitats. Interestingly they are not put off by urban areas and are often seen in people’s backyards. Echidnas are surprisingly long-lived for such a small mammal - 30-40 years in the wild, and over 50 years recorded in captivity!

I have been living in the Wombat Forest for 20 years - and over that period we have seen the Millennium drought, the Black Saturday fires, the La Nina flooding event of 2010-2011, year after year of



How bandicoot digs affect soil.

<https://theconversation.com/one-little-bandicoot-can-dig-up-an-elephants-worth-of-soil-a-year-and-our-ecosystem-loves-it-132266>

“planned burns” and most recently the severe windstorm that devastated patches of the forest with extensive tree fall and uprooting, which Gayle wrote about in the last issue.

To some extent, echidnas can handle droughts and the associated lack of food as they have a very low metabolic rate, in fact the lowest of all mammals. This low energy requirement means that echidnas can survive lean periods, and their habit of going into a kind of hibernation called torpor also helps conserve resources.

The echidna anti-predator strategy is to use those powerful muscles and backward facing hind feet to dig directly down into the soil - and this same movement is used to surprising effectiveness to swim when the need arises - such as during heat waves or floods.

Their anti-predator hiding strategy is also used in the case of wildfire or planned burns. The soil is an excellent protector, but if the echidna does not dig down deep enough the spines can be burnt. The spines are made of keratin, just like hair, and can be burnt down to a stub.

Individual survival chances of echidna in fires are pretty good - but what is more worrying are the changes that occur as a result of the burns - mainly the destruction of fallen logs and other shelter sites that are so essential to echidnas. And like all animals post-fire, their survival beyond the fire event relies upon a plentiful supply of food. If the planned burn area is too large then this means that echidnas have to rely solely on burnt areas to find food.

The microbiome of an echidna’s gut is very different depending upon whether the animal is foraging in burnt or unburnt habitat - but what is not clear is the long-term effects of fires on echidna health and survival.

I watched Echidna CSI researcher Tahlia Perry give a fantastic talk online - and when someone asked whether echidnas were factored into pre-burn surveys Tahlia replied that they were not, but most probably should be!

Each of our long-lived Wombat Forest echidnas deserves a long and healthy life, with a rich complex understory habitat, so they can continue providing those vital ecosystem functions as they dig for food - yet another reason to fine-tune our planned burn regime. ■

References

One study:

<https://research.usc.edu.au/esploro/outputs/abstract/Theprivate-life-of-echidnas-using-accelerometry-and-GPS-to-examine-fieldbiomechanics-and-assess-the-ecological-impact-of-a-widespread-semifossorial-monotreme/99451052602621>

Ecosystem engineers:

<https://theconversation.com/losing-australias-diggers-is-hurting-our-ecosystems-18590>

Superb lyrebirds:

<https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/eap.2219>

Arid study:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.catena.2021.105166>

The end is coming for smutty Trad

Do you want some smutty Trad?



25 January 2021



3 July 2021

About ten years ago, some members of Friends of Sherbrooke Forest realised that Wandering Trad (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) was almost impossible to eradicate. Someone saw an article about biological control of Trad in New Zealand and said “Why don’t we get some of that?” So we started talking to other Friends groups, agencies and experts in biocontrol, and writing letters to politicians. Eventually, permission was granted and funds were found and work started on quarantine testing (in Victoria) of an insect that liked eating Trad in New Zealand. Concurrently, work on another biocontrol agent, *Kordyana brasiliensis*, a smut fungus, was commenced by CSIRO in Canberra.

In the end, *Kordyana* became the preferred agent, and after extensive quarantine testing to prove that the fungus did not impact Australian species, it was approved for release in the wild in late 2018.

Since then, the fungus has successfully established and spread in NSW and Victoria. In Victoria, establishment commenced in June 2019 in the Dandenong Ranges and these plantings have matured to the extent that material can be harvested from them for use in spreading the biocontrol to other uninfected stands of Trad.

Material from these plantings is available to landowners or agencies who have a problem with Trad and would like to deal with it. **If you would like some material, contact Bill Incoll, Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenongs, bincoll@melbpc.org.au.**

Further more detailed information about the history and testing of the agent can be found at:

https://research.csiro.au/wandering-trad/wp-content/uploads/sites/173/2020/09/Wandering-Trad-Biocontrol_Release-Information_NSW-Enviro-Trust_07.09.20.pdf