



Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association Inc

History with a Future

PO Box 376, Campbelltown, South Australia 5074

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2020 (Year 19 Vol 28)

EDITORIAL

The summer of 2019-2020 may well be one that many of us would like to forget. The drought has continued on. And whilst our Bunkers CR escaped the ravages of wild fire, many communities round Australia suffered the dire effects of bush fires and flooding. But, unquestionably, the issue that continues to weigh on our minds is the fall-out from COVID-19. Through our secretary, Jim Kennelly, both the Bunkers CR Camp Ground and Mt Caernarvon Track were closed for visitation. This was in keeping with our State and Federal government announcements. I am sure all Members and Friends join with me as we patiently ride out this turbulent time and await the moment when the Bunkers CR awakens to an inviting sunrise over the Little Bunkers.

Shane Fantinel

NEWS FROM THE SECRETARY

ANNOUNCEMENT

With the current COVID-19 virus and the Travel Restrictions and Social Distancing being put in place by the Government and SA Health, the Committee of Management has decided to close the Bunkers CR camping facility and Mt. Caernarvon Track until further notice.

The Bunkers Grassland/shrub land herbivore impact survey that was planned for Easter, and all subsequent bookings for camping and tourism, have been cancelled.

The matter of 'Essential-Travel-only' will be decided by the Committee of Management. This will encompass only work that is understood to be required maintenance.

Thank you.

COMMUNICATION ON SITE

As decided at the last COM meeting, I have organized Sky Muster Broadband and a telephone to be installed at Davey Hut. Connection by NBN will take place during 2020. The document below outlines management and use of the system. The telephone will be free for local and national calls but calls to mobiles are charged at mobile call rates. This initiative provides an additional level of safety and security for our members and friends who visit the Bunkers CR.

INTERNET AND TELEPHONE INTRUCTIONS

The Internet and Telephone has been installed primarily for emergencies and to enable those who are running the Caernarvon Track to check for bookings.

All data and Calls will be monitored for costing and charged to the user.

- Data plan is not large so use sparingly
- Local and National Calls to fixed lines are free
- Calls to Mobiles will be charged at the going rate to the user
- Incoming calls do not incur a cost to YFRWPA

Telephone Use

- Simply turn on the power to the building and the modem will turn on automatically. (will take a few minutes for the Modem to Boot up)
- The telephone needs to be turned on at the power point and will automatically charge the handset (note hand set may be flat and will need a few hours to charge before use)
- Calls can be made and received on the base station before handset is charged
- The Base station is also an answering machine and messages can be played by pressing the Play/Stop button on the base station.
- Messages can be deleted by pressing the Delete button
- Range of the cordless phone as always has its limitations
- Telephone Number is 08 (still to be finalized)

Internet Use

- The Password to access the internet will only be supplied to Rangers running the Caernarvon Track
- The Password is not to be Shared
- The internet is for the Rangers running the Caernarvon Track to check for Bookings.
- Surfing the internet will not be tolerated

Jim Kennelly

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Tourism

A new batch of business cards has been purchased and delivered to Kym. They will be distributed to Committee Members when we next meet.

An email was sent out to all Mt. Caernarvon Track Bookings for Easter. The email advised that we were closed due to the COVID-19 virus. Options for rebooking or refund were provided. At this stage the visit by the 'Dirty Deeds 4WD Club' have rebooked for Easter 2021.

We are excited that Snowy's travel blogger, Chris Newman, friend of one of our committee members, was all set to camp the last weekend of March and drive the track to experience all that the Bunkers has to offer. However COVID-19 has now put this trip on hold. We thanks Snowy's for their willingness to make this happen, to showcase this unique part of South Australia to their on-line readers, promoting the great conservation works being undertaken by the Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association.

In the meantime, check out Snowy's travel site <https://www.snowys.com.au/blog/travel/>

Kym Groves and Philip Wells

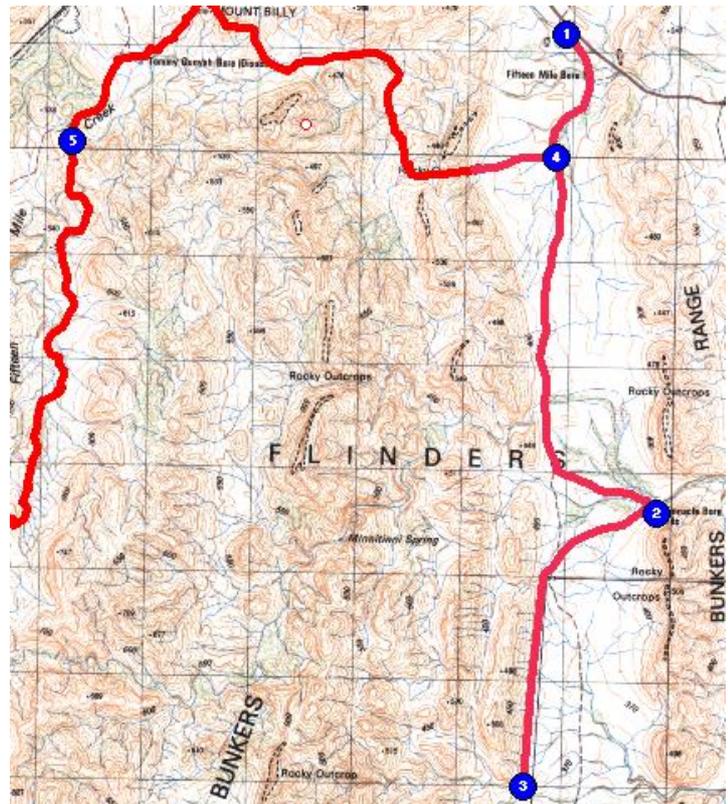
For Consideration

A neighboring station, Martins Well has shot or trapped 10 Wild Dogs in the months of February and March. Most of these were quite close to our boundary with Martins Well.

Until we can open the old track towards the Martins Well boundary, via the Pinnacle Well Valley, and when the COVID-19 threat subsides, some suggestions include:

- Baiting to be restricted to main tracks only
- Bait in a way that we form a bait line that primarily protects us from the North, North East and North West
- One or two people could undertaking the baiting process from a single vehicle. This will remove the need for field baiting on foot for the immediate time.
- Baiting to be done between points 1, 2, & 3 and points 4 to 5 along the main tracks and at a higher rate than we would normally do. .Point 3

is 2.5kms south of Pinnacle Bore and point 5 is the entrance to the Centre Track (see map).



Trapper

In conjunction with DEW, as a wild dog trapper will be working on the Bunkers CR, I will arrange for the trapper to have a temporary key to gain access for his work.

Kym Groves

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND WORKS

Progression of the amenities:

- flushing of the interior walls is now complete
- doorframes and doors have been fitted
- all the lights and fans have been fitted and are connected and working
- new relief valves for the water heaters have been purchased



Power is now on in the new Amenities Block.



Kym Groves

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY NEWS

Nil Incidents, Accidents, Injuries or Near Misses were reported in the last six months.

The new amenities block is coming along but, with completion still a little way off, this facility is out-of-bounds until further notice.

Follow up meetings with Sibelco and the Department of Mines have meant that it will be quite some years before we take on management of the old mine area. Therefore, the old mine site area is out-of-bounds until further notice.

Government Requirements regarding prevention of contracting COVID-19 has meant all YFRWPA members and friends and the general public should not travel to the Bunkers CR. Mt. Caernarvon Track is closed. This has been advertised through an email to members plus on our web sites. Visits are restricted to essential work only. This will be coordinated through the Committee of Management.

Euro Management

As a result of continued drought conditions within the Bunkers CR, no Permit to Destroy was applied for at the start of 2020. The situation with Euro numbers will be monitored over the course of 2020.

Fuel Reduction Programs

Aims and Objectives are in place but no action has occurred to date. I have made contact with the DEW Project Officer for this activity and a meeting, regarding more detailed plans, will ensue down the track.

Local Area Liaison

Permission was granted to DEW to conduct their annual aerial culling of designated feral animals in The Bunkers CR. This occurred from 20 – 21 March 2020. It was listed in our calendar. Thirty-five goats were culled.

Permission was granted to DEW to expand their wild dog trapping program into the Bunkers CR. This

program is already up and running on Parks and private properties in the vicinity of the Bunkers CR. This will commence within the next few months.

Shane Fantinel

Information Technology Report



(editor's note: I found this data quite intriguing. Like me, I imagine many members thought only people within Australia checked us out on line. Indeed, it is quite the opposite.)

In March 2020 we had 766 visits on the YFRWPA Website. The top 10 for March were from:

Locales	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Ukraine	ua 644	645	11.55 MB
Australia	au 231	1,657	116.13 MB
United States	us 196	379	25.66 MB
China	cn 145	153	18.19 MB
Great Britain	gb 100	171	6.84 MB
Bosnia-Herzegovina	ba 50	51	388.39 KB
Canada	ca 46	97	4.18 MB
Russian Federation	ru 44	73	1.42 MB
Germany	de 29	75	9.81 MB
France	fr 15	34	781.80 KB

In March 2020 we had 564 visits on the Caernarvon Track Website. The top 10 for March were from:

Locales	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Australia	au 447	2,293	98.48 MB
United States	us 164	342	10.55 MB
Canada	ca 22	22	215.36 KB
Great Britain	gb 22	133	6.34 MB
China	cn 14	34	1019.73 KB
Russian Federation	ru 7	7	113.56 KB
Ukraine	ua 7	7	130.23 KB
Romania	ro 6	16	1017.14 KB
Germany	de 4	4	74.42 KB
South Korea	kr 4	5	98.42 KB

Charles Onody

Yellow-footed rock-wallaby trends on the Bunkers Conservation Reserve

(sent in by Jeanine Baker)

Recently, Lethbridge *et al.* (2019) provided a report to DEW titled 'Population Trends of the Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby (*Petrogale xanthopus xanthopus*) and feral goats (*Capra hircus*) from Aerial Survey Data in the Flinders and Olary Ranges'. This report included the results of aerial and ground surveys for a number of regions in the Flinders and Olary Ranges. It provides an opportunity to look at what is happening with yellow-footed rock wallabies on the Bunkers Conservation Reserve (BCR).

Firstly, some key points from the report. Across the Flinders and Olarys, trends indicate numbers of yellow-footed rock-wallabies in managed zones are doing better than those in unmanaged zones, despite decreases from peak numbers in 2012 in all zones, with the exception of Bimbowrie.

In the report, BCR results are included as part of the Wirealpa South Zone. This is classified as a managed zone (i.e. it incorporates broad-scale integrated fox and feral goat control). Results show that in the Wirealpa South zone, numbers in 2019 are higher than pre-2000 numbers despite a drop from the peak numbers observed in 2012. Average densities/km reported for the Wirealpa South Zone are also towards the higher end of densities at 14.7 animals/km². This zone also follows observed trends indicating higher yellow-footed rock-wallaby densities are associated with lower goat densities.

Figure 1 shows historical sightings for yellow-footed rock-wallabies between 1993 and 2012. Superimposed on this are the sightings of yellow-footed rock-wallabies (uncorrected for observer error) observed on the BCR as part of the recent aerial survey (Lethbridge *et al.* 2019). These recent sightings suggest that the original source populations are still present and animals may be dispersing along survey lines.

Lethbridge *et al.* (2019) suggests drops in numbers between 2012 and 2019 across the majority of zones may be due to dispersal away from survey lines as well as from density-dependent mortality. This hypothesis is supported by opportunistic sightings recorded by Peter Baker between 2015 and 2019 (Fig 2). It is impossible to determine whether the sightings away from the survey lines are individuals from pre-existing populations or are the result of dispersal. This is because these are not part of any systematic data collection process. However, they do suggest that there has been dispersal away from the original aerial survey lines and that source populations are still surviving at key sites on the BCR. In summary, anecdotal information suggests that yellow-footed rock-wallabies were in decline and only present in low numbers prior to the formation of the BCR.

The findings outlined in the report by Lethbridge *et al.* (2019) suggest that populations of yellow-footed rock-wallabies on the BCR are now much higher than pre-2000 numbers (despite a drop from peak numbers in 2012).

An average population of 14.7 animals/km² is also towards the higher end of wallaby densities observed for the Flinders and Olarys overall. Opportunistic sightings also suggest, and support the hypothesis outlined in Lethbridge *et al.* (2019), that dispersal may be occurring from the source populations.

Hopefully, with recent rain recorded on the BCR there may be some vegetation recovery and yellow-footed rock-wallabies will continue to thrive. More importantly, they may continue to disperse into surrounding habitat capable of supporting viable populations.

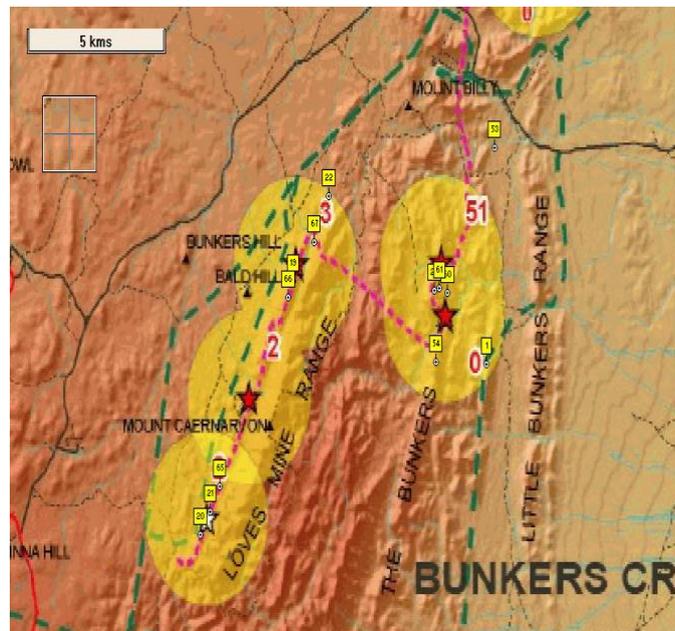


Fig 1. Map showing estimated Bunkers Conservation Reserve flight path (pink dotted line) used for yellow foot rock wallaby surveys (source DEWNR Bounceback report 1993 – 2012) with 2019 uncorrected aerial sightings collected for Lethbridge *et al.* (2019) superimposed (yellow squares).

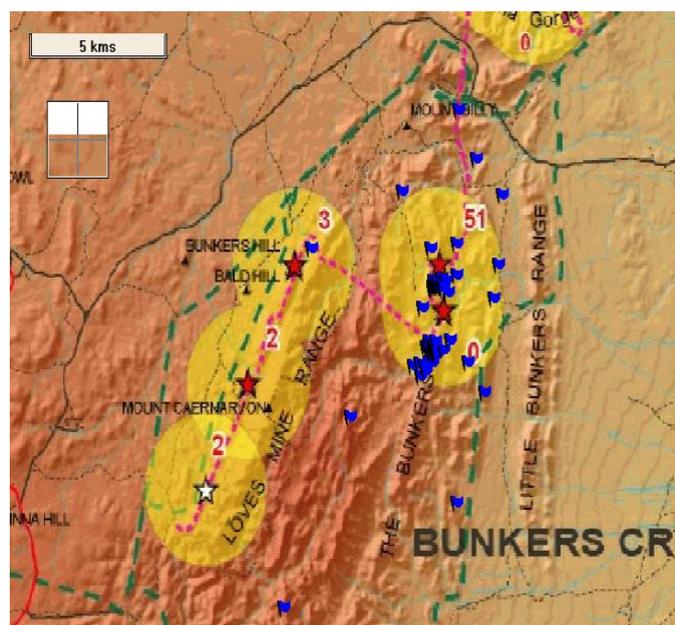


Fig 2. Map showing estimated Bunkers Conservation Reserve flight path (pink dotted line) used for yellow foot rock wallaby surveys (source DEWNR Bounceback report) showing 1993 – 2012 yellow foot rock wallaby

counts (red stars) with **opportunistic** GPS sightings of yellow foot rock wallabies (2015 – 2019) (blue flags) superimposed. Note: this map does not show an addition 3 GPS' sightings at the south end of the Bunkers Conservation Reserve (2 observed approx. 1.0 km N from Boulders Bore and one on the track approx. 2 km NE from Green Well).

Acknowledgements and thanks to:

Mark Lethbridge (Ecoknowledge) for providing the 2019 aerial data for the BCR.

Kaz Herbst, Steve Lieschke, Alex McDonald, Peter Knapp and Dana Teusner for their constructive comments.

References

Population Trends of the Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby (*Petrogale xanthopus xanthopus*) and feral goats (*Capra hircus*) from Aerial Survey Data in the Flinders and Olary Ranges, South Australia. Report to Department for Environment and Water. Lethbridge, M.R., Shute. E., Wells, C. and Stead, M. (2019)

Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale xanthopus*) Colonies in the Flinders Ranges NP and Blinman Area. Map produced by Regional GIS – SA Arid Lands, DEWNR. (2012)

Jeanine Baker

DID YOU KNOW

Yellow footed rock wallaby (*Petrogale xanthopus*)

'The largest of the wallabies, the yellow-footed rock wallaby also has the most colourful markings. Its tail is ringed brown and yellow, its paws are yellow and its back is covered in soft grey fur. Its underbelly is white and there are white stripes on the flanks, hips and cheeks. The main threats are fox and feral cat predation, loss of habitat and competition for food and water sources from feral animals, particularly goats, which are able to survive in the same habitat. Yellow-footed rock-wallabies have been known to live in colonies of up to 100 and when a threat approaches, a wallaby will thump its feet to warn the others.

Habitat

Yellow-footed rock-wallabies live in semi-arid areas in rocky outcrops and ranges. Once common in arid mountain areas, today the species is only found in seven small pockets of land in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

Diet

Due to the arid environment they live in, food choices are limited, and these rock-wallabies feed on grasses, shrubs, bark and fallen leaves. As daytime temperatures often hit 40 Celsius, the wallaby is mainly nocturnal, sheltering in caves and overhangs during the day and feeding at dusk. They can go for long periods without water but when it's hot will travel many kilometres to drink.



Fig.3. Photograph taken on the Bunkers CR. Can you spot the joey?

Reproduction

Female yellow-footed rock-wallabies are able to breed from 11-22 months of age and males at 30 months. After a month-long pregnancy, a single tiny joey is born. It attaches itself to one of the mother's four pouch teats and stays there for 28 weeks suckling. After leaving the pouch, the joey does not follow the mother around like kangaroos do, but stays in a safe place in the rocks while the mum forages for food.'

Ref: <https://reptilepark.com.au/animals/mammals/yellow-footed-rock-wallaby/>