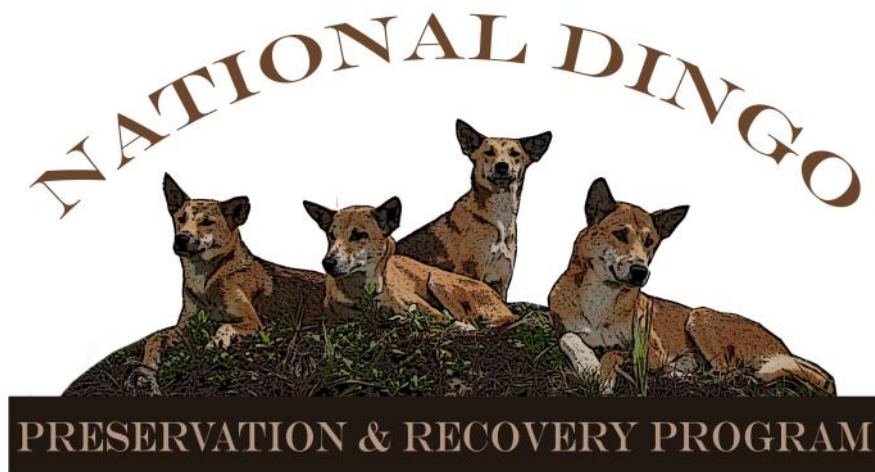


National Dingo Preservation and Recovery Program

NDPRP MAGAZINE

Winter, 2015 Volume 3 Number 1

NDPRP brings together a small number of well-informed and experienced people who strive to intervene strategically, advocating for the dingo using environmental and ecological research



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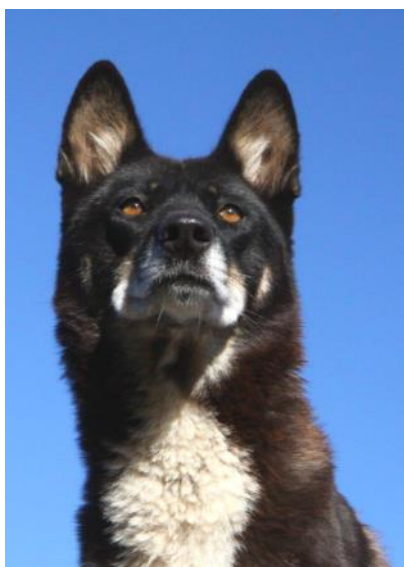
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**‘Great spirits have always
encountered violent opposition from
mediocre minds’**

Albert Einstein

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Compiled by Ernest Healy and
Jennifer Parkhurst

Affiliate Organisations:

- Australian Dingo Conservation Association (NSW)
- Humane Society International (Aust)
- Save Fraser Island Dingoes (Qld)
- Gumbaya Park (Vic)
- Australian Wildlife Protection Council (Vic)

President's Report

I wish to thank the committee and all members of the NDPRP for their time, efforts, commitment and interest over the last 12 months. It has been a difficult year dealing with governments, bureaucrats and those who seem determined to cull all dingoes.

I would like to highlight the positive progress that has been achieved over the last 12 months -

The NDPRP's newsletter was a tremendous success and our congratulations to all those who contributed and produced the newsletter – let's keep this rolling to achieve the necessary communications between all members as it is nearly impossible otherwise.

The year has seen a continuing support of the NDPRP for the welfare and protection of dingoes on Fraser Island. The difficulties of dealing with the QPWS has continued with limited response. Whether the change in Government and the new Minister in Queensland will change the rate of progress is yet to be seen.

The new Labour Government in Victoria with a new Minister for the Environment has now responded to the NDPRP's request for discussions surrounding the definition of the dingo for conservation purposes in Victoria, and about which parts of the state will be designated for dingo protection. Dr Healy and Dr. Richie have met with ministerial advisors and have put a number of propositions to correct weaknesses in the current arrangements. We look forward to a favourable response.

The NDPRP supports the Humane Society International call upon Canberra to develop a Conservation Plan for dingoes throughout Australia. The focus is on the positive role dingoes have in protecting the ecosystem. Here HSI will be working with the office of the Federal Environment Minister and the newly appointed Threatened Species Commissioner.

There have been regular calls for a NDPRP web site, and it has finally come to fruition. Please visit the site and let us know what you think. Any contributions to the site are welcome. http://www.nationaldingo.org.au/dingo_dr/

Our main aim is to extend out promotion and communications to members and the public to secure their support to save the dingo.

Let's keep fighting.

Ian Gunn.



Jennifer Parkhurst

Principal purposes and aims of the National Dingo Preservation and Recovery Program:

The purpose of the National Dingo Preservation and Recovery Program (NDPRP) is to work towards the preservation and rehabilitation of wild dingo populations in Australia.

1. Consistent with this purpose, the NDPRP aims to:
2. identify wild populations of dingoes of high conservation value
3. identify locations for the potential establishment of new dingo populations
4. recruit persons and organizations to the NDPRP with necessary expertise to facilitate conservation of the dingo
5. establish a national gene bank of reproductive tissue, including semen, and other tissue relevant to the conservation of the dingo. This gene/tissue bank will serve as a national security reserve and as a source of genetic material for assisted breeding programs.
6. encourage, assist and undertake research into the reproductive function and performance of Australian dingoes (the female reproductive cycle, ovulation induction, behavioural cues associated with reproduction, mate preference, rearing of pups and sex ratio in litters).
7. facilitate captive and wild breeding management for conservation purposes, including assisted reproduction.
8. establish a coordinated captive breeding program for the dingo to ensure that the maximum taxonomic integrity and genetic diversity of wild and captive populations is maintained and if possible increased.
9. establish of an Australian data base or register to record all relevant known information, including origins, lineage and DNA records, relating to dingo's which are currently held in captivity (personal care, zoo's, conservation parks etc.).
10. where necessary, encourage legislative and government policy change to ensure the protection and survival of the dingo in the wild.
11. inform and educate the public and government as to the cultural, ecological and historical significance of conserving the dingo.



Australian Dingo Definition: 2 June 2008
[Accepted by the NDPRP Committee of Management 2008]

The dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*) is a primitive dog that ... is now considered a native species in Australia.

Extant Australian populations comprise two distinct dingoes - 'ancestral' dingoes and 'modern' dingoes. The 'ancestral' dingo type refers to dingoes resembling the 'original' dingo type that was ... first described by European settlers in 1789.

The 'modern' dingo type refers to dingoes exhibiting additional pelt colours and behaviours resulting from introgression of domestic dog genes (hybridisation) over the past two centuries or so since European settlement of Australia.

The average size and shape of both dingo types is similar: shoulder height 570 mm, nose-tail length 1230 mm, weight 15 [- 26] kg, pricked ears and bushy tails.

The major external difference is in pelt colour. The pelt colour of 'ancestral' dingoes is typically ginger but varies from sandy-yellow to red-tinger and is occasionally black-and-tan, white or black. 'Modern' dingoes predominantly comprise sable, brindle, patchy ginger-and-white and patchy black-and-white pelt colours. Most 'ancestral' dingoes and many 'modern' dingoes have white markings on the feet, tail tip and chest and some have black muzzles.

Both dingo types exhibit similar territorial, breeding and social behaviours in the wild and both types perform similar ecological, cultural and economic roles.

The dingo is an Australian icon and is considered to play a key role in Australian ecosystems.



Arian Wallach

HYBRIDISATION—NDPRP POSITION STATEMENT

There is now a major contradiction between a large body of independent environmental research, which highlights the importance of healthy dingo populations for biodiversity conservation and long-established anti-dingo or 'wild-dog' sentiment, which deems the dingo a pest animal to be eradicated.

The days are over when dingo destruction can be confidently promoted as consistent with good environmental stewardship. The next generation of farmers will need to confront this realisation, even if the current generation will not.

Dingo conservation may seem complicated by hybridisation. Pastoral industry advocates, fearful of the idea that dingoes should be managed as an environmental asset, have latched hold of hybridisation to argue that what currently exists in the wild should not be considered indigenous or wildlife. The term 'wild dog' thereby becomes a politically loaded term designed to legitimise the continued destruction of what is still, essentially, a native animal.

A key consideration here is ecological function. If the role played by hybridised wild populations is essentially the same as the pre-European dingo, or is shown to provide a net environmental benefit for the preservation of other native species, then considerations of genetic purity become an unnecessary distraction. Much of the in-the-field research into the ecological role of the dingo has been conducted with populations that are hybridised to some degree.

For the most part, hybridised dingo populations are nothing like a first generation dingo-dog cross. Strong selection pressure and genetic regression have effectively pushed the hybrids back into an ancestral conformation.

Farming now needs to be environmentally responsible in ways not imagined a generation ago. There is now no such thing as an exclusively local, regional or even state issue when it comes to environmental management. Environmental management in Queensland is now visible to everyone. It is being scrutinised by people everywhere in Australia and from all over the world.

Brad Purcell



Research: Tasmanian Devil Reintroduction on Mainland Australia

(Hunter, D, Britz, T., Jones, M., and Letnic, M. (2015) 'Reintroduction of Tasmanian Devils to mainland Australia can restore top-down control in ecosystems where dingoes have been extirpated', *Biological Conservation*, 1912, 428-435)



Photo: Amie Hindson; Healesville Sanctuary website

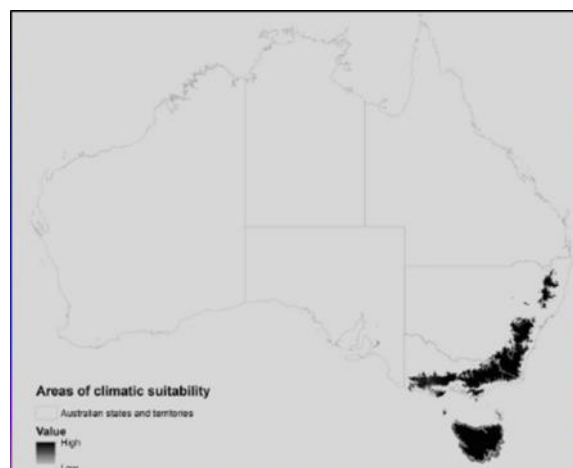
A recent academic publication explores the prospects of reintroducing the threatened Tasmanian Devil into forested south eastern Australia as a way of restoring ecosystems. Two important environmental objectives are considered in putting this forward: increasing the survival prospects of the devil itself which is currently threatened in Tasmania, and restoring ecosystems through the re-introduction of a top-order predator role in areas where the dingo (which currently performs this role) has been 'extirpated'.

This paper is important for dingo conservation advocates and organisations. This is because dingo conservationists have come to rely upon reference to the apex predator role of dingoes in making their case to governments, and because it advocates intensive **poison baiting of dingoes as part of the devil reintroduction process.**

On closer inspection, what initially may seem an innocuous initiative for the re-introduction of devils to mainland Australia, becomes troublesome both politically and environmentally. First, an outline of research and what it concludes.

Research: Tasmanian Devil Reintroduction on Mainland Australia

The starting point for the paper is that dingo culling has been linked to ecological cascades evidenced by eruptions of herbivores and introduced mesopredators (foxes and cats), and declines in small and medium-sized herbivores (including small mammal extinction). Increased herbivore populations have resulted in decreased understorey vegetation, which in turn has facilitated mesopredator predation upon small mammal species. The paper identifies mainland habitat where reintroduced devil populations may survive and models the potential effects of devil reintroduction for herbivore numbers, understorey vegetation recovery and small mammal numbers. It is concluded that reintroduction of the devil as an alternative apex predator would restore ecological balance. Suitable areas for devil reintroduction are estimated in the map below.



D.O. Hunter et al. / Biological Conservation 191 (2015) 428–435

The case for devil reintroduction, however, does not simply rely upon scientific argument. It is based on political judgements which cut to the core of current efforts to preserve the dingo as apex predator, including in south eastern Australian forested regions.

Whereas, the title of the paper and some of the media coverage that it has attracted points to devil reintroduction in forested areas where dingoes 'have been extirpated' and 'where dingoes no longer exist', a closer reading indicates that devil populations are deemed to be incompatible with dingoes and that **ongoing, intensive dingo control, through the use of 1080 poison, would be required** over large areas to sustain devil populations. It can be presumed that such ongoing, intensive baiting may also occur in remote forested regions where devils would be re-introduced and where baiting is not currently carried out. Landscape scale baiting against dingoes would be deployed not only to protect sheep, but devil populations, perhaps at intensities and scales greater than at present.

Research: Tasmanian Devil Reintroduction on Mainland Australia

Here, we see radical ecology converging with conservative politics. This is because a working assumption of the paper is that dingo conservation is not viable in areas where they are deemed to be an agricultural pest:

Because dingoes are a major pest to livestock producers the maintenance of dingo populations is an untenable option for wildlife managers in many regions of south-eastern Australia. (Hunter, et al., 2015: 429)

Under a devil reintroduction program, the dingo would not only continue to be classified an 'agricultural pest', but an environmental threat as well – something the pastoral lobby would relish. Ultimately the appeal of the proposal for reintroducing devils to forested south-eastern Australia rests on the conservative (some would say reactionary) political assumption that dingo conservation in these areas is 'untenable' because of commercial agricultural interests. Business trumps nature. The paper appears to be dog-whistling to the anti-dingo prejudice of the pastoral industry in an attempt to rally support for devil reintroduction.

There is no recognition that the scale of dingo predation is often exaggerated by pastoral interests and reflects an uninterrupted, ingrained cultural prejudice from the early colonial period. In Victoria, for example, a loss of around 3,500 sheep is recorded annually due to 'wild dog' predation, out of a population of around 20 million sheep. While there are hotspots where sheep predation may be more serious, the overall problem should be manageable through alternative, non-lethal means. Nevertheless, historically, a 'wild dog' control industry has grown up around an exaggerated and sometimes hysterical perception of the 'wild dog' threat and an unwillingness to acknowledge the legitimacy of the dingo as apex predator. It is unfortunate that some scientists now appear to be using this entrenched prejudice as their starting point for a 'scientific' investigation into the plausibility of devil reintroduction. Science does not exist in a political vacuum.

The ethical objections to devil reintroduction, as conceived in this paper, go further. Recent genetic research (Cairns, 2015) strongly suggests that there were two introductions of the dingo into Australia. One of these distinct dingo lineages exists in the south eastern forested regions of the Australian continent. What has been loosely referred to as the 'Alpine' dingo, it is argued, represents a distinct genetic lineage and not merely a regional adaptation. The very areas where this distinct dingo lineage exists are the areas targeted in the devil reintroduction paper.

To explore opportunities for expanding the range of the Tasmanian devil, including onto mainland Australia, is potentially defensible. But, to give credibility to such an endeavour by advocating the 'extirpation' of another native apex predator, essentially for reasons of prejudice and commercial triumphalism, is deplorable – 'science' at its worst.

Ernest Healy

MEDIA WATCH: NDPRP challenges *The Courier Mail* at The Australian Press Council – Ernest Healy

In early 2015, the NDPRP lodged a complaint with The Australian Press Council against a feature article, published in *The Courier Mail* on December 6th 2014. The article, '*Marauding wild dog packs wreak havoc in outback Queensland pushing drought-plagued graziers to the wall*', was a particularly long piece and inaccurate and biased in the extreme. The NDPRP maintained that the article was in breach of more than one of the Australian Press Council's principles relating to accuracy and prejudice. This was even though the article was published as an *opinion* piece, which was therefore subject to a lower benchmark.

Unfortunately, The Australian Press Council determined that the article did not breach its publication principles, an outcome with which the NDPRP rejects. Nevertheless, the NDPRP requested that the Courier Mail publish a rejoinder, to put a more accurate and responsible perspective. *The Courier Mail* indicated that it would be willing to consider publishing a rejoinder. The NDPRP promptly wrote a rejoinder, which was submitted through the Australian Press Council. The Courier Mail then decided not to run the response, claiming that too much time had passed since the original article and that it was, therefore, not sufficiently topical.

Below is a slightly amended version of the complaint lodged with the Australian Press Council, followed by the 700 word response that The Courier Mail refused to publish.

The bottom line is that newspapers can publish material with virtual immunity, with regard to inaccuracy and prejudice, as long as it is presented as 'opinion'.

The NDPRP maintains that, in this instance, *The Courier Mail* acted with a very low standard of intellectual integrity, and that the article did breach Australian Press Council principles. Perhaps the Australian Press Council itself needs to be subjected to greater scrutiny.

COMPLAINT FORM

BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM, PLEASE READ THE SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S PROCESSES FOR RECEIVING AND HANDLING COMPLAINTS. THE SUMMARY IS AVAILABLE ONLINE OR BY CONTACTING THE COUNCIL AT INFO@PRESSCOUNCIL.ORG.AU OR 02-9261-1930 OR 1800-025-712

YOUR DETAILS

1. The following details must be provided:

*Given name Ernest

*Family name ...Healy, on behalf of National dingo Preservation and Recovery Program Inc... (Inc. A0051763G)...

...

PUBLICATION DETAILS

2. The following details must be provided about the article or other published material which is the subject of your complaint

Name of newspaper, magazine or website ...The Courier Mail.....

MEDIA WATCH

Date of publicationDecember 06 2014.....

Headline, URL or other identification ... **Opinion: Marauding wild dog packs wreak havoc in outback Queensland pushing drought-plagued graziers to the wall**

3. If possible, please also send a print copy or screenshot of the material by email, fax or post
Material appended below

4. Please tell us where you saw the material (print/online/both) ...online.....

REASONS FOR COMPLAINT

5. Please state in no more than 400 words the reasons for your complaint and, where possible, state which of the Council's Standards of Practice you think has been breached. The Standards are available online.

400 words is insufficient to adequately make my case.

Statements are made which, by omission of key facts, and encouragement of prejudice, misrepresent the reasons for the decline in the sheep industry in Queensland. This misrepresentation by omission is used to manufacture an exaggerated account of the role of the dingo in the demise of the sheep grazing industry in that state. As such, the article is misleading and prejudicial to the survival and environmental role of dingo as a top order predator within Australian ecosystems. Further, it is prejudicial to the ongoing efforts of conservation organisations, like the NDPRP, which endeavour to dispel misconceptions about the alleged harm of the dingo to the pastoral industry and to their efforts to educate the public about the importance of the dingo to Australian ecosystems. Such misleading statements include:

'Dingo kills were the main reason landholders had switched to cattle.'

'...wild dogs were largely responsible for the rapid decline in wool industry over two decades.'

Although an opinion piece, there is no attempt by the journalist to balance such statements with any alternative facts or perspective. The statements therefore may be taken by any reasonable reader to also represent the views of the authoring journalist and not only the persons quoted and paraphrased by the journalist. As elaborated below, the NDPRP maintains that the article breaches Principles 3 and 6 the Australian Press Council statement of general principles, which states:

'3. Ensure that factual material is presented with reasonable fairness and balance, and that writers' expressions of opinion are not based on significantly inaccurate factual material or omission of key facts.' (NDPRP emphasis)

Therefore, being an opinion piece does not absolve the journalist from a reasonable attempt at factual accuracy and the need to avoid omission of key facts.

MEDIA WATCH

In addition, the NDPRP also maintains that Principle 1 of the Press Council of Australia statement of general principles does not absolve the writer of the obligation to make a reasonable effort to ensure that claims of fact are accurate and not misleading.

1. Ensure that factual material in news reports and elsewhere is accurate and not misleading, and is distinguishable from other material such as opinion.

The NDPRP considers that Principle 1 does not nullify the onus of responsibility expressed in Principle 3 concerning factual accuracy and completeness. Principle 1 is not intended to legitimise a piece of writing based on a series of inaccurate and harmful statements purporting to be fact, by the simple inclusion of the word 'opinion' in the header of the article. **There is nothing in the body of the article itself which distinguishes opinion from the spurious factual claims made.** There remains an onus of responsibility upon the journalist for the factual accuracy of the piece. **If it purports to make factual statements, the article can no longer be reasonably claimed to be simply an opinion piece. The inclusion of the word 'opinion' in the header is misleading.**

Further cursory investigation of the issue by the journalist would have shown the statements to be either inaccurate or open to reasonable contestation. For example, a recent authoritative account of the structural reasons behind the demise of the sheep grazing industry in Australia, and indeed the demise of sheep grazing globally, was published in the *Australian Veterinary Journal*, Volume 97 No. 12, 2014, pp. 461-462, entitled: 'A comment on the influence of dingoes on the Australian sheep flock', by Forsyth et al.

The authors state:

The similar rate of decline in the sheep flocks of Australia and other sheep-producing nations suggests broader commodity issues influence the industry in Australia rather than just dingo predation. The five detailed reviews published on Australia's sheep industry since 1990⁵⁻⁹ all attribute Australia's declining sheep flock to a long term decline in the real price paid for wool compared with other textiles, and to the high cost of growing and processing wool, reducing the profitability of wool growing relative to other agricultural products. A similar conclusion was reached for the cause of declining sheep flocks in New Zealand¹⁰ and the USA.^{2,4} Global demand for wool has been in long-term decline because it cannot compete on price or volume with synthetics and cotton.⁷ Hence, wool prices paid to farmers have declined substantially in real terms since 1950^{2,5,7,11,12} and particularly after its reserve price scheme was phased out in the late 1980s.^{5,7} One review noted the importance of dingo predation on sheep in Australia during the 1800s,⁷ but none of the reviews mentioned dingo predation as a cause of the post-1990 decline in Australia's sheep flock. (Forsyth et al. (2014)

Again, the NDPRP maintains that, as they stand, the above statements from *The Courier Mail* opinion piece are a violation of **principle 3** under the criteria relating to **Fairness and Balance** within the Australian Press Council Statement of Principles, which states that factual material must be presented with 'fairness and balance'.

MEDIA WATCH

The article is also remiss in perpetuating gross factual claims for which there is no sound evidence and which may indeed be empirically unverifiable. The claim of a Mr Tully is cited without any serious scrutiny or suggestion that its accuracy may be in doubt: “On my reckoning dogs would have eaten more than seven million sheep”, over the past 20 years (presumably in Queensland). Although the figure of seven million is referred to as a ‘reckoning’ of Mr Tully’s, there is no suggestion by the journalist that it may be seriously in error, or implausible. Again, **principle 3** is relevant; even in an opinion piece some responsible effort must be taken to ensure the facts are accurate or verifiable. Further, it is not clear that these statements are simply reported as the opinion of Mr Tully, but appear also to be presented as the opinion of the journalist. There is certainly no attempt made in the piece to distance the opinion of the journalist from that of the persons whose statements are reported and paraphrased.

Furthermore, the opinion piece includes a number of extraordinarily emotive statements which, together with inaccuracies of omission and fact noted above, result in a piece of writing that is biased in the extreme, and which encourages the maintenance of a prejudicial attitude towards a native animal which a mounting body of evidence shows is essential for ecological balance within Australian ecosystems. No difficulty would be had in compiling an extensive list of authoritative, peer reviewed scientific research articles on the importance of dingoes within Australian ecosystems. Here, the NDPRP maintains that **principle 6** is relevant, which advocates the need to ‘Avoid causing or contributing materially to substantial offence, distress *or prejudice...*’ (my emphasis). Statements likely to encourage prejudice against dingoes and efforts to conserve dingoes as an integral important part of ecosystems within the opinion piece include:

“Wild dog packs are on the march, and are organised in a kind of animal kingdom military formation.”

“The dogs are taking the life out of the west. They come in wave after wave ...”

Referring to the alleged experience of Mr Tully and his neighbours, the following statement is made:

“One 35kg killing machine brought down 30 sheep in a single night last week at Barcaldine in Queensland’s parched central west.”

Presumably the “35 kg killing machine” is shown in an accompanying photograph, which refers to a dingo which allegedly brought down 30 sheep in one night.

The caption of this photograph reads: *“Gavin Durie with a wild dog which brought down 30 sheep in a single night.”*



MEDIA WATCH

From some years experience amongst NDPRP members in researching, owning and breeding dingoes, the NDPRP can say with confidence that the dingo depicted in this photograph is a mature, healthy male, which would weigh no more than approximately 25 kilograms – an average weight for a healthy adult wild male. The claim relating to a 35 kilogram ‘killing machine’ is inaccurate, misleading and likely to encourage prejudice against an environmentally significant native animal and efforts to conserve the dingo (**principles 3 and 6**).

OTHER INFORMATION

6. Are you identified in the material or directly affected by its contents? If not, please state what has led you to complain.

I was not directly identified in the material. However, the lack of balance, omission of key facts, and unsubstantiated claims of the article undermine informed efforts towards conservation of the dingo as a keystone species within Australian ecosystems – an activity that I and the organisation with which I am involved – the National dingo Preservation and Recovery Program, are closely involved with. A large part of the difficulty in advocating dingo conservation is overcoming entrenched prejudice and ill-informed attitudes towards the dingo in some rural areas.

7. Have you complained to the publication itself? If so, what response did you receive?

...No.....

8. Have you read the Summary of the Council’s complaints processes mentioned at the top of this form?

...Yes.....

[Note: Information on this form is used by the Council for the purposes of responding to your complaint and may also be used for general research into the operation of our complaints system. Please tell us if you wish any of the information to be confidential to the Council.]

Australian Press



Dingo and goanna at waterhole—Arian Wallach

NDPRP opinion piece – What The Courier Mail refused to publish

“Drought, Dingoes and Environmental Reality – Time for a Rethink

Severe drought has again highlighted the hardship of Queensland pastoralists, particularly those in arid areas. Familiar topics have again come to the fore: the doubtful wisdom of farming marginal lands, kangaroos taking scarce pasture, ‘wild dog’ predation on stock and rampaging pigs breaking down the dingo fence. Everything, it seems conspires against the struggling farmer.

The imagery used seems understandable – ‘killing machines’ taking the life out of the west, wave upon wave with almost military precision, billions lost to the economy and sheep farmers driven out of the industry. Political demands abound for governments to do more to combat the ‘wild-dog’ scourge. Instinctively, politicians make the right noises.

While the silhouette of drought and rural desperation is etched into the Australian consciousness, the time has, nevertheless, come for a reassessment of this man-against-nature view of drought and our collective responses to it. Attitudes towards the dingo are a good starting point for reflection.

Why is such a reassessment necessary? Because, there is now a deepening and unresolved contradiction between a growing body of independent environmental research, which highlights the importance of healthy dingo populations for environmental balance and biodiversity conservation and long-established anti-dingo or ‘wild-dog’ sentiment, which deems the dingo a pest animal to be eradicated or, at least, perpetually controlled through lethal means across the landscape.

The legal status of the dingo across much of Australia still largely reflects this historically entrenched pest-animal perspective. However legislators respond in future, the days are over when dingo destruction can be confidently promoted as consistent with good environmental stewardship. Farmers and their peak representative organisations need to undergo this realisation.

The contest between environmental research, which by and large finds that dingoes should be protected in the service of good environmental management, and established ant-dingo attitudes, remains complex. This is because dingoes can hybridise with their domestic counterpart, the domestic dog (Even a European wolf can breed with a poodle). As when putting a drop of coloured dye in a bucket of water, all of the water, eventually, will be coloured to some minor degree, domestic dog genes will ultimately spread throughout the wild dingo population.

Pastoral industry advocates, fearful of the idea that dingoes should be managed as something more than pest animals, let alone protected as an environmental asset, have latched hold of hybridisation to argue that what currently exists in the wild are not dingoes, but hybrids, which ought not be considered indigenous or wildlife, and are therefore ineligible for protection. The term ‘wild dog’ thereby becomes more than a description, but a politically loaded term designed to legitimise the continued destruction of what is still, essentially, a native animal. Disingenuously, it is at times further argued that, in controlling hybrids through ‘wild-dog’ control (poisoning and trapping on a landscape scale), protection is afforded remnant populations of ‘pure’ dingoes.

What The Courier Mail refused to publish

What then should we draw from the science which argues for a more benevolent attitude towards dingoes, particularly given the grievances of battling farmers struck by drought? A key consideration is the ecological function of wild dingo populations, even if they have undergone some degree of hybridisation. If the role played by hybridised wild populations is essentially the same as the pre-European dingo, or is shown to provide a net environmental benefit for the preservation of other native species, then considerations of genetic purity become an unnecessary distraction. This line of thinking is lent support by the fact that much of the in-the-field research into the role of the dingo in maintaining ecological balance, as a top order predator, has been conducted with populations that were probably hybridised to some degree.

Evidence suggests that hybridised dingo populations are nothing like a first generation dingo-dog cross. Much of the hybridisation is many generations old. And, importantly, selection pressure is strong. Prominent dingo researcher, Dr Laurie Corbett, once commented that, although he believed dingoes in north eastern Victoria had undergone some hybridisation, this was not apparent. He speculated that this was because strong selection pressure in this region was effectively pushing the hybrids back into an ancestral conformation.

Farming now needs to be environmentally responsible in ways not imagined even one generation ago.”



Arian Wallach



THE LAST DINGO AT YARRAS

In 2002, I finally found the place that would become Lightning Rock Conservation Area. It was a large property at Yarras, a mountain in the Great Dividing Range. Once logged for the timber that graces the walls of the Sydney Opera House, it was in better condition than other properties I had investigated.

One outstanding feature made Yarras my selection. A family of dingoes lived in there. I heard their magical howls the first night I camped out on the property, and placed my offer to buy the following week.

Because there were dingoes, there were NO cats or foxes on the place, but there were 16 endangered or vulnerable species of native mammals and birds. The surrounding National Park was involved in a dingo DNA project, for which I would be trained. I was very excited to have found a property worthy of the effort and huge expense of having the title changed to provide protection for the wildlife in perpetuity.

Two years after the registration of the Conservation Area, the graziers on nearby properties contacted the (then) Rural Lands Protection Board to obtain massive quantities of 1080 baits, claiming their cattle were being taken by wild dogs. No actual evidence of attack was required (the leader of the group is an absentee owner who visits his property and cattle a couple times a year for economic purposes). Despite the Rural Lands protection Board assuring me that the use of 1080 baits is 'rigorously regulated', no one ensured that the baits were monitored. No one ever went back to collect baits and carcasses on their land. But I found a dead eagle and powerful owl, presumed poisoned as well.

And the dingo family was all but wiped out. Only the female remained. I glimpsed her a couple of times. Once we stood and gazed at one another for a lengthy period before she turned and trotted away.

I saw her a last time a month after our silent communication. She was down on the river flats, dead on the highway. I wrapped her in a blanket from the ute and dragged her off the road. The last dingo at Yarras.

Now there are no dingoes, BUT there are cats and foxes. I haven't seen a quoll in 10 years. The prized population of scarlet fairy wrens is no more.

I fought the baiting, the murder of the dingo family. I hired an Environmental lawyer and made a case against the Board and its planned baiting, but we lost. One unfortunate result of my dispute was that the Rural Lands Protection Board then required the rangers at Birriwal Bulga National Park to bait the Park estate as well -- to protect the local cattle industry.

I will always feel the absence of the dingoes that once shared their home range with me. I will always mourn the many native creatures that are no longer on the property, having lost out to the foxes and cats. Nights when the moon is bright, I think of the now-vanished 'call of the wild' that once could be heard echoing on the mountain, a call few will ever hear, and to which fewer still will respond.

I would suggest that we as a people have lost our connection with the wild things that share our world, and with it, a major component of our lauded 'humanity.'

Sally Chapman



Jennifer Parkhurst

Perceptions, Decision Processes and the Natural Environment

by
Stanislaw Pelczynski

There is a striking difference between how Aboriginal and European people perceive their relationship with the natural environment. This difference is very important as it affects our ethics, education, sciences, laws, economy and decision making .

The difference is well explained by Michael J. Christie in his article “Aboriginal Science for the Ecologically Sustainable Future” (1). According Dr. Christie, “Aboriginal science is a mode of knowledge which has evolved to allow human beings to fit into, rather than outside of the ecology”.

The Western science on the other hand evolved in a world which “place humanity apart and above the natural world, and in command of apparently inexhaustible resources. In our early days western science appeared to need no ecological constraints, and it quite naturally expanded along all the directions which improved our potential to exploit the physical world for our comfort and wealth.”

The absence of ecological constraints meant that Western management of land inevitably led to land degradation and extinction of species, either through direct eradication or through destruction and fragmentation of their habitat, use of inappropriate fire regimes, pollution and whimsical introduction of exotic species.

In Aboriginal view this is management which, they said, turned the ‘quiet’ country they knew and managed into ‘wild’ country. (2)

In her book “Old Days, Old Ways”, Dame Mary Gilmore relates how Aboriginal management of land preserved the biodiversity of Murrumbidgee, Waga Wagga, Burnside regions and how this diversity was destroyed within few years by the European Invaders (3). Her father tried to preserve at least part of the Aboriginal emu sanctuary in Wagga Wagga region, but his efforts were lost to developers. He was motivated by what Dame Mary called his “great longing for the conservation of the wild” and not by material or financial gain. My feeling is that Dame Mary’s father was motivated by an ethic akin to the Aboriginal land ethic Deborah Bird Rose speaks of in “Exploring an Aboriginal Land Ethic”(2).

The land ethic is an extension of Western social ethics that prompt individuals to co-operate with fellow members of their community to include soil, water, plants and animals in the boundaries of the community. Ethics are essential for any community to function peacefully and therefore exist.

The existence of land ethic within Aboriginal society means that the overwhelming majority respects and protects the variety of all life forms, that is biodiversity, on their lands. Policing to protect the environment is therefore possible. In Western society people with land ethic are a minority, that is why it is difficult to protect the environment and police the existing environmental laws.



Perceptions, Decision Processes and the Natural Environment

The difference in perception and approach to the environment means that the two societies developed different forms of management of land.

The State of the Environment and Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment, 2002, Reports are but two of the recent publications which illustrate the effects of European land management on the natural environment, a management that has led to the current unprecedented biodiversity crisis Australia now finds itself in, a crisis which, according to all successive State of the Environment Reports since 2002, is progressively deepening. The book "Country of the Heart"(6) is one of the publications illustrating the effects of Aboriginal land management, while the articles "The Warlpiri and the Rufous Hare-Wallaby" (4) and "Looking after the land at Uluru" (5) show how Aboriginal management restored the health of the environment in the two national parks, while the articles (7), (8) and (9) and the book (6) show how important Aboriginal knowledge is for the current management of the natural environment.

It is now recognized by ecologists that the European perception of the natural environment is based on a myth and that we urgently need to reject both it and the current assumption that priority in our decision processes should be given to the economy, and that the problems can always be solved using the wealth thereby created as this assumption is contrary to the fundamental truth, namely that society is part of the natural environment and dependent on it's healthy functioning ecosystem for its livability while the economy, which is of our invention, is part of the society and therefore depends on both society and the environment, which in turn means that sustainability cannot be achieved without giving priority to the natural environment (10 p. 15) .

The necessity for rejecting the Western perception is reinforced by the fact that people "who continue to perceive our predicament according to a pre-ecological paradigm simply will not recognize limits imposed by world's finiteness" (11, p. 231).

Consequently, if environmentalists and environmental organizations are serious about protecting biodiversity, they urgently need to modify their campaigns to include rising people's understanding of their place in, dependence on and responsibility for the natural environment and of the consequences for their own livability if they permit environmental degradation to continue. Otherwise environmentalists campaigning on single issues, such as protecting threatened species, or their habitat because "we love it" or because "it is unique", without addressing this main root cause of our destructiveness, will find themselves repeating the same campaigns over and over again without achieving the intended results (12 p. 59).

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SOME HISTORY

This newspaper article is from the August 10th edition of the Melbourne Argus, 1857. It is by Professor Frederick McCoy, Lecturer in paleontology at the University of Melbourne the first Director of the Melbourne Museum.

THE DINGO.—In answer to the query in the second number of your journal, as to the occurrence of the Dingo in the fossil state, or the evidence for or against the question of its being an introduced or indigenous animal, I beg to inform your correspondent that amongst the bones sent down to me as Palaeontologist and Director of Museums, by Messrs. Selwyn and Aplin, the Government and Assistant Geologists, from the newly discovered caves in Mount Macedon, I recognised two fragments of the superior maxillary bone with the long transverse molar, the smaller last molar and the second molar, together with two rami of the inferior maxillary bone, beyond all doubt of the Dingo at present living in this country. The great point of interest to your correspondent is, that these bones were mingled with numerous others in the same state of preservation, belonging not only to species of *Halmaturus*, *Thylacynus*, *Hypsiprymnus*, *Macropus*, and other forms now living here, but with a perfectly recognisable portion of the lower jaw of the "Devil" of the Tasmanian colonists, which has never been known to be an inhabitant of the mainland, although living in Tasmania; and, most curious of all, I find fragments of the skulls of three individuals of a perfectly new genus of carnivorous mammalian animal, wholly unlike any creature hitherto known in the living or fossil state in any part of the world! The question of the introduction of the Dingo by man to this country may now

be answered—I believe for the first time—satisfactorily in the negative, and the discussion as to its being a local variety of the European domestic dog set at rest. These specimens are being figured for publication in our new projected *Memoirs of the Survey and Museum of Victoria*, and will shortly be open for inspection in the Public Museum in the University buildings. — *Professor McCoy*, in "Facts and Figures."

On the basis of 'fossil' evidence from a cave at Mount Macedon and elsewhere in Victoria, McCoy concluded that the dingo had been in Australia for a very long period of time, was a native animal, and was not introduced by humans.

It should be remembered that, although geologists at this time had constructed a clear idea of geological sequences, they did not have an accurate appreciation of geological and evolutionary time.

(Further, although McCoy was a naturalist of considerable and deserved reputation, he was not a convert to Darwinism.)

In fact, the dingo skeletal remains that McCoy refers to were not, strictly speaking, in a 'fossil state', as the bone had not been replaced through mineralisation.

In his publication, *Geological Survey of Victoria, Prodromus of the Paleontology of Victoria, Figures and Descriptions – Victorian Organic Remains*, 1881, McCoy provides illustrations of dingo skeletal remains, found in different locations in Victoria including specimens from the caves south east of Macedon.



SOME HISTORY

The NDPRP Secretary approached Museum of Victoria staff in 2009 to make inquiries about the existence of dingo skeletal remains found in the Tower Hill area of Victoria in the mid Nineteenth Century. Although these remains were not located, museum staff did find the Macedon remains. Photographs from that visit are seen below.

The reason for the discrepancy in the date on the hand written card in the first photograph, of 1862, and the Argus article of 1857, where McCoy first refers to the 'Macedon' remains, is not clear. (Gisborne is to the south east of Macedon.) At this point, we are assuming that the 'Macedon' bones and the 'Gisborne' bones are the same. However, this may be incorrect.

There is clearly an opportunity to attempt to both date these remains and to see if any DNA material can be extracted from the teeth. In 2009, Museum staff seemed open to the prospect of making the remains available for dating and DNA analysis.

Ernest Healy and John Marsh (NDPRP) intend to track down all of these Nineteenth Century dingo remains and to raise funds to date them and explore the possibility of DNA extraction.

Ernest Healy and John Marsh





Humane Society International puts campaign focus on dingo conservation

Humane Society International (HSI), which has been a member of the NDPRP since 2012 (??), has recently reinvigorated its dingo conservation campaigning efforts, updating and reapplying a growing body of historical work as well as pursuing fresh angles to benefit the dingo throughout Australia.

Key Threatening Process nomination

As part of our wildlife and habitat protection scientific nomination program, which seeks listings under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), HSI this year submitted a Key Threatening Process (KTP) nomination for *'The cascading effects of the loss or removal of the mammalian predator, the dingo (including wild dogs and dingo cross dog hybrids) from Australian landscapes'*.

Our nomination outlined that a growing body of research shows that many Australian threatened species benefit from the presence of dingoes in the landscape, primarily due to their regulatory relationship with introduced predators such as cats and foxes and herbivores such as rabbits. It also detailed how sound dingo conservation is likely to result in reduced livestock predation due to manner in which stable packs operate compared with those that are fractured through control programs. For the purpose of our nomination the definition of 'dingo' included wild dogs and dingo-cross-dog hybrids, as evidence suggests they perform a very similar ecological role to dingoes. Over the coming months we plan to revisit the EPBC Act nomination and amend for similar submissions under the New South Wales *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

Feral cat Threat Abatement Plan

In April HSI staff attended the National Feral Cat Management Workshop, providing input for the in formulation draft varied Threat Abatement Plan for predation by feral cats. We advocated for conservation initiatives such as the cessation of 'wild dog' baiting in certain regions to promote the formation of stable dingo packs, arguing that dingo conservation is the key element required to provide the best chance of survival for hundreds of threatened species from the severe threat predation by feral cats pose.

Following the workshop HSI provided further comment on the draft Threat Abatement Plan, outlining that proper dingo conservation will reduce predation on small native mammals by feral cats, and that the opportunity is ripe to improve dingo management practices. We also submitted that the reintroduction of dingoes, especially into cattle country in northern Australia, is seen by many experts as far more prospective than the draft Threat Abatement Plan recognised. The *Threat Abatement Plan for predation by feral cats* was surprisingly finalised and released within one week of the closing date for submission comments, and HSI is currently reviewing the document.



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL
AUSTRALIA**

1080 Organics

HSI recently wrote to the Organic Industry Standards and Certification Council expressing strong opposition to a submission by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre seeking to lift restrictions on the use of 1080 on organic farms. 1080 baits kill not only target species such as foxes and 'wild dogs', but a wide range of native wildlife including dingoes. Due to the dingo's role in suppressing invasive predators and assisting the conservation of native species, using bait that also affects them appears counterproductive.

Wildlife Lands species profile

To assist with the general understanding of the dingo's uniqueness and highly important regulatory role played, we selected it as our wildlife species to profile in the most recent edition of *Wildlife Lands*, the newsletter of HSI's private land conservation network, the Wildlife Land Trust. The species profile was very popular and well received, and the version featured in *Wildlife Lands 15* has been replicated online at <http://wildlifelandtrust.org.au/index.php/australian-wildlife-profiles/502-dingo>.

Upcoming plans

Among other HSI plans for dingo conservation are the ongoing promotion of a National Dingo Conservation Plan for the benefit of a wide range of native species and habitats; the potential submission of faunal-based dingo Threatened Ecological Community and threatened population nominations for listing under the EPBC Act; and the revisitation of nominations seeking National and Commonwealth Heritage recognition for the dingo.



Jennifer Parkhurst

VICTORIAN ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS 2015

From the Coalition to Labor in Victoria - Issues and developments, 2015

Introduction

There is an increasing dissonance between a growing body of environmental research, which concludes that dingo conservation, including the conservation of dingo hybrids, should be harnessed in the service of good environmental management, and the inherited mindset behind established pest animal legislation, which deems the dingo, or 'wild dogs', to be a pest to be controlled.

Pastoral industry advocates, concerned to fend off the idea that dingoes should not be managed simply as pests, but an environmental asset, have latched hold of hybridisation to argue that what currently exists in the wild are not dingoes, but hybrids, which ought not be considered indigenous or wildlife, and are therefore ineligible for protection. It is at times disingenuously argued by the farming lobby that in controlling hybrids through 'wild-dog' control (poisoning and trapping on a landscape scale) protection is afforded to remnant 'pure' dingoes.

An alternative dingo conservation perspective is now needed, which accommodates the reality of hybridisation in defining what is to be conserved. The key consideration from this perspective is the ecological function of wild populations, even if they have undergone some degree of hybridisation. If the role played in the natural environment by hybridised populations is essentially the same as the pre-European dingo, then considerations of genetic purity become an unnecessary distraction from good environmental management. This approach is lent support by the fact that much of the in-the-field research into the role of the dingo in maintaining top-down ecological balance, as a top order predator, has been conducted with populations that are probably hybridised.

An important consideration with dingo conservation is the inherent uncertainty of dingo purity testing techniques. Furthermore, 'pure' dingoes and dingo hybrids are not readily distinguishable in appearance. Dingo researcher, Dr Laurie Corbett, once commented that, although he believed dingoes in north eastern Victoria had undergone some hybridisation, this was not visually apparent. He speculated that this was because the strong selection pressure for survival in this region was effectively pushing the hybrids back into an ancestral conformation.

A new, more environmentally responsible mind set is needed.

Key issues:

The most pressing issue - Legal status of dingo hybrids

At present, any degree of hybridisation whatsoever means governance as an 'established pest animal' under the Catchment and Land Protection Act (CaLP Act) – along with feral pigs, feral goats and rabbits.

Also means that only 'pure' dingoes are governed as wildlife under the Wildlife Act and covered by the threatened species listing under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG Act).

The stated reason for this is that, as hybridisation is identified as a threat to dingoes, the protection of hybrids as Wildlife, or the inclusion of any hybrids within the definition of the dingo used for the purposes of the FFG Act, would constitute the sanctioning of a threat. It is claimed that the protection of hybrids is therefore a legal impossibility.

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Problems with this approach:

As there is no reliable pre-European genetic benchmark, genetic testing should not be used to identify 'pure' dingoes for protection. Dr Alan Wilton (now deceased), who developed the current genetic testing technique for dingoes, warns against applying too restrictive a genetic standard for identifying dingoes for protection; he recommends classifying dingoes which test between 75% and 100% as 'pure' for the conservation purposes. Wilton's purity test also does not account for regional genetic variation of dingo populations; he saw this as a limitation of his test.

The growing body of environmental research, which shows that dingoes provide a net benefit within eco-systems for the maintenance of biodiversity do not control for purity. This means that the biodiversity benefits identified by research relate to dingo populations that have likely undergone some degree of hybridisation.

The then Department of Sustainability and Environment incorrectly concluded that the protection of dingo hybrids under the wildlife Act (and therefore also under the FFG Act) was not legally possible (on the basis of undisclosed internal legal advice). Independent legal advice (Environmental Defenders Office) concludes that there is considerable legal latitude around this issue. Protection of hybrids is possible under current legislation. (DSE has refused to release its internal legal advice on this issue, even though it previously committed to do so.)

The then Department of Sustainability and Environment misinterpreted the findings of the Victorian Scientific Advisory Committee when making its recommendation to list the dingo as threatened. The threat identified was genetic introgression from domestic dogs '*Canus familiaris familiaris*'. Precedent: New South Wales has recognised that feral domestic dogs pose the hybridisation threat to remaining 'pure' dingoes; hybrids are not identified as the threat.

There are precedents for the protection of hybrids as wildlife when a wild type breeds with its domestic counterpart – the Scottish Wildcat.

Actions:

Dingo-hybrids need to be managed as wildlife. Dingo-hybrids may be designated as wildlife under the Wildlife Act. Once it is accepted that dingo hybrids are not part of the threat identified by the Victorian SAC in relation to the dingo threatened species listing under the FFG Act, then dingo hybrids could be deemed by the Minister to be wildlife under the Wildlife Act. Dingo hybrids would need to be simultaneously removed as an 'established pest animal' under the CaLP Act.

Under this approach, there are three possibilities for governance of dingoes in relation to the FFG and Wildlife Acts.

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- 1/ Following Allan Wilton's advice, the definition of 'dingo' under the FFG Act threatened species listing is broadened to include dingoes hybridized to a specified level, for argument's sake, 75 per cent dingo or higher. While not included as 'threatened' under the FFG Act, hybrids less than 75 per cent dingo may nevertheless be granted wildlife status under the Wildlife Act. Because these hybrids would no longer be identified as part of the hybridization threat under the FFG Act, there is no impediment in their being governed as wildlife.
- 2/ The FFG Act threatened species listing continues to refer only to 'pure' dingoes and all hybrids become wildlife under the Wildlife Act. A down side of this option is that a time will be reached when all dingoes are hybridized to some degree and the FFG Act listing has nothing to protect in practice.
- 3/ A third option would be to adopt a phenotypic definition of the dingo, as recommended by the 2009 'Dingo Working Group' (DWG) convened to advise the Minister on the FFG Act threatened species listing. The DWG recommended a descriptive definition be used:

'An average adult Dingo is 1,230 mm long, 570 mm tall and weighs between 9.6 to 24.0 kg (average 15 kg) (Strahan 1995), with females slightly smaller than males (Corbett 1995; Jones 1990). Distinguishing traits include erect pointed ears, a bushy tail, no dewclaws on their back feet and, occasionally, dark facial features (Corbett 1995; Corbett 2004). The Dingo has a narrow muzzle, large canine and carnassial teeth and large auditory bullae compared to domestic dogs (Corbett 1995; Newsome *et al.* 1980). Most Dingoes have a short ginger coat with white patches on their feet, chest and tail tips (Corbett 1995). Less common are the black, white and black and tan Dingoes (Corbett 2001; Newsome and Corbett 1985).' (Dingo Action Statement)

In terms of stock protection, Victorian farming interests should have no practical objection to the changes advocated. Control activities may continue within the 3 kilometer buffer zone put in place as part of the Governor in Council Order associated with the FFG Act dingo listing. The difference would be in the legal status of dingo hybrids that are subject to control within the buffer zone (and potentially the Wild Dog Management Zones). Under the proposed reforms, hybrids would be 'unprotected wildlife' in control areas instead of 'established pest animals'. In the parts of Victoria where even 'pure' dingoes are designated unprotected wildlife and therefore can be legally destroyed for the purposes of stock protection, dingo-hybrids would also be designated unprotected wildlife.

Feral domestic dogs would continue to be designated 'established pest animals' under the CALP Act.

The FFG Act threatened species Dingo Action Statement would need to be revised to accommodate these changes. At present, it limits protection to 'pure' dingoes only.

2/ Where should the dingo be controlled (unprotected)?

As a result of protracted consultations in 2009, convened by the then Department of Sustainability and Environment and involving a broad range of stakeholders, a Governor in Council Order (GIC Order) was put in place which restricted dingo control to within 3 kilometers of the interface of public and private land, within designated parts of the state.

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It was the understanding of participants that the only exception to this 3 kilometer limitation was for the pursuit and control of individual problem animals (beyond 3 kilometers). In such cases, permission was required on a case by case basis from senior bio-diversity authorities. This exception was not intended for *pre-emptive control* and not for routine control. The NDPRP is concerned that the Minister may not have been accurately informed on this matter.

Under the previous Coalition Government, this limitation was seriously eroded. Blanket permission is being given for control beyond 3 kilometers for rolling periods of twelve months. The NDPRP is concerned that *routine control practices* are now being permitted beyond 3 kilometers, not restricted to the pursuit of individual problem animals.

If this is the case, it makes a non-sense of the GIC Order 3 kilometer restriction put in place as part of the FFG Act threatened species listing and, in the view of the NDPRP, represents a serious violation of the GIC Order.

It should be noted that the arrangements decided in 2009, including the tight restrictions on the purpose of control beyond 3 kilometers, was at the time deemed a fair and reasonable compromise between the Victorian Labor Government's commitment to protect farm livestock while conserving dingo populations.

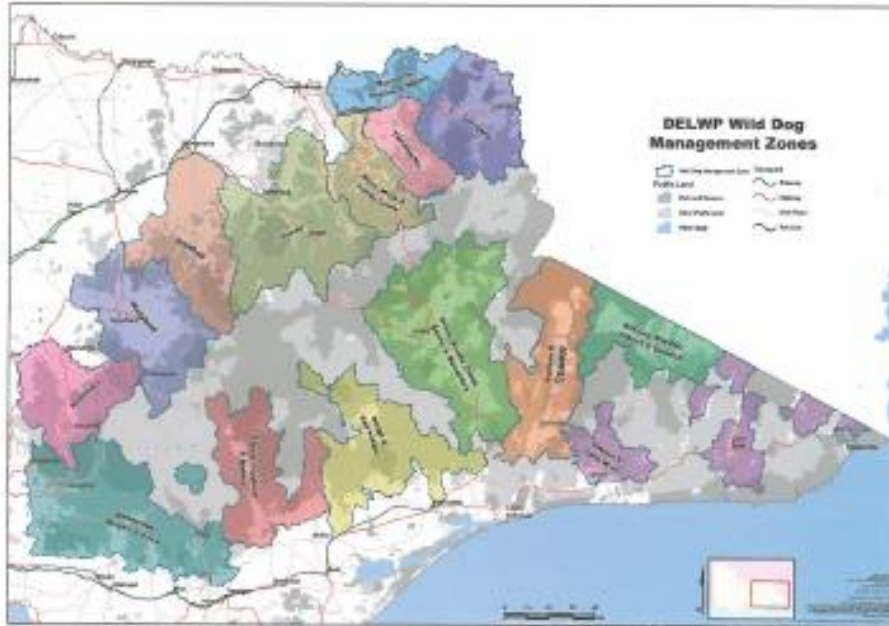
The tight restrictions on control beyond 3 kilometers put in place by Labor in 2010 should be reinstated. These were the outcome of an extended stakeholder consultation process. The dismantlement of these restrictions involved no commensurate level of consultation with dingo conservation stakeholders.

The NDPRP believes that, under the weakened conditions on control put in place by the Victorian Coalition Government, which now includes aerial baiting, and currently adhered to by the Labor government, **there is currently no more** protection for the dingo, in practice, than before the dingo threatened species listing in 2010. Control regimes are, in effect, the same as before the listing.

This concern can be illustrated by an examination of the three maps below. Map 1 shows the current Wild Dog Management Zones, as delineated by the Coalition Government and to date maintained by the Labor Government. In many locations these zones extend far beyond the 3 kilometer boundary defined in the Dingo threatened species Governor in Council Order Gazetted in 2010 and represent the total area which can potentially be included for dingo control.

VICTORIAN ISSUES

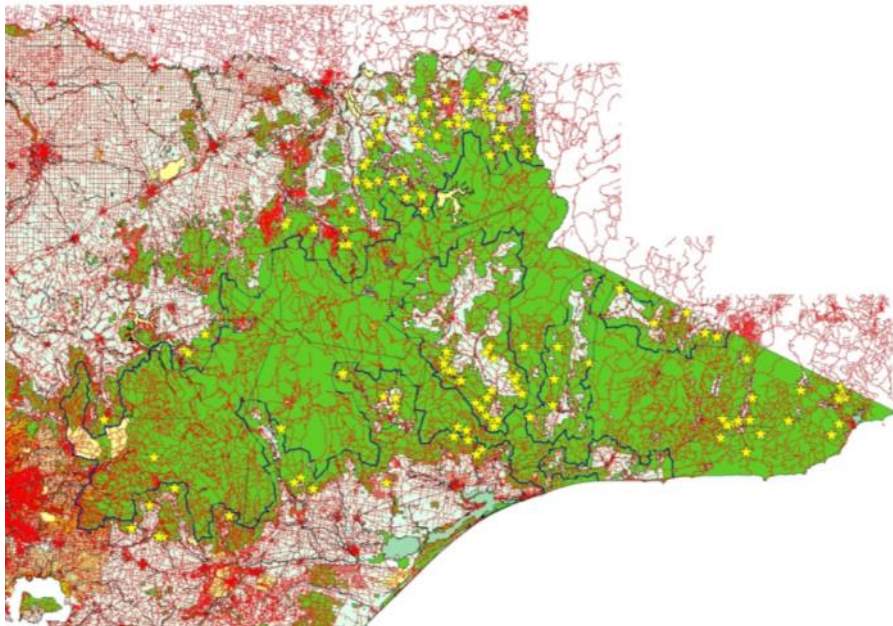
Map 1 Current Wild Dog Management Zones



Department of
Environment, Land,
Water & Planning



Map 2 Three kilometer boundary as defined by 2010 FFG Act GIC Order

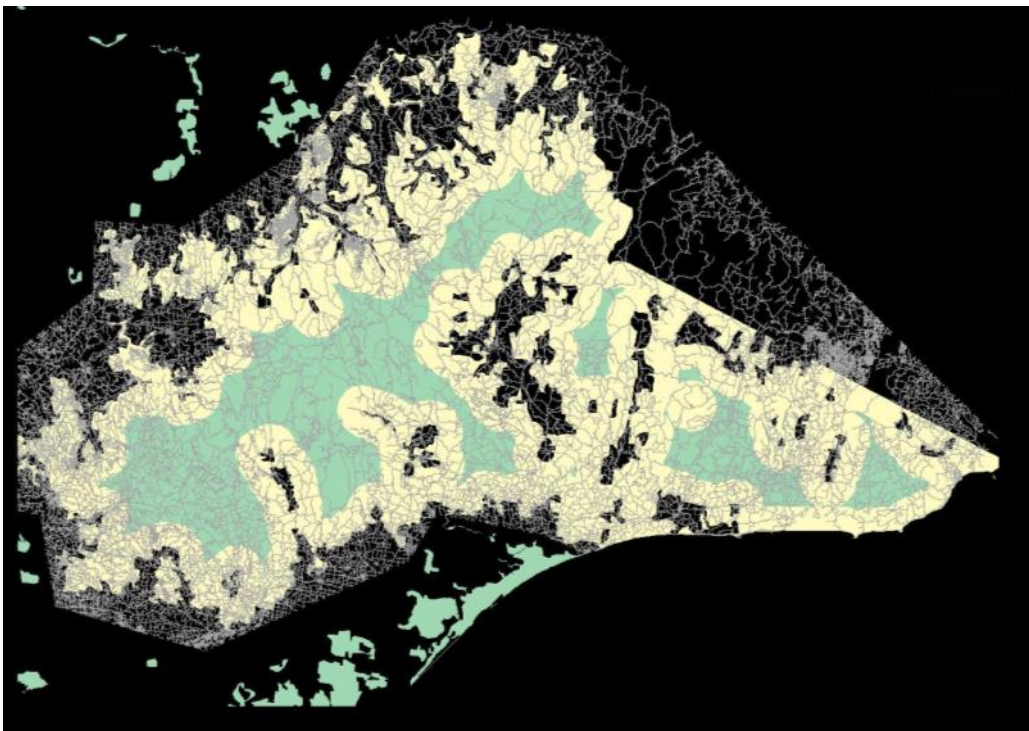


Map 2 above shows a close approximation of the three kilometer boundary agreed upon at the time of the dingo threatened species listing by Labor in 2010, which is the basis of the GIC Order delineating where dingoes are protected and unprotected wildlife.

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Map 3 below was presented by the then Department of Primary Industries at the 2009 Dingo Working Group consultations, convened as part of the FFG Act dingo threatened species listing process. DPI was clearly attempting to ensure that the GIC Order reflected the wild dog control area boundaries then in use. That is, DPI did not want the threatened species listing to have any practical effect on the current scale of wild dog control operations. By the end of the consultation process in 2009, this ten kilometer proposal was rejected in favor of the 3 kilometer boundary shown in Map 2.

Map 3 Ten kilometer boundary put forward by the Department of Primary Industries during the 2009 Dingo Working Group deliberations



If the 'core' areas remaining in Map 3 are compared with the areas remaining in Map 1 above, it can be seen that they appear virtually identical in extent.

Despite the 3 kilometer principle having been adopted as the basis of the Governor in Council Order (as required under the FFG Act), the total area of Victorian public land currently available for lethal dingo control does not appear to have been reduced compared with the period prior to the threatened species listing. If this is so, the intent of the Governor in Council Order will have been nullified in practice. If on closer scrutiny, this is shown to be the case, current control practices may be challengeable in law.

At this time, accurate consolidated maps showing all of the following are not publicly available,

- 1/ The 3 kilometer boundary described in the GIC Order (Map 2 above was produced by the NDPRP itself)
- 2/ Wild Dog Management Zone Boundaries
- 3/ Reserved Crown Land (National Parks and Fauna and Flora Reserves), and
- 4/ Unreserved Crown Land

A serious consideration of the issues raised in this brief cannot be undertaken without a single consolidated map for Victoria showing these boundaries.

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'Wild Dog Management Zone' control beyond 3 kilometers

The NDPRP is concerned that control beyond 3 kilometers, as managed under the Wild Dog Management Zone plans lacks integrity from a dingo conservation perspective and may represent a violation of the Dingo threatened species Governor in Council Order. As noted, it was initially intended that control beyond 3 kilometers would be *reactive*, in pursuit of individual problem animals, *not proactive* for routine control.

Dr Ian Gunn, then NDPRP President and participant in the 2009 Dingo Working Group recalls the outcome of the extended consultation process in the following terms:

As per the DSE/ DPI Victorian Dingo Management Working Group meeting September/ October 2009 - the accepted and agreed outcome was:

The defined areas in Victoria that were listed as being protected areas for the dingo would have a 3 mile buffer zone (within the boundary of the protected area) in which wild dogs could be culled in - wild dog control areas- and that there must be prior authorization to intrude further into the into the protected zone only when it was necessary to remove a specific wild dog that had targeted livestock outside or within the buffer zone. This was my understanding.

(Private communication March 2015)

Has there been a change in control rationale since the 2010 threatened species listing that overturns the principle of limited, reactive control beyond 3 kilometers? If so, when did this occur? If so, how can this be reconciled with the 3 kilometer principle set down in the 2010 GIC Order? If there has not been a definite change in rationale in favor of pre-emptive control beyond 3 kilometers, it is then reasonable to ask whether preemptive control is being conducted, while maintaining the pretence of reactive control?

In either case, the NDPRP maintains that the large scale and frequent nature of control beyond 3 kilometers constitutes a serious breach of the intention of the GIC Order. Under the Wild Dog Management Zone Plans, what was meant to be the exception has become the rule.

It was not intended that stock losses in a particular location would automatically result in significant, broad scale control beyond 3 kilometers. The possibility of stock losses being used as a pretext for pre-emptive control beyond 3 kilometers should be critically investigated and the implications of this for the integrity of the GIC Order examined.

From a dingo conservation perspective, and in terms of biodiversity protection more broadly (given the strong evidence now available of the benefits of dingoes for biodiversity), even if dingo control were only conducted within 3 kilometers of the public/private land interface, the deleterious effects of control would reach far beyond the 3 kilometer zone. This is because dingoes' territories can be large; killing animals within the 3 kilometer zone has implications for the viability of dingo populations further into public land. Similarly, control beyond 3 kilometers (as within the WDMZs) has damaging effects into the so-called 'core' dingo protection areas. Under current control practices, dingo populations are not secure even within 'core' areas.

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Here the use of the term 'core' area is also misleading. The Governor in Council Order defines dingo protection areas on the basis of the 3 kilometer control principle. Those areas of public land beyond 3 kilometers are the 'core' areas of dingo protection, not something less than this, as for example defined by the boundaries of the Wild Dog Management Zones. Again, the NDPRP considers that the WDMZs represent a significant challenge to the intended meaning of the GIC Order.

North-West Victoria

Serious consideration should be given to cessation of all dingo control in North-West Victoria – principally the Little Desert and the Big Desert.

Apart from being environmentally damaging, there is little or no economic justification for control in these areas. A cost-benefit analysis of dingo control in this regional would almost certainly reveal it to be economically inefficient. To the very limited extent that stock protection is required in this region, public finances would be better spent on subsidizing farmers for the purchase and upkeep of alternative, non-lethal forms of stock protection, such as for the use of Maremma guardian dogs, or even financial compensation for the very limited scale of stock loss. The latter approach may be a more financially responsible use of public funds for addressing the issue of stock loss in this part of Victoria.

The bulk of farming in this region consists of grain cropping. Prior to the threatened species listing of the dingo, 'wild dog' control in the North West of Victoria was limited in scale and restricted to a 2 kilometer buffer zone at the interface of public and private land. However, for the purposes of 'policy consistency', the then Department of Primary Industries successfully argued for this buffer to be increased to 3 kilometers. There was no manifest need for such an increase.

3/ The establishment of a dingo conservation advisory group

The FFG Act Dingo Action Statement recommended the establishment of an advisory/consultation group. This has not been enacted. For dingo conservation purposes, there is no ongoing consultation.

By contrast, there has been pro-active 'public consultation' by government departments with farming interests regarding the setting of annual Wild Dog Management Zone control plans.

It is the position of the NDPRP that a dingo conservation consultation group should be established without undue delay and be comprised of experts and representatives from relevant conservation organizations. Such organizations may include the NDPRP, the Wilderness Society (which was party to the 2009 DWG) and the Humane Society International (which is currently involved in lobbying for protection of the dingo nationally). A legal representative from the Environmental Defenders Office may also be considered, as well as an animal welfare and ethics expert. The NDPRP recommends animal ethics expert Dr Ian Gunn for the latter role.

As the primary focus of such a group would be dingo conservation and related matters in areas where dingoes are protected wildlife, the NDPRP urges that wild dog management groups and other farming stakeholders not be included. Once issues related to control methods and locations are resolved, farming interests cease to be relevant stakeholders. As noted, at present, such interests are already consulted with by the government through other arrangements.

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4/ Who should be authorized to kill dingoes? - Recreational hunting

During the 2009 DWG consultations, it was agreed that dingoes would not be subject to recreational hunting. Without further consultation with relevant stakeholders, this principle appears to have been overturned.

The NDPRP understands that recreational hunting of 'wild dogs' is currently allowed on unreserved Crown Land, that is, not in National Parks and public Flora and Fauna Reserves. The extent of crown land not included in parks and reserves, but which lies beyond 3 kilometers should be critically examined with a view to ensuring that no recreational hunting occurs beyond the 3 kilometer boundary – that is in areas identified in the 2010 GIC Order as areas where the dingo is protected.

It is of serious concern that, in effect, hunters may kill dingoes on some unreserved Crown Lands where even government wild-dog controllers would not be able to operate without showing good reason as part of a Wild Dog Management Zone plan. There may indeed be some areas where recreational hunters can kill dingoes with virtual immunity (because there is virtually no compliance about what hunters are actually killing – dingoes or dingo hybrids) where government wild dog control is not permitted at all (beyond Wild Dog Management Zone boundaries). It is imperative that such anomalies be identified and rectified.

It is almost certain that monitoring of the purity status of 'wild dogs' killed by recreational hunters is virtually non-existent.

Conclusion

Overall, the NDPRP considers that Victorian government's dingo conservation efforts since the dingo's listing as a threatened species have been mismanaged. This mismanagement worsened under the Coalition Government. However, there seems to be significant political inertia to rectify the damage done by the Coalition. It is hoped that this inertia does not extend to addressing the shortcomings of the original dingo listing.

The highly restrictive genetic definition of the dingo used in the threatened species listing, itself, has been a major impediment to ensuring meaningful conservation the dingo. This approach was against the recommendation of the 2009 Dingo Working Group, which advocated a largely phenotypic (descriptive) approach to defining the dingo. Independent, expert legal advice indicates that limiting the threatened species listing to only 'pure' dingoes was not a legal necessity.

More broadly, there is absolutely no recognition of the biodiversity benefits of hybridised dingo populations under the current approach to defining the dingo for conservation purposes. The NDPRP would like to draw the Minister's attention to the testimony of Dr Allan Wilton (now deceased) who, in highlighting the limitations of his pioneering genetic purity test for the dingo, recommended that dingoes testing between 75 and 100 per cent pure be considered 'pure' for conservation purposes in the wild. A copy of Dr Wilton's statement has been provided.

VICTORIAN ISSUES

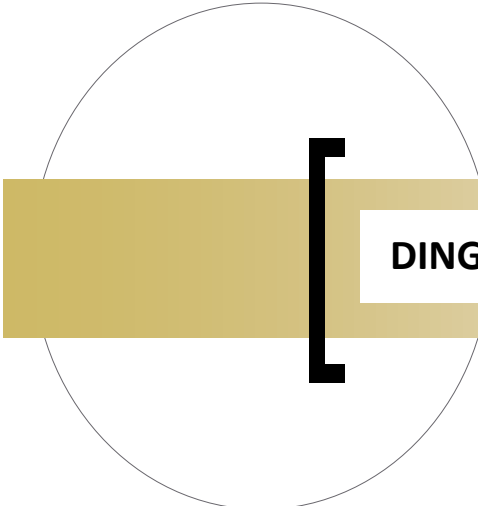
On the basis of information currently available to the NDPRP, it appears that the 3 kilometer principle for limiting dingo control, as prescribed in the GIC Order, has been seriously undermined in practice. On the face of it, there appears to have been no reduction in public land available for 'wild dog' control as a result of the dingo threatened species listing in Victoria. Wild Dog Management Zones under the current management regime appear just as extensive, and involve the same broad-scale control measures, as the under the previous Local Area Control Plans, which existed prior to the threatened species listing. The dingo has been listed as threatened, but 'wild dog control appears to be business as usual.

In addition, recreational hunting has now been legitimised as a 'wild dog' control measure. Although where this can occur in relation to the 3 kilometer buffer defined in the GIC Order requires closer investigation, it appears that hunters can kill dingoes in some areas where even wild dog control officers are not permitted to.

The NDPRP considers that most of the concerns raised here could be addressed under current legislation, without compromising the Victorian Government's parallel commitment to a fair and reasonable level of farm livestock protection. Unfortunately, however, there appears to be a great deal of resistance amongst sections of the public service to the reformed mindset necessary to give meaning and substance to dingo conservation in Victoria. The NDPRP hopes that this resistance is not insurmountable and that good governance will prevail.

FOOTNOTE: It should be noted that the Bracks/Brumby Labor government enquired into the efficacy of aerial baiting and found it to be ineffective.

MEMBERSHIPS ARE DUE NOW:
PLEASE SEE FORM AT END OF NEWSLETTER



DINGO— FRIEND OR FOE? By Arthur Gorrie

Compassion was a far more effective environmental management tool than “poison and guns,” award winning ecologist Dr Arian Wallach told a recent conference of conservationists and farmers.

And dingoes were an ideal agent for saving the environment and promoting co-existence between native and exotic species.

The May 17, 2015 conference, “Dingo – Friend or Foe” was held just across the Great Sandy Straits from World Heritage listed Fraser Island where, it was argued, Australia’s war on the dingo began.

Three prominent local farmers, Harry Jamieson, Lindsay Titmarsh and James Hansen told the conference about their dingo problems, worse in recent years than ever before.

Arian Wallach:

Dr Wallach, whose work has been published in the international journals Nature and Science, said human attempts to manage the environment by killing came with high costs – ethical, economic, social and environmental.

Winner of the 2013 Eureka Science prize (Australia’s foremost research award) for work on the ecological role of dingoes, she advocated greater humility from the scientific community.

“We need to be very humble in what we think we know and don’t know,” she said.

Agriculture needed to focus more on non-lethal control methods, including guardian dogs. But although human persecution was the main threat to large carnivores worldwide, it was not farmers who posed the main danger. “The most dangerous place for a dingo is in national parks,” she said.

“Unlike national parks in other countries where the authorities protect the predators, dingoes are not protected anywhere.

“Foxes are common where dingoes are scarce. Where there are many dingoes, there are fewer foxes. Foxes are strongly associated with the extinction of marsupials. Where dingoes do well, marsupials are also doing well, essentially across the entire continent. Where dingoes are persecuted we get more stock losses, not less.

She also attacked the “wild dog” concept, which she said was “perfect” as a public relations tool to justify extermination, implying that the problem animals were not really dingoes. The wild dogs are dingoes,” she said.

DINGO—FRIEND OR FOE?

Harry Jamieson:

Retired beef cattle grazier, agricultural public servant and conservationist Harry Jamieson, told about 80 participants (including three dingoes and one assistance dog) about his experience on land frequented by dingoes, kangaroos and wallabies as well as stock. He spoke as a former president of the Mary River Catchment Co-ordinating Committee, which has been active in conservation efforts for the endangered Mary River turtle, cod and lungfish.

Mr Jamieson said he had operated a family beef property in dingo country and had never suffered any calf losses as a result of dingo predation.

“During our early years, it was not uncommon to see dingoes in packs of four, six, sometimes eight. Often we would hear them howling. Kangaroos and wallabies were numerous. I never shot or allowed anyone to shoot a kangaroo or wallaby. They were for the dingoes.

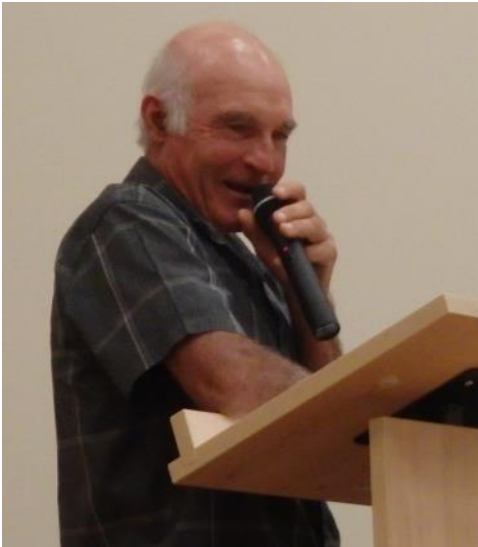
“We ran a male steer fattening operation. We would buy calves, get them to four to six months and sell the calves to other fattening operations. At no stage during that time did we ever lose a calf to the effects of dingoes.

“You hear so much about dingoes causing a lot of people to incur losses... and you have to have sympathy. Over the years it’s been baiting, trapping and shooting. It doesn’t seem to have made a lot of difference. We’ve got to take a different approach,” he said.



DINGO—FRIEND OR FOE?

Lindsay Titmarsh:



Grazier Lindsay Titmarsh, of the Tandora property at the Mary River mouth told of an unprecedented recent increase in dingo numbers.

He said his family had shot and trapped dingoes over the years but they had always been in small groups and did not seem to breed up.

“If you see a dog every two months, you’re doing well, (but) we have shot 16 dingoes in the last five months, that’s unheard of at Tandora. I don’t know what the story is. They just keep coming, from everywhere. We lost 20 calves in one year.”

James Hansen:

Dairy farmer, Fraser Coast Regional councillor and a member of the council’s Koala Conservation Committee, James Hansen said he remembered it once being rare to see a dingo.

“Then about 10 years ago, something strange began happening. We lost 30 weener heifers in one year. They cost about \$1000 each to replace and would earn \$10,000 over their lifetime.

“I really couldn’t sleep at night. Then they struck during the day and took to eating calves as they were born. I don’t know where they came from. I’ve never baited at my place. It’s a nasty way of dying and it affects other animals as well.”



DINGO—FRIEND OR FOE?

Adam O'Neill:

Mr O'Neill said the evidence from farmers of problems becoming much worse in recent years supported his contention that they coincided with local persecution of the dingo, which he said had started with the Beattie Queensland Government after the Clinton Gage tragedy. This persecution had caused overbreeding, hybridisation and changes in behaviour. "I've researched this a bit and it was from 2003 onwards (that things got worse).

"This is a problem that needs to be addressed from the top, with a stop to dingo persecution on crown land, including state forests and national parks."

He said he and Dr Wallach had conducted the experiment that proved his point while managing the Evelyn Downs cattle station in central Australia.

"I decided not to kill any dogs and within two years, stock predation was eliminated. You need dingoes to stabilise everything. But I had 2500sq.km, so I basically had my own country."

Farmers in more closely settled areas would need a government co-ordinated approach because their properties might only be part of the range of a dingo pack.

"When dingoes are stable they become invisible and no-one notices the good things they do. People only notice dingoes when they become a problem. Stop the baiting, let the dingoes stabilise and they'll control the pigs and foxes and you'll save a shitload of money," he said.

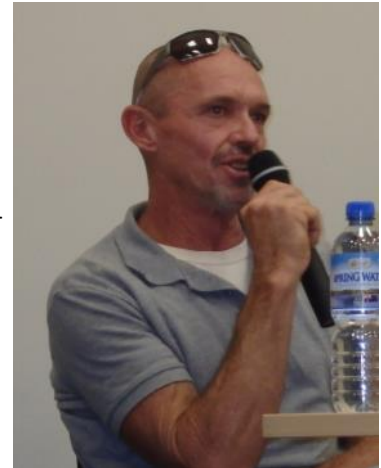
"You've got to inquire how these government agencies are running our vast areas of wilderness. They're baiting for no apparent reason. They don't have livestock."

Dr Wallach said that in her two years at Evelyn Downs with Mr O'Neill, eight calves had been killed by dingoes, "six at the beginning when the dingoes were unstable.

"More deaths were caused by drought and the biggest killers were boggy dams (in which the cattle would get stuck trying to get to water) and incessant heat.

"I know it can be hard to be a farmer. Adam couldn't sleep at night during some droughts."

James: "If we tried to restrict 1080, we would have a revolution on our hands from primary producers."



DINGO—FRIEND OR FOE?

Dr Wallach said consumers were the key to solving the problem.

“Do you want to put your money towards contributing to the persecution of big predators (to produce) wool or meat?”

She said a global “predator friendly” certification system already existed.

“As consumers we have an opportunity to make a choice about the kind of human beings we want to be. Being compassionate and not being so quick to use guns and poison, let’s put lethal control at the bottom of the list.”

Malcolm Kilpatrick:

SFID president Malcolm Kilpatrick cut his address short because of time constraints, but said the organisation had sought to make the Fraser Island manager, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service more free with information and had agitated for an animal care centre, especially for animals injured by humans. There was no real care facility except at the Seaworld and Australia Zoo tourist attractions. Of animals taken off the island for veterinary treatment, only a small number survived.



MC: Councillor Robert Garland. L-R: Harry Jamieson, Adam O’Neill, Lindsay Titmarsh, James Hansen, Ray Revill, Malcom Kilpatrick, Arian Wallach.

SAVE FRASER ISLAND DINGOES

The Elections have come and gone with the fall out now becoming evident and a whole host of new faces to contact .

Our concerns for a Care Facility on the Island have not changed, nor has the ground swell of support from many areas. Our members and the public are still very keen to see this facility eventuate and SFID will continue to lobby the government. Perhaps the new Minister will be more open to negotiations.

We have been accused of bothering the government, of taking up the Department of Environment and Resource Management's time, especially with our frequent RTI (Right to Information) requests, which have become more costly and difficult to access

Members have been cyber-stalked by individuals who feel they have more of a right to fight for the dingoes than we do. We have been accused of fabricating evidence, and lying about the condition of the dingoes. Yet the stories never stop flooding in by members of the public, tour operators, and Island residents, and what has become extremely evident is the lack of sightings. Therefore high on the list of priorities is to put pressure on the Government to ascertain the current dingo population on Fraser in particular the number of breeding pairs. Residents, tourists and tour operators feel that the population has diminished to less than 50, we hope that this is not correct as such a low count could be devastating for the future healthy survival of the Fraser Island Dingo. The Government has agreed to invest \$15K in a population study to be conducted in the not too distant future

There is one male around Maheno apparently in good condition; at the southern end a few are not in good condition and then there is a male at Eurong 12 months old weighing 18 kilo. On a recent trip, Jennifer Parkhurst sighted an old male, with very obvious facial scars, watching fishermen expectantly while he sat under a tree. She also spotted two young juveniles, very thin but not quite emaciated, visiting people casually asking for food and then moving on without causing any fuss.

SFID has been a cohesive, strong, professional presence in the conservation arena for many years and through dedication and determination will take the fight into this new era we are facing; a new Government and Ministers that we need to form relationships with.

As always it won't be easy, but we will keep moving forward.

High on our agenda before the year is out is to meet with the new Minister for Environment and National Parks Dr. Steven Miles to discuss our proposal for the first response Centre on Fraser Island. As requested by the previous LNP Minister for Environment we put together a comprehensive 10 year business plan detailing how we propose to run and fund the facility. Thanks to Sea World and Australia Zoo we obtained data from them on sea and land animals rescued from Fraser Island, the number of deaths and survivals, sadly many perish due to the long travel by road to the various Care facilities. The CEO of Sea World Trevor Long as further offered assistance with wildlife training and some equipment



Jennifer Parkhurst

SAVE FRASER ISLAND DINGOES

Recently QPWS informed us that they have collared a young dingo 12 months old, weighting 18kilo, below is an extract of the e-mail we received and a photo of the collar.

"The collar is new technology, has an improved battery pack and can be released from the animal remotely. I have attached a photo for your reference – the one we are using is the collar in the centre, the one on the left is the previous style used in research trials, and the one on the right is another option sourced, but as you can see considerably bulkier and not a preferred option. While the one we are using is slightly larger than the previous version, the more regular polling necessary for us to be in touch with its location more regularly requires an improved battery, however with advances in technology it is not substantially heavier if at all."



We were also informed that the collar would only be used for 8 weeks and it is hoped that any negative encounters could be averted or attended to quickly due to the ability to find the dingo in a short space of time while wearing the collar. What measures they will be using to correct negative encounters has not been discussed, however one Ranger we spoke to said he sincerely hoped that all dingoes once past the juvenile stage would go on to lead a happy existence, we couldn't agree more!

SFID will continue to hold the government accountable for any policies pertaining to our Fraser Island dingoes. The Fraser Island Dingo Conservation and Risk Management Strategy (FIDCRMS) is still being implemented and we have had some successes but there are still issues of concern..

Issues still pending include..

Research into dingo numbers.

Enforcement by rangers and accountability of tourists.

More rangers and/or volunteers during peak holiday periods.

Increased monitoring of visitors and visitor numbers.

SFID also has a number of fundraising activities ahead to ensure we have enough in the bank to carry any expense incurred getting mainland carers over to the Care Facility should it go ahead. Currently we have a good range of merchandise from books, stickers to beanies, for further details please go to www.savefraserislanddingoes.org.au

SFID Committee.



CANDOBETTER.NET

Candobetter.net (established 2006) is an Australian website for reform in democracy, environment, population, land use planning and energy policy (based on an environmental sociology thesis called *The Growth Lobby in Australia and its Absence in France* by Sheila Newman and James Sinnamon). It promotes citizen journalism through articles and comments. Articles may be pitched at any level, from scientific to local activist. The point is sincere reporting and analysis. Comments are never censored unless they contravene the law and authors are expected to defend their stances when criticised. Editor Sheila Newman is a population and environment scientist and author of a new multi-species population theory in evolutionary sociology.

Writers and editors come from all over the world, including Syria and Russia and range from particle physicists to local planning backlash group activists. The site promotes the work of Australian ecological activists and wildlife carers as part of the push-back against the impacts on wild spaces of the Australian growth-lobby which has influenced Australian governments to constantly up planned invited economic immigration.

The site encourages people to make their own observations rather than react to the mainstream press and sees itself as an original source of journalism, opinion, record, education and analysis. The site supports itself independently through voluntary work and does not seek grants or advertising. The only exception to this is some linking of book reviews to book-selling sites.

A goal of this site is to inform the public about the issues which threaten our survival and to promote vigorous discussion and debate with a view to arriving at solutions. We hope that this will help bring into existence a grass-roots political movement which is capable of having these solutions adopted as policy at all levels of Government in Australia and, hopefully, in other countries as well.

<https://candobetter.net/>





Is there such a thing as environmental management?

On Friday August 7th, the Radio National 'Life Matters' program aired a discussion about the views of Dr Arian Wallach concerning pest animal management. At a time when the Federal Government has launched a 'war' on feral cats because of their destructive impact on small native fauna, Wallach's views are proving controversial (see letter to the Editor, below). This is because she argues against the lethal control of such introduced predators, or otherwise harmful exotic species. Because Dr Wallach has been a forthright advocate for the protection of dingoes, her views are of particular interest to the NDPRP. Below is a summary of Dr Wallach's views, as expressed on the Life Matters program, and some commentary on them.

(<http://www.abc.net.au/radio/programitem/pgga6dEzoV?play=true>)

Dr Wallach argues for a more 'compassionate' and 'ecological' approach to the management (or really non-management) of pest and introduced invasive species. Her reasons for this position appear to be as follows:

- 1/ There are limits to our understanding of the way our interventions in the natural environment influence species; there are many unintended consequences of control programs, especially lethal control. We need to approach nature with a greater sense of 'humility'.
- 2/ Often, lethal control has little or no measurable ecological effects in terms of reducing the effects of the target species.
- 3/ We, therefore, need to be very careful about using lethal control for conservation purposes in the 'modern' ecologies' that we now have.
- 4/ Conservation involves finding ways of ensuring the persistence of species, especially endangered species. Control practices that do not achieve that end are immoral.
- 5/ The problem of introduced species predating on, and endangering, native species needs to be understood in an 'entire ecological context'; in relation to the combined impact of the introduced species and other, human activity which may amplify the negative impact of the introduced species. For example, the predation impact of cats needs to be understood in context of overgrazing, loss of habitat, or fire regimes, which remove vegetation cover for prey species to avoid predation – human activity which removes or weakens the limitations on predator activity. Another example would be the removal of dingoes and foxes, which depletes the 'landscape of fear', which limits the predatory activity of cats.
- 6/ We, therefore, need to embrace all the species we now have, including introduced species and predators; ecosystems and evolution are 'messy' and we can never control it.



Is there such a thing as environmental management?

Comments

- 1/ It is not clear that the destructive impact of introduced predators (or indeed any species which has a destructive impact on native species) is made worse, or exaggerated, by human interventions in all situations. The implication that introduced species are only an environmental problem because of compounding human activity seems a long bow.
- 2/ Wallach's perspective implies a fundamental re-conceptualisation of Conservation. The distinction between exotic and native, or indigenous, species seems to be implicitly dismissed, or at least blurred. From this perspective, are we any longer concerned about the introduction of exotic species and their potential impact on existing ecosystems? Do we simply cease measures aimed at preventing the introduction of exotic species? The perspective seems to have two aspects. One is quite orthodox, for example in calling for the cessation of destructive human practices which disrupt ecosystems and contribute to species decline, as with dingo control. The other suggests a retreat into the subjective (feelings of humility before nature) -- perhaps the resort to an 18th and 19th Century Romantic view of nature as ultimately unbounded, indefinable and largely beyond the reach of the human intellect.
- 3/ The perspective appears inconsistent on the issue of human intervention in ecosystems. On the one hand, as noted, harmful human intervention in ecosystems should cease. On the other hand, in the name of compassion, introduced species should be left alone, despite the fact that (at least in the Australian context) these are mostly introduced through human intervention (although often inadvertently). In Australia, introduced species that have a disproportionate ecological impact are a product of human intervention. Such human intervention, however, should be left run its ecological course according to this view. As with all perspectives that are unresolved in some essential respect, it is uncertain in which direction it will tend in future. Could the perspective end up lending legitimacy to careless policy and practice regarding exotic species introduction, thereby turning a blind eye to certain types of harmful human intervention? What is ostensibly a perspective which eschews intervention may in practice facilitate it. From this perspective, which warns against the unforeseen consequences of human intervention in the natural world, what place is there for restorative conservation efforts? For instance, in areas where the dingo has been extirpated, would not dingo reintroduction constitute unwarranted interference with unknown consequences? The farming lobby would likely support such a perspective.



Is there such a thing as environmental management?

- 4/ Strategically, how does conservation proceed in a situation where all the factors which contribute to the decline of species, including the anthropocentric factors, cannot be dealt with at once? In the world of real environmental politics, a paradigm shift in favour of the natural world is unlikely. Yet, from this perspective, it is not clear how conservation would proceed pragmatically, on an incremental basis, to ensure the persistence of species? At the end of the day, the real challenge of environmental conservation is to chart ways forward step by step. Of course, it is necessary to have a holistic philosophical and strategic view to inform one's actions, but this is amended along the way.
- 5/ Whatever abstract, philosophical appeal the perspective may have, it appears politically unworkable, especially with regard to dingo conservation. It is very difficult arguing for protection of dingoes from the perspective of it being a native species. In the current political climate, to argue for the dingo from a perspective which deems all species, whether exotic or native, and whether pest or not, to be equally deserving of protection would be self defeating.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

I am upset about Ms Wallach's 'lets all protect feral cats scree' on Radio National yesterday. Is this woman REALLY interested in protecting dingoes? Or is her primary aim to protect feral animals in the name of compassion? How about compassion for native animals? Can't see the cat going on the endangered species list, but the entire Yarras population of scarlet fairy wrens wiped out by ONE feral cat IS on it. There just aren't any here anymore...

According to our environmental expert, I should have cared for the cat until it gave birth to its 8 kittens and then released them all back into the wild? When they were weaned?

Her kind of wildlife conservation is to let 'the new nature' develop; where the Indian myna and the Glossy Black cockatoo are considered of equal value? And it's OK to lose the latter if it can't learn to 'co-exist' before it is eaten, but the former CAN because it comes from a place where it co-evolved with cats?

Re: birds learning to turn cane toads over to eat them. YES! A few RAVENS (arguably an unusually smart bird) have worked it out. A goanna never will. A quoll never will. I know there is currently a project running trying to prevent the extinction of the northern quoll by cane toads. They are capturing quolls and feeding their young tiny bits of toad laced with some chemical to make it taste revolting to try to train them NOT to eat toads.



Is there such a thing as environmental management?

Yes, Yellowstone has been a stand-out in environmental repair due to the re-wilding. This consisted of allowing the wolves to manage the ecosystem, and resulting in AMAZING recovery. The many forms of flock protection used to protect should be considered here -- 'flag' fencing; and donkeys! A REAL study! With REAL results!

I do reckon she is onto something. Her 'wildlife management' proposals are cost free, and I reckon there is many an 'environment' minister who would LOVE these ideas -- excepting the one about leaving dingoes alone.

In my view, her main fault is considering that each individual life is of equal value (a very libertarian construct) rather than valuing the collective.

My own research has NOT found a single place or project that has followed the scenario set out by Ms Wallach. Not one place where exotic feral animals have been given 'their passport' and equal value with endangered wildlife. Guess she is looking for a 'first'.

I try to celebrate every achievement, no matter how small, on behalf of wildlife because it is SO HARD to do anything at all. I can't even help maintain the vulnerable on the little patch that is Lightning Rock. Lost the dingoes. Lost the scarlet wrens. Probably lost the Greater Gliders. Lost the powerful owls. All in 13 years of hard work and continuous effort.

WHY have they all been lost? Because I lost the dingoes.

Why did I buy THIS place instead of another?

Because there were dingoes here to do the 'work', and they had done a GREAT job.

Next step -- protect the cats? Never.

Sally Chapman



MAGPIES, KOOKABURRAS AND WILLIE WAGTAILS AMONG COMMON AUSTRALIAN BIRDS 'STARTING TO DISAPPEAR'



Magpies, laughing kookaburras and willie wagtails are on the decline in some regions, a [report tracking the health of Australia's bird populations has found](#). Birdlife Australia, analysed data collected in more than 400,000 surveys across the country, the majority done by bird-loving volunteers. The [State of Australia's Birds Report](#) states that while predators including cats, *habitat loss and even changes* in climate might be to blame, more research was needed before certain species became endangered. *Habitat loss* and *changes* are polite euphemisms for human destruction, such as land clearing and degradation for mining, logging, industries and urbanization!

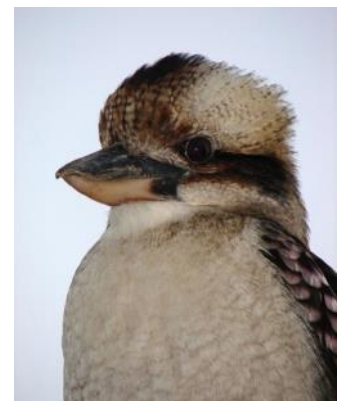
Sightings of kookaburras have decreased at a rate of 40 per cent across south-eastern Australia. Magpies have declined significantly on the east coast, a new report shows. The Eastern curlew, a migratory shorebird that has recently been declared critically endangered.

Editor of *Australian Birdlife* Sean Dooley said the decline of common birds in parts of Australia was a surprise to researchers.

Numbats, malas, bandicoots and bettongs are among the mammals the Federal Government's identified in its new Threatened Species Strategy. The birds include the mallee emu-wren and Norfolk Island boobook owl.

The Environment Minister Greg Hunt says [feral cats are a serious threat to native species](#) and that he wants the *feral animals eradicated from five islands and 10 mainland enclosures within five years*. Hunt has also set a target of 10 new cat-free enclosures on mainland Australia by 2020.

Dr Euan Ritchie is with Deakin University. He wants native *predators like dingoes ... reintroduced, as a natural way of culling foxes and cats*. This is an enlightened approach to the status of Dingoes that have been vilified and trapped over decades as a threat to livestock!



National Dingo Preservation & Recovery Program

Incorporated in Victoria No A0051763G

Affiliation/Membership Application/Renewal

Individual members please complete the personal details and sign. For Affiliated Organizations please complete the Name of Organization and position (e.g. President, Secretary Owner etc.) of person making application

Affiliated Organization Details

Name of Organization

Position of person making application

Personal Details

Title Given Name Family Name

Address Suburb

State Country Post Code

Home Phone (.....) Business Phone (.....) Mobile

Email Please notify NDPRP if you change your contact details.

Membership

Type	Cost	Amount
Single	\$20.00	
Affiliate Organization	\$50.00	
Donation		
Total		

Memberships can be paid by cheque or money order, and post to the address below; or by electronic banking to:

BSB: 033-289

Account No: 25-7130

Please snail mail or email copy of electronic banking slip with completed membership application.

Declaration

I agree to abide by the rules and the ethics of the NDPRP Inc and agree that my personal details may be released to other members of the organisation (as required by the constitution).

Signed Date

Forward completed form and remittance to:

Mr Ernest Healy

643 Pascoe Vale Rd

Oak Park Vic 3046

Ernest.Healy@monash.edu



***‘Great Spirits have
Always encountered violent
Opposition from mediocre
minds’
Albert Einstein***