

Wombatised Inc.

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Wombatised

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**Wombatised Newsletter
Vol. 11 20210601**

Wombatised is authorized by
Wildlife Rescue South Coast

Dear Everyone,

Wombats and Wildlife Magnetism!

What a wonderful seminar we had at the Mittagong RSL last month! So many people attended, some coming from Sydney and Canberra. Huge thanks to the speakers for their excellent and varied presentations and to the many people who supplied us with so much positive and appreciative feedback. Chloe Moore who was studying for her HSC this time last year was a lovely MC and her youth, enthusiasm and dedication to wildlife added to the day's magnetism! Wombatised membership has swelled as a result and we feel confident to say that there will be another such seminar again - about this time next year.

**WOMBATS
AND WILDLIFE
MAGNETISM**

FREE ALL-DAY SEMINAR

1 May, 9:30 for 10:00 am start
Mittagong RSL

Talks include:

- farmer's view of wombat management
- dispersing myths about wombats
- connectivity and wildlife corridors
- protecting our platypus
- challenges facing our Australian animals
- actions to make a positive difference

Register:
<https://bit.ly/3sAnX31>

Contact Chloe Moore
Chloe.moore1143@gmail.com

This newsletter and the following one will be devoted to short summaries of each talk along with some supporting images. I think we were all amazed at just how much we learned from the day. Although the many critical problems affecting our unique and endangered wildlife are almost

overpowering, it was inspiring to discover how many people from such a wide area of expertise are working so hard on their behalf.

*All the very best,
From us all at Wombatised*

Andy McLeod's wonderful talk, Wombat Management within the context of farm life began the day with a flying start. His 100 acre farm in the Woodlands area has about 250 wombat burrows and his personal interaction with wombats is an ongoing, enriching experience and an illuminating example of how farmers and wombats can co-exist happily and successfully.

Methods he uses to combat possible dangers of wombat burrows to people or stock include

1) burrow hoops – a polypipe above the burrow to alert people and cattle of burrow

2) closing a burrow if it's under a gate or fence by

a) placing manure and a shade cloth at the burrow entrance and leaving for a month to ensure there is no occupant, then filling in burrow, or

b) placing a one-way burrow flap so the wombat can exit but not return.

3) wombat gates to avoid burrows being dug under fences etc.

Simple ways to help wombats survive successfully include

1) placing burrow flaps with cydectin at burrow entrances to medicate for mange

2) establishing watering points by placing food (horse pellets and low protein hay) and water in flat troughs during droughts.

3) placing food during floods and pumping out flooded burrows. (Andy's pump removes 40 litres of water a minute. It takes one hour all told to pump out a burrow.)

4) reshaping burrows and building shelters over burrows to minimise future flooding.

Often farmers offer their property as an Air B&B to supplement income. Having wombats on the property is a sure draw card, according to Andy.



Andy is not only a local landowner but also has a 10,000 acre property in Wellington which is a potential habitat for the critically endangered northern hairy nosed wombats.

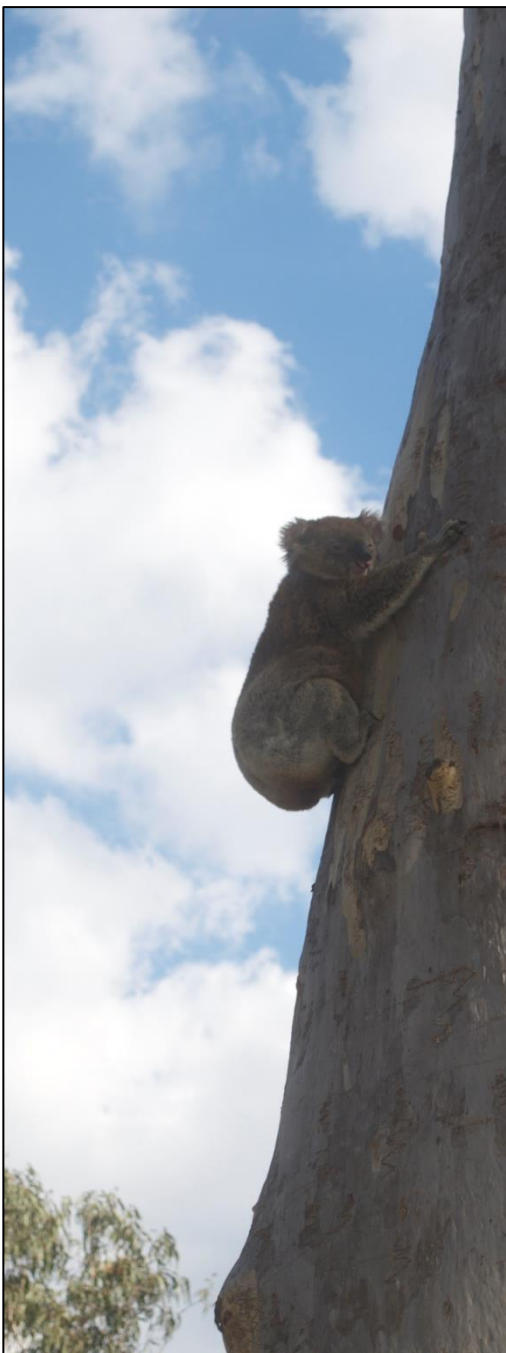


*Mother and daughter **Charlotte Stahl** and **Thelma Johnson** presented the second talk, ***Our Koala Sanctuary and the pressing need for koala protection.****

Fifty-one years ago, when Thelma was just three weeks old, the family moved to their property in Canyonleigh, where there was no water, no electricity but lots of pristine Australian bush. At first they followed the usual practice of 'land improvement' by clearing remnant vegetation but soon realised they were custodians of an area of great genetic diversity, which included a centuries old koala population. Instead of destroying vital wildlife habitat, they regenerated the cleared area to re-establish their link in the Great Eastern Wildlife Corridor.

In 1997 their Southern Highlands Koala Sanctuary was gazetted in 1997 as a wildlife refuge and which is home to emus, glossy black and gang gang cockatoos, gliders, possums, echidnas, kangaroos, wallabies, spotted-tailed quolls, wombats and the largest population of koalas in Southern NSW.

Charlotte, Thelma and her daughter actively promote wildlife habitat protection by giving talks, encouraging neighbours to protect local habitat and by hosting environmentalists, zoologists, scientists, wildlife ecologists and university vets and researchers to the





sanctuary.

In Charlotte's own words:

'Living in a forest and seeing the animals in their natural habitat reminds me every day of how important it is for people to take steps to protect them. I realise now that being a landholder is a huge responsibility and I hope our work inspires and encourages other landholders to value and protect the ancient land over which we are custodians.'



Scientists and ecologists from the N.S.W. government and the University of Sydney conduct research on the resident koala population.

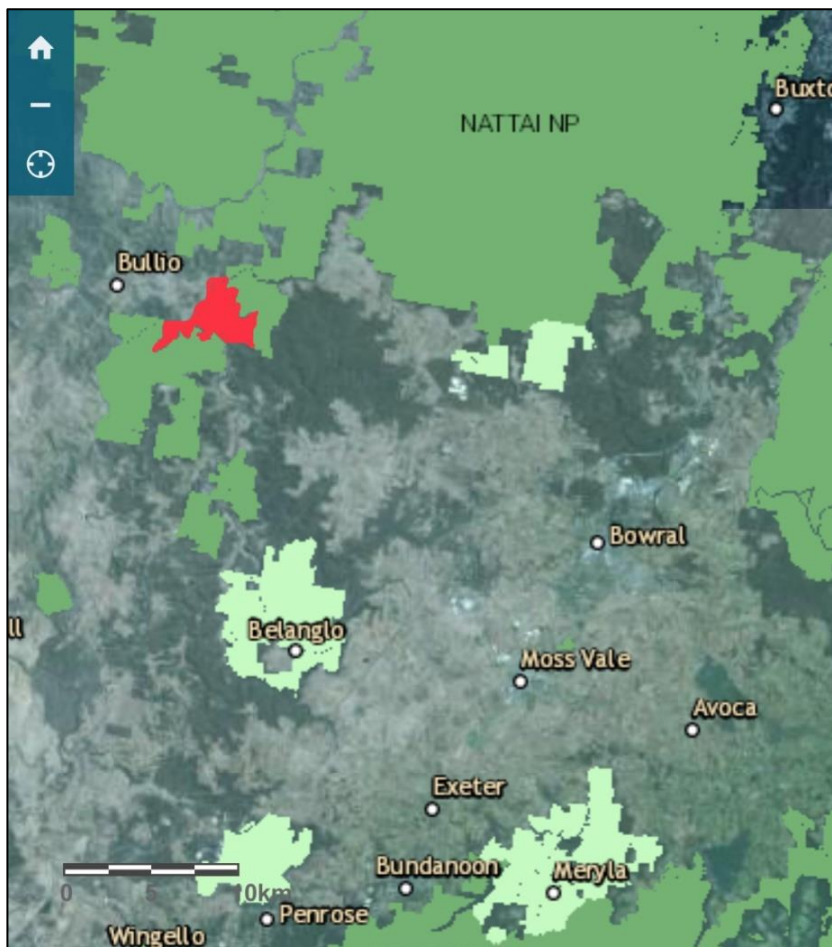
Below: an iconic and much loved tree in the Koala Sanctuary.



*The third talk, **A Holistic and Analytical Approach to protecting our natural environment**, was presented by **Robbie Weekes**. A summary of her talk will be included in our next newsletter.*

This was followed by **Lu Conlon**'s talk *Land for Wildlife and the fires*.

Lu Conlon's family property, Karalinga was purchased in 1956 as a merino sheep run. It has been with Land for wildlife since 2014, but they have been practising conservation for far longer.



Situated on the Wombeyan Caves Rd, Karalinga is an integral part of The Great Western Wildlife Corridor, which lies between the Morton National Park in the south and the Nattai and the World Heritage Blue Mountains National Parks to the north. There are also continuous linkages with the Nattai National Park in the north, the Joadja nature reserve to the east, and the newly gazetted national park Guula Ngurra to the south. The property shares 12 km of Wingecarribee river frontage with Guula Ngurra and on the south west is the Wollondilly nature reserve. To the west is the cleared land of Bullio. The topography is generally moun-

tainous with ridgelines, cliffs, steep-sided gorges and some flatter plateaus.

Importantly Karalinga is at the intersection of two bioregions. To the west the South Eastern Highlands bioregion which extend to the to the central tablelands and slopes, to the east is the Sydney basin bioregion typified by the Hawkesbury sandstone landscapes, which underneath the sandstone runs the Illawarra coal measures. As a result of the two bioregions converging there is a high level of biodiversity with species often at their geographical limit. There are actually six different vegetation communities spread across the property which vary from tall open wet sclerophyll forests in the deep creek and Carter's area through to a red gum and yellow box Devonian landscape on the west and casuarina riparian forests on the Wingecarribee river frontage.

The family continued with merino wool production until the late 80s, when the collapse of the wool prices made it uneconomical. However, rather than pursue other agricultural enterprises, with a keen interest in the environment the decision was made to let the bush once again reclaim the property.



BEFORE and AFTER: When Lu's grandfather bought Karalinga in 1956, there was severe erosion along the creek bed. More than sixty years later the erosion has been repaired and creek rehabilitated.

Land for Wildlife

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary program which encourages and supports landowners to devote a section of their property to the regeneration of native habitat and the protection of Australian animals.

Private landholders play a key role in nature conservation. The continued survival of many rare and threatened animals and plants is dependent on restoration of habitat on private lands.

Benefits of joining Land for Wildlife include:

- *receiving advice and support to achieve restoration goals on the land,*
- *learning about local native plants, wildlife and ecosystems,*
- *inclusion of nature conservation into overall property management,*
- *opportunities to meet and learn from other like-minded landholders.*

The wildlife at Karalinga is as diverse as the landscape and includes 16 threatened and vulnerable species. These include the gang gang, glossy black Cockatoo, powerful owl, scarlet robin, amongst many other more common birds such as the wedgetail, magpies and white cockatoos. Our marsupials are also numerous with many eastern grey kangaroos on the western side and red necked and swamp wallabies. Wombats abound and are the true kings of Karalinga with hundreds of burrows. Echidnas are often sighted and in the 12km of frontage shared with Guula Ngurra platypus abound. There are also multiple threatened species such as the koala, yellow-bellied glider, squirrel glider, as well as other smaller gliders and ringtail and brush tail possums. Reptiles are plentiful such as the larger monitor lizard (goanna) and water dragons in the river right down to tiny skinks, plus many brown and red belly black snakes.

During the Black Summer fires, Karalinga was under intense threat from the Green Wattle creek fire coming from the north. With a miraculous wind change and hard work by the RFS

choppers the fire was halted at the front gate. Karalinga had suffered badly in the drought and wildlife were already under much pressure, facing starvation and much of Bullio was burnt out.

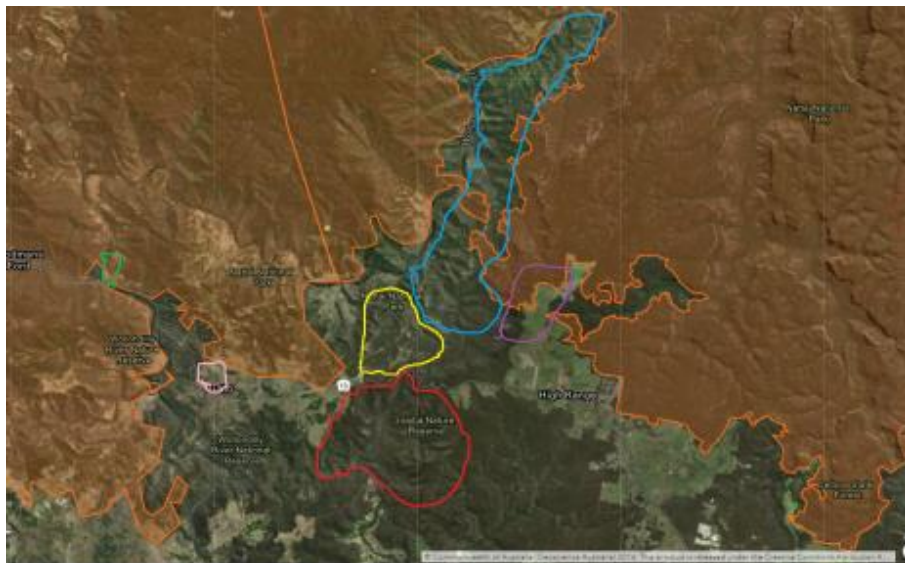


Everyone jumped into action and Karalinga became a wildlife food and water hub for the area, and with the assistance of other local landowners, food and water were distributed from the Wombeyan Caves to Bullio and up into the Burragorang valley.

Wildlife Rescue South Coast also generously assisted with hay and food donations and other groups provided water pipes and other larger containers for water.



It was exhausting and fulltime work simply getting the water and food out to multiple stations but also rewarding to see the animals coming in and utilising what was there. It was definitely lifesaving for the wildlife.



The map shows the fire area and 6 areas where food was distributed after the fires.

With climate change upon us, we know this was essentially a trial run for what will come in the future. From this experience we have now a wonderful group of dedicated landowners we feel we can count on in the future.

Clive West's talk *Connectivity through habitat corridors as a means of maintaining biodiversity and protecting species in our world of relentless human encroachment* addressed the role of habitat corridors in preserving precious native habitat right in the heart of the Southern Highlands.

'Habitat Corridors' can be defined as avenues connecting national parks, nature reserves or river systems. They enhance biodiversity by allowing species (fauna and flora) to move from one habitat to another, thus strengthening their genome. Wingecarribee Shire is strategically located within the Great Dividing Range. This large-scale corridor runs from Victoria to North Queensland and is the subject of an intergovernmental project called the 'Great Eastern Ranges Initiative'.

95% of the shire is within the Sydney water catchment area and is thus extremely important to the 5 million people living in Sydney. Habitat corridors along the riparian zones filter the water going in to the major streams and rivers in the catchment.

The importance of riparian land is reflected in local planning laws. There are 3 levels of riparian land recognised in the Wingecarribee Local Environment Plan: Category 1 protected for 50 metres on each side of the water flow, Category 2 riparian land which is protected for 30 metres on each side of the stream, and Category 3 riparian land which is protected for 10 metres on each side of the stream. A minimum of 30 to 35 metres is the preferred width for a habitat corridor, but this may not always be possible, particularly on private land where landowners may be reluctant to commit so much land to re-wilding. Wombats in particular thrive in riparian zones and with proper management wildlife can be reintroduced.

The Southern Highlands Landcare Network is a group of volunteers working with landowners and government agencies to plant native vegetation on their riparian land by supplying native plants, plant guards and bamboo sticks. The group recently participated in a national parks initiative to plant over 900 koala food trees at the new Guula Ngurra National Park at Canyonleigh.

Wingecarribee Shire is fortunate to have an environment levy introduced in 2000. Initially it constituted 4.51% of the general rates raised in the shire but over time has slipped to 2.5%, and continues to decline as a percentage of the general rates. Between 2016 and 2019 Council received a massive rate rise of 45.3%, but none of the increase has been allocated to the environment. A small group met on 23 April with the Council Administrator to address this fall in environmental allocation.

Five years ago, the State government approved two massive sand quarries near Canyonleigh, an essential koala habitat, which will completely sever the Great Western Wildlife Corridor running from the Blue Mountains to the coastal national parks. The massive craters disturb the aquifer, destroy natural habitat and act as an impediment to the movement of wildlife. Council needs to take an active role in pressing the State Government to ~~condemn~~ not approve these destructive developments.

Habitat corridors play an important role in future planning and can lessen the impact of over development. Riparian zones should be re-wilded and fenced off to encourage and protect wildlife. An example of this potential is Mittagong Creek as it winds its way between East Bowral and Retford Park. There are grassy areas with ponds and a few trees, but no continuous belts of storied native vegetation. The East Bowral riparian zone could be extended in the future to link the coastal national parks with Mt Gibraltar and Mt Alexandra and onto the Blue Mountains UNESCO listed World Heritage Area.



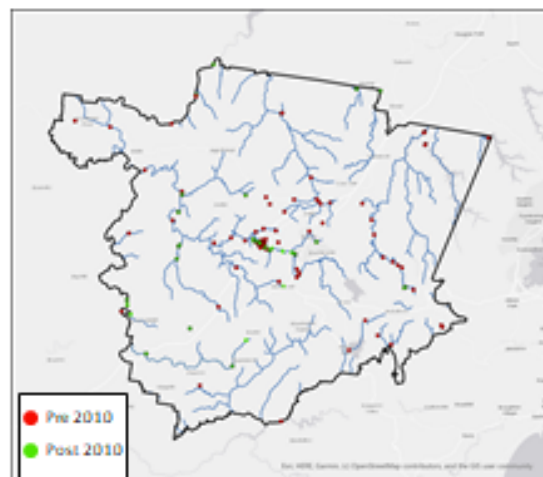
A wombat ancestral burrow on the Lower Holt

A vital urban habitat corridor is Frensham's Upper and Lower Holt. This corridor has the critically endangered ecologically community called Southern Highlands Shale Woodland. There are only 2,000 hectares left in the world and they are listed under the federal Biodiversity legislation. Frensham has a long and proud history of environmental protection and education, but may need reminding of this in light of its recent DA for student accommodation in the Lower Holt.

The Nature and Protection of Platypus Habitat was a talk shared by **Patrick Tegart** (from Wingecarribee Shire Council) and **Ian Rayner** (from Greening Australia). They have kindly given permission to include the following Powerpoint presentation in this newsletter.

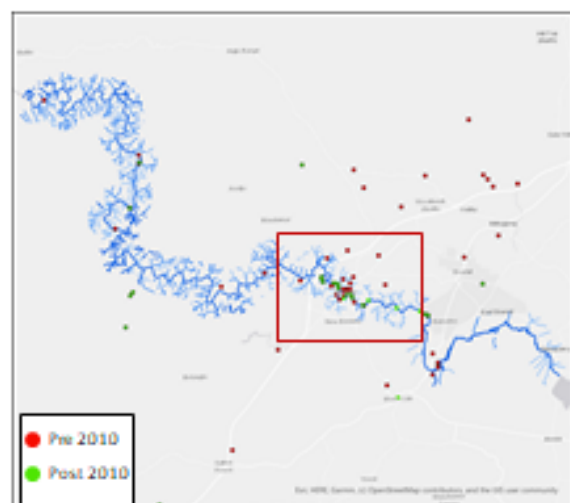


- Burrawang Creek (Burrawang)
- Caalong Creek (Robertson)
- Cecil Hoskins Nature Reserve (Moss Vale)
- Gibbergunyah Creek (Mittagong)
- Long Swamp Creek (Sutton Forest)
- Medway Rivulet (Medway)
- **Wingecarribee River (Berrima)**
- Wollondilly River



Platypus Surveys: Wingecarribee River

- Most of the **survey effort** in the Southern Highlands has focused on the **Wingecarribee River**.
- **Citizen science** focus along the Wingecarribee River around Berrima.
- **Research:** Dr Tom Grant had 9 survey areas that he focused on along the Wingecarribee River.



Platypus Surveys: Types

Visual

Pros

- Cost effective.
- Limited disturbance to platypus.
- Less constrained by inclement weather/high flows.

Cons

- Risk of misidentification.
- Unable to provide reliable information about a platypus' sex, age or condition.
- Require the water surface to be visible from vantage points along the bank.

Live trapping

Pros

- Only method for describing population attributes such as sex ratio and reproductive success and gaining accurate information about size and condition.

Cons

- Can cause stress to captured animals.
- Requires specialised equipment and is logistically demanding.
- Sampling bias as nets can only be set effectively in a limited range of water depths & flow.

eDNA



Visual



Live trapping



eDNA



Platypus Surveys: eDNA Sampling

- What is it?
- Why is it useful?
- What are its limitations?
- Sampling along the Wingecarribee River and Why?



- What is it?
- Why is it useful?
- What are its limitations?
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Habitat Requirements

Consolidated banks

Overhanging vegetation

Instream features



Consolidated Banks

The **roots** of riparian plants reduce flood damage and other erosion, holding together banks used for **resting and nesting burrows**.



Overhanging Vegetation

Creates summer shade and supplies organic material that benefits the small invertebrate **food species (macroinvertebrates)**.

It also reduces the chance of **predation** by foxes, dogs and some birds of prey.



Instream Features

Pools - deeper than 1m but less than 5 are preferred and larger pools are extremely important as refuges during drought times when connecting riffles may dry out.

Riffles - Platypuses also forage in riffles.

Large woody material and plants growing in the water (**macrophytes**) provide shelter, living spaces and organic food material for macroinvertebrates and native fish species.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VU8t2ik7YQ&t=2s>

<https://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/projects/w2w/>

Ian Raynerirayner@greeningaustralia.org.au

SOME of our MERCHANDISE!!

***Adorable hand crafted kangaroos and koalas \$20
and unique hand crafted little wombats and cockatoos \$18***



Wombat Whiskers!!

by Adrienne Bradney-Smith

Wombat Whiskers is produced entirely on home soil. It is an educational book for young children and adults of all ages, which asks questions about what wombats really look like. This little book creates an awareness of how precious and unique our wombats are.

*All proceeds go to Wombatised Inc.,
which means **directly to the protection of our wildlife.***

Copies are \$25 each

Not many copies left!



Wombatised Inc.

Vision and Mission Statement

Who are we ?

Wombatised covers an ever expanding network of people dedicated to the welfare of our native animals with a strong focus on education, conservation and community inclusion. We work for all wildlife with an emphasis on wombats.

Our vision is

- to continue raising healthy wombat orphans, guiding them to appropriate release sites to ensure their prosperous future.
- to improve hospital facilities and medical provisions for native animals.
- to maintain treatment in the field of diseases such as mange and other parasitic afflictions introduced by early settlers.
- to provide financial support for veterinarians, willing to explore the often untravelled path of wombat health.
- to cultivate effective means to relocate wombats, saving them from all too common atrocities such as road accidents, being buried alive at development sites, being shot and poisoned etc.
- to educate people on the very real need to help our wildlife.

How can you help?

We would welcome any donations to Wombatised Inc. However, we are still awaiting our tax deductibility status. Our bank account details are:

BSB	802 101
Account No.	100075892
Account Name	Wombatised
Reference:	Please use your full name

Please advise us of your donation by sending this form

The Secretary, Wombatised Inc.
22 Payten Street, Mittagong NSW 2575.

or by emailing wombatisedinc@gmail.com or adriennebradneysmith@gmail.com . We will then send your receipt / membership e-certificate.

Hands-on Assistance

Hands-on skills would be also greatly appreciated such as **construction skills** (e.g. building pens), **technology** (e.g. making cards, sharing information), **the arts** (e.g. photography, film making), **tailoring** (e.g. sewing animal bags, making burrow flaps, making items for sale), **domestic duties** (manning stalls), **animal husbandry** (cleaning enclosures), **conservation work**, **marketing**, as well as work on the field.

Because of licensing regulations and duty of care, we need interested persons to have working with children accreditation, character references and to demonstrate a willingness to acquire new skills.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Thank you so much for your interest in Wombatised Inc.