

Wombatised Inc.

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Wombatised

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Wombatised Newsletter
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Dear Everyone,

We hope you all had an enjoyable and safe Christmas and New Year, albeit a little different perhaps! Our wildlife was blissfully unaware of holidays and Covid 19 and some of us were kept busy during those torrential downfalls attending to flooded burrows and possible trapped animals. Brendan and Tania worked tirelessly over two days just before Christmas, digging up a burrow in search of a wombat orphan who we now know is safe and sound. She was caught in the flood and hiding close by, trying to get home for a couple of days. Working with wildlife can be fraught with anxiety as well as wonderfully rewarding.



New Year's Day began with a bird rescue followed by a call out for a sick wombat suffering from mange and a very nasty wound on his back. Miraculously Tania was able to treat him and he is now a much healthier animal.

With the New Year comes **membership renewals** and we have made a few changes in the light of the ongoing costs of wildlife care. For those kind people who are able to support our cause, we are offering

- Premium membership. Come and meet us! \$50.00
- Family membership \$20.00
- Adult membership \$10.00
- Child membership \$5.00

We thank all those members who joined last year and we do hope everyone will renew their membership this year.

We have some exciting events planned for 2021, the first of which is another **Wombatised Corbett Plaza stall** in Bowral, which will be held on **3rd April – Easter Saturday**. Last year's stall was amazingly successful and again we will be asking kind members and friends to make cookies and cakes for us.

Hot on the heels of the stall is a first for Wombatised – a seminar with the enticing title **Wombats and Wildlife Magnetism in the Southern Highlands**. This will be held on the **1st May** at the Mittagong RSL. Our speakers so far will include Tania Clancy, John Creighton,

Clive West, Lou Conlin, Patrick Tegart (platypus expert) and Andy Macleod with Roma Dix as M.C. The main topics will be conservation and the green web, wombat health, biodiversity and animal wellbeing.

*The Christmas get together at the Glass Café in December was such a great opportunity for members to meet other members that we've decided to do it again – this time it will be **Christmas in July at The Glass Café**. We will inform you of the date closer to the event. Needless to say fundraising for Wombatised can be lots of fun which we all discovered last year, despite Covid restrictions.*

We all at Wombatised look forward to an exciting and productive year ahead and we thank you in advance for your interest and support.

Every good wish,

From us all at Wombatised

A Special Visit

A group of Year 12 students and their teachers from a Sydney school, who hitherto had been unable to go on excursions, visited the Southern Highlands recently to help our wildlife, just after completing their HSC. Inspired by their wonderful headmistress, these students and dedicated staff chose to devote a whole day working for wildlife when they could have taken the opportunity to have a well-earned rest. They arrived by bus, but because of Covid restrictions, the number was limited to about twelve students and five staff. For some it would have been their first encounter with acres of unspoilt bush. However, they all got to work dividing into three groups in a concerted working bee.

One group dealt with erecting shelters within an enclosure, the second painted gates while the third worked on making wombat burrow flaps to treat mange.

This was the third working bee inspired by this same Sydney based headmistress and Wombatised again would like to thank



sincerely all involved who gave their time and energy to assist our cause.

It is heart-warming to know that these young people, at the next exciting stage of their lives, will continue to support our Australian animals, whatever they decide to do in the future.



Percephoné ('Percy') the magpie

Percy's origins are obscure. When hatched from her egg, perhaps the first living thing she saw was not her real mum but a human, as she certainly likes humans. Before Wombatised took her into care, she had been raised in the bedroom of a kind lady who surrendered her as it was not safe for a fledgling to be contained in an urban



environment surrounded by dogs and cats ready to pounce.



Percy's closest avian friend is Jack ('Jackie') a currawong who shares a similarly obscure family history. They are lucky to have found each other and are seldom very far apart.

Both fledglings enjoy a mash of bugs, meat and chick starter but are fast becoming independent and spend a lot of time on the ground, searching for worms. Preening proved a challenge at first, with no mother to teach them what

to do. They looked very bedraggled in the rain until somehow they learned to adjust their feathers to keep their bodies waterproof. Preening is more about keeping feathers in strict alignment to ward off rain rather than the desire to look good! Although Percy in particular is delightful and very affectionate, it's definitely not in her best interests to be humanised as it makes both birds extremely vulnerable to cat attacks and other such dangers.

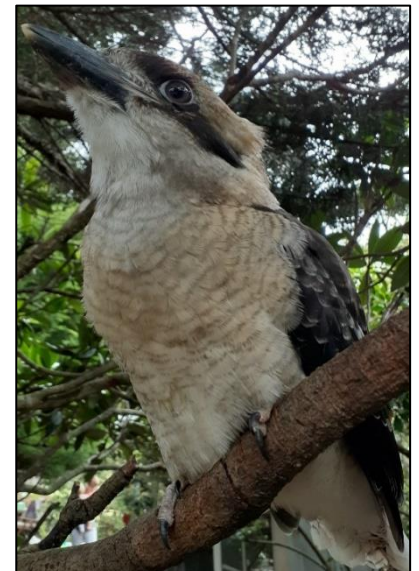
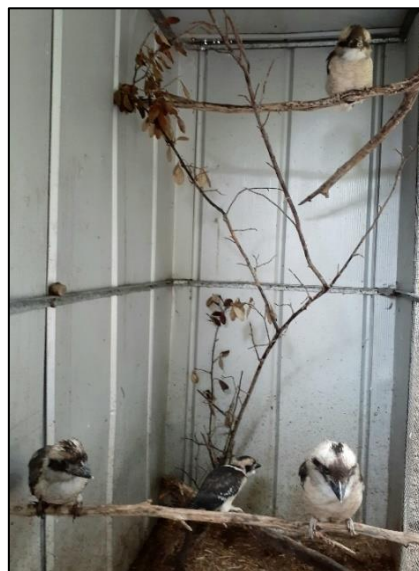
Another happy bird story concerns Nathan, the tree lopper who had been contracted to fell some large gum trees in a recently developed residential area in East Bowral. Upon discovering a nest with a baby cockatoo in one of the trees (below), Nathan called Wildlife Rescue South Coast with whom we are licenced, and we assisted in the relocation of the nest.



How many tree loppers would be concerned enough to give our wildlife a second thought? Hopefully most. Thank you Nathan!



Since our last November newsletter, Wombatised has received more than twenty callouts for birds, including this kookaburra chick (left), very weak upon arrival. Sadly there is no hope for reuniting the bird with the flock. We managed to introduce the chick with three other orphan nestlings all of which were reared by a very experienced WIRES expert. Happily all four have now been released.



Wombat Wisdom



Anyone who has been a teacher and has had to do playground duty will be aware of inevitable problems when children interact with each other. Wombat teenagers are no exception and sometimes there is an individual, basically good at heart, but who is over friendly and won't leave the girl wombats alone. Such a wombat is Billy. Bulls, heifers and rams are also often separated for the same reason.

Little Sophie (left) hid in the burrow to escape Billy's advances and when she eventually emerged, she was covered in clay.

Billy is now confined to an area on his own, near other wombats but not with them. Each day he is taken for a walk for his

exercise and to enjoy his cool, sclerophyll forest surrounds!

The mysteries of group dynamics never cease to amaze, for in another sanctuary, four males share a compound with just one female who is totally respected and is able to choose her partner who is not the alpha male. Robbie Hoddle (right) is pictured here in her glory, wearing orange lipstick received from a juicy



carrot. (No need to worry! Our wombats are not released where government agencies poison rabbits etc. with carrots.)

Robbie Hoddle (centre) is pictured here with two of her buddies.



Who says wombats can't climb? Can you spot the wombat?



*Yes, it's **Billy** again, a cat whoops a wombat on a hot tin roof!*

Don't worry! He won't fall! Wombats are extremely agile and are used to navigating steep ravines and escarpments along their riparian zone!

But of course Billy is now in another pen, away from anything he could climb.





Treating a sick wombat

On New Year's Day we received a callout for a sick wombat who had wandered from the wild into a nearby property. Catching the wombat with a special net was relatively easy as the animal was suffering both from mange and a nasty injury to his back.

Netting a wombat is only for licenced and trained people with a permit. We have three minutes maximum to treat the

animal in order to avoid cardiomyopathy.

The wound was infested with maggots which surfaced as we sprayed the area with Cetrigen. Medication including Cydectin (which kills parasites, many of which were introduced by cattle) was applied. Fortunately it was early stage mange and the animal was not dehydrated. Antibiotics would have been administered had the mange been more advanced.



With ongoing treatment, the wombat will be protected from mange. Happily he was able to graze as soon as he had been treated and released and has now resumed his normal nocturnal activities. Treating the average wombat victim costs around \$200 and is ongoing. Mange is an insidious threat to the species and is very unlikely to go away. This is just one example of why Wombatised is always in need of funds.*

** One 15 litre bottle of Cydectin or its equivalent costs between \$1000 to \$1500. We use recommended high doses from 70 to 100 mls. at least three times at intervals of once a week. More about this in our next newsletter.*



Pumping out burrows

After the devastating drought it seems criminal to say that we had too much rain in December (130 mls in half an hour on one occasion just before Christmas.) Unfortunately lots of burrows were flooded, both in the bush and in our sanctuaries, and wombat safety was again threatened. Andy McLeod researched the best pump, charged by a deep cell battery, to

remove water from the burrows on his property. This was hugely effective, pumping out 20 litres of water a minute.

As well as the pump and battery an additional piece of equipment is a post-hole digger.

It was Brendan's idea

to use this to track meandering burrows to minimise burrow destruction.



A Portable Pen

Catering to various wildlife and wombat families highlights the need for a growing number of enclosures. Through the kindness of President Jacqui Bayley and Inner Wheel members, a portable pen was purchased, complete with roof as wombats are good climbers. This structure is now used for feeding and sleeping quarters and opens on to a communal grazing area, in an effort to allow wombats to assimilate in the same way as a wisdom shares its range. These pens are particularly suitable as a shelter for teenage and young adult wombats, for flight rehabilitation for injured birds, possums and pouched kangaroos. The pen can be adapted to seasonal changes of temperature with insulation.

Michael, Shane and Jamie devoted two days of volunteer work to help Tania erect the pen.





This exquisite little possum is a ringtail who was reared as a young baby by a devoted foster carer when mum was the victim of either timber felling or a dog or cat attack. He is one of four who were at pre-release age and were put in a huge aviary to build up their muscle strength and agility, and for the local ringtails to become accustomed to their presence. The surrounding foliage was placed daily in the aviary so that the ringtails could accustom themselves to their local food source. After we withdrew the specialised marsupial milk, we concentrated on collecting surrounding foliage so they became accustomed to their food source. Then we opened the door. Some returned to the aviary and others just went off on their own.



They are now living in a beautiful connected canopy with a lush understory, close to the enclosure where they grew up.

*Introduced trees in the green suburbs have been kind to ringtails who have adapted well to non-indigenous foliage, such as *Leylandii*, *Banksia Rose*, roses generally and *Plumbago*. They have been able safely to negotiate powerlines and indeed use them for transport – yes, a ringtail tramline!*



We are licensed with Wildlife Rescue South Coast, a 24 hour call hotline (0418 427 2140) servicing much of N.S.W. Some of the animals featured in our newsletters are from the wildlife Call Out Centre, including Posy possum, her baby Poppy and the Picton kookaburra. We donate to W.R.S.C. and appreciate their outstanding work with wildlife rescue.

Wombatised LETTER BOX

'How come wombats are so cute?' asks Milda Didziulyte, a lovely young girl from Lithuania.

A good question and easy to answer! Wombats are like humans in so many ways – they are intelligent, discerning, very determined and have 'hands' and 'feet' rather than paws (left) just like us! There is something very loveable about wombats, and a baby wombat usually melts the heart of even the most sceptical of people.



Before coming to Australia, Milda had never heard of wombats but during a hiking trip to Tasmania, she and partner Julius stumbled across them in the wild and it was love at first sight.

*Milda's wombat obsession drove her into booking a weekend at an Airbnb in Bundanoon where they met John Creighton who introduced them to Tania. Now the couple are staying in Bundanoon where they can indulge their wombat obsession to their hearts' content by cleaning out enclosures, helping build shelters, refreshing water bowls etc., and becoming **thoroughly wombatised** in the process!*



Phil's Corner

More about Wombats and Pneumonia



Thanks to Phil Hazzard, the famous Cat Doctor from Ironmines Vets, for his skill in detecting very subtle crackling in the lungs.



Bare nose wombats are native to the waterways of Australia's east coast, from northern New South Wales, south to Tasmania.

Evolution has provided the wombat with membranes on the side of the gums to prevent water coming into the mouth as they float or swim. They are excellent swimmers and have thick water proof skin. Wombats are adapted to low oxygen levels and prefer cooler temperatures (the burrows being approximately 10° and very humid).

Even with these adaptations the challenges for foster carers are many when it comes to pneumonia and its prevention. The foster carer must always have a decent stethoscope on hand. Pneumonia and respiratory infection sound like plastic crackling and or gurgles and can also cause raspy sounding breath. Best to put the stethoscope under the armpit and feel the rib cage towards the spine and then towards the front of the torso.

Pneumonia is fatal so we have to act fast.

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Impact pneumonia is also possible. This can happen if baby has mum's teat in her mouth swallowing milk when the car strikes. Even saliva could be thrown into the airways hence risk respiratory infection. The baby might have been outside in the cold before rescue and pneumonia could follow from hypothermia. Pinkie wombats can't thermo-regulate so we need to give warmth and enough humidity to replicate the environment of the pouch. The risk of getting cold must be avoided.

Aspirational pneumonia is common and even the most diligent carers can experience this problem. Wombat teat holes can easily become too generous because the wombat could be chewing on the teat. The joey wombat may suckle too fast with force and swallow milk whilst breathing and then have a gurgling in the throat which could risk aspiration.

New furred or older wombats in care often refuse and struggle with the artificial teat and their new situation so they can squash the teat around and breathe in the milk.

By the time baby wombats are approximately 5 kg, mum would not allow them back in the pouch so life would be in a burrow and as they grow, at mum's heel. Babies would have lots of fun in the burrow and their nails would be hardening while they receive lots of appropriate earthly biomes.

The common practice is to keep baby wombats this age in containers and pens but we believe they get so bored and risk illness due to depression. They must be developing natural behaviours. Baby wombats would be helping mum dig so we must allow them to enter burrows so they can dig and be wombats. These babies must also get a chance to run around in a bigger area with grass and adventure to replicate how it would be with mum walking around.



These initially handmade burrows are dug down into the subsoil allowing babies to do the rest. It's preferable to have an older caring female with the younger ones because they can stay nice and warm from her heat. Babies stay with mum until they are almost as big as mum. The warmth of mum is so important. If we don't have an older wombat to keep them warm and snuggle up to, a heat pad tied to a rope thrown into the burrow will suffice, along with some polar fleece placed down into the burrow.



Wombat carers have to be vigilant if they are to allow their 5 kg babies to have burrows because the babies must stay warm. Sometimes rain and various factors such as very cold nights need to be considered as primary care needs. It's also good to have a smaller area like a dog kennel with lots of polar fleece and blankets in case they prefer this for keeping warm and snug.

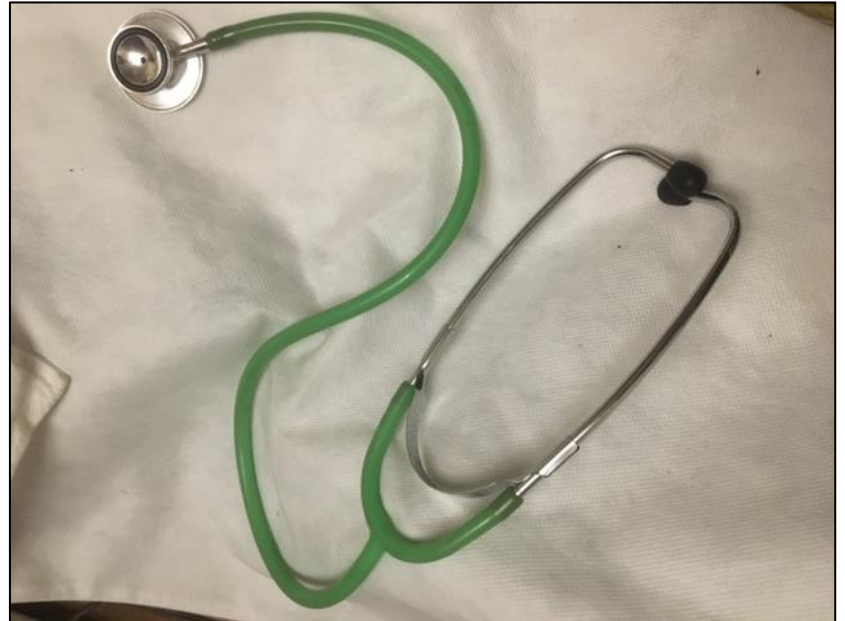
As wombats play they don't really care about jumping into their water bowl and sometimes one wombat can exclude another wombat outside the burrow and the unlucky baby may not get warm or be able to keep warm. This

shows the importance of the protector and as premium foster carers we must be there to monitor this. As Alexandra says we are their protectors and surrogate parents and not frightened of our wombats being attached to us because with buddies they prefer their own species and as time goes on the wildness comes. In the interim we must be their protectors and constantly look after them, assuring them of the best possible life.

It is most important to be vigilant, detecting signs of respiratory problems even before you hear a crackle in the throat ... i.e. the animal might be off its food and listless. It's important to have a stethoscope just to check regularly.

Treatment when pneumonia hits.

Oral Baytril is an antibiotic, specifically made for small mammals. For a long time our manuals have said that oral is not a correct form of antibiotic for marsupials because of their hindgut. However we've been reassured that the development of thrush due to antibiotics and the destruction of biomes is not necessarily because it's oral - an injection can cause the same disruption of gut flora.



Perhaps the oral Baytril formula has changed over the years but it is perfect for treating pneumonia and other issues. Other products such as Convenenia and long acting injections are a little bit less broad-spectrum so we highly recommend oral Baytril. Care must be taken though because it's a powerful antibiotic and it's certainly not necessary to keep going with what may be considered a course of antibiotics. Instructions are clearly give as required.

We have found that even the most alarming crackle in an adult wombat's lung can be treated in two days, usually just treatment for one day after symptoms subside. We've never had any trouble with oral Baytril.

With all this taken into consideration, it is also important to ensure the hind gut is not affected with an overload of yeast after the use of any antibiotic. Nilstat and Fluconazole are the products to have on hand because thrush is a deadly killer as well. Thrush is easy to detect because the poo starts smelling pungent and changes in colour to a grey, indicative of a difficulty with digestion.

Wombatised Inc. Vision and Mission Statement

Who are we ?

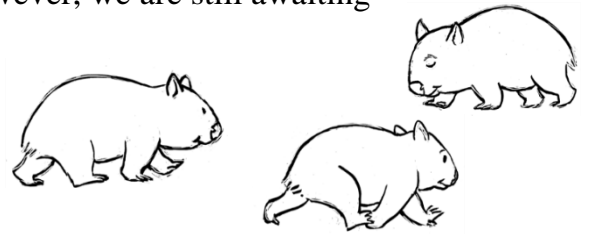
Wombatised covers an ever expanding network of people dedicated to the welfare of our native animals with a strong focus on education, conservation and community inclusion. We work for all wildlife with an emphasis on wombats. Our vision is

- 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.