Issue 49 - September 2019

Wombat Forestcare Newsletter

Spring is a wonderful time to enjoy the Wombat Forest. Birds are arriving to breed and can be seen gathering nesting material. Wattles are in bloom and soon the peas, lilies and orchids will flower.
Gayle Osborne (editor) and **Angela Halpin** (design)

Australian Fungi on the IUCN Red List

Words and images by John Walter

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was established in 1948 in France and consisted of governments' and conservation organizations' representatives who were inspired by UNESCO to establish the world's first international organisation for the conservation of all aspects of nature. Today its membership includes 213 States and government agencies, 1100 NGOs and indigenous peoples' organisations, 15,000 experts and it has members in 160 countries.

While it has both observer and consultative status at United Nations, its mission is to "influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable".[1] It is best known for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species which evaluates the extinction risk of thousands of species.

The IUCN recognised that fungi were overlooked in international conservation initiatives and established the Global Fungal Red List Initiative in 2013 to boost the number of fungal species assessed. In early 2019 only 160 fungal species out of 165,305 described species were assessed and listed whereas the IUCN had assessed 49,688 out of 69,788 described vertebrate species.[2] Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria hosted a 4 day Red Listing workshop in July 2019, which aimed to assess 100 species from Australasia, including two rarely seen Wombat Forest species.

One of these species is the *Sarcodon* sp. "Wombat" which was found during a Wombat Forestcare event near Lyonville in March 2011. In the following few weeks I located three additional populations, one near the original Lyonville site, another near Little Hampton and the last between

Sarcodon sp. "Wombat", one of the two spore bodies collected for the Herbarium in 2011 showing the spiny underside and cracked cap. Photography © John Walter

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Trentham and Blackwood. I later found out that Alison Pouliot had recorded it in the Wombat in 2007 and saw it again in 2011. I made a collection from the Lyonville population for the National Herbarium of Victoria and in 2018 it was characterised by James Douch[3] and DNA sequence data matched it to a collection of a *Sarcodon* made in 1969 just south of Toolangi. The DNA sequence data however does not match other species of *Sarcodon* known from either Australia or internationally.

The second Wombat species assessed was the *Auriscalpium* sp. "Blackwood" which until recently was known only from a population on a single tree near Blackwood. This species was first located by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria fungi group in 2005 and one of this group's members located a second population near Cardinia Reservoir, east of Melbourne, on July 18 this year.[4] This find occurred just before the Red List workshop commenced on July 22, but some hastily arranged visits to the site ensured the most up to date information was made available for the workshop to assess.

The host tree at Blackwood was a lucky survivor a few years ago when a neighbouring tree fell, missing it by just a few feet. Another neighbouring smaller dead tree also recently fell and has become caught up in the upper branches of the host tree, although it is more likely to rot and collapse than cause any actual damage to the host tree. This fungus species was not seen for a few years and I was wondering if the change in microclimate caused by the fall of the first tree may have impacted on the fungus but it reappeared last year and again this year although the numbers of spore bodies were low in both years.

The results of these assessments is scheduled for release in November 2019 and we will ensure this information is passed on in our summer newsletter edition.

While it is my understanding that you do not require more than one collection of a species in order to formally describe and name it, it is certainly good practice to assess more than one collection to ensure you are allowing for the natural variations when preparing your description. This recent find of the *Auriscalpium* and the DNA match of the two *Sarcodon* populations will hopefully allow both these species to be formally named sometime soon. ■

Notes

1. https://www.iucn.org/about/
2. https://www.iucnredlist.org/about/barometer-of-life
3. Douch, J.K. (2018) Phylogenetic and taxonomic study of *Sarcodon*, *Bankera,* and *Boletopsis* (Bankeraceae) in Australia and New Zealand. BSc (Hons) thesis, School of BioSciences, The University of Melbourne.
4. https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/29040494

Sarcodon sections prepared to facilitate drying the herbarium specimens.

Auriscalpium sp. "Blackwood" taken in 2018 when the spore bodies were a little larger than in 2019. It is usually from 10 to 15mm across but in 2019 only 5 spore bodies were seen and only one was close to 10mm, with the others being barely 5mm across.

The upper surface sometimes has a scattering of fine white hairs

Currawongs

By Trevor Speirs

In a recent Australia's Favourite Bird Poll the Superb Fairy-wren, Australian Magpie, Laughing Kookaburra and even the White Ibis are some of the birds that were high on the list. One species that rarely receives many votes is the currawong, although it would be safe to say they have the poor old raven covered in such a contest. Currawongs' taste for apples, strawberries, blueberries and other fruits, either home-grown or commercially grown, may have something to do with their unpopularity. Another not so endearing quality is a liking for small birds and their nestlings. Pied Currawongs, in particular, have been linked with a decline in some localised bird populations because of this predatory behaviour. In fact, they were subjected to a culling program on a small island off NSW due to their predation of the endangered Gould's Petrel. Heavy grazing by the introduced rabbit severely decreased the ground cover, which in turn exposed the ground-nesting petrels to the sticky fruit falling from the native Pisonia tree. Unable to fly, the petrels were left to the mercy of the predatory currawongs.[1]

Despite all this negativity, the currawongs are remarkable songsters and their evocative calls are a welcome sound during the cooler months. Pied afternoon-tea bird and Mutton-bird were two of the names given to Pied Currawongs by the early colonists, who considered them to be good eating, if not a bit on the nose when cooked. Other names usually made a reference to the magpie and crow; Black or Mountain Magpie and White-vented Crow, for example.

The Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina* ssp *nebulosa* and Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor* are the two species found in the Wombat Forest and surrounds. There are several subspecies of both Grey and Pied Currawongs throughout Australia, with variations in size, colouring and calls. In our region identifying either species is reasonably easy, with the Pied being a large, black bird with nearly always a prominent white window in its wing and usually, but again not always, a quite noticeable white base at the tail. Juveniles tend to be less dark than adults and the white markings are not always as prominent. As the name suggests the Grey Currawong is just that, but the shade of grey can vary and there is less white colouring at the base of the tail than the Pied, and a rather indistinct white window in the wing. Grey Currawongs have a lovely splash of white at the tips of their tail feathers, most visible in flight, and maybe this led to its specific name *versicolor*. Meaning various colours, when compared to another versicolor of the bird world, the very colourful Varied Lorikeet, it does seem a little odd when grey and white are their only colours.

Immature Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina* ssp *nebulosa*
Photography © Gayle Osborne

While probably not as pertinent in this region, differentiating between currawongs can become very tricky, the further west you travel. In the south west, the Otway Forester (not a subsidised timber cutter) is the common name of the local Pied Currawong species *Strepera graculina* ssp *ashbyi* and these birds have a lot less white in their plumage than the Pied Currawongs of the Wombat. Until very recently this subspecies was thought to be extinct due to introgression (a complex type of hybridization) by the overlapping subspecies *nebulosa*, but is now recognised as existing in its own right.[2] Also, in western Victoria the Grey Currawong subspecies *melanoptera* is much darker than its easterly cousins, leading to possible identification problems.

At the onset of cooler weather the calls of currawongs can be heard frequently. Pied Currawongs have many different calls with the most familiar probably being a falsetto, curra-curra-currawong which is believed to be the basis of its common name. As well as various chortles and a single piping call, they also have a lovely, plaintive far-carrying whistle, heard throughout the year, but most often just before dawn during

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Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolour*

the spring breeding season. The Grey Currawong is also known as Rainbird, despite the fact it can be heard calling throughout the day, regardless of the weather. Clinking Currawong is another of its names and this is probably more appropriate given its call, especially when heard up close, which is a ringing metallic "kling-kling. ■

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1. https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Topics/Animals-and-plants/Threatened-species/NSW-Threatened-Species-Scientific-Committee/Determinations/Final-determinations/1996-1999/Goulds-Petrel-Pterodroma-leucoptera-leucoptera-endangered-species-listing
2. Menkhorst P., Rogers D., Franklin K., Clarke R., et al. (2019) *The Australian Bird Guide* Revised Edition. CSIRO Publishing.

Rodent poison and its effects on birds

By Louise Keene

Rat and mice invasions during winter are a significant problem for most of us but perhaps we need to re-think how we deal with them in the light of the impact poisons are having on birds. Commonly, we use anti-coagulant rodenticides such as Ratsak. The poisoned rodents do not die immediately but can wander into the open and can potentially be eaten by owls and other birds of prey, leading to secondary poisoning of the birds.

Last winter Wildlife Australia had a 300% increase in reports of sick and dying owls. While research suggested that the primary cause of death was starvation, around "43% of birds tested had detectable levels of 2nd generation anti-coagulant rodenticides in their liver, providing conclusive evidence that rodent poison is making its way into the food chain." (Wildlife Victoria newsletter, March 2019).

Barking Owls are very susceptible to secondary poisoning as they take much of their prey from the ground.
Photography © Gayle Osborne

An earlier 2017 study of 70 dead boobook owls in WA found 70% had measurable levels of rat poison in their blood and 18% had lethal levels of 2nd generation rodenticide. These 2nd generation rodenticides don't break down as the earlier ones did (PhD student Michael Lohr, 2017).

This ABC TV report from 2018 summarises some of the research:
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-12/something-killing-barn-owls-in-victoria/9980016

Here are some suggestions to try and minimise the likelihood of owls and other birds of prey eating poisoned rodents:

- To discourage rodents, keep food sources in rodent proof storage and seal any obvious points of rodent entry (steel wool is useful).
- Wildlife Victoria recommends humane methods such as live trapping instead of using poisonous rodent bait. This has the added advantage that if a native mouse is trapped, it can be released away from the house.
- If using traps, rats will take a while to get used to them, so expect to leave traps for a while before catching a rat. Numerous types of traps and suggested non-poisonous baits can be found on the internet.
- If using rodenticide poisons (not recommended), leave water nearby. The anti-coagulant poison makes rats and mice very thirsty, so they will roam looking for water and can then be eaten by owls etc. If there is a water supply, hopefully they will not stray far from the bait station. ■

The Wombat Forest before European Settlement

By Murray Ralph

With the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's recent recommendation to make much of the Wombat Forest a National Park it is a fitting time to reflect on what the forest was like before European settlers arrived in the area about 180 years ago.

Prior to European settlement, what was to become known as the Wombat Forest was part of one large continuous forest cloaking the foothills of the Great Dividing Range across central Victoria. The forest extended both north and south of the Great Divide where it merged with more open woodlands and grasslands as the rainfall and elevation declined.

The exact nature of the pristine Wombat Forest is open to conjecture. However, from the little that is known from traditional owner groups, early European historical accounts, the current distribution of plant and animal species, and from more recent research on the former structure of pre-European forests, it is possible to provide a broad picture of what the early Wombat Forest was like.

The late Ron Hateley's book *'The Victorian Bush: its 'original and natural' condition'* was a valuable reference on the pre-European history of Victoria and provided some specific local historical information. Anne Dobbs, a member of the Daylesford Historical Society also provided some information for this article.

Four traditional owner groups - the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Wurundjeri and Wadawurrong – had distinctive cultural, spiritual and economic rights to different parts of Wombat Forest, including some shared areas (VEAC 2018). Some local towns in the forest, such as Bullarto and Bullengarook, still retain their indigenous names.

These areas formed part of much larger territories that extended to adjacent woodland and grassland areas, each providing different natural resources. With a milder climate and abundant natural resources woodland areas to the north and south of the Wombat Forest, especially near rivers and swamps, were most likely the most heavily occupied areas for much of the year (Hateley 2010).

Possibly with many parts of the Wombat Forest experiencing high rainfall, prolonged periods of cold weather and periodic snow, forest areas were not heavily utilised over colder months of the year. Although one group on the Loddon River were known as the Kalkalgooneet or "*the men of the forest*" (Hateley 2010).

The damp and wetter Wombat Forest would have provided traditional owner groups with a wide range of foods and natural resources; plentiful populations of fish and large freshwater crayfish to catch in the rivers and creeks, and Swamp Wallabies to hunt. The hearts of the once common tree ferns were also good eating. The forest would have also provided other natural resources such as certain types of wood for making tools and weapons (Hateley 2010).

Some or many areas of the Wombat Forest would have held general or more particular mythical or spiritual significance for traditional owners. Possibly certain parts of the forest may have been largely avoided as one detailed historical account mentions the *'...dark forests west of Mount Blackwood...that were held to be the abodes of evil spirits or creatures...'* (Hateley 2010). Other areas may have been used for ceremonial purposes.

Some historical evidence suggests that the frequent and systematic use of fire as a management tool by traditional owner groups may have been limited in the damper and wetter forest ecosystems of the Wombat Forest (Hateley 2010).

This is supported by research that indicates minimum natural fire disturbance regimes of 20-30 years for many of the different forest types that occur in the Wombat Forest (DELWP 2019). It is possible that many areas of the forest were not subjected to bushfires for much longer periods, especially the wet gullies and riparian forests which may not have burnt over long periods of time.

What is clear is that with the arrival of the first European settlers in the 1840s land suitable for agriculture was quickly taken up as pastoral leases then cleared of forest to graze sheep. The impacts on local indigenous groups by this displacement, European diseases and massacres were swift and devastating.

Currently about 30 different vegetation types or ecosystems occur across the Wombat Forest depending on local conditions (DELWP 2019). For example, what is called Shrubby Foothill Forest grows on steeper slopes in the higher rainfall areas of the Wombat Forest and Sedgy Riparian Forest grows in flatter wetter areas. It is highly likely that most of these vegetation types are similar to what occurred prior to European settlement. In fact it is probable that these vegetation types have existed in the Wombat Forest for over the last 10,000 years or so as the climate has been relatively stable over that period.

A number of historical accounts highlight very large trees being a significant and common feature of the Wombat Forest prior to European settlement.

Wombat Hill in Daylesford was described as *"...a dense forest, some of the trees being of immense size..."* (Pitt 2016). Articles

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in the Kyneton Guardian refer to trees *'80 feet high before they started branching'* between the Loddon and Coliban Rivers south of Glenlyon (31st July 1868) and near Trentham one tree was *'so immense'* that a team of men were in full swing with axes at its base *'...without the slightest danger to each other'* (31st July 1869).

Another account in Smeaton in 1869 mentions a tree nine yards in circumference and a hollow in the base large enough to fit a horse, and 80 feet tall trees (Jenkins 1869). Around Lyonville trees of *'...enormous girth - these forest giants commonly six or eight feet through, often much more...'* were cut to feed the rapacious appetite for timber (Sunderland 1999).

Although variable across the forest, research indicates that on average there were about twenty large eucalypts, some immense in size, per hectare in the foothill forests of the Great Dividing Range (DELWP 2019). Larger numbers of medium to smaller eucalypts and blackwoods *Acacia melanoxylon* would have also formed part of the forest canopy.

Many early European explorer and settler accounts across Victoria highlight extremely rich and abundant populations of indigenous fauna – bird flocks so large they almost darkened the sky, abundant fish in rivers and plentiful populations of a diverse range of mammals. Of course this would have been balanced with natural fluctuations in populations of many species by the occasional extended periods of drought, bushfires and perhaps more locally through the impacts of traditional hunting (Hateley 2010).
It is unlikely the Wombat Forest would have been an exception, especially with its high rainfall feeding a pristine network of gullies, large sedgy swampy areas, tributaries, creeks and rivers flowing both north and south of the Great Divide.

A typical scene of timber cutters in the Wombat Forest.
The stumps indicate the immense size of the original trees.
Source: Daylesford & District Historical Society.

In the summer and times of drought these areas would have provided a welcome refuge for native fauna from across the forest. The larger creeks and rivers would have been full of platypus, native fish, large crayfish and other aquatic fauna. Big trees would have provided an abundance of tree hollows for many species of birds and arboreal (tree dwelling) mammals such as Greater Gliders, Sugar Gliders, Feathertail Gliders, Mountain Brushtail and Ringtail Possums, which in turn would become prey for Powerful Owls and the now regionally extinct Spot-tailed Quoll.

But not all of the forest would have been full of big old trees. A patchwork of younger tree regrowth of various ages and of different patch sizes would have also occurred, scattered across the forest. For example, significant wind damage with trees overturned and thick regrowth was noted in the Macedon Ranges by one explorer in 1837 (Hateley 2010).

Regrowth across the Wombat Forest would have also resulted from a range of other natural disturbance events such as bushfires of various intensities and certain tree diseases, such as the parasitic fungus *Armillaria luteobubalina*.

Many parts the forest would have been very hard to penetrate due to a thick understorey of shrubs and trees, especially in the gullies and some upper slopes of the Great Divide.

The following comments from the 1860s describe Wombat Hill in Daylesford as being *'... thickly covered with scrub and fern'* (Pitt 2016). Referring to the Macedon Ranges in 1837, Alexander Mollison also noted *'dense understorey'* (Hateley 2010).

Having escaped the ravages of logging during the late 1900s due to introduction of riparian area buffer zones some of the gullies in the wetter areas of the Wombat Forest where a dense understorey of Musk Daisy Bush *Olearia argophylla* and a ground layer of ferns still remain are probably very similar to their former state.

In other parts of the Wombat Forest the understorey would have naturally been more open and sparse or had a grassy understorey. A number of early European settlers refer to park-like forest that a horse could easily be ridden through near Musk and other local areas (Sunderland 1999). The areas of deeper volcanic soil that were most heavily cleared

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in the region may have often had a more open tussock grass understorey.

This variation in understorey is largely reflected in current vegetation types of the Wombat Forest with some areas such as Shrubby Foothill Forest and Heathy Dry Forest having shrubby, often dense understorey. While other areas such as Herb-rich Foothill Forest, Grassy Forest or Valley Grassy Forest had a sparse or herbaceous and grassy understorey (DELWP 2019).

Being largely undisturbed except for periodic fires the understorey of the pre-European Wombat Forest was most likely significantly more diverse and complex than currently. Ferns, mosses, native herbs, grasses, sedges, orchids and a very diverse range of fungi species would have thrived on the forest floor. Tree ferns, which are relatively rare in the forest today, would have been far more numerous in some areas of the forest.

Understorey tree and shrub species such as Blackwood *Acacia melanoxylon*, Cherry Ballart *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, Rough Coprosma *Coprosma hirtella* and Elderberry Panax *Polyscias sambucifolia* were probably far more common, often forming dense thickets in some areas. Exotic weeds, of course, would have been absent.

Thriving populations of ground dwelling mammals, reptiles, amphibians and a rich diversity of bird species would have flourished in the diverse understorey free from feral predators such as foxes and cats. With an abundance of prey, the apex predators of the forest, the Spot-tailed Quoll and Dingo would have also been plentiful. Both are now sadly gone from the forest, with largely unknown consequences.

As the name of the forest implies, wombats and their large burrows would have been very plentiful and a feature of the landscape. Some burrows were obviously very large, especially on the deeper volcanic soils. In the 1860s Wombat Hill in Daylesford was described as being *"...varied with immense wombat holes"* (Pitt 2016).

Some native species may have been less abundant than now, such as kangaroos which have increased in numbers due to large areas of open pastures and more farm dams.

Large amounts of fallen logs, some of enormous size, would have hindered passage through the forest, feeding a cycle of decay and providing homes for a variety of fauna as they were slowly decomposed by fungi, termites and natural weathering (DELWP 2019).

These fallen logs, the big old trees full of hollows, the varied and complex understorey, the patterned landscape of rivers, creeks, gullies, swampy areas and steep slopes provided an extremely rich range of resources for both indigenous fauna and humans over many thousands of years.

We can lament all the ways the pristine forest has changed, but hope remains in just how resilient the forest has been. Greater Gliders and Powerful Owls inhabit the forest, both species relying on hollows in large old trees. Many of these trees are now over 100 years old and are growing in the protected gullies and riparian areas.

Despite the excessive exploitation of the Wombat Forest since European settlement, it still retains very high conservation and other values worthy of a National Park. The forest is a stronghold for many threatened species (VEAC 2018) and still functions as a dynamic and complex forest ecosystem where many of the ecological processes that were once a feature of the wider landscape still flourish. ■

A large Mountain Grey Gum *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*
Photography © Gayle Osborne

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A rarely seen orchid and another Cinderella plant

Words and images by John Walter

Last November, Gael Elliott and I were fortunate enough to visit a property near Spring Hill that has a population of *Pterostylis bicolor*. This beautiful little orchid is one of the so called "midget greenhoods" which are characterised by an upright dark green appendage on their labellum.

The labellum is the highly modified third petal of the orchid flower. All orchids have three petals and three sepals, and the sepals form the outer covering of the unopened flower, protecting the petals and the fused male and female reproductive structure known as the column. A pair of winged appendages on the column of *Pterostylis* species was the feature that gave rise to the name. *Pter-* or *Ptero* means wing or winged and the *stylis* is the supporting stem of the stigma, or female receptive organ.[1] You cannot see these wings unless you dissect a flower, something I do not advise you to do as this species is thought to have a threatened status although there is currently insufficient data available to complete an assessment.

In greenhood orchids, the upper sepal and two upper petals are also fused together and form the "hood". The two lower sepals sit at the base of the flower and are cupped on the midget greenhoods but take on a wide variety of shapes and forms, both with and without long hair points in other greenhood groups. The third petal or labellum sits above them acting like a landing platform for the orchid's insect pollinator in some groups, or it may be largely or partly concealed in others like the Nodding Greenhood, *Pterostylis nutans*.

Left: The three clearly defined upright ridges on the dark green labellum appendage mark this as *Pterostylis bicolor*. The ridges are not as well defined on the similar *P. mutica*.

Upper right: The tiny flowers cluster around the stem of *P. bicolor*.

Lower right: The labellum on *P. nutans* (with white frosting on its tip) is hinged and slowly moves forwards when stimulated ensuring the trapped pollinating insect engages with the column. The yellow patches seen under the hood of both species is the pollinia or male portion of the column.

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The labellum on *P. bicolor* is also a highly sensitive trapdoor that flies up at great speed when disturbed, temporarily trapping the pollinator in the hood where it comes into contact with either the ripe pollen or sticky stigma of the flower's concealed column as it attempts to make its way out.

Nearby Gael and I found a good population of the Common Sunray, *Triptilodiscus pygmaeus*. This is a common species as the name suggests but there is only one record for it in the Wombat Forest and that is at Daylesford. It is listed as an endangered species in Tasmania. It is very easily overlooked due to its small stature and I am sure I have walked over it on a number of occasions and not paid it due attention.

It is an annual and a member of the Asteraceae or daisy family and at this site the plants were barely 5 or 6 centimetres tall. It can grow up to 20 centimetres however and each individual yellow tubular floret is only around 5 or 6 millimetres in length. It certainly qualifies as one of the Cinderella plants that you can add to the list of species I have covered in past issues. ■

Notes

1. The well-known flying reptile *Pterodactylus* translates as winged finger.

At least 50 individual plants are seen in this cluster of the Common Sunray *Triptilodiscus pygmaeus*.

The pointed silvery bracts have hairy margins and enclose clusters of the yellow tubular florets.

Locals Caught on Camera

A great delight to capture on camera this very healthy Wombat with her offspring deep in the Wombat Forest.

Motion-sensing camera update

By Gayle Osborne

It is now seven years since we obtained our first motion-sensing camera and we now have twelve. This is a fairly non-invasive way to monitor wildlife. As we use an attracting bait, in a sealed container, some animals spend feeding time visiting for no result. There is also a chance that foxes and feral cats might take them as prey, although we have seen no evidence of this. To reduce the impacts on the fauna the cameras are only left out for three weeks at each site.

Highlights of our project have included images of Brush-tailed Phascogales *Phascogale tapoatafa* and Eastern Pygmy Possums *Cercartetus nanus* in locations where they have not been previously recorded in the southern section of the Wombat. Spotted Quail-thrushes *Cinclosoma punctatum* occasionally pass in front of the cameras.

We have found that Mountain Brushtail Possums *Trichosurus cunninghami* are found throughout the main blocks of the Wombat, with no Common Brushtail Possums *Trichosurus vulpecula* recorded to date. Our records for common brushtails are in the Spring Hill area, where both species overlap, and the Basalt area and Cornish Hill.

We have recorded Dusky Antechinus *Antechinus swainsonii* in only a few locations, however Agile Antechinus *Antechinus agilis* are extremely common, logged at nearly every site. Of particular interest has been an inability to locate any Swamp Rats *Rattus lutreolus* in the forest.

We also capture images of birds and animals not attracted to the bait, so it is not unusual to have wombats, kangaroos and even the occasional koala pass in front of the cameras. The project has established that foxes are in high numbers across the forest.

When we started the project there were very few fauna records on the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas and over the years we have entered so much data that now there is a good overall picture of faunal distribution for the Wombat Forest.

Participating in the project provides an opportunity to experience the forest in all seasons – the wildflowers and fungi. ■

Motion-sensing camera image of a Brush-tailed Phascogale

Wombat Forestcare research • education • action

Wombat Forestcare Inc. is dedicated to preserving the biodiversity and amenity of the Wombat State Forest, Central Victoria, Australia, by utilising the skills and resources of the community.

By becoming a member you will have input into our activities and projects, and give support to caring for our forests.
For memberships and further information contact Gayle Osborne, (03) 5348 7558 or email info@wombatforestcare.org.au
Membership fees: $15 single and $20 family. Visit our website - www.wombatforestcare.org.au