



POTOROO PALACE
Native Animal Educational Sanctuary



SANCTUARY



DINGOS



WOMBATS



FLYING FOXES



EMUS

Newsletter September 2021

So what is Sanctuary? (Notes by Alexandra Seddon)



A holy place, where fugitives (wildlife?) are entitled to immunity from arrest or execution, a place of refuge, asylum, a protected place where animals can live and breed without interference.

Before whites arrived, the whole of Australia was a sanctuary. The animals were hunted for necessary food, but there was no meaningless huge slaughter and destruction of their homes. We can learn so much from the traditional custodians who cared for the land so beautifully for thousands and thousands of years.

Many species are now hated--snakes, flying-foxes, wombats, dingoes--and killed when seen. I was brought up to kill snakes on sight. Now I know all the heightened sensitivity (far far greater than the sensitivity of any human) and fear that snakes have.

Hope Kola



Here is mischievous Hope. She used to jump onto the heads of the keepers. Since making enormous leaps which ended her up in the Wombat Enclosure, she has moved to the Koala Captive Breeding Pen (set up under NPWS supervision for a planned Captive Breeding for release programme) down the back. It is very large and has plenty of interesting things for her to leap onto.

Her father Jimmy (who is far more sedate in his habits) was rescued by James Fitzgerald of Two Thumbs Koala Sanctuary at Cooma, and is still within the Park, in the Koala Enclosure, and so easily visible to visitors. James was unable to release Jimmy because he had been in care since he was very young and had not been able to adapt to life in the wild. Hope's mother was Sapphire, the progeny of 18 year old Suzy, a zoo koala, and Blinky, rescued after being hit by a car. Blinky had a good life at Potoroo Palace after the vet set his broken bones. The vet advised us that he would not be able to escape quickly enough from predators, such as dogs, in the wild. Hope has at least 75per cent local genes and so could be important in breeding programmes.



Potoroo Palace Management

Veronica is our Park Manager since April 2020 and Maree is our Assistant Manager. Together they have worked wonders. Somehow they have navigated through all the drama of Lockdown. They have kept everything going on all fronts even though they are stretched to the limit. Their incredible achievement was acknowledged when DPI gave us a grade A rating when they inspected us. Tanya, our accountant, is brilliant. She has steered us successfully and cheerfully through countless difficulties. Chuff in the photo approves of them too, most important.

Environment Day



Anna was asked to speak on World Environment Day at the Bega Library. It was an incredible gathering of ALL the wildlife groups together.

Numerous other people attended and the response to Anna's talk was excellent. Again and again we give the message that we are all working together for the welfare of the animals. It is above all vital that we use our energy to care for all the vulnerable native animals who are continually horrifically depleted and damaged by human greed. We take care to heal any hostilities between people.

It is obvious that people will often disagree about the best way to care for the orphaned and injured animals, but we are all working for the same cause. The gathering on World Environment Day was very harmonious and creative.



Millie the wombat



Dear Milly Wombat has been with us for some years now. She was hit by a car as an adult and became blind because of it.

When wombats want to play they let you know by pointing their noses in the air and giving you a little nudge or bite. Often people misinterpret the bite and think that it is an attack.

Young wombats follow their mother's back feet closely and, because Milly is blind, she often follows moving feet. If the feet run, she runs too. She is not chasing, but simply finding her way around. Some humans and Denis Swan think that they are being chased and move fast, so Milly moves fast too!

Milly loves encounters. She was especially gentle with this child.



Dingos

We have given away four of our dingoes, including Shylow in the photo. We admire the work of Aussie Ark, so when they asked for some dingoes and potoroos and bettongs, we said yes. We now have only Misty and her daughter Ruby.

Misty was rescued by a dog trapper at Wonboyn who saw immediately that he did not have a dog in his trap. Seeing that he had caught a dingo, he did not kill her, but rang us and brought her to us. Our old dingo, Rusty, mated with her and Ruby is their offspring. Misty is still very shy.

We now know that most wild dogs are basically dingo. In the dingo pen are many logs and sticks. Small animals, especially lizards, see these piles of branches as refuges. Some of the small skinks may only move about 30–40 metres in their whole life. For them, an open space of 2 metres can be too much to cross safely. For them it is a danger zone.

In National Parks, it is forbidden to remove fallen timber because of its value as habitat, and also because of its nutrients which rot into the soil and feed small creatures. Sticks and leaf litter help to keep the ground moist and also make homes for microbes and invertebrates. Insects in the leaf litter provide food for other insects, birds and reptiles. Branches break the flow of water and hold soil in place. Even Antechinuses may come to feast on the resident spiders and cockroaches. And all this can happen under the noses of the dingoes if there is plenty of cover.





Glebe Wetlands Wildlife & Flying Fox Reserve

When Grey-headed Flying-foxes decided that the Glebe Wetlands in Bega might be a safe place to have a camp about 15 or so years ago, it was a shock to some of the human residents nearby. From the flying-foxes' point of view it was a good choice.

So many of their traditional camping places and food trees like blood woods had been invaded and demolished by humans. And there is permanent water there which makes it an ideal mothering roost. The resident water birds took it all in their stride/flight. In fact some of them liked the apparent safety, nesting underneath groups of flying-foxes. There were angry meetings of local human residents and there was huge hostility towards those of us who fostered flying-foxes. One dairy farmer in the midst of an overwhelming smell of cow poo exclaimed, "Flying-foxes smell!" From the beginning, Hugh Pitty, who lives alongside the camp, has been making things better and better.

The area is now a truly beautiful and educational place to visit. There are magical walks and explanations of wildlife, both plants and animals. There are places to sit and to shelter. Hugh organises frequent Working Bees to maintain the care of the Glebe Wetlands. He also has a team once a month to count the flying-foxes on their fly outs. Alongside the camp was an area of huge magnificent ancient Angophoras. But a housing company has now bought it and has already demolished 24 enormous trees while building roads and drains. Hugh has throughout continued passionately to organise meetings and protests to the council. Perhaps something can be saved, but many illegal things have already been done without the Council trying to prevent or punish anything. It is not over yet. It is now officially Friends of the Glebe Wetlands Incorporated.

Grey-headed Flying-foxes are only in Australia. Their numbers are dropping so fast that their extinction is expected within a few years. The work they do with seed dispersal would cost millions to replicate. And eucalypts are adapted to them rather than to bees. They put out their best pollen at night so that flying-foxes will find it. So much of their preferred food has been destroyed by clearing of forests for woodchip, agriculture and housing projects that they now have to resort to orchards. You can help them by leaving fruit trees uncovered (if you do use netting, make sure it is pulled taut so that they cannot become entangled).

Wombat Joey

About 3 years ago, two young men knocked on the door of Batty Towers in Pambula. They had in their arms a very thin tiny wombat. They said that they had found her in Valencia Court, just opposite. She was very dehydrated. We nursed her and she took the wombat teat easily. Gradually she took larger and larger amounts of marsupial milk formula and grew strong. Then she joined Paris, a male orphan wombat being fostered at Cowsnest and they became mates. Their soft release has been a long slow process. They no longer stick together, but they are both spotted from time to time. Valencia knows how to come in and out of the 57 acre feral animal proof area via the wombat gates. She knows she will find delicious dishes of food there. Mark recently took a video of her while she had her head in a bucket, eating. It shows a small male Joey in her pouch!

We asked the community what he should be named and after some consideration he was named Maximó!



The Maintenance shed

The Maintenance Shed is now often referred to as The Men's Shed. David, Richard, Graeme, Robert and Pete are often found there. It is the place from which people go out to build new enclosures or repair old ones.

It is the place where we take things which puzzle us or defeat us. A lot of mechanical things happen there, and welding. It houses the switch for the electric fence which goes around the perimeter of the Sanctuary. It is a place of mystery.

Wonderful things come out of there. The train has visited the Men's Shed many times. Screws, nails and saws live there. The trolleys often go there. The wheelbarrows visit. The mowers and whipper snippers think of it as a second home. For them it is like visiting a doctor or a hospital.



The Emus of Potoroo & Cowsnest

Some years ago a Forestry bloke who was bulldozing in a pine forest near Bibenluke saw 3 emu eggs right in the path of his machine. He stopped, but no incubating male emu was in sight. He picked up the eggs and could hear small sounds inside them. He kept them warm under his shirt and brought them to Potoroo Palace.

We continued the incubation and they hatched! We had to replace their father by showing them how to forage and keeping them warm, especially at night. They grew. They joined staff for morning teas. They showed us how dangerous bits of plastic rubbish are because they always wanted to taste any bright things that they found in the grass or elsewhere. We called them Bib, Ben and Luke, for obvious reasons (rescued near Bibenluke).

When they grew larger, they were able to have their own enclosure down the back of Potoroo Palace. They were always happy to be hugged or hosed or played with. After some time, Luke became possessive of Bib, and aggressive towards Ben. We took Ben into a separate enclosure, but he was always lonely. We thought perhaps we could find him a female mate and he could go to the 50 acre feral animal proof enclosure at Cowsnest. Well, Ben was expertly caught and bundled up by Paula and Veronica. He travelled in the back of a car/van to Cowsnest. All went well while he was sitting there with his head covered, but about half way there, his head emerged. Chaos. Ben grew very enthusiastic about getting the rest of himself out. Luckily he reached Cowsnest and was released into his new huge area.

It took him a week or two to relax, but he became very friendly with Sanctuary Handlers after a while and was easy to feed and monitor. Meanwhile we were arranging with Belinda Donovan from Mudgeroo Emu Farm to collect a female emu. Cam made a beautiful wooden travelling box, but then after consultation with Belinda, had to make another larger one. Craig and Anna travelled up twice to Mudgeroo and all went well on the second trip and now Jennifer has joined Ben! We are not sure whether Jennifer is male or female, but the courtship is respectful and very gradual, and we are sure there will be a good partnership before long.



THE GARDEN

As you approach the entrance to Potoroo Palace you walk along a tiled path through gardens of shrubs, succulents, ferns, orchids and a maze of hanging baskets.

As you come out the back of the café, there are rows of potted plants for sale. Then you walk past our beloved Chuff, who will greet you by spreading his wings out and will want to have a conversation. Then you can go up the steps into the Pretty Garden.

It is full of sages, buddleias and many other plants which attract Eastern Spinebills and other honeyeaters. There are Bassian Thrushes there sometimes, low down along the leafy floor. King Parrots visit from time to time and Lorikeets and Crimson Rosellas, and Redbrowed Finches. You never know whom you may meet. Little Spotted Pardalotes have sometimes nested in a deep horizontal hole into the huge fallen Argyle Apple trunk which is there.

Ann keeps an eye (and a hand) on all the gardens.



Blue Wren Café

Blue Wren Café is a part of Potoroo Palace Native Animal Sanctuary. However, it is also somewhere people can visit without going into the sanctuary at all. The two places complement one another but can be enjoyed separately. The food emphasis is on local and organic/chemical free wherever possible. Most food provided is lovingly made and prepared either on the premises or in the commercial kitchen at Cowsnest Community Farm.

Entrance into the sanctuary is via the café, which also serves a multi functional role as an information desk, an entry ticket booth, as well as a booking counter for Animal Encounters and train rides! The café is available for functions and is providing a great selection of ethical and Australian Made gifts, and educational literature for adults and children.

Oh and did we mention that we serve great coffee too! Come and visit soon or just drop in to our peaceful little location whenever en route in between Merimbula or Bega, avoiding the crowds, queues and traffic of the town.

The Feedshed

The Feedshed is very busy at the times when dozens of little boxes of hors d'oeuvres are being prepared for over a hundred different animals. It looks rather like the kitchen of a restaurant. Veronica has organised a team of volunteers who choose and chop and arrange beautifully. A lot of concentration is required and a lot of efficiency.

Thankyou, Thankyou to all the volunteers who help with this. It is a huge task which has to be done every day. And thankyou to all the people in the community who donated money so the feed shed could buy a commercial food processor to make the job easier.



WWOOFing at Cownest

Cownest have been welcoming WWOOFers for 30 years. WWOOF stands for Willing Workers on Organic Farms.

WWOOFing at Cownest means farm work for 4-6 hours a day for accommodation and food. It is an opportunity for life long relationships, teaching and learning, and a way to contribute to the welfare of Cownest and all its inhabitants. It is all about community, conservation and education. The work involves gardening, preserving, fencing, fruit picking, cooking and many other things. The WWOOFers have the chance to try cow milking and learn about farm animals like pigs, chooks and ducks. The time not working can be spent bush walking, reading in the library, playing music and observing wildlife. Cownest supply the food for WWOOFers to make their own meals. Enquiries about WWOOFing at Cownest please send to cownestfarm@gmail.com Or call Anna 04475758832



Reptiles!

Our Reptile House is warm and full of special surprises. We are lucky to have Janet, who looks after all the reptiles. Maddy, her daughter, is in the photograph with Evie, a Diamond Python. Evie has a reputation for gentleness, so it was a shock when she bit a visitor who was being filmed for a television programme. The visitor had been handling Chuff, so Evie smelt a delicious bird on his hands. She withdrew quickly when she found it was only a foolish human.

Maxine is an elderly Children's Python. If she were wild, she might be found hanging in the entrance to a cave hoping to catch micro bats as they flew in or out. She is shy and a bit nervous, which makes some handlers wary of her, but she is Janet's favourite. Woma is of course, a Woma Python. They dig burrows by hammering on the soil surface with their noses. Black headed Pythons also hammer their noses at the surface of the soil when they want to dig a burrow. These are the only two species with this remarkable behaviour. Lester, Diamond Python, is his usual amiable self. He and some others have continued eating right through the cold times because they are so warm and comfortable in the Reptile House.

Hyacinth, Carpet Python, is large and contented. She came to us from a woman whose son released 2 pythons in the house to scare his mother! National Parks caught them and brought Hyacinth to us. She is not very scary at all!

Kianu, Boyd's Forest Dragon, tries to be invisible. In the wild, his species were at one stage thought to be very few because they were seldom seen. It turned out to be because of their remarkable camouflage which means that even within the Reptile House enclosure, you may have to look carefully to see Kianu. The Shinglebacks, Feisty and Lawrence, have been companions for many many years. Their species can live till they are 50 years old and they mate for life. They have live young and often have considerable trouble giving birth because their skin does not stretch at all.



Tania - A Wombat Hero

Tania Clancy is a remarkable wombat researcher and carer. Her work is so valuable that it will be used by scientists in years to come. She lives nextdoor to Frensham School in Mittagong. For years the school has encouraged her to familiarise the students with wildlife care and conservation in general.

The Frensham property is more than 300 acres. 100 acres of it is very ancient forest and waterways. A platypus has been sighted there. Frensham have encouraged Tania to use this protected area for release of wombats and the students have worked with her weeding, securing boundaries and creating homes for possums and others. Suddenly Frensham have revealed plans to demolish a large part of this magical precious forest to build accommodation for 72 people. The local community are trying to prevent the destruction.

Tania knows every ancestral burrow, and every nursery burrow there. She introduced Mountain Mama, who is in the photograph, to the burrows by taking her round on a harness at first. Mountain Mama was blinded as an adult when hit by a car and required intensive nursing for many months by Tania.

Tania always knows who is getting on with whom in the wombat community, and all their movements and habits. This harmonious wisdom of wombats would be totally disrupted with many made homeless if this oasis in the middle of Mittagong is bulldozed.



Animal Sponsorship

As a family, organisation or individual you can choose to sponsor your favourite animal. A sponsorship will be acknowledged with a sign next to the animal's enclosure. And a certificate of appreciation to put on your wall.

There are several levels of support available. Silver \$100, Gold \$250 and Platinum \$500

So, what will the money do? The money will pay for the animal's food, updates on the enclosure, special treatment like yummy plants or insects.

Vet bills. Enrichments like special toys or fruits. All depending on what animal you would like to sponsor.



Cowsnest Catering

The bookings keep coming! So many music nights now have irresistible suppers provided by Cowsnest Catering! And at the Candelo Festival there were queues for the food. The Festival was truly huge and as inspiring as ever with poems coming out of trees and wonderful music and very interesting talks and seminars. And at Candelo Markets, Cowsnest continues to serve a very satisfying meal as well as snacks and coffees. Candelo Café always has displays of arts and crafts because the creative group Make and Mend meets there on Mondays. The café itself is a place to sit and rest and have a cuppa after trekking round the Market. Numerous planned and spontaneous gatherings occur there.

With all the forbidding government rules, we are relying more and more on the Farm Gate Stall (on the Myrtle Mountain Road, just a couple of kilometres out of Candelo).

And now we are attending the SCPA Friday Markets in Bega. The frozen meals are very popular and we often have extra orders for beef curry.



Water Farming Project

Since 1975 there have been many trees planted on Cowsnest, by humans, by birds and by the trees themselves. Before that the land was cleared. There is a big difference between the places that have been kept cleared and where trees have been allowed to grow.

One of the slopes used to be full off blackberries and people got sick of slashing the blackberries so Harry spread heaps of wattle seeds there to grow fire wood. Little did he know (or he probably did know because he is smart) that this east facing slope would turn into a paradise for many plants and animals. There are barely any blackberries left, and heaps of native grasses and flowers are growing. When the Far South Coast Birdwatchers came to Cowsnest they saw many birds on that slope, like the Diamond Firetail Finch, Bronzewing Cuckoo and the Yellow Tufted Honeyeater. It is now left alone to grow. And it all happened because the water was slowed down by the plants.

Water is the basis of us humans and of all the life forms we rely on to survive. Because of the changing climate and weather patterns, Cowsnest Community members decided some time ago to start to farm water more consciously. Basically it means we want to rehabilitate the watercourses in order to hydrate the Land as it once was before the clearing, the erosion, and loss of top soil drained the land and lowered the watertable. In some watercourses at Cowsnest this means rebuilding the natural leaky weirs, in others, the restoration of the chain-of-ponds swamp systems. The restored swamp systems will again provide food, fodder and habitats. It is known that wetlands and swamps are one of the greatest carbon fixers on the planet. So we have now marked out the contour lines on the cleared pastures to be fenced off and hedgerows of food and fodder trees, shrubs and herbs will be planted. These plants will slow any water and nutrient run off which will not only sustain the pastures longer through dry times but also supplement cow feed all year round. The hedgerows on the contour will also act as wind breaks, sun traps and provide shade, shelter and habitats. The hedgerows will transform the large pasture paddocks to many smaller paddocks. Each paddock will then be given longer rest times ensuring healthier soils and stronger, more diverse plant growth. Instead of farming cows, Cowsnest is farming water and soil to benefit all the plants, fungi and animals great and small. And the cows are helping.



Brush-Tailed Rock Wallabies

Our beautiful shy Brushtailed Rock Wallabies have a huge rocky enclosure now! It is green and lush because there used to be dingos there and they ate very little grass. When they first arrived from Mt. Rothwell Sanctuary, they were in a smallish pen which soon became bare. Several became sick there. Veronica, our manager, saved one who was close to death. Veronica took the little one home closely covered in a pouch so that she felt safe and kept her warm and undisturbed until she could stand up again and move around normally. Within a week, the wallaby was well enough to go back with the others. The wallabies have had many joeys. They are becoming extremely rare in the wild. We would like to give some to other Rewilding Sanctuaries, but they can only be handled with incredible care because they are not used to being caught. Capture Myopathy kills them very easily if they are incorrectly handled. Catching them and taking them to a vet can be fatal. They are adorable and they often hold their two paws almost clasped in front of them like Swamp Wallabies.

Threatened Species

We have more and more requests from sanctuaries who would like to breed potoroos.

It is very exciting that their numbers are increasing, at least in protected areas. More places are reintroducing dingos, which immediately benefits all the small creatures. Not only do dingos kill cats and foxes, but also those two ferals are unwilling to attempt living in areas where there are dingos. If a dingo eats one potoroos, it is far better than a fox or cat slaughtering 14 and leaving the bodies behind. And now more and more regions are introducing domestic cat curfews which will be helpful to reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals.

It is being realised more and more how small digging marsupials help the health of forests and woodlands, especially after fire. The scrapings they make hold water and seeds and composting leaves. And most people are aware of the benefits that potoroos and bandicoots provide by finding native truffles to eat and distributing their spores. Both the Long-footed and the Long-nosed Potoroos love truffles. Australia has over 300 species of truffles. The truffles are the underground fruits of the mycorrhizal fungi which grow in a huge network on the roots of trees and other plants. The fungi provide nitrogen and phosphorous and protection from disease to the trees and the trees give the fungi carbohydrates (food).

Scientists have tried to grow the spores in laboratories without success. We need potoroos for a healthy forest!



A BIG THANKYOU!

Potoroo Place and Cowsnest is a team effort. Every day people come from all over the Bega Valley to maintain those beautiful places. Everyone who is helping, no matter if you are a volunteer, an employee, a resident or donor, is putting their resources into a community that helps to protect the natural world by education, conservation and community. So Thankyou beautiful people that believe in the value of the natural world. There would not be a Cowsnest or Potoroo Palace without you!



POTOROO PALACE & COWSNSET

Not-for-profit educational sanctuaries

Mission Statement

We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of our area, the people of the Yuin and Monaro nations and pay our respects to the Elders, past and present. We are passionate about looking after our Earth. Our foci are: conservation, community and education. Humans share the earth with 300 million other species of living things. At Potoroo Palace and Cowsnest we are crusaders in changing the practice of stealing from the future to ways of caring for our planet. We would like to show people ways of living with native animals and valuing the big trees and wild places which are their homes.

www.potoroopalace.com

2372 Princess Highway

Yellow Pinch

Merimbula

NSW 2548

Blue Wren Café 02 6494 9225

Office 02 6494 9053

Cowsnest 044 757 88 32

Info@potoroopalace.com

Cowsnestfarm@gmail.com

Keep up to date with everything at Cowsnest and Potoroo. Add us on Facebook and Instagram

The Blue Wren Café

Open 9am-4pm 7 DAYS Closed on Christmas Day

Delicious Meals Homemade Treats & Preserves

Freshly grown salads, fruits and eggs

WELCOME!!