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The Eastern Barred Bandicoot Newsletter

FAST FACTS

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot, otherwise known as the EBB, is a native Australian marsupial. This small nocturnal mammal is extinct in the wild due to habitat loss and fox predation.

Current work is being conducted to release populations of EBBs back into fox-free areas, including fenced reserves and islands.

RECENT EVENTS

- One year anniversary of EBBs moving to Churchill Island
- Approval process for a Phillip Island release has begun
- Eight litters currently born in captivity with more expected
- Tasmanian EBBs due to arrive next year for breeding trials

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Muddy Puddles

Kim Volk, Conservation Volunteers

Victoria has had a lot of rain in the last several months and Hamilton has been no exception. Our newly released bandicoots have been loving the wet weather, digging up a storm in our soft soils, leaving their scats and cute little prints for all to see and even showing off a baby on camera. With all this activity we just couldn't wait to get out for the November bandicoot monitoring week.

And what a fantastic trapping week we had! Conservation Volunteers runs the trap session and this time we were lucky to have assistance from Richard Hill, the Chair of the EBB Recovery Team and many volunteers. Over the three days we caught a total of 20 EBBs, including five that had never been caught before. Each bandicoot was weighed, given a health check and their own unique microchip ID if they didn't already have one. This data allows us to keep track of how individuals are faring over the long term. All females caught had pouch young, which is a wonderful sign that our EBBs have settled in very well to their new home. We think the EBBs will continue to breed over the summer period due to the excellent habitat conditions, (we are still wearing our gum boots on fence patrols) so we should have a well-established bandicoot population at Hamilton Community Parklands in no time.

A significant date is also coming up for our Hamilton Conservation Volunteers team. Just before Christmas we will be

celebrating the enclosure being fox free for one year. This is despite someone recently cutting a hole in the fence, but due to our regular fence patrols we found and fixed the hole before a fox could enter the reserve. A big pat on the back to everyone that has been involved in managing the Hamilton enclosure over the last year and a bit, your hard work is very much appreciated.



Above: EBB digs at Hamilton (photo K. Volk)
Below: Richard Hill releases an EBB at Hamilton (photo K. Volk)



EBBs, Weeds & Rain

Travis Scicchitano, Conservation Volunteers

The second round of trapping at Woodlands Historic Park was completed in spring. And what a round of trapping we had! Over four days, 1,000 bait balls were made to attract the bandicoots, 889 traps were checked, and 92 kilometres walked very early in the morning by our team of EBB handlers and volunteers, in search of our furry friends. It was a very long and tiring task, thankfully great results achieved throughout the reserve.

After a wet winter and the arrival of warmer weather, our grassland habitat has started to return. This has proved vital as the bandicoots have bred to the better conditions available, which showed in the numbers we caught. Our previous record was 114 individuals, which was set in July 2015. This spring, trapping resulted in 132 individuals caught. An amazing result. Even more fantastic is that 65 of these EBBs were born and bred on site and had never been caught before. This shows a new breeding cycle has taken place and we hope they can carry on over the next few years. Out of all the females caught,

94% showed signs of breeding and were carrying 93 pouch young. So it looks like there will be plenty of juveniles hopping around soon. We hope they all do well and look forward to catching them in the future.

Although there has been good conditions and breeding success over winter, it is important to continue to manage weeds and over-grazing to

ensure that the habitat is able to begin to recover and support the improving bandicoot numbers. Long term recovery of the open red gum grassy woodlands is the only way forward for sustained recovery and we can't always rely on rainfall to assist us.

A huge highlight of the week was catching a female bandicoot that came from Hamilton and was released at Woodlands in July 2013! She must be at least four years old,

a good age for an animal that typically lives 2-3 years in the wild and, she also had two pouch young!

These monitoring results and the distance sampling surveys done by Zoos Victoria, estimate the Woodlands population to be at around 500 animals. So all up, it's been a brilliant end to the monitoring year, despite some challenges throughout the year.



Two large pouch young suckling from their mother
(photo A. Coetsee)



Left: A Green Army volunteer releases an EBB (photo A. Coetsee) **Above:** An EBB bounding home after its health check (photo A. Coetsee)



At Capacity?

Duncan Sutherland,
Phillip Island Nature Parks

The August monitoring session for Eastern Barred Bandicoots on Churchill Island saw another jump in the number of individuals captured. All up there were 58 different individuals captured, almost 50% more than were caught in June. And on top of that, there were 37 unique pouch young. Winter is the time we expect bandicoots to breed well, so this jump comes as no great surprise, but it's very pleasing to see.

Three months later we were keen to see how the population was faring. As we've now entered summer, the nights are shorter and the trap checks start later, so we're working into the wee hours of the morning. But it's well worth it!

It turns out that the population has grown further, with 71 unique individuals, 27 of whom had not been captured before. This is up from 58 unique individuals captured back in September. As we work across the island we also see plenty of young at foot which are not entering the traps. See the photos of an adult being released and a young at foot happily foraging unconcerned by our presence. Interestingly, only a few of the females that we captured were breeding at this time, and body condition of the bandicoots was generally lower than in previous sessions, the sort of signs we might expect if the population were reaching its carrying capacity on the island.

I would also like to welcome Ross Holmberg to the project team, with thanks to the support of the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. Ross will be assisting with the project part time and coordinating much of the activities in the field. And of course, a huge thanks again to our dedicated team of staff and volunteers that make the monitoring not only possible, but also great fun.



Top: Churchill Island at dusk. **Middle:** Ross releases an EBB while a young at foot happily forgoes, unconcerned, close by **(bottom)**
(photo credits D. Sutherland)



The Eastern Barred Bandicoot Recovery Team was founded in 1989 after a continual decline was noted in the wild population. Although extinct in the wild on mainland Australia, populations of bandicoots can be found in predator-free areas at Churchill Island, Hamilton Community Parklands, Mt Rothwell Biodiversity Interpretation Centre and Woodlands Historic park, occupying a total of 860 ha.

'Warron' is the Kirrae Whurrong word for the Eastern Barred Bandicoot. This newsletter was named 'Warron' in honour of Wayne Drew after his passing in 2001. Wayne was the 'Bandicoot Ranger' for Woodlands Historic Park and a member of the Kirrae Whurrong people from the western district of Victoria.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Conservation Volunteers
www.conservationvolunteers.com.au

Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Mt Rothwell
www.mtrothwell.com.au

Parks Victoria
www.parks.vic.gov.au

Phillip Island Nature Parks
www.penguins.org.au

Zoos Victoria
www.zoo.org.au

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Eastern Barred Bandicoot Recovery is a collaboration of the following organisations:



Department of
Environment, Land,
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