

# Wombat Whispers

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## Hello members

The latest "Burrow Bits" from Dr Alan Horsup provides news of some interesting initiatives in the field, plus some positive news on Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat numbers. It is pleasing that The Wombat Foundation has been able to assist with costs associated with the most recent hair census programme, from which the revised numbers have been derived.

For those who have not discovered our website yet, it is taking shape at [www.wombatfoundation.com.au](http://www.wombatfoundation.com.au) A big thanks to Tory Grice in Brisbane, web designer and wombat lover, for her great work in designing and constructing the site. It is hoped that it will lead to increased global awareness, enquiry and support for the plight of the Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat. Please pay the site a visit sometime.

Another year has gone past, and recognition should be given to the continuing efforts of Charmaine Skerman on the Gold Coast as Accountant, Kathy Humphery in Sydney as Membership Secretary, and Fran McFadzen in Emerald as Newsletter Compositor.

Finally, the Foundation is very much in need of additional Members so as to keep our numbers above the statutory minimum. If you could encourage just one more person to join, it would greatly assist. A membership form is available at <http://www.wombatfoundation.com.au/joinordonate.html>

Alternatively, those interested could drop a note to the Foundation at GPO Box 2188, Sydney 2001, and we'll send a form out.

*Garry Richmond*

Secretary  
Wombat Foundation

## Burrow Bits

WOMBAT NEWS FROM  
November 2006

Things continue to proceed well with our wombat work. Here a nice photo of a northern hairy-nosed wombat digging on its runway (the stake is a metre long). It was taken with the remote digital camera perched on the tree in the picture on the right. The camera can record still photos in total darkness with an infra-red flash or with a white flash (this photo), and short videos with IR light. We have just purchased 10 more of these cameras with funding generously provided by the Merrin Foundation. The cameras will be used to monitor wombat use of feed and water stations and to help identify individuals for translocation.



## *Burrow Bits* Continued

**WOMBAT NEWS FROM November 2006**

### **Latest population estimate**

The collection of wombat hair during the October 2005 'hair census' has produced, via analysis of the DNA it contained, the latest population estimate of 115 wombats. This consists of 62 males and 53 females, the most even sex ratio we have recorded since the mid-1980s. It also agrees with the rapidly growing number of new burrows being constructed and with the high number of young wombat signs we are seeing. We gratefully thank the Wombat Foundation for funding the analysis of the wombat hair which was undertaken at Monash University.

### **Translocation**

The push to establish a second wild population took an important step forward in July this year when we translocated two female wombats into unoccupied wombat habitat in the north of Epping Forest National Park where the last population lives. We were prepared to move up to 4 males and 2 females but were unable to capture any more wombats in the target range of 18-25 kg. The aim was to move sub-adult animals that will more readily adapt to change (the adult size range starts at 25 kg). We trapped for 15 nights and caught 13 wombats which is about as good as it gets when trapping 'northerns'! We captured a 35 kg female who had first been caught in 1986 as an adult, making her at least 3 years old then. She has therefore extended longevity in the wild for 'northerns' to at least 23 years! She was in excellent condition and, according to her pouch condition, preparing to breed!

The two translocated females were released into artificial burrows that had been drilled by a 'bobcat' (mini tractor). The first girl, Audrey, spent the first 7 nights wandering in all directions from the burrow, presumably looking for other wombats. When it rained on the 8<sup>th</sup> night she immediately headed up wind to the nearest natural wombat burrow, 600 m away. She has remained there since and is sharing the burrow with a wombat of unknown sex. The

second wombat, Zena, was released the day after Audrey found the natural burrow. Zena found Audrey on her first night and during the next week headed south for 5 km until she found the burrow where we had originally captured her. Next year we will probably repeat the exercise with a more complex directionally-drilled artificial burrow and fences to help establish the wombats in the new area.

These on-park translocations are designed to develop the techniques and expertise required for establishing a second wild population off-park. The search for that site progressed this year when we narrowed 20 potential sites in southern Queensland down to two likely sites. Detailed investigations of these two sites will determine which is best and then we will begin to prepare it. This will involve enclosing it with a dingo-proof fence (as at Epping Forest NP), controlling weeds and feral animals, and improvement of the pastures.

Thanks again for supporting our efforts to save this unique wombat species. I hope you have a safe and enjoyable festive season and wish you well for 2007. If you are looking for a Xmas gift, please think about the wombat merchandise that can be ordered through the Wombat Foundation website:

<http://www.wombatfoundation.com.au>

Regards,

*Dr Alan Horsup*  
**Queensland Parks and Wildlife  
Service, Rockhampton**

**"Wombat Whispers" is the  
official communication of  
The Wombat Foundation,  
GPO Box 2188,  
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Donations always welcome!**