



Natural History Society of South Australia Inc trading as

**Wombats SA**

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President Report 2020

Highlights of the year include:

1. Renewed assembly of a Wombats Alliance. A meeting was held at the Waite on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019, which included 16 people, some from universities and some from DEW as well as wombat rescue groups. A call from Brigitte Stevens to hold them more often so that issues get actioned. Unfortunately, this has not happened.
2. A grant from Australian Wildlife Society was taken up as an education project. The grant of \$8,000 has been put towards a project managed by Sally Letcher with the able assistance of Carol Cornish with the aim of producing education materials on wombats for use by schools. The materials are on line and the site has been set up with the URL: [www.saveourwonderfulwombats.org](http://www.saveourwonderfulwombats.org). Visits to schools will be possible once COVID-19 lockdown is lifted.
3. A visit from an Austrian couple. We were contacted by Gregor Kleczkowski from Austria who runs a hostel in Vienna called the Wombat Hostel. They wanted to see wombats and Susanna and I were able to take them around Moorunde on a Ranger Duty. Unfortunately, it was a 38 degree day and we were only able to see one wombat out. They and their two small daughters seemed to enjoy the experience and we have maintained contact with them.
4. Response to the killing of a wombat by stoning. In response to a massive outpouring of public condemnation to the stoning of a wombat put on social media, I was contacted for interviews with three radio stations and one television interview. The person who did the stoning has not been charged as he is an Aboriginal person. We have asked the premier to look at the legislation protecting native species for a review into restricting permission to only those Aboriginal people living in a traditional way, where they rely on bush food for their living and for there to be a set of further regulations around the permission (numbers/methods/etc) that are then enforced.
5. River Murray Dark Sky reserve. The new reserve spans a huge area from Swan Reach to Brookfield and includes Moorunde Wildlife Reserve. This is established as an International Dark Sky site which potentially means that international visiting astronomers will be interested in coming to visit. The main activity so far has been at Meldanda in Cambrai.
6. Response to a DEW permit issued to a Yorke Peninsula group to kill 200 wombats. The permit was applied for by the local Aboriginal Lands Trust in Point Pearce and was granted by an unknown officer in DEW. Attempts to find out who this was and why permission was given have been blocked. Fortunately, the Aboriginal Lands Trust people have responded to the negative public backlash and have decided not to proceed with the cull. Discussions with the Environment minister are ongoing.

7. Astronomy workshop postponed. A proposed Astronomy Workshop was being organized for April with prominent Astronomical Society member, Joe Grida, agreeing to present the workshop. Joe is the author of the monthly column in the Advertiser talking about the stars and what can be observed each month. The workshop was postponed because of the coronavirus outbreak and Joe has suggested that we try again in the Spring.
8. Gift of telescope. As part of the Education Project, I met Carol Cornish who offered the Society a telescope which had come to them through a primary school and was not being used. I picked it up from her and it is in the Latifrons Shed at Moorunde. It is a Celestron scope with an 8" aperture but does not have a tracking motor.
9. As the drought continued into the summer of 2019/2020, we kept an eye on the surviving wombats noting that very few, if any, young ones were seen of late. However, Karen Collins keeps records of the condition of wombats seen and there are a pleasing number of healthy looking wombats to be seen.
10. Coronavirus effects. Wombats SA held its first Committee meeting by Zoom which seemed to work quite well. This will continue until social distancing rules are relaxed. The AGM, set for May 21<sup>st</sup>, is to be held via Zoom with members able to join and interact.
11. Adrian Jones, Glen Taylor and I have been working on and off on the Woodcutter's Hut and had a minor roof collapse which has now been fixed. Work will continue as time permits.
12. A trip to Cullen Reserve was held last October, but one around Easter time was not possible due to coronavirus restrictions. We hope to get down there again this spring.
13. Committee members to thank include Karen Collins for a huge amount of work as treasurer (with acknowledgement to Georgie Fiedler for her help) and also as web/Facebook manager; Sally Letcher for minute taking and Steve Protopapas as well; Sally Letcher for taking on the Education project so enthusiastically; Adrian Jones as Secretary; Glen Taylor for Ranger Duty organisation and for his huge mapping project; and Ray Wallis for keeping an eye tuned to our aims and his minutes suggestions.

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