

NARG ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

NARG has been going for four years and we celebrated the event in September by having a get-together at the Braidwood Hotel. We expected 2010/11 to be a year of consolidation and that has been the case. Apart from the day to day core business activities of caring for our native animals, being called out at all hours, relocations, snake catching, reptile wrestling, owlet night jarring, and Tawny Frog mouthing, being badgered by the general public as though we were their paid employees, getting abused on the Kings Highway, etc etc we have had to tackle a couple of big issues, which have been time consuming for some of the committee.

In March 2011 the newly formed Office of Environment and Heritage published their new Rehabilitation of Fauna Policy and this required NARG to enter into an MOU agreement with neighbouring wildlife groups where there were out-of-area members. NARG had been fighting for greater volunteer freedom of choice for some time and this rule helps in this regard. NARG has established an MOU with Wildcare to cater for 17 members living in their area and one Wildcare member in NARG's area. This is a general MOU and it covers the intent to help each other with training rescues, transfer of animals etc. Unfortunately, notwithstanding lengthy communication, WIRES Southern Tablelands and Wildlife Rescue South Coast (NANA) have refused to discuss an MOU. This matter is now in the hands of OEH staff. NARG has written to the effect that we will maintain the status quo until these two wildlife groups are prepared to enter into an MOU. During this period of policy implementation, it had been thought that there was a mutual boundary with LAOKO, however this is not the case. This is of concern to us as there is consequently a large area to our south which is not serviced by the nominal group WRSC (NANA). It does nothing in that zone and has no means of doing so. NARG, in fact, services the area and will soon do so even more effectively once our member who is moving, who is moving there, moves there. I expect the new committee will pursue this matter in the New Year.

A significant piece of work throughout the year was to update the NARG Constitution to include the new Fair Trading Act 2009 and clauses needed to apply for registration on the Register of Environmental Organisations – an application was recently forwarded to the Federal Government and we await the outcome. We are getting closer to gaining tax deductibility status. Thanks in particular go to Phil who did the rewrite and the couple of other members who made editing suggestions.

Whilst a few members have left the organisation, others have joined and there are now 79 members with the majority living in-area. We have been able to buy a new wombat trap, as well as signage to be attached to fences to advertise NARG in our operating area. We have purchased two NARG banners for use at displays and talks.

Communicating with a membership that is widely dispersed is not easy. Four newsletters have been produced, as well as numerous emails advertising training courses, correspondence associated with the new Rehabilitation of Fauna Policy, the new Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Protected Fauna, the MOU developments, changes to our Constitution, Membership updates and other ad hoc messages to encourage members to become involved and doing our best to keep you in the loop. It would be good

if more members could voice an opinion and keep in touch – especially those caring for animals who need to be in contact with the Animal Advisers often. As individuals we can always improve the lines of communication, take the initiative and become more involved. Work has been progressing on recreating our web presence and here is the new website.

As you can see it is still somewhat rudimentary at this stage but over the next month or so it will become fully populated with a range of pictures, an assortment of NARG articles and the like as well as hot links to other related organisations and general informative articles about aspects of wildlife. There will be a donate button as well as membership forms, constitution and even the minutes of our meetings for you to peruse in your copious free time between 2 am and 3 am. The new website will be a bit easier for us to use and more people can be involved in its upkeep. There will be a private members section which will be password protected for such things as membership contact lists etc. As always, if you don't want your details to be available (only to the membership) you will need to let us know when I contact you. The Communications person as well as the Secretary and President can help with the whole website management. Training by the web designer for the webmasters will take place quite soon. Might I mention that if you change your email address to let us know so we can keep our contact list up to date?

Members who are not in a position to care for animals can help in managing the organisation, help others nearby and become involved with fundraising activities. But you need to let us know and chase us up. Don't sit back waiting for us to contact you if you think you can help.

The Annual NARG Wombat Calendar in particular needs support in the sales department.

The committee has met six times this year – all of them at the Braidwood Servicemen's Club. Attendance has been excellent and it has been encouraging to see several members come along and join in the discussions. Very many thanks for the effort put in by Bill & Lesley Waterhouse, Roger Poole, James Fitzgerald, Shirley Lack, Phil & Lesley Machin, and Dianne Colman (Dianne joined the committee half way through the year). Also thanks for the input of Julia Gibb, Bill Eden, Di Hinton, Lorraine Bell, and Harriet Searcy who have attended some of the meetings and contributed. NARG is proud of its "transparency" policy and we welcome the input of members at these committee meetings and remind everyone they are always open to the members to attend.

One committee member, Louise Bonomi, moved to Melbourne and for most of the year there has not been a dedicated Communications Officer. (We might form a Melbourne branch soon as we now have two members there!) Louise produced a slide show before she left which plays endlessly in the Bendigo Bank in Braidwood. Phil Machin has helped by getting a couple of articles into the Braidwood Times, including an advert for the 2012 Calendar. Phil has started to feed topical wildlife articles to the Braidwood Radio via Vera Sapov. If you are in the area tune in as the "Barbed Wireless" is a very wildlife friendly organisation. 94.5 on your radio dial.

NARG members are also found contributing to other organisations. Many of us are members of other wildlife groups, there are several NARG members who hold executive positions in the NSW Wildlife Council and are active as members or Directors of the

Wombat Protection Society of Australia. Significantly, two of our members are Directors of The Wombat Foundation helping save the Northern Hairy Nosed wombats. Several are closely involved in our neighbouring groups, LAOKO and Wildcare and some contribute at high level to the Animal Justice Party and Southern Cross Wildlife Care. You are members of a group firmly committed to Australia's Native Species.

It would be good if more people could help out and nominate for a NARG committee role to give others a break. It is also important for committee members to reflect on their duties and get more involved to spread the load.

We should thank Shirley and Phil for their efforts on the NWC. They have fought hard for greater freedom of choice and the new OEH policy reflects this to some extent. Shirley has taken on the role as Secretary and Insurance officer with the NWC. Phil is often asked to help draft letters and papers. As I indicated earlier, NARG has a considerable influence on the NWC.

We have many dedicated animal carers. This is where the rubber hits the road. Thank you for all of your wonderful work. I would like to give a special thank you to Howard Ralph and Rosemary Garlick. Both are members of NARG and have used their life skills as a vet and medical doctor to fix and care for animals and give lots of help and advice. Where we can, we need to help Howard and Rosemary in their work to offset the load. Howard operates under the Southern Cross Wildlife Care charity and donations can be made. NARG has helped pay for some of the renovations at Howard's newly opened care centre at Mayfield. Peter Lack did most of the electrical work earlier this year and David McCurley helped considerably with much of the earlier work. Bill Waterhouse has become a 'chippy' and helps Howard with some construction work. Lou, Marie & Shania Gardner often help Howard with his operations – as does Glenda, his wife. Well done to all these people and all our carers for the dedication and help given to saving our wildlife.

Cortona Resources intend to develop the Dargues Reef Mine at Majors Creek. Bill & Lesley Waterhouse who live in Majors Creek are providing advice on wildlife issues. This is being done under the authority of the NARG licence. Whilst the mining staff may provide the labour to sort out wildlife problems, it may be necessary for other NARG members to become involved to help Bill & Lesley as the situation and development proceeds.

Finance

An audited financial account has been done and is included with this report. NARG is in a healthy position financially, but this is entirely dependent on the annual fundraiser – selling wombat calendars. This year the committee agreed to pay for all treatments, medications and vet bills. Milk is also being subsidised to the extent that milk is sold for about half price (\$10 per kilogram).

NARG applied for grant assistance from NPWS, but have so far been unsuccessful in gaining any funds.

To support the new NARG Public Fund, which is needed to accept donations, a sub committee has been formed to manage it (Bill Waterhouse, Shirley Lack, Phil Machin & Lorraine Bell).

Very many thanks to Shirley Lack for maintaining the financial account so well and keeping us on track.

The biggest expense - insurance for members and directors, continues to be provided through the NWC.

Fundraising

Last year's fundraiser selling the 2011 Wombat Calendar went very well and all 1810 calendars were sold. The sale of the 2012 calendar is underway and it is hoped to sell 2,600 this year. Thanks to John Kosseck for the original idea and template and to Bill Waterhouse for completing the design of the calendar and arranging for printing. I would like to give a huge thank you to the wonderful photographers.

Already, a large number have been sold via the web to all four corners of the world. BUT, might I again reiterate the need to step up to the plate with this our only fundraising activity for the year. It is this and only this which allows us to subsidise all training and development, animal feed and health supplies and veterinary costs. It also allows us to help members with the costs of facilities.

Donna Stepan has applied for a grant from IBM and we await the outcome. If successful, this money will be used to pay for materials for an animal enclosure.

Training

This year NARG arranged for two training courses – an Orientation course and a Wombat Workshop. Both these courses were highly successful and included attendance by members of the public and a contingent from the ACT RSPCA for the wombat course. In November there will be a Raptor and Owl course.

In addition to the NARG courses, we piggyback on neighbouring group training courses. Members need to be trained to care for animals and it is their responsibility to apply for courses. We do our best to let you know of all our events as well as events offered by neighbouring groups.

Thanks to Dianne Colman for coming onto the committee and taking on the Training and Events coordination role. Lesley and Phil Machin, Shirley Lack and Bill Waterhouse have also helped out with the training and arrangements.

Animal Coordination and Statistics

I would also like to thank the tireless lesleys- Lesley Machin and Lesley Waterhouse who continue to carry out the animal coordination roles. They not only give sage advice to all our carers, they are up half the night most nights caring for animals themselves as well as being distributors of foods, medicines and equipment of all sorts as well as keeping statistics for the OEH on their yet- to- be- finalised data forms.

This year there have been 57 wombats in care with 23 released; 23 kangaroos with 14 released; six possums or gliders; and 13 birds. Of course there have been a large number of animals checked on the road, numerous euthanasias and snakes, wombats and possums relocated. There are a growing number of calls for advice.

NARG was able to help Georgeanna Story with her PHD work in tracking a released wombat. It will be interesting to obtain feedback from her in due course.

Many NARG members attended and presented well researched and well received papers at the inaugural Wombat Protection Society Wombat Conference in Albury in March.

Looking Ahead

It would be good to build on the MOU process and improve cooperation between NARG and our neighbours. The MOUs will help, but only if WIRES and Wildlife Rescue South Coast come onboard.

It would be good to find alternate funding sources e.g. from NPWS. Depending on funding the committee might look at further ways to offset carer's cost.

There is a need to spread the load much more. Perhaps the job descriptions need to be revisited if only to remind committee members what they are responsible for. We really do need more, trained people within Braidwood and the villages to take a more active role in our core business. Is everyone checking "road kill" SAFELY and giving the poor thing some dignity by dragging it off the road and turning it over and marking it as "checked".

As mentioned earlier, it appears the gold mine at Majors Creek will go ahead. This is still subject to appeals being heard in the New Year. It is important to note the positive effect several NARG members had on the whole approval process. The mine is under much closer scrutiny about all water, habitat and wildlife issues and that several good outcomes have been brought about largely as a result of submissions made by people who are members of NARG. Once the "dust has settled" (literally and metaphorically) we should help cope with wildlife issues as they arise and to the extent of our capacity.

There is a need to improve public awareness with signage, flyers and media articles in the local newspaper and radio.

It is hoped that members can be encourage to be more engaged with NARG activities. Apart from the animals, NARG is an excellent community group, which provides a network of support.

Finally, the forces of evil are out there, alive and well and living in and around Braidwood. NARG has made some inroads into the collective psyche of the area but we have a long way to go. There are now 3, yes 3, commercial kangaroo killers (harvesters) living and working the area. People are employing them. How many thousands have they killed just this year, let alone every other year? Certain forms of hunting are now legal in most of the forests in and around the Braidwood district. Is it any wonder the number of 'roos coming into care in the whole South East is down considerably? Apart from this, hundreds and hundreds of animals are being killed on our roads- many on purpose. This is a fact bragged about in certain circles. Even some local environmentalists in this area hate wombats and request "licences to harm"; people in rural Australia have not yet learned to live with

snakes- immediate response- kill it; People in Braidwood, kill off birds, poison possums; People run over echidnas and bluetongues and turtles in situations where it could be avoided. One of our new signs has already been pulled down. Not only do some of our neighbours hate and kill wildlife, they don't want to let anyone else even have a chance at saving life.

We are in a battle and we are in the right. We have to keep on with what we do- quietly, calmly and persistently. Keep it up. Support each other. Be kind. Smile.

It's been a pretty good year all things considered and we look forward to the next and many years to come.

Thank you again to you the members and the hard working committee. Please, stay in touch.

Phil Machin
Secretary
NARG

Bill Waterhouse
President
NARG