



## NEWSLETTER May 2025 (Year 24 Vol 38)

### Editorial

During my visit to the Bunkers Conservation Reserve (BCR) in March this year, I was treated to an absolutely marvelous sight.

Pictures tell a thousand words!



**Photograph 1: Yellow-foot only 750m from camp.**



**Photograph 2: two male Yellow-foots fighting for dominance in the new colony**

The above photographs are a sample of the 19 Yellow-footed Rock Wallabies I observed on the eastern side of the BCR.

Why so many you might ask? Undoubtedly, our successful custodial management of the BCR (with respect to management of feral animals, incursions from neighbouring stock and control of local animals) has meant that colonies in the centre of the BCR have expanded.

Consequently, the younger males have been 'kicked-out' by the senior males; this has precipitated the commencement of new colonies in other parts of the BCR, and the younger males determined to make their mark! The second photograph captures two yellow-foots in a boxing match!

We can all take great pride in the fulfillment of one important clause in our Constitution:

### 3. OBJECTS AND PURPOSES

The objects for which the Association is established are:

- (1) To promote the common interest of persons who are interested in the yellow footed rock wallaby
- (2) To promote and aid in the preservation of the yellow footed rock wallaby

This newsletter highlights additional conservation work being carried out on the state of our vegetation – through the 2025 Herbivore Impact Grassland Survey. Further, the dedicated work by committed members has seen the propagation, plantings and watering of new plants around the campground. Lastly, the regular ongoing study of the presence of our flora through our photo point observations. Thank you so much to all involved.

In his President's report, Kym mentions the various project works that occur on the BCR. He amplifies the fantastic work carried out by a small group of dedicated members and friends. Looking to the future, he issues a heartfelt invitation to other people to get involved. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Katrina's input highlights the success of our 2024 AGM. So much so, that our 2025 AGM will be held at the same venue in October. In addition, Katrina makes special mention to our generous sponsors and supporters. Thank you so much.

Finally, I would be remiss to mention another, equally valued aspect that occurs on the BCR. This is our welcome we bestow to the visitors and tourists who come to visit the Reserve. Indeed, our Memorandum of Understanding fosters such involvement from visitors:

To provide visitors with an experience of the biodiversity, heritage, geographical, natural and scenic features (under a) nature based tourism and recreation (program). (MOU, Paragraph 6.1, page 4). Undoubtedly, this provides visitors to the BCR a life enriching experience that only walking in the Flinders Ranges can realise.

And for those visitors who desire a longer stay on the BCR, the layout and facilities of Davey Hut and Campground are first class. The infrastructure and idyllic setting of this area bears testimony to the fantastic and on-going work carried out by our construction and maintenance volunteers. We are so grateful for their expertise and commitment. Thank you.

**Shane Fantinel (Editor)**

## Save the Date

**Environmental work: 5<sup>th</sup> -12th September 2025.**

What's happening on these dates?

- Weed spraying
- Wild dog baiting
- Checking the quoll cameras
- Ground surveys' for Yellow-footed Rock Wallabies and the Short-tailed Grass Wren

If you are interested, contact Jeanine Baker ([jeanine@yellowfoot.org](mailto:jeanine@yellowfoot.org)) to be added to the planning emails.

## Other upcoming activities

Members and Friends of the YFRWPA can make a note of the following activities that are on the radar.

- There is a grassland survey commencing on the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> April.
- There are also members going up over Easter and the following week to do general maintenance.
- From the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> May there will be pest management, weed spraying and general environmental work happening.

Just let me know if you're keen to go up to the Bunkers during an activity and I will put you in contact with the members involved.

## President's Report

It was another good start to the year with bookings over Easter for the Caernarvon Track and a good turnout of members staying at the Bunkers over Easter.

Many hands make light work. The annual Herbivore Impact Grassland Survey was conducted by Dana and Katrina the week before Easter with members and friend helping with the Survey.

Member's bookings for the Reserve have been solid since the beginning of the year for recreation, work and projects.

## Members Area

### BCR Members Bookings & Yearly Program

#### Yellowfooted Rock Wallaby Preservation Association

#### Yearly Program & Members Bookings 2025

All members booking Davey Hut and/or Campsites please book via the [Online Booking Form](#) (No phone or verbal Bookings please)

January 2025			
Arrival	Departure		

The following is an excerpt from our camping policy just to remind people how to book and what is expected for your guests.

## **BOOKING**

- Bookings can be made by via the link in the member's area on the [yellowfoot.org](http://yellowfoot.org) web page.
- Normally, in regards to booking of the rooms or site allocation, it is first in, first served. However, preference will be given to bookings that relate to project works.
- Bookings are for members only, except by member invitation and supervision or Committee authorized project.
- Fees payable on booking confirmation:
  - Members and family - free.
  - Non-Member - \$20/person/up to week.
  - Child (<12 years) – free.
  - Authorised project work – free/donation.
  - Caernarvon Track, members and members family are free, guests \$60 per car

Without the hard work of our member volunteers we would not be in the position we are in with regard to recovery of the land and the recovery of the native animals, especially the Yellow-footed Rock Wallabies.

We have regular projects going on throughout the Reserve. These include: wild dog baiting, photo point photography and analysis of the vegetation in locale, weed control, Herbivore Impact Grassland Survey, seed collection and propagating the seeds into seedlings, planting the seedlings and watering, infrastructure maintenance, plant maintenance, building maintenance and some minor construction projects such as the installation of the rain water tank next to the storage shed - which is happening as I write this.

Running the Caernarvon Track is also part of the running of our YFRWPA organization.

So far this year, volunteer members have travelled just over 10,000kms to contribute many hundreds of hours of vital volunteer work. With this in mind, I want to point out that

most of the above work has been undertaken by about 25 to 30 hard working volunteer members, from our total of 100 members. It needs to be mentioned that we have a small group of friends of the BCR who also donate their time and energies by helping out with projects. Most of the membership joined because they believed in the concept of YFRWPA but we need help with the above. Therefore, please get involved by contacting the relevant portfolio people or the secretary, Jim, at [jim@yellowfoot.org](mailto:jim@yellowfoot.org)

We are looking at the future of YFRWPA and to this end we need to plan ahead considering the membership and to ensure our membership is capable of taking us into the future.

We have a group of people on our waiting list so if you would like to sell your membership please contact the Membership Coordinator, Katrina, at [katrina@yellowfoot.org](mailto:katrina@yellowfoot.org)

Next time you are at the Bunkers, take the time to look around the headquarters and campground area. There has been a considerable amount of work undertaken over the 24 years of the organization in developing the facilities for members to have a comfortable stay as well as meet the needs of the reserve with storage, plant and equipment.

In addition, a large amount of re-vegetation has been undertaken around the campground area - bearing in mind that the headquarters only take up less than a half a square kilometer out of the 140 square kilometers of the reserve.

## **Construction and Maintenance**

Back in the middle of March, the battery solar system was upgraded to a Lithium Battery System along with the associated equipment upgraded to match the new system.

The operation of the system is no different to the old one. Now, you can see the charge capacity in the batteries via a simple gauge that is in the switch board with no adjustments needed. Therefore, I ask that people look but don't touch.

With regard to all the taps in the camp kitchen amenities etc, we operate on a low pressure system. Accordingly, there is no need to turn the taps off like you do at home. Turning them off too hard damages the tap washers and causes premature failure.

Grant and Brandon have been busy planting seedlings around camp and keeping up the water to them to get them through a harsh summer. The reserve looks good but dry as we have had low rainfall just like the rest of the state.

In the second week of May, a large rain water tank will be installed at the rear of the storage shed. This tank, when full (after we get rain) will provide backup rain water for camp but also rain water for weed spraying as the bore water has too much mineral in it and will block the weed spraying nozzles.

Bob T has been busy welding up a new donkey boiler as a backup to our current unit. These water heaters used to be manufactured in Alice Springs but we haven't been able to find anyone that still manufactures them. As such, Bob took on the task of fabricating this one. In addition, Bob also fabricated and installed the new under-bench storage for the camp kitchen and it looks great. We appreciate the dedicated effort that Bob puts in for us and the YFRWPA. Many thanks Bob.

***Kym Groves (President)***

## **Vice President's Report**

The past few months have been a busy time for Work Health and Safety, but not for reasons of Hazard and Incident Reports – none were filed. Virtually all documents on our website were reviewed and updated. This was a major job.

Earlier in the year, draft documents were presented to the Committee of Management regarding the establishment of Bush Walking Trails on the BCR. A Policy document was considered, with many drafts being written before a final version was passed. An Ideas Draft document has been circulated amongst

the Committee. A time-frame has been established for the Committee to consider the next step in the process. More information will follow in due course.

We managed to survive the summer without any threat of bushfire impacting upon the Reserve. Needless to say, the low rainfall during the 2024-25 summer period has left the Reserve dry. Trees and medium high shrubs are faring well. However, vegetation ground cover is struggling. Hopefully winter rains will improve the landscape.

Control over unwanted animals on the Reserve has been ongoing. Regular bi-annual ground and aerial baiting activities have kept foxes and wild dog numbers down. Ground and aerial culling resulted in 211 wild goats being dispatched in the period from January to April 2025. Rabbit and cat numbers are very low. Nonetheless, we must continue our campaign in controlling their numbers.

Thank you to those members in the Conservation group for their tireless work in ground baiting the Reserve. Further, many thanks to the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) department for involving us in their aerial activities over the BCR.

Finally, our pastoral neighbours have been most conscientious in their efforts at removing livestock off the BCR. Indeed, recently our northern neighbours invoked the use of a spotter airplane. Stock numbers are low on the Reserve – definitely lower than what they were five or more years ago. However, as custodians of a conservation reserve we would all like to see zero stock. Rest assured, we and our neighbours are working assiduously towards this goal.

***Shane Fantinel (Vice President)***



## 2025 AGM Announcement

Following the successful new AGM format in 2024, our 2025 AGM will be held at the Fullarton Park Community Centre from 12 noon on **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2025**.

The afternoon will kick off with a meet and greet BBQ, followed by the AGM. During the session we will have:

- Brief question and answer times for the various portfolios
- A guest speaker
- Christmas raffle

Finishing time will be around 4.00pm.

Please mark the date in your calendar. We would love to see your attendance as a member, friend or sponsor of the YFRWPA. The occasion is also the opportunity to meet people who are dedicated to the cause on conservation and environmental education on the BCR.

***Katrina Windebank (Membership Officer)***

## AGM Acknowledgement

Our 2024 AGM saw outstanding support from some wonderful companies and people.

A huge thank you must go out to:

- Yellow tail Wines for their donation of mixed wines;



- Beerenberg Farm for their gift packs;



- Sue Hatch for her donation of art work.



Our 2025 AGM will follow the same format in 2025 – that is, same location, time and during October. If anyone has any connection to businesses or people who might like to offer donations for our 2025 YFRWPA AGM raffle, I would love to hear from them.

Please contact me at [katrina@yellowfoot.org](mailto:katrina@yellowfoot.org)





*Katrina Windebank (Membership Officer)*

## News of an Update to our Mission Statement

Over the past few months, the Committee revisited our YFRWPA Mission Statement. I wonder how many of us would recall that the YFRWPA actually commenced back in 1997. Purchase of the BCR block commenced in earnest around the change in the millennium.

As with any organisation, it is always good to have a look at where we have come to in our 25<sup>th</sup> year of custodial management of the BCR.

## Mission Statement for the Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association (Inc)

The Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Association (Inc) exists to ensure the long-term survival of the Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby and the protection of its unique habitat within the Bunkers Conservation Reserve.

- **Conservation Commitment:** We are dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural habitat of our flag ship species, the Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby, ensuring a sustainable future for the species and other threatened species.
- **Scientific Research:** We support and conduct research to understand the behaviour, ecological challenges that threaten flora, fauna and unique geological formations, using data to implement informed, conservation, management strategies.
- **Collaboration:** We collaborate with government agencies, researchers, traditional owners and like-minded organisations to maximise conservation outcome.
- **Custodianship:** We recognise our role as custodians of the Bunkers Conservation Reserve and honour the traditional owners, the Adnyamathanha people.
- **Public Access:** We promote responsible public access that fosters education and environmental appreciation while maintain ecological integrity.
- **Member Benefit:** We engage and empower our members as active stewards of the land and in the management of a critical conservation area that protects indigenous flora, fauna and habitats.

*Katrina Windebank (Membership Officer)*



## New YFRWPA Members

Please make welcome our newest members 2024:

**Adam Windebank:** Adam has been involved in volunteering at the Bunkers from the beginning. Over the last 7 years he has been actively involved in the grassland survey and manned the bar at the last AGM. Since becoming a member Adam has assisted in another survey and culling goats from the Southern end of the Bunkers (Adam is a former H&C member).

**Di Farrell:** Di has been involved in volunteering at the Bunkers over the last 4 years and has actively been involved in the grasslands surveys. Since becoming a member, Di has assisted the Treasurer and has been instrumental in sorting out and getting us all up to date with our membership fees, along with another grassland survey.



**Photograph 3: two regular volunteers in the Herbivore Grassland Survey Team, Di and Adam**

Currently I have 7 people on the waiting list, who are ready to become members. If you feel it's time to relinquish your membership, please let me know and I can assist you to ensure your membership is transferred to someone who will be actively involved in our association.

**Katrina Windebank - Membership Officer**

## Herbivore impact grassland survey 2025

The 2025 survey was completed during the week leading up to Easter, the 13th to 16th of April. Due to warm weather (most days were around 30°C), the survey was conducted across four days, reducing the time in the field each day. To avoid hot conditions, the team headed out each morning between 6.30am and 7.00 am.



**Photograph 4: the Herbivore Survey Team**

The early starts were a great opportunity to see the land in a different light and to see numerous animals and birds, but unfortunately, we also sighted many goats and sheep.

The survey team also observed a great deal of damaged young shrubs and bullock bushes. The damage was often fresh and very extensive. Many of the younger trees may recover. Interestingly, despite sighting many goats and sheep, the scats of these animals were only recorded in 1% percent of the quadrants surveyed. This broadly indicates that even small proportions of goat and sheep scat reported by the survey may likely represent a substantial issue requiring significant intervention and management. It also indicates that the current survey is not appropriate for detecting and describing goat impacts and the importance of considering the introduction of a regular additional survey dedicated to assessing goat impact (a **Goat Browsing Survey** along transects frequented by goats).





**Photograph 5: new life sprouting forth**  
What data is collected and what does it tell us?

Data on the presence and condition of palatable perennial grasses, woody shrubs and animal scats were collected on 564 survey quadrants (1m by 1m) across 13 sites (between 30 and 60 quadrants at each site).



**Photograph 6: Planning the quadrant**

Perennial plants are plants that have a life span greater than 2-years, many species of native grasses can live for decades. The data collected helps to assess the recovery of the land and if our land management practices are effective. By recording the presence and condition of palatable plants (plants eaten by native animals), we can assess the presence of animals in different areas of the park and the availability of food.

Currently the survey focuses on monitoring perennial plant and shrub *coverage*, but another important aspect of land management monitoring is observing the plant *diversity*. Consequently, future surveys should consider ways in which we can record the variety of plants observed along each of the survey transects.



**Photograph 7: the Survey Team at work**

### Key observations from the 2025 survey

- Overall survey results were very similar to 2024 results, with only around 5% of quadrants having intact perennial grasses and 46% quadrants containing grass butts. Grass butts are grasses eaten down to the butt, these grasses are not dead and the majority will regrow in favourable conditions.
- There were zero quadrants containing animal scats in the Southern Exclusion zone indicating that fence maintenance has been effective at keeping animals out of the zone.





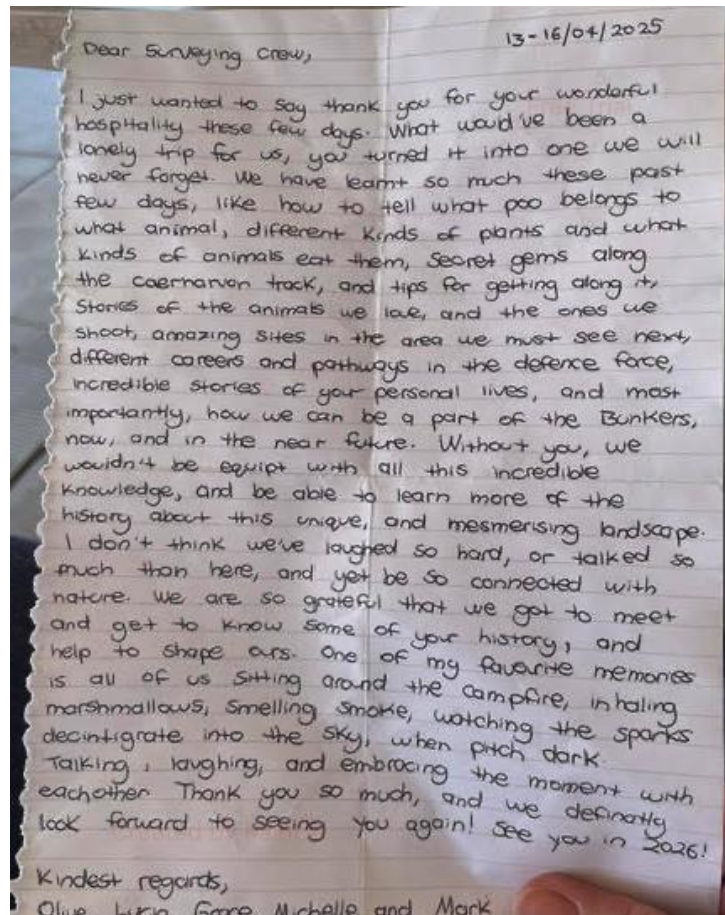
**Photograph 8: a sample of the scats collected**

- Horehound weed was not recorded in any survey quadrants or observed in the vicinity of the survey transects.
- We found cat scat and sited a feral cat near the Northern section of the Caernarvon Track.

### Survey Volunteers

The 2025 survey team consisted of association members: Katrina and Adam Windebank, Di Farrell, Dana Teusner, and second-time volunteer, Adam Brincat-Cotton. The team was also joined by two first-time volunteers, Cynthia Brooks and Mark Campbell.

Big thank you to our volunteers who thoroughly enjoyed participating in the survey and learning about the bunkers. In addition, the Catalonia family came out and observed the survey on the 2nd morning, prior to heading out on their day out on the track.



**Letter 1: Letter of appreciation from a family of volunteers who assisted during the Herbivore Grassland Survey. We loved your involvement and appreciation.**

Even if you are unable to participate in the full survey, we are always happy for people to drop in and tag along out of interest. It is a great way to learn more about this unique environment and makes it more fun for us! All welcome.

If you would like to volunteer for future surveys, the survey is conducted mid-April each year. Please contact Dana Teusner, (teusndn@gmail.com) or Katrina Windebank.

**Table 1: Proportion of Survey quadrants with perennial grasses by herbivore impact, survey region and year.**

		Percentage of quadrants with one or more grass butts						
Survey site region		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
North Bunkers		20.0%	0.0%	1.8%	2.9%	23.0%	17.0%	
North Central Bunkers		15.8%	0.0%	0.0%	12.7%	73.4%	70.0%	
North East Bunkers		23.0%	0.0%	1.7%	2.7%	50.0%	39.0%	
South East Bunkers		26.2%	17.5%	8.6%	2.6%	47.2%	44.0%	
South Ex		56%	38%	37%	11%	56%	28%	6%
<b>All sites</b>		<b>21.7%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>52.4%</b>	<b>46.8%</b>	
		Percentage of quadrants with one or more grazed grasses						
Survey site region		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
North Bunkers		0.8%	0.0%	5.3%	23.5%	7.1%	1.9%	
North Central Bunkers		3.8%	5.3%	9.4%	52.8%	25.0%	3.4%	
North East Bunkers		0.0%	9.7%	6.7%	29.5%	19.1%	5.6%	
South East Bunkers		0.8%	2.5%	1.7%	8.7%	39.8%	17.2%	
South Ex		59.3%	6.9%	0.0%	3.6%	33.3%	57%	
<b>All sites</b>		<b>4.4%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	
		Percentage of quadrants with one or more intact grasses						
Survey site region		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
North Bunkers		3.3%	0.0%	8.8%	4.9%	2.7%	2.8%	
North Central Bunkers		9.2%	1.9%	38.2%	19.8%	3.1%	2.4%	
North East Bunkers		2.0%	6.5%	33.3%	28.6%	2.7%	0.0%	
South East		3.1%	30.0%	39.0%	42.0%	9.3%	4.3%	

<b>Bunkers</b>	%	8%	7%	6%	%	%
	66.	10.	59.	82.	50.	46
<b>South Ex</b>	7%	3%	3%	1%	0%	%
	<b>8.1</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>32.</b>	<b>26.</b>	<b>5.7</b>	
<b>All sites</b>	%	%	8%	7%	%	5%

*Dana Teusner, YFRWPA Herbivore Impact Grassland Survey Team Leader.*

## Conservation

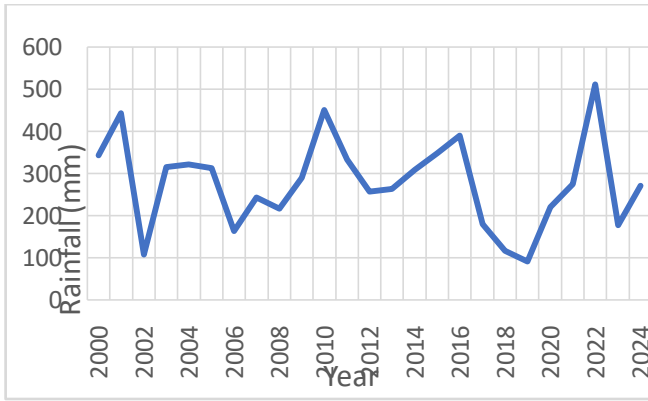
### What are the photo points telling us after more than 20 years of stewardship?

Anecdotal observations in 2023 gave us a significant number of firsts – Sturt Desert pea flowering in the Northern Enclosure, along with other small plants and grasses not seen there before. The Bell Fruit trees near Mount Caernarvon were suckering and showing growth around the bases of many of the mature trees. However, what are the photo points showing us about long term trends for perennials on the Bunkers Conservation Reserve (BCR)?

A 2019 analysis of the photo points from 2004 to 2018 showed positive trends for plant numbers and foliage indicating that we had recruitment and growth of perennial plants since becoming stewards of the BCR. So, while we lost some perennial plants during these years, the positive far outweighed the negative. Results suggested that the loss was natural succession and destocking and herbivore (feral and macro pod) control was helping revegetation processes on the BCR.

A recent analysis, comparing changes since 2018 to 2024, showed that there has been a decline in perennial plant numbers and defoliation in some areas compared to the earlier analysis. This likely reflects the recent drought impacting on foliage and plant numbers. Figure 1 show that, for local weather stations, the years 2017-2019 (referred to as drought years in the rest of the document) received 46% less rainfall than the average rainfall across the years 2000-2024. This would have impacted on perennial vegetation in the area.





**Figure 1. Average Annual Rainfall across Blinman, Hawker and Oraparinna, 2000 – 2024**

Despite these low rainfall years, both maintenance of existing and a slight increase in perennial recruitment is still occurring, although at a slower rate than recorded in the last analysis. Looking at vegetation classes, it seems that *Callitris* (native pine) has struggled since 2018 (see photos of *Callitris* at Lov001) The recent drought years received consistently low rainfall levels, with 2019 recording only 91mm in the local area! *Callitris* are known to be drought resistant but a severe drought will kill them, so maybe the sequential years with low rainfall were just too much for many of them. We also lost some of the juvenile *Eucalyptus* recruited in good rainfall years, especially in creeks. However, *Eucalyptus* is holding its own across the BCR compared to *Callitris*.

**Photograph 8: *Callitris* at Lov001 in 2018.**



**Photograph 9: *Callitris* at Lov001 in 2024. (note dead trees)**



Shrubs across the BCR are also holding their own, depending on the sites they grow in. Some plains areas are showing signs of foliage becoming stressed but the plants themselves are still surviving. Surprisingly, perennial ground cover is doing well and has increased in some areas (see photos of NP001).

**Photograph 10: Ground cover at NP001 in 2018.**



**Photograph 11: Ground cover at NP001 in 2024.**





Overall, the recent analysis has shown that perennial plants are still doing well, despite the poor rainfall across 3 drought years.

Thankfully, since 2019 rainfall levels increased. Based on photo point records, things are still going well for perennials on the BCR.

## Quoll cameras – what is out there when we are not.

Five field cameras and solar panels were purchased in August 2024. These cameras are part of a Western Quoll Detection Program being run in conjunction with the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park (I-FRNP).

The cameras were placed in the field in early September 2024 and are being monitored regularly. If you come across them during your wanderings, please do not disturb them. It could damage our efforts to find out if Western quolls (*Idnya*) or brush-tailed possums (*Virilda*) have successfully dispersed onto the BCR following their reintroduction to the I-FRNP in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

The Western quoll is a nocturnal hunter closely related to the more famous Tasmanian Devil. It feeds on various prey including birds, small mammals and insects. As the top order predator in their habitats, they play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem ([FAME quoll project](#)).

***What we would love to see on the BCR.***



**Photograph 12: Quoll photograph taken on neighbouring Ikara NP.**

Restoring the brush-tailed possum to its natural place in the local environment will improve the quality of native vegetation and restore the chain of regeneration. These possums feed on the mistletoe that is stressing the Flinders Ranges red gums and spread the seeds of important plants like the native orange ([FAME possum project](#)).



**Photograph 13: Brush-tailed possum photograph on the BCR.**

So, what have we seen on the cameras since they have been deployed? A lot photos over the time they have been deployed (40,000 plus). Animals captured by the cameras include rabbits, euros, sheep, goats, an owl nightjar, crows, echidnas, a fox, cats and, while no quolls, we have a photo of a brush tailed possum.

***What we don't want to see.***



**Photograph 14: Feral cats on the BCR.**



**Photograph 15: Dorper sheep wander in.**



**Photograph 16: Dopey goats checking out the camera!**

We are looking forward to capturing a photo of quolls on our cameras as well because personal communications with National Parks staff suggest they should have dispersed onto the BCR or will soon.

So, it is official, the BCR now has possums on it so be careful if you are spotlighting for feral animals like rabbits, cats or foxes. Those eyes in a tree may not be a cat but a possum. Quolls are called a native cat but do not confuse them with the feral cat at any time. Quolls are protected and we want them and possums to thrive.

On a final note, if you are out in the BCR bush keep your eyes open. You may see a possum or a quoll and we would all love to know if you do.

**Jeanine Baker (Conservation Group Leader)**

## **Photos of our Bunkers Conservation Reserve (taken by Tania Asquith)**



**Photograph 17: Lots of greenery**



**Photograph 18: The Bunkers view as far as the blue horizon.**



**Photograph 19: The track through absolute serenity.**

***Thank you Tania.***