

Hidden Vale Tails

HIDDEN VALE WILDLIFE CENTRE

#1
NEWSLETTER
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Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre



Mara and Joey

Welcome to the first edition of Hidden Vale Tails, with news and highlights from the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre.

Located on Old Hidden Vale Station, the Centre is a collaborative partnership between the University of Queensland and The Turner Family Foundation. It provides unique hands-on wildlife research and teaching opportunities so that students and researchers can develop next-generation animal management and conservation techniques.

In this edition, we take a closer look at the Hidden Vale property's koalas and read how PhD student Megan Edwards is combining microchip-automated burrows and animal behavioural techniques to teach bandicoots the resilience skills they need to avoid predators.



Scan here to read more about research themes and current projects.

TAKING THE LEAD ON *endangered species conservation*

A recent report by the Queensland Audit Office found that Queensland has no strategy or framework for conserving or managing threatened species. The damning report concluded that the department charged with the protection of threatened species "is unlikely to effectively conserve and recover many threatened species".

A primary goal of the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre is to breed and release threatened wildlife species to develop new research strategies and techniques. Captive breeding agreements are required to undertake this work.

Captive breeding has been highly successful in other mainland states. However, Queensland has very few captive breeding permits issued. This is despite having the highest proportion of threatened vertebrate species in the country.

In 2019, the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre team intend to work with other leading wildlife centres, parks and zoos to develop a position to take to the Queensland Government to promote the development of an effective, systematic captive breeding approval process that conserves and protects threatened species in Queensland.

One land, many uses

THE SECRET LIFE OF *koalas*

Koalas in South-East Queensland are threatened by habitat loss, dog attacks, vehicle strikes and disease. Hidden Vale is home to a healthy population of koalas, under the watchful eye of Chief Vet Dr Andrew Tribe.

"We have 19 adults and five joeys on the property with either collar or anklet trackers so we can monitor where they are and where they are moving to and from," Dr Tribe said. "Some of our koalas move quite long distances; up to 1 km in a 12 hour period."

Each of the Hidden Vale koalas has been named - including one troublesome character, "Skroo", who shares his name with The Turner Family Foundation's Graham "Skroo" Turner.

"He's one of our bigger koalas and he drops his collar a bit, possibly during fights with other males," Dr Tribe said. "Only one koala, 'O'Hara', has moved away from the colony."

Dr Tribe said initial health checks indicated that the population was encouragingly healthy.

Many Queensland koalas carry Chlamydia, but do not always show clinical symptoms (known as chlamydiosis). The symptoms include eye, urinary tract, respiratory tract and reproductive tract infections, and the latter can lead to infertility in female koalas.

"A number of our koalas tested positive to Chlamydia but are showing no symptoms so that is something we will be monitoring closely," Dr Tribe said. "Tracking is a very expensive but an incredibly useful way to know what's going on with our koalas, and ensure they are safe."



WATCH THIS SPACE

The Centre's foyer area is being transformed into an engaging interpretation space that will educate and entertain tertiary and school students, visitors and guests to Hidden Vale.

Upcoming work will include a diorama recreating the local landscape and featuring several native animal species. Further work is scheduled early in 2019.



WHO'S A CLEVER *Bandicoot?*

Keeping our native wildlife safe from predators requires resilience as well as protection. And training native animals to avoid predators is a special skill of UQ behavioural ecologist Megan Edwards.

Her "school for bandicoots" featured on **Channel 10's Scope program**. Her work is delivering impressive results teaching bandicoots new behaviours to recognise and avoid predators. Safe burrows using microchip-automated doors are also providing safe refuge.

It is hoped that the Centre's bandicoot program will provide a model for protection of endangered species like the Greater Bilby.

HOW TO *Train* A BANDICOOT

- Using scent
- Visual recognition
- High-tech doors on man-made burrows

Species

SNAPSHOT

Our research staff and students are working with a range of native species. Visitors to the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre can read more about these species in our Interpretation Room and may have the opportunity to see our researchers in action.

FAT-TAILED DUNNARTS

Our fat-tailed dunnarts are thriving, having moved in to the Centre almost a year ago.

A favourite of HVWC Manager Dalene Adam, the dunnarts were exhibiting 'normal' behaviours, including reproductive, grooming and foraging, from their very first day.

"Within one week we had our first HVWC babies – about the size of a grain of rice," Ms Adam said.

Changes to the captive breeding system have ensured the long-term genetic health of the dunnart colony. A new caging and air filtering system is keeping the animals happy and active.



MAHOGANY GLIDERS

The critically endangered mahogany glider's only native range is in Far North Queensland.

All gliders have settled in well at HVWC and have been observed foraging for insects and fruit (native mulberry).

HOUSEKEEPING

Built with the significant philanthropic backing of The Turner Family Foundation, and the work of UQ scientists, HVWC is developing a showcase of research projects and husbandry techniques.

There's a lot happening behind the scenes. As well as standard operating procedures, risk assessments, chemical manifests, husbandry routines and schedules, the Centre is using technology to improve data collection methods and set a new standard for native animal research and conservation.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

As part of The Turner Family Foundation's ongoing commitment to fostering high impact research within the Hidden Vale Wildlife Project, funding to support postgraduate research projects is made available in quarterly funding rounds. Current Hidden Vale postgraduate research students are eligible to apply for this funding to offset the costs of equipment, fieldwork expenses, laboratory analyses, conference attendance, and training. So why not look at doing postgraduate studies at the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre. For more details see the website: www.hiddenvalewildlife.uq.edu.au

PARTNERSHIPS



The World Wildlife Fund is partnering with the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre on projects to help conserve the koala population. Work includes tree planting and building culverts to direct koalas and wildlife away from roads. Watch the WWF-Aus video [here: https://bit.ly/2BMqjnm](https://bit.ly/2BMqjnm)



Out & About

Our staff and researchers have attended and presented at prominent conferences and events. The Centre's David Stent Lecture Theatre has also been regularly used to host seminars, forums and groups.



SIGN UP

To subscribe to *Hidden Vale Tails* or to find out more about the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre, visit www.hiddenvalewildlife.uq.edu.au

SUPPORTING AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE *preservation*



A love of the Australian bush, its flora and fauna, and a determination to take action to preserve and protect our native species and their habitat are the driving forces behind The Turner Family Foundation.

Headed by Flight Centre and Spicers Retreats founders Jude and Graham "Skroo" Turner, TTFF has committed to more than \$20 million to build and run the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre over the next 30 years. UQ Alumni Graham Turner and son Matt, along with Jude Turner and daughter Jo, continue to direct their philanthropic efforts to protecting the Australian bush and its unique wildlife.

To find out more and to show your support, visit The Turner Family Foundation website at: www.turnerfamilyfoundation.com.au