

THE ARK



EDITION #9

THE HISTORIC RETURN

The Tasmanian devil returns to the Barrington Tops for the first time in 3,000 years
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AUSSIE ARK PARTNERS WITH WIRES

Read all about this landmark partnership
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DIRECT FROM THE PRESIDENT

"A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children."

John James Audubon

If you would have told me years ago that Aussie Ark would accomplish all it did this past few months, I would not have believed you. I am truly blown away by what we have achieved as a community this year, especially in light of the devastating bushfire crisis and the global COVID-19 pandemic we are currently living in.

In spite of our hectic world continuously and rapidly changing, Aussie Ark has remained steadfast in its mission to create a long-term future for Australia's threatened wildlife such as the Tasmanian devil and the Brush-tailed rock-wallaby through habitat and species recovery. For Aussie Ark, 2020 was punctuated with historical milestones, celebrated partnerships and overall great successes.

The staff at Aussie Ark and I feel so incredibly lucky to have witnessed the historic return of two iconic native species to the Barrington Tops: the Tasmanian devil and the Eastern quoll. The first having been extinct on mainland Australian for 3,000 years and the second extinct in the Barrington Tops region since 1963. Both species were released into our wild 400Ha Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary. Additionally, in wake of the 2019-2020 bushfires, Aussie Ark has returned rescued platypus back to the Barrington Tops' waterways. Releasing animals back into the wild must be one of the favourite parts of what I do. Whilst it is a rewarding process, it is also very demanding as a lot of work goes into returning endangered species to the wild.

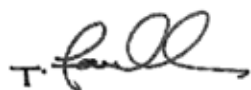
Furthermore, Aussie Ark has cemented a landmark partnership with WIRES, Australia's largest animal rescue organisation, and renewed its 3-year partnership with long-time supporter Glencore. This year, Aussie Ark also received an overwhelming amount of support from long-time partners such as Global Wildlife Conservation and together we are working towards creating brighter futures for our native Australian wildlife.

Aussie Ark additionally welcomed over 130 babies, including 46 Eastern quoll joeys, 69 Tasmanian devil joeys, and 20 Manning River turtle hatchlings. It is wonderful to see our insurance populations growing strongly and steadily!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for believing in Aussie Ark's vision and projects as much as we do. The Aussie Ark team and I have many plans for the future of Aussie Ark and are looking forward to bringing them to reality. I cannot wait to keep growing this fantastic organisation alongside all of you!

With your support, Aussie Ark is paving the way to the restoration and rewilding of the Barrington Tops.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Faulkner – President
Aussie Ark



VISION

Creating a long-term future for Australia's threatened wildlife.

MISSION STATEMENT

- To protect Australia's threatened species with robust insurance populations,
- To create healthy ecosystems within Aussie Ark sanctuaries and through rewilding,
- To have long-term tangible outcomes for the species in our care,
- To be a proactive, professional, transparent, and effective organisation

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HISTORIC RETURN OF THE TASMANIAN DEVIL TO MAINLAND AUSTRALIA IN 3,000 YEARS



For the first time in 3,000 years, the Tasmanian devil is back in the wild on mainland Australia! Aussie Ark, in partnership with Global Wildlife Conservation and WildArk, released 11 Tasmanian devils into its a 400-hectare (nearly 1,000 acres) Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary. Actors Chris Hemsworth and Elsa Pataky, who are WildArk supporters, helped release some of the animals into their new home.

The release marks an important moment in history as the return of the iconic animal to mainland plays a critical role in rewilding Australia - the country with the world's worst mammal extinction rate.

“In 100 years, we are going to be looking back at this day as the day that set in motion the ecological restoration of an entire country,”

Tim Faulkner, Aussie Ark President

“Not only is this the reintroduction of one of Australia’s beloved animals, but of an animal that will engineer the entire environment around it, restoring and rebalancing our forest ecology after centuries of devastation from introduced foxes and cats and other invasive predators. Due to this reintroduction and all of the hard work leading up to it, someday we will see Tasmanian devils living throughout the great eastern forests as they did 3,000 years ago,” Tim said of the momentous occasion.

Tasmanian devils vanished entirely from mainland Australia in large part because they were

outcompeted by introduced dingoes, which hunt in packs. Dingoes never made it to Tasmania, but across the island state, a transmissible, painful and fatal disease called Devil Facial Tumor Disease (DFTD) — the only known contagious cancer — decimated up to 90% of the wild population of Tasmanian devils. Only 25,000 devils are left in the wild of Tasmania today.

For the last decade, the Aussie Ark team has been building an insurance population of Tasmanian devils and learning everything they can about the animals. This includes learning about their reproductive physiology, behaviour, and ecological needs, all leading up to the reintroduction which took place on September 10th, and followed a successful assisted trial release with fifteen Tasmanian devils. Twenty-six total devils now call the wild of mainland Australia home.

Aussie Ark selected the particular devils for reintroduction based on those most suitable to breed with one another without any inbreeding. The Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary prevents the spread of disease, feral pests, noxious weeds and fire. The wild sanctuary also keeps cars out, ensuring that the devils learn not to associate cars with food—an association that could be deadly when they are more widely released.

Aussie Ark’s Tasmanian devil breeding program is the most successful conservation breeding facility for the endangered species on mainland Australia. Aussie Ark founded its Tasmanian devil breeding program in 2011 with 44 individuals. Today, Aussie Ark is home to more than 200, which is about **cont...**



50% of the entire captive insurance population spread across mainland Australia. Over the years, more than 390 devils have been born and raised at Aussie Ark in a way that encourages and fosters their natural behaviours, helping ensure that they maintain all the skills they need to survive in the wild.

“Without Aussie Ark’s incredible work and perseverance over all of these years, the recent devil reintroduction would not have been possible and instead of looking forward to the recovery of the species, we would be watching the devil slip into extinction,”

Don Church, Global Wildlife Conservation President

“This is an incredible example of how to rewild our planet, bringing back the natural systems to the benefit of all life on Earth.”

Not only does the reintroduction bode well for the recovery of the Tasmanian devil, but as native apex predators and the world’s largest carnivorous marsupials, the species help control feral cats and foxes that threaten other endangered and endemic species. As scavengers, they help keep their home clean and free of disease.

“The re-introduction of devils to mainland Australia is a game-changer for conservation in this country, not only building a robust and genetically healthy population outside of Tasmania but also paving the way for future introductions that the Aussie

Ark team are already mapping out,” said Mark Hutchinson, co-founder of WildArk. “Having partnered with Aussie Ark and Global Wildlife Conservation on the Koala Comeback Campaign after the bushfires this year, we’ve witnessed first-hand their commitment to ecological restoration in Eastern Australia and we couldn’t be prouder to now support the Devil Comeback. The groundwork is being laid for a broad, nationwide effort to rewild Australia and help our little critters find their niche again.”

This release is the first of three planned reintroductions. In the next two years, Aussie Ark will do two additional releases of 20 devils. The animals will be monitored through regular surveys, radio collars fit with transmitters and camera traps. This will allow the researchers to learn about how the devils are faring, where they are claiming territory, what challenges they are facing, what they are eating, and whether they are reproducing. All of this information will help to inform future releases, including in Tasmania and elsewhere on the mainland, to continually refine the process.

The release of these Tasmanian devil individuals marked an important chapter in History, placing Aussie Ark at the forefront of the everlasting fight to return the iconic species to mainland Australia.

Head to aussieark.org.au to learn more about #DevilComeback and to support Aussie Ark in its mission to save the Tasmanian devil from extinction.

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– TIM FAULKNER
PRESIDENT OF AUSSIE ARK



PHOTO BY DAVID STOWE

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUSTRALIA'S CARBON SINKS FORESTS



PHOTO BY DAVID STOWE

Australia is known for its dreamy beaches, divine landscapes and its outstanding biodiversity, but also for its grand forests and the wildlife that resides within them. The importance of Australia's forests cannot be underestimated – their role is vital.

Forests constitute 17% of Australia's land area, totalling 134 million hectares. They provide habitats for diverse ecosystems, protect wildlife and act as carbon sinks. Carbon sink forests are natural reservoirs that absorb and sequester carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere, filtering the air we breathe by reducing the concentration of CO₂ in the air. Each year, Australia's native forests and plants sequester more than four million tonnes of CO₂.

“Forests offer protection to our wildlife and are the playground of so many ecosystems. They are the lungs of the Earth and the home of life itself,”

Tim Faulkner, Aussie Ark President

“The millions of hectares lost to the bushfires cannot be brought back. Nevertheless, we have to do everything that we can to protect what's left, and more.”

Unfortunately, Australia's forests were one of the first victims of the recent horrific bushfires – with more than 20% of its area gone in flames. Fires, whether occurring voluntarily or involuntarily, deforestation and other

elements, play a crucial role in the decline of forest ecosystems. Additionally, forests' decline weakens the ability of these carbon sinks to sequester CO₂.

Aussie Ark took a commitment to restore and protect Australia's forests by launching its first tree protection initiative. Over the coming months, the Aussie Ark team plans on planting new trees, protecting and preserving the old and working towards expanding their protection within the Barrington Tops region. Tree planting and growing forests not only provide a new habitat to many animals and organisms such as the Koala, but they also reduce the emissions of burning fossil fuels. Furthermore, younger trees from temperate forests are able to absorb CO₂ quicker and in larger quantities in comparison to mature trees, making the location of the plantation ideal.

Through this initiative, Aussie Ark aims to impact the trajectory of wild Koalas in New South Wales by protecting approximately 7% of the wild population. Aussie Ark is committed to protecting land for the Koalas against habitat destruction and bushfires as well as taking care of weed management.

Visit aussieark.org.au/koala-ark to learn more about Aussie Ark's initiative to save the remaining Koala population of NSW.

AUSSIE ARK RETURNS THE EASTERN QUOLL TO MAINLAND AUSTRALIA



Aussie Ark returned the extinct Eastern quoll to the Barrington Tops for the first time since its disappearance in the 1960s. 28 Eastern quolls were released into the Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary, marking their return a historic moment in the conservation world.

The quolls are part of the Aussie Ark's Eastern quoll breeding program. Through the program, Aussie Ark has successfully bred this vulnerable species in the Barrington Tops and now hold almost 90 individuals, a number that grows with every breeding season.

Aussie Ark's President Tim Faulkner says of the release: "Our ultimate goal is to bolster the Eastern quoll species' population and rewild the Barrington Tops. The release of these 28 individuals is a massive step in the right direction."

Eastern quolls have been extinct on mainland Australia since 1963 due to habitat fragmentation and predation from feral foxes, cats and domestic dogs. Aussie Ark's fenced wild sanctuary thus provides refuge and healthy habitat, removed of feral predators, to the endangered mammal.

These ideal conditions allow the species to thrive and therefore breed effectively. "By replicating the needed healthy and safe environment, I have hope of joeys being bred into our sanctuary," continues Tim. Faulkner

"These kinds of historic releases are the result of the impressive long-term vision and commitment of the Aussie Ark team," said Don Church, President of Global Wildlife Conservation, who supported this release.

"By strategically reintroducing the right species in the right habitats, Aussie Ark is leading the way on rewilding Australia, restoring the ecosystems to their original state. This benefits not only the quolls, the ecosystems in which they live, and Australia, but helps ensure a healthier planet for all life on Earth," he continues.

Aussie Ark, with the support of partner organisations like Global Wildlife Conservation, has the know-how and ability to change the fate of Australian wildlife. A wilder future is on the horizon for Australia with Aussie Ark.

You can help Aussie Ark ensure a future for the Eastern quoll population by donating at aussieark.org.au



AUSSIE ARK PARTNERS WITH WIRES IN LANDMARK PARTNERSHIP FOR AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE

Aussie Ark is delighted to announce its partnership with WIRES, Australia's largest animal rescue organisation, who recently granted us with the amount of \$1,045,000. Aussie Ark is committed to providing a long-term future for Australia's threatened wildlife and WIRES generous support will have a considerable impact on the deliverance of Aussie Ark's conservation efforts.

In the wake of the devastating bushfires spawning from the end of 2019 to the beginning of 2020, Aussie Ark and WIRES were at the forefront of the crisis and have been faced with the loss of Australian native species at an unprecedented rate, in addition to the long-term environmental issues of the crisis. As billions of animals perished in the fires and their habitats suffered tremendous damages, the two organisations stood out by their proactive on-the-ground relief actions.

WIRES has a mission to rescue, rehabilitate, assist in the recovery and preserve Australian wildlife, and has been doing so for over 30 years. Its ongoing support of smaller organisations having the same mission and values makes WIRES a predominant player in the wildlife recovery community. Now looking at long-term recovery initiatives for the conservation of imperilled wildlife and habitats, the New South Wales based organisation's partnership with Aussie Ark is a step in the right direction.

“My team and I are looking forward to working closely with WIRES,”

Tim Faulkner, Aussie Ark President

“By joining forces with WIRES, Aussie Ark will be able to increase twofold its efforts and outcomes towards the long-term recovery and conservation of native threatened fauna and their habitat.”

WIRES CEO Leanne Taylor states: “The rate of decline of so many native animal species is nothing short of alarming. We are so grateful that organisations such as Aussie Ark are committed to making a difference. Their efforts in protecting Australia's rich fauna diversity will help ensure our unique native wildlife is sustained for future generations.”

Aussie Ark is now in a unique position of being “project-ready” and has thus put in place an ambitious plan with the objective of delivering multiple projects within the next few years. Among others, Aussie Ark wishes to expand the number of threatened species under its care and thereby its species' breeding programs to establish robust insurance populations for eventual reintroduction into the wild. Aussie Ark is also committed to rescuing Australian native species from a foreseeable demise, in part, by means of survey, monitoring and in-situ management.

WIRES funds will be directed towards the support of species recovery and habitat programs. Species such as the Koala, Davies' Tree frog and Broad-toothed rat will benefit from these programs in the short and long-term, as one of many aims is to maintain genetic and biological diversity in their population, as well as bolster their populations' numbers.

Aussie Ark is grateful for the support of WIRES, and together with partners Global Wildlife Conservation, NSW Government and Glencore, we are expecting to achieve great things for wildlife conservation.



AUSSIE ARK RETURNS PLATYPUS TO THE WILD AFTER BUSHFIRE RESCUE



During Australia's bushfire crisis, the world watched as Australian land was flattened and left covered in ash. Its wildlife was some of the worst affected by the fires, with an estimated one billion animals thought to have perished.

During this time, Aussie Ark staff were in the field providing supplementary food sources, relocating animals and bringing into care those that needed veterinary attention. Among the species rescued by Aussie Ark were five platypus. The individuals were severely malnourished, and their pelts were showing signs of extreme distress. The animals were found in muddy pools of water no bigger than backyard swimming pools and were essentially swimming in their own faecal matter. They sadly had little to no food available and rising water temperatures threatening their lives.

With rains now falling and river systems repairing, Aussie Ark has been out releasing the animals back into the waters they were rescued from. Each waterway the platypus was collected from has been carefully surveyed to establish water quality, abundance of food and disease in preparation for the release.

Aussie Ark President Tim Faulkner said of the rescues: "It was heartbreaking to see our unique Platypus suffering, they are such a beautiful species. They were swimming up and down the small water holes they still had left in search of food with nowhere else to go".

He continued: "Platypus are notoriously shy, and it is highly unusual for them to be so out in the open like they were, the fires would have driven them to do this."

Commenting on the release, Mr Faulkner said: "This is the moment we have worked for. These wacky creatures belong in the wild and that is exactly where we want to see them!"

The Aussie Ark team views the release of these platypus individuals to their respective waters as a beautiful and hopeful way to round up these past couple of months.

Aussie Ark will continue to monitor the waterways to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the animals, and that no further intervention is needed. Australia's wildlife is truly resilient, and this tale of recovery is proof of their ability to come back!



FERAL PESTS: A TALE OF WILDLIFE ANNIHILATION IN AUSTRALIA



Over millions of years, Australian animals and plants have adapted to living on an isolated continent. The arrival of European settlers, however, perturbed the natural balance of the aged ecosystem by introducing to the mainland a range of feral animals now competing with the local wildlife for habitat, food and shelter.

This predation threat is a driving force behind Australia earning the worst mammal extinction rate on Earth. Indeed, at least 29 of Australia's 273 mammal species have gone extinct since European colonisation and an additional 21%, which is the equivalent of about 57 species, are predicted to go extinct at a rate of one to two species per decade without swift conservation action.

Feral predators such as cats and foxes have since their introduction on mainland Australia been putting new pressure on previously untouched and secluded ecosystems. Feral pests are annihilating populations spanning from insects to birds to reptiles and especially small mammal populations.

They act as predators towards species, compete with them for food and shelter and act as disease and parasites carriers. Without direct action, introduced pests' destructive practices play a major part in the demise of already threatened species.

Indirect threats from feral pests are seen in soil and waterway deterioration. For instance, many animals rely on a constant supply of seeds and greenery to survive. Therefore, degraded or eaten vegetation that provides food and shelter for diverse species by feral pests put the vulnerable native wildlife under considerable pressure.

Unfortunately, those introduced animals have few predators on the Australian continent are less predisposed to fatal diseases and have high reproductive rates. As a result, their populations are hardly decreasing, in addition to their rapid reproduction when favourable conditions are presented.

Alone, feral cats are responsible for killing over 2 billion

Australian native birds, mammals, and reptiles each year in Australia which adds to the already other substantial threats such as land clearing, fire and climate change. Feral cats threaten the survival of over 100 native Australian species that still cling to life today. They have caused the extinction of some ground-dwelling birds and small to medium-sized mammals and they are found throughout Australia in all habitats, including forests, woodlands, grasslands, wetlands and arid areas covering around 98% of the Australian landmass.

In response to this crisis, Aussie Ark has proactively put in place feral-free sanctuaries to which native species are being returned. Once bred to sufficient numbers in Aussie Ark's breeding facilities, species like the Long-nosed Potoroo and Rufous Bettong will be released to live a wild existence with the absence of feral predators, comparable to the way they have evolved.

Aussie Ark is working closely with Hunter Local Land Services (HLLS) to ensure that its important ecological sanctuaries remain free of pest animals. HLLS provide advice and assistance in eradicating declared pest species and developing vertebrate pest management plans.

Introduced animals have been cultivating an unrivalled reign of terror all around the Australian continent for almost two centuries. Numerous programs such as trapping and fencing are now in place to reduce the damages caused by feral pests but their eradication is sadly a lifelong challenge.

Head to aussieark.org.au to learn further about Aussie Ark's feral-free sanctuaries.

AUSSIE ARK CELEBRATES BIRTH OF ENDANGERED EASTERN QUOLLS



Aussie Ark celebrated the birth of 46 Eastern quoll joeys at its breeding facility in 2020. The endangered species has called Aussie Ark home since 2017 when the facility stepped in to bring the species back to mainland Australia!

The weight of the task is not lost on Aussie Ark and we have totally WILD aims to rewild lost species in the Barrington Tops of NSW.

“It’s an exciting time of year for the whole team when we do the Eastern quoll pouch check. These creatures are so important, and they fall into a really unique niche in the ecosystem,” Aussie Ark President Tim Faulkner said. “Eastern quolls were once common throughout Australia, but sadly can now only be found in the wild in Tasmania. We have big plans at Aussie Ark to reintroduce them back to the landscape in the Barrington Tops of NSW.”

The cause of their mainland extinction is due to introduced feral pests such as cats and foxes, as well as poisoning and trapping. Across Tasmania, quoll numbers have declined by more than 50% since 2009 and are showing no sign of recovery. It is estimated that approximately 10,000 are left in Tasmania, but numbers have fallen rapidly with Eastern quolls edging closer to extinction.

The vision of Aussie Ark is to establish a robust insurance population of Australian threatened native mammal species and release them into sanctuaries protected from unnatural threats. The vision came to reality this past September as Aussie Ark celebrated the release of its first group of Eastern quolls into its 400Ha Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary.

The success of the Eastern quoll program at Aussie Ark is only possible thanks to the ongoing support of Aussie Ark partners including Global Wildlife Conservation, Australian Geographic and the Foundation for Australia’s Most Endangered Species (FAME).

You can help Aussie Ark’s mission of saving endangered native wildlife from extinction by symbolically adopting an Eastern quoll for as little as \$25 a month or \$300 a year. Head to [**aussieark.org.au/adopt**](https://aussieark.org.au/adopt) to find out more.



AUSSIE ARK BREAKS GROUNDS FOR ITS HUNTER RIVER AND BELL'S TURTLES FACILITY

Aussie Ark is thrilled to announce that it has broken ground on a new specialised breeding facility for the endangered Hunter River and Bell's turtles. Located at the Australian Reptile Park, the facility will be the first to be open to the public, allowing wildlife enthusiasts to experience first-hand the work Aussie Ark is doing to save both endangered turtle species.

The construction of the new facility was made possible with the immense and continuous support from Aussie Ark's partners, including, NSW's Local Land Services who generously contributed \$64,000 to the project, and individual donors.

"I am beyond excited about the construction of the new facility. We have spent many hours planning and designing it to perfection. Our turtles deserve the best,"

Tim Faulkner, Aussie Ark President

"We have experienced firsthand the destruction and degradation of their habitat and the result of predation from feral foxes and cats. This sorrowful truth has encouraged us, even more, to secure a future for the threatened Hunter River and Bell's turtles."

In collaboration with the Australian Reptile Park and the NSW Government, Aussie Ark has started the construction of its second specialised breeding facility for the species at the Australian Reptile Park.

The facility is being built to create the perfect environment to enable insurance populations to be established in an effort to bolster the species numbers. Aussie Ark aims to be releasing between 200 to 300 turtles per year once the program is up and running. The wild release will consist of hatchlings of 1-2 years of age having originated either from the breeding facility or from eggs collected from the wild and incubated by Aussie Ark staff.

Mr Faulkner continues: "As this is the second facility we are building in connection with the Save *Our Turtles* project, Aussie Ark and the Australian Reptile Park's team are more experienced and above all confident in the capability of this conservation method in establishing robust and healthy insurance populations."

These turtles are essential to NSW's freshwater ecosystems being nature's vacuums – they clean up our beautiful river systems, keep the aquatic vegetation in balance, and maintain the stunning waterways. Sadly, apart from Aussie Ark's initiative, there is currently no conservation plan for these species coming from other organisations.

Head to **aussieark.org.au** to offer your support to Aussie Ark and donate towards the future of our native freshwater turtles.



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OUR NATIVE
FRESHWATER TURTLES
DESERVE THE BEST!

– TIM FAULKNER
PRESIDENT OF AUSSIE ARK



GLENCORE RENEWS PARTNERSHIP WITH AUSSIE ARK



Aussie Ark is pleased to be renewing its 3-year partnership with Glencore. The natural resource company pledges to grant Aussie Ark \$200,000 each year for the next three years towards the organisation's conservation outcomes.

Aussie Ark has been working for almost a decade to establish robust insurance populations of imperilled native Australian wildlife and to create healthy ecosystems within its sanctuaries and through rewilding in the Barrington Tops of NSW. Glencore's ongoing support has had a significant impact on Aussie Ark's deliverables, especially during the recent bushfire crisis.

Glencore has been operating in Australia for more than 20 years and employs more than 18,700 employees in the coal, copper, cobalt, nickel, oil and zinc industries. Glencore is not only an employer, but it is also a devoted supporter of local organisations. Indeed, the company recognises its responsibility to contribute positively to society.

"We are immensely grateful for Glencore's continuous generosity and their enthusiasm to provide threatened species a long-term and secure future. Aussie Ark values Glencore's commitment and the renewal of our partnership," says Aussie Ark President Tim Faulkner.

Tim Faulkner continues: "Partnerships like this one are very important to us, as conservation needs advocates in all sectors. Having been working with Glencore for the last 3 years, we have developed a great rapport and are looking forward to working together on current and future species and habitat recovery projects."

"Glencore recognises that our mining assets have direct and indirect impacts on the land we own and manage," says Craig Strudwick, Community Relations Manager for

Glencore's coal business in Australia. "We put a strong focus on returning mined land to self-sustaining native ecosystems, agricultural use or other suitable purposes that meet government requirements and community expectations. We also seek local organisations to partner with and, together, make a lasting positive contribution to the environment. In Aussie Ark, we have found a passionate partner whose world-class work to protect endangered wildlife is important for all of Australia. We are delighted to extend our support for another three years."

Aussie Ark will utilise the funds to further its mission to protect endangered Australian natives like the Tasmanian devil and the Brush-tailed rock-wallaby, and deliver new projects, such as the construction of Koala Ark – an initiative aiming to plant new trees and disease manage the Koala population of NSW, then creating Australia's largest wild and disease-free population of Koalas.



AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE RATS: THE BENEFITS OF FENCED ENVIRONMENT



SWAMP RAT
PHOTO BY MAX JACKSON

Australia is home to more animal species than any other developed country, with most of the nation's wildlife found nowhere else on Earth. However, Australian mammals are disappearing at an unprecedented rate. Indeed, in the last 400 years, one out of three mammal extinctions have occurred in Australia.

Sadly, some species are receiving more attention than others, which is the case with Australian native rats who generally get overshadowed by "cuter" animals such as the Koala or the Tasmanian devil. The vulnerable Hastings River rat was even renamed Hastings River mouse in order to make it seem more appealing to the public.

Interestingly enough, Australia holds nearly 65 species of native rodents, which accounts for almost one quarter of the mammal species across the country. Unfortunately, 15 out of 65 of those species are considered extinct, due to predation by feral foxes and cats.

Over the years, Aussie Ark has become a safe haven for many species that are not being directly protected by its sanctuary. Indeed, the fully fenced sanctuary has been attracting a diverse array of animals who seek the protection of its feral-free environment.

When it comes to rodents, Aussie Ark's keepers have started to notice a rise in the numbers of native rodents and the decline in the number of introduced rodents inside the sanctuary. It is a good example of how Australian native species can re-establish themselves in absence of feral predators.

In an environment like Aussie Ark, fencing is beneficial to native rat species and aids them to return to their natural ecosystem and thrive. Native rats, like the Swamp rat, who

are rarely seen in places where human traffic is frequent, are reproducing at a relatively fast rate inside the sanctuary now that they are not being preyed upon.

Rats have been branded with a bad reputation and their role in the ecosystem is too little recognised by many. For example, the Swamp rat holds a significant part in the food chain by being a food source for snakes and birds, spreading seeds and by playing a role of pollinator by feeding on pollen.

Aussie Ark refuses to overlook the contribution of native rats any longer. In this spirit, Aussie Ark has future intentions of protecting the endangered Broad-toothed rat from extinction and hope to influence conservation efforts in that direction.



BUSH RAT
PHOTO BY GA HOYNE

OPEN DAYS – SPRING HOLIDAYS

Back by popular demand, Aussie Ark opened its doors to the general public for the third holiday season, this time during the Spring School Holidays! Open days are the perfect occasion for Aussie Ark's supporters to experience first-hand the incredible work the organisation's team is doing to return some of our most iconic native threatened wildlife to the Barrington Tops.

"I believe it is so important to show our supporters exactly what it is we do here at Aussie Ark, and what better way to do that than have them come by," says Tim Faulkner, Aussie Ark President.

Whilst Aussie Ark only conducts small private tours each month, the open days spanned from the 26th of September to the 11th of October 2020 and allowed visitors to partake in shorter tours every single day.

Over 850 visitors walked through Aussie Ark's doors to meet some of Australia's most endangered species. On their tour, visitors met Tasmanian devils in their wild enclosures and were able to get up close with Eastern quolls.

Aussie Ark's team loved to be part of people's journey to connect with nature. Aussie Ark

believes in giving its supporters the opportunity to experience the conservation work the organisation's staff do every day.

Aussie Ark cannot wait to host open days again very soon!



AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC EXPEDITION 2020



Aussie Ark held, from the 7th to the 9th of October, the third edition of the beloved hands-on experience that is the Australian Geographic Expedition and welcomed eight participants.

This year's expedition was a great success. As the current COVID-19 pandemic was still present, social distancing rules, as well as deep cleaning and sanitising, were taken into account and followed throughout the three-day event.

Together with Aussie Ark President Tim Faulkner, participants in the expedition had the opportunity to immerse themselves with our native Australian wildlife at Aussie Ark's facility located high in the Barrington Tops of NSW. The Australian Geographic expedition allowed participants to get their hands dirty by assisting in feeding and monitoring Tasmanian devil and Eastern quoll individuals, as well as learning about what goes into running and maintaining a facility like Aussie Ark.

Aussie Ark is overly thankful for the continuous support and generosity of Australian Geographic and for supplying caps and cooler bag for each of the participants.

AUSSIE ARK'S FIRE AND WEED MANAGEMENT PLEDGE

Isolated in the mountains of NSW, Aussie Ark wild sanctuaries are at the mercy of various elements and the surrounding vegetation. This brings forward the reality of possible threats such as weed and fire that can be detrimental to the Aussie Ark sites and animals. Aussie Ark staff have therefore been prepared to deal with any eventualities and have been advised to follow detailed management plans prepared by Aussie Ark management team, in counsel with rural fire authorities, to react in the best way possible.

For many years now, Aussie Ark has waged a war on the Scotch Broom, a highly invasive and noxious introduced weed that has taken over 10,000Ha in the Barrington Tops. Introduced by the European settlers to Australia, Scotch Broom thrives in cooler conditions and forms a dense group of bushes. The march of Scotch Broom poses a significant threat to the future of many endangered species, including terrestrial orchids and other specialised plants in the highlands. If not controlled, the weed can modify native ecosystems by increasing the frequency and intensity of fire, changing vegetation structure, altering soil chemistry and providing harbour for invasive animals.

To remedy the situation, Aussie Ark has been working with the Hunter Weed Authority to eradicate the invasive weed by following an intensive multi-faceted management plan involving fire, herbicide spraying and the cut and painting method. Aussie Ark aims to bring the bush back so that the native flora and fauna thrive once again.

Weed control is a challenging and time-consuming task and without it, invasive weeds present a real risk of bushfire ignition. Aussie Ark site is located in the Upper Hunter Liverpool Ranges area, where about 300 bushfires occur each year - with only a small number of which are considered major fire incidents. Aussie Ark is surrounded on one side by pastoral land, which represents a low burn risk for grass fires because of regular grazing. On the other, by white gum and string bark forest, which are made of bushland with upper canopy growth and ground cover causing a higher risk of a fire travelling through the canopy or a grass fire underneath.

Aussie Ark sanctuaries are vulnerable to their surrounding environment. Whether a fire is ignited naturally or with human intervention, a catastrophe can happen anytime, anywhere.

In an attempt to anticipate various scenarios and to ensure the safety of Aussie Ark animals and staff members, a meticulous fire management plan has been put in place in case of emergencies. Aussie Ark staff are advised to follow directions given by Fire and Rescue NSW, Gloucester Division, to prevent any possible fire and to react consequently in light of one.

Although not often talked about, weed and fire management both hold a crucial place in Aussie Ark' activities. Without them, ensuring a safe and healthy environment, as well as optimum site rehabilitation, would not be possible.



AUSSIE ARK'S WILD RIDE: FROM THE PARK TO THE ARK!



Aussie Ark biked towards conservation! *Aussie Ark's Wild Ride* is the first-ever sporting event hosted by the organisation in an effort to raise funds for Aussie Ark's crowdfunding campaign that ended on the 13th of November to acquire the Curricabark property, a wildlife refuge of 250Ha and home to over 30 threatened species.

The *Aussie Ark's Wild Ride* was a 300-kilometre bicycle adventure that led two courageous and venturesome riders to bike from the Australian Reptile Park on the Central Coast to the Aussie Ark facility in the Barrington Tops. The participants embarked on their wild ride starting at the Reptile Park on November 10th and finished their journey at Aussie Ark on November 12th.

"This charity event was such a fun and unique way to fundraise for a cause that is close to our heart!"

Tim Faulkner, Aussie Ark President

The two riders braved the elements and ascended more than 1,000 metres to reach the Aussie Ark facility.

"The Aussie Ark's Wild Ride was a big success! The determination of the two riders is so contagious," says Tim Faulkner.

Australia's wonderfully diverse land, known for its unique fauna and flora, has been under threat from wildlife annihilation for countless decades and its animal extinction crisis is a lifetime away from being resolved. By purchasing and protecting parcels of land such as Curricabark,

Aussie Ark is making a difference in caring for Australia's ecosystems.

Riders, Andrew and Tony, who made the 300km journey both said of the ride: "We were so thrilled to be part of this and wanted to get on board, and support this project in anyway we possibly could! We can't wait to see what Aussie Ark does next."



HELP FROM OUR PARTNERS



Australian Geographic

Being Australia's foremost geographical destination magazine, Australian Geographic captures the essence and spirit of Australia through its meticulously crafted and beautifully presented stories and photography. The highly respected authoritative and much-loved brand seeks to inspire, educate and entertain, connecting readers to Australian landscapes, plants and animals, science, industry and people.

Australian Geographic has been a supporter of Aussie Ark for many years. Australian Geographic has not only helped promote Aussie Ark's cause but has also sponsored the Eastern quoll enclosures at Aussie Ark, helping us build on what we know is a successful model. Aussie Ark is proud to partner with a business such as Australian Geographic that showcases the beauty and importance of our unique native fauna and flora.



Ellestron Pty Ltd

Ellestron Pty Ltd plays a crucial role in supporting Aussie Ark's vision and mission. Indeed, Aussie Ark is built on land, owned by the Packer family for the term of the project. By leasing hundreds of hectares of land to Aussie Ark, Ellestron Pty Ltd provides Aussie Ark with the much-needed support to develop its captive breeding programs to establish sustainable insurance populations, with enough space for future expansion.

Aussie Ark is immensely grateful and appreciative for Ellestron Pty Ltd's vital contribution to our conservation efforts.

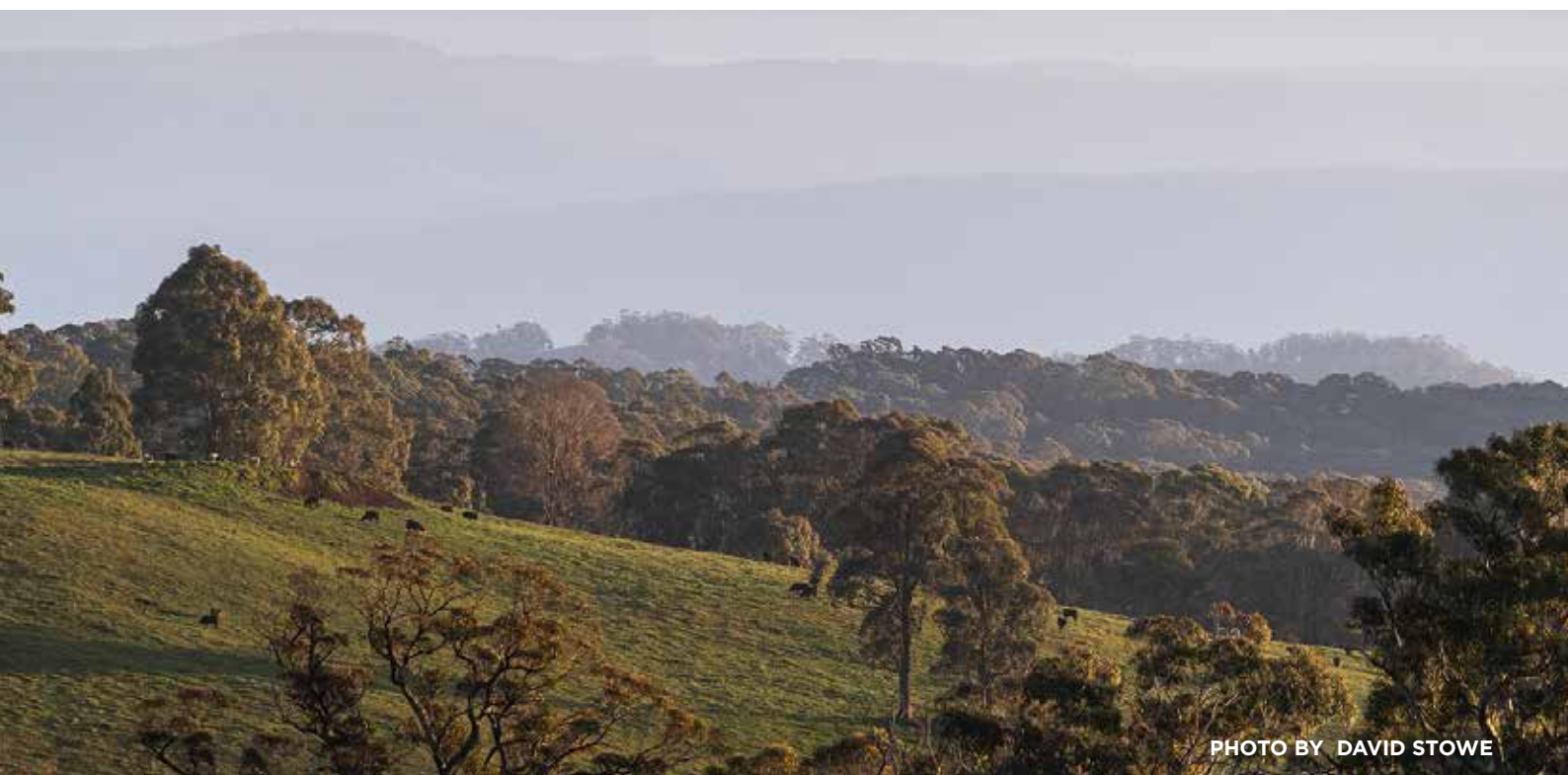


PHOTO BY DAVID STOWE



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HOW CAN YOU HELP?



DONATE

Australia has the worst mammal extinction rate in the world. You can help us build a brighter future for Australia's threatened wildlife by donating today. All donations will help fund vital conservation work at Aussie Ark- with every donation over \$2 tax deductible.



STAY

Looking for a getaway? Aussie Ark's "Devils Retreat" is perfect for you. With all of the essentials to ensure a relaxing getaway in the mountains, you'll find yourself wishing to stay longer! Join us for a once-in-a-lifetime experience that you'll remember for years to come.



SUPPORT

Aussie Arks success isn't possible without people like you, our supporters, we cannot thank you enough. Aussie Arks mission is mammoth and we will not stop. Help us help them by providing feral free sanctuaries. \$150 will provide 1 meter of fencing, your contribution goes directly to serving Australia's wildlife.

PROJECT PARTNERS OF AUSSIE ARK

