

# THE ARK

EDITION #18



**WORLD FIRST WILD RELEASE OF  
MANNING RIVER TURTLES!**

Page 4

**EASTERN QUOLLS EXTINCT IN  
AUSTRALIA BUT THRIVING AND  
BREEDING AT AUSSIE ARK**

Page 6

# MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It is with a smile that I wish you all a very Happy New Year and reflect back on all we achieved in 2022, and all we've begun in 2023.

The final quarter of last year was a time of trying new things, being even braver than ever, and celebrating world-firsts.

Firstly, we experienced high technology, collaborating with the University of Sydney to conduct a broadscale survey in the Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary of our resident koalas. Using thermal sensor drones we located and captured them conducting rigorous health checks. Our staff worked in freezing conditions, for five long nights in a row. Bravo!

Next it was the world-first wild release of the endangered Manning River Turtle. I can't express how special that moment was releasing 10 turtles back into the wild. Our work with this exquisite reptile began when we rescued animals and eggs during the Black Summer drought and fire. Three years later, we had to time our release around record-breaking floods! But finally, we got there! And for me personally, the joy of that day was even stronger sharing it with my son Matty.

I was extremely proud when staff reported a 'Quoll baby-boom'; 63 joeys born in our Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary... a record! The news created a huge media buzz and lots of public engagement, which was so inspiring for us all at Aussie Ark. Nothing compares to sharing the passion of conservation with our wider community, and the nation.

Then it was time to get our hands dirty, greening up the Ark! In just one day we planted 900 native trees in our Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary and over 5000 trees in one month! This was such a rewarding effort, ensuring a complex long-term ecosystem for our animals.

We ended the year with the spectacular release of 10 Eastern Quolls into the Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary. It was a thrill to share the experience with our amazing team and major partners Glencore. Our staff work so hard breeding and caring for these animals, so my heart was in my throat as I watched each Quoll leap from our arms into the wild. Our feral-proof sanctuaries enable them to live like their pre-colonial ancestors did, safe from feral predation, in bushland that's guaranteed to remain pristine forever. That's powerful stuff!

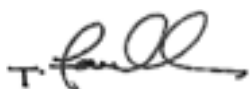
We barely took a breath over Christmas and the new year, opening the Ark to general public the whole of January for our Open Days. It was a huge success, with over 1,000 people through the gates and a whole new swag of Australians inspired by our work.

As always, we want to thank our community of supporters and partners, without whom our work would not be possible: **Re:wild, WildArk, Australian Reptile Park, Glencore, Australian Geographic, WIRES, Volkswagen, FAME, Ellerston, Sydney Helicopters, Coles, Symbio Wildlife Park**, and new partners **Aurizon and Clarks**.

We have a busy year ahead, and we're already rolling up our sleeves. Our first campaign is dedicated to the 1597 Australian fauna species identified by the IUCN as threatened with extinction. It shows yet again the enormous challenges faced by our iconic wildlife!

Aussie Ark is on the frontline, helping many of those species. Please continue to support us, share our message, and help us build a brighter future.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Faulkner - Managing Director  
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

## CONTACT DETAILS

PO Box 192,  
Gosford, NSW, 2250  
PHONE  
(02) 4326 5333

EMAIL  
admin@aussieark.org.au

WEBSITE  
www.aussieark.org.au

## SOCIAL HANDLES

Facebook  
@AussieArk

Instagram  
@aussieark

YouTube  
Aussie Ark

Twitter  
@aussie\_ark

TikTok  
@aussieark



# AUSSIE ARK 2023 SUMMER OPEN DAYS

During the Summer School Holidays, we opened our doors to welcome the general public to walk through and see what Aussie Ark is all about.

It was a great time for our enthusiastic team to show exactly what we have been up to during a very busy 2022 whilst sharing our passion of wildlife conservation with our visitors.

***“Open days are the perfect opportunity for our supporters to experience the conservation work that our team is doing every single day. I believe it is so important to show our supporters exactly what it is we do at Aussie Ark”***

says Aussie Ark Wildlife Ranger, Matthew Helm.

From the 1st to the 26th of January 2023, visitors had the opportunity to meet some of Australia's most endangered species including getting up close with our cutest little residents, Sandy and Danny the Tasmanian Devil joeys.

Whilst on the tour, it was guaranteed that visitors would see and encounter Devils feeding in their wild enclosures and get up close to many unique species that call Aussie Ark home. Encounters with our joey animals such as Tasmanian Devils and Eastern Quolls were available and perfect for all ages!

Aussie Ark already runs public tours throughout the year however, opening our doors for the school holidays encouraged a large number of people of all ages to join our conservation crusade.

“Open days constitute a lot of work, but it is so worth it! It is precious for our staff to be part of people's journey to connect or reconnect with nature,” continued Mr Helm.

If you would like to visit Aussie Ark this year, give us a call on 02 4326 5333 or email us at [admin@aussieark.org.au](mailto:admin@aussieark.org.au). There are some great accommodation options and we would love to see you up there!



# WORLD FIRST WILD MANNING TURTLE RELEASE!

On the 20th of October 2022, in a world first, Aussie Ark returned 10 endangered Manning River Turtles back into the Wild. Aussie Ark has been supported by the Australian Governments Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Initiative, following the bushfire disaster of 2019/20, as well as partners the **Australian Reptile Park, Re:wild and WIRES.**

The release was the first of its kind and is hugely significant as these particular turtles were rescued from a nest during the bushfire disaster of 2020, whilst still in the egg.

***“This has been a long time coming. We have cared for these juveniles for over 2 years now, and have watched and waited patiently as our river systems recovered from fire, drought and then floods”***

said Tim Faulkner, Aussie Ark Managing Director.

This group of turtles are part of another milestone for Aussie Ark as they were the first to hatch in our care. In total, 20 Manning River Turtles hatched in March and April 2020 and we are hoping to witness the hatching of additional turtles in the coming months for this year's breeding season.

Prior to the release, our staff monitored the Manning River for many months to ensure that the body of water was substantial, clean, and flowing. Manning River Turtles are restricted to the middle and upper stretches of the Manning River catchment area and are found in relatively shallow, clear, continuously fast-flowing rivers with rocky and sandy substrates.

“These particular individuals were rescued during one of the worst drought and bushfire disasters our country has seen. Since then, though, their river systems have been hugely impacted by severe floods. It has been critical that we watch and wait patiently before releasing these guys back” said Jake Meney, Head of Reptiles at the Australian

Reptile Park.

As the 2019/20 bushfires left the river system with contaminated water and dried parts, it was necessary for us to make sure the water quality of the river was suitable for the species to live in. Food availability and suitable nesting environments were also taken into consideration. Just as the rivers seemed to have recovered La Niña swept through and washed away entire riverbanks.

The Aussie Ark team were thrilled to see the return of this endangered species back to wild. The greatest risk for these turtles is when they are at their most vulnerable in an egg, and so our program provides the species with a head start.

Aussie Ark is proud of our first wild translocation of the endangered species, but stress that more must be done. We are eager to see the program develop and expand over the coming years, with hundreds more endangered turtles to be returned back to the wild.

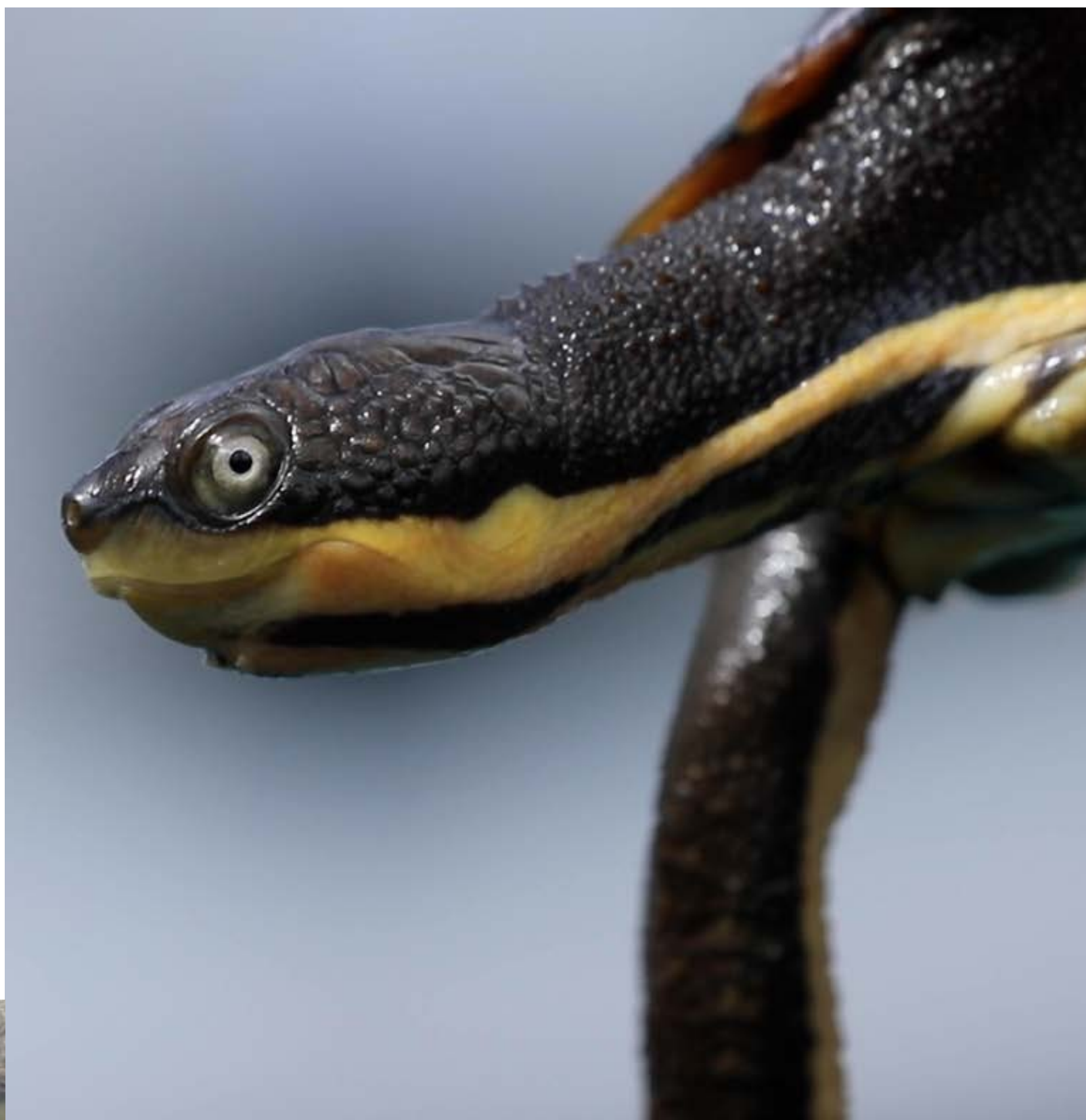
“This is what the program is all about, rescuing an endangered species and getting them back to the wild. Getting to see them swim off into the river is not a sight I will soon forget” said Tim Faulkner.

Aussie Ark would like to say a huge thank you to our Manning River Turtle breeding program supporters: **Australian Reptile Park, Re:wild, WIRES, Glencore, Australian Geographic and the Turtle Conservancy.** As well as local businesses, **Kleinfelder, Manning River Steel, Aus Eco Solutions, Steber international, Bev Barendse and The Happy Wombat.** Without these loyal supporters, as well as our supporters at home, the release would not have been possible.

You can come and see our Turtle conservation facilities and program first hand at our Conservation Ark, located at the Australian Reptile Park on the Central Coast NSW!







“THIS IS WHAT THE PROGRAM IS ALL ABOUT, RESCUING AN ENDANGERED SPECIES AND GETTING THEM BACK TO THE WILD. GETTING TO SEE THEM SWIM OFF INTO THE RIVER IS NOT A SIGHT I WILL SOON FORGET”

TIM FAULKNER



“THIS QUOLL BABY BOOM IS TRULY INCREDIBLE! IT’S  
SIGNIFICANT NOT ONLY FOR OUR ORGANISATION, BUT ALSO  
AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD” DEAN REID



# EASTERN QUOLLS EXTINCT IN AUSTRALIA BUT THRIVING AND BREEDING AT AUSSIE ARK

In November 2022 we were so excited to announce the baby boom of Eastern Quolls within our famous Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary. Health checks conducted by our staff reveal a total of 63 joeys born in the 'wild'; the highest number ever recorded by Aussie Ark in one breeding season.

These endangered marsupials have called Aussie Ark home since nine animals were delivered to the our facilities from Tasmania in 2017, as a safeguarding 'insurance population'. Since that time, we have successfully bred and released over 250 quolls into our feral-proof Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary, offering the species hope for the future.

***"This Quoll baby boom is truly incredible! It's significant not only for our organisation, but also Australia and the world"***

said Dean Reid, Aussie Ark Operations Manager.

"Eastern Quolls have been extinct on mainland Australia since 1967! So, the birth of these joeys feels like a modern Jurassic Park; bringing a species back from the brink, to reclaim the Australian bush." he said.

Eastern Quolls were part of the Australian landscape on the mainland for millions of years, serving an important role as carnivores. But predation by feral animals as well as poisoning, trapping and land clearing resulted in its demise. It's thought the last mainland Australian Quoll was killed in 1963, leaving Tasmania as their only stronghold. Sadly, the Tasmania population has declined by 50% in the past 10 years and shows no sign of recovery.

"This is a species that continues to face complete annihilation, so this makes our successful breeding season even more significant, and special. It shows what this animal can do given the right conditions and protected environment. It's a conservation model and success story that's hopefully a positive example for the world." Mr Reid said.

Eastern Quolls breed in early winter and have a gestation period of 21 days. Females can give birth to up to 30 young, but only have six teats in their pouch. So the first joeys to attach themselves to the teats are the ones who survive, where they remain for about 10 weeks after which they detach and are nurtured by mum. Towards the end of November, when the quolls are between 18 to 20 weeks of age, they are weaned and become independent.

Aussie Ark Supervisor Tyler Gralton oversaw the pouch checks that revealed the record number of baby Quolls. "This is what our work is all about, this is the ultimate reward for all the years of care. To open pouch after pouch and see so many joeys is a sight I'll never forget." Mr Gralton said.

As part of the Tasmanian Quoll Conservation Program, we are committed to the long-term conservation of this charismatic species. The joeys born this year will live out their lives in our protected 400 hectare Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary...and will one day breed themselves!

You can help us change the trajectory for this species by donating to our Eastern Quoll rewilding campaign.





# ANGELIC RELEASE OF TASMANIAN DEVILS

Aussie Ark was delighted to announce the successful release of seven sub-adult Tasmanian Devils into our Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary.

Aussie Ark Supervisor Tyler Gralton managed the release with other Aussie Ark staff. "This is another historic day for Aussie Ark and our most famous species, the Tasmanian Devil," Mr Gralton said.

***"It's the second generation of Devils born and bred in our Barrington Tops' facility, and a valuable genetic boost for our population of adult Devil's already living 'wild' in our sanctuary."*** said Mr Gralton.

The Tasmanian Devil has been extinct on mainland Australia for over 3,000 years. It continues to live in the wild in Tasmania, but in the 1990's the population was almost exterminated by the highly infectious and deadly Devil Facial Tumour Disease. Today, less than 25,000 animals are left in the wild and continue to face an uncertain future.

Determined to save the species from extinction, Managing Director, Tim Faulkner, established Devil Ark in 2011, and secured our 400 hectare feral-proof Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary in 2020.

We received 44 Tasmanian Devils to secure an 'insurance population' of the species, and since then have successfully bred and rewilded hundreds of individuals.

"It's a globally recognised conservation success story," Mr Gralton said. "And today's release is the next step for us. We now have the largest population of Devils on mainland Australia, and we specialise in fostering their natural behaviour to help ensure they can survive and thrive in the wild."

Our Aussie Ark team were thrilled to watch the Devils' behaviour during the release. "When faced with the wild they all responded differently. They have very distinct personalities. One female was particularly hesitant. She looked around for a while, sniffing the air, and stayed for a few minutes in the trap before heading off. But a younger male bolted away from us as fast as his legs could carry him, not once looking over his shoulder!" Mr Gralton said.

Mr Gralton said "It's always a thrill to witness a wild release like this, especially for this species."

"Tasmanian Devils are totally absent from the Australian bush but here in our sanctuary they are thriving. Watching a Devil running through the understorey is like seeing a ghost materialise back into flesh and blood. It's an amazing thing." Mr Gralton concluded.

Aussie Ark would like to thank our partners **WIRES, Rewild and Glencore** for supporting their Tasmanian Devil program, as well as **Bev Barendse** and our community donors and supporters.

You can help us create a longterm future for this species by donating to our Tasmanian Devil rewilding campaign.







"IT'S A GLOBALLY RECOGNISED CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY...WE HAVE THE LARGEST POPULATION OF DEVILS IN AUSTRALIA, AND WE SPECIALISE IN FOSTERING THEIR NATURAL BEHAVIOUR SO THEY CAN SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN THE WILD."

TYLER GRALTON

# THERMAL DRONE SURVEYS OF WILD KOALA POPULATION

Aussie Ark, alongside partners **WIRES**, veterinary teams from the **University of Sydney** and contractors from **Ripper Corp drone pilots**, conducted a broad scale Koala population survey in our predator free Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary.

The surveys were supported by our partner **WIRES** and were undertaken to determine the abundance of Koalas within the area, as well as to test for presence of disease. The two major pathogens affecting Koalas are *Chlamydia pecorum*, leading to chlamydial disease and *Koala retrovirus* (KoRV).

***“This survey work was a critical step for Aussie Ark moving forward. We knew through our own internal survey works that we had a substantial population of Koalas within our sanctuary. However, utilising this incredible thermal drone technology to spot them from the air allowed us to get a more detailed look”***

Conservation Manager, Hayley Shute said

“The first step following the intense surveys is to take the samples that the University of Sydney Veterinarian obtained and sending them to the lab to be tested for disease. Beyond this, additional samples will also be tested to examine the overall health of each of the individuals tested” she continued.

The team spent five nights in the field starting at midnight in freezing conditions, working first with the Ripper Corp thermal drone pilots to spot the thermal patterning of a Koala. A designated ‘watcher’ was then deployed to sit under the tree the Koala was found in and watch its movements until first light when our Koala catching team was engaged.

At first light the Koala catcher, vet, and our Aussie Ark rangers were onsite, to safely restrain the Koala and take the necessary samples needed for the testing to be done. Once this process was complete, each Koala was released to the tree it was found in and monitored for a short while to ensure its safety.

“Being in the Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary in the middle of the night was like nothing else, it was teeming with wildlife. Watching the drone cameras light up at every turn with different species of wildlife was so exciting!” Ms Shute said.

A total of seven Koalas were swabbed and tested by our team. The samples have been taken to the lab at Sydney University where they will be processed, and a report compiled. Hayley Shute said “Each of the Koalas we tested were beautiful. They were all a good weight and showed all the right signs of being incredibly healthy, which is a positive start.”

Keep up to date with our latest projects by subscribing to our newsletter. We will be announcing some new Koala projects soon!





# GREENING UP THE BARRINGTON WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Aussie Ark were thrilled to confirm 5,200 trees have been planted over the month of December in our Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary.

Project coordinator and Aussie Ark wildlife ranger Rory Francis said “This ambitious revegetation project is the culmination of months of consultation and planning, and is a ‘dream come true’.

***“We planted 920 native trees in a single day!”***

Mr Francis said

The effort turned a bog into a brand-new Alpine wetland. That’s a great achievement for Aussie Ark and also a huge contribution to the ecology of the Barrington Tops’ Alpine region. If you love getting your hands dirty this is the best work ever.

We consulted expert horticulturalists in the planning stages and were assisted in the physical labour of planting by some fabulous AGL volunteers!

The aim of the revegetation project in the 400 hectare Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary is to re-establish a diverse midstory within the sanctuary that offers essential ecosystem functions.

“We have identified three main sites which require different plant species. We have higher elevation ridge line sites that suit banksias, acacias and eucalypts. Then we have river sites that suit ferns. And finally we have ‘smilax’ sites suited for vines, which help with biodiversity and erosion control.” Mr Francis explained.

We have identified 11 different sites to revegetate. Each of these sites have been planted with over 600 new plants, consisting of a mix of 16 species of trees, shrubs and grasses.

The strategy is to provide year-round flowers, food and shelter for the animals living in the Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary.

This will provide a more resilient ecosystem which will dramatically increase carrying-capacity and animal welfare. A richer, more diverse midstory attracts more birds and also increases the presence of insects. And insects are a major part of the diet for species such as our Eastern Quolls.

Aussie Ark has the target of planting 100,000 new trees across its reserves. Australia has the worst extinction rate on earth and is one of the worst developed countries in the world for broadscale deforestation. We have cleared nearly 50% our forests in just 200 years. Broadscale deforestation is just one of the many threats facing our wildlife, and why projects like these are critical to the long-term survival of Australia’s unique wildlife.

You can help us with our ambitious goal of planting 100,000 trees by donating \$5 per tree today and \$3.50 for maintenance for a year!



# ONE SMALL STEP FOR QUOLL... ONE GIANT LEAP FOR QUOLL KIND!

Aussie Ark was delighted to announce the release of 10 endangered Eastern Quolls into our Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary.

Aussie Ark Director Tim Faulkner attended the release, and couldn't be more proud and said "This is a globally significant moment. This species was declared extinct on mainland Australia in 1963...but here we are, releasing healthy happy animals back into the Australian bush. It's a spectacular culmination of five years of hard work, and proof again of the success of our breeding and rewilding program."

Mr Faulkner said the significance of this particular release is the genetic diversity that the 10 animals will bring to the population already living 'wild' in the Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary.

"This year Aussie Ark was very lucky to receive some new quolls, some new genetics, from the Tasmanian Quoll Program in Tasmania. Our goal is to have a mainland population that is representative of its wild counterpart. So these new quolls that are being released help us achieve that." Mr Faulkner said.

***"Whenever we do a release like this we are turning back time,"*** Mr Faulkner said.

"This exquisite species has suffered so much. This is the second chance it deserves," he continued. We have successfully bred and rewilded the Eastern Quoll for over five years.

***"This is what Aussie Ark specialises in. And today, we're doing it again."*** said Mr Faulkner.

All the Eastern Quolls were thoroughly health-checked by our Aussie Ark staff prior to release. The health-check included weighing, body condition scoring, and medication to protect the animals from parasites and disease.

"They all passed their health check with flying colours, and are ready for their life back in the 'wild'. In our 400 hectare feral-proof sanctuary, these lucky quolls will enjoy a life similar to what their ancestors experienced. That's a great feeling, and the ultimate reward for all of us working for Aussie Ark." Mr Faulkner concluded.

Manager of Conservation Hayley Shute also attended the Eastern Quoll release, and said it was an 'emotional' experience "Today's release, and all our releases, is bitter-sweet for the Aussie Ark team. We go from daily care and daily checks of these animals, to then putting them back out into the wild. It's wonderful for the quolls...but we miss them!" Ms Shute said.

We now boast the largest population of Eastern Quolls on mainland Australia, and this new cohort adds vital genetic diversity to the population of quolls already living in our 400 hectare Barrington Wildlife Sanctuary.

You can help us change the trajectory for this species by donating to our Eastern Quoll rewilding campaign.







"WHENEVER WE DO A RELEASE LIKE THIS WE ARE TURNING BACK TIME. THIS IS WHAT AUSSIE ARK SPECIALISES IN AND TODAY, WE'RE DOING IT AGAIN." TIM FAULKNER



# WHAT'S ON AT THE ARK! COME AND VISIT US

*'One person can make a difference and everyone should try'* – John F Kennedy



## DEVILS IN THE WILD TOUR

Want to get up close with our devils?  
Well, now you can!

Devils in the Wild tour is a 2.5 hour fully escorted tour led by one of our Aussie Ark Rangers and starts off with an introduction of the project and the Tasmanian devil over morning tea at our Interpretation centre.

You will be privy to enter a huge free-range enclosure and experience a rare opportunity to really get up close and personal in the devils natural enclosure to witness a communal feed that encourages wild behaviour.

To book visit [www.aussieark.org.au](http://www.aussieark.org.au)

## STAY WITH US!

Come and enjoy a 2 night stay with us at Devils Retreat or Quoll Cottage! 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. Your stay also includes our "Devils in the Wild" tour – a 2.5 hour walking tour of the Aussie Ark facility.

**What are you waiting you for?**

Head to [www.aussieark.org.au](http://www.aussieark.org.au) or contact us via phone 02 4326 5333 or email [admin@aussieark.org.au](mailto:admin@aussieark.org.au) for more information.



# SUPPORT AUSSIE ARK TODAY!





## HELP FROM OUR PARTNERS

---

# GLENCORE

### GLENCORE

Glencore have operated in Australia for over 20 years and hold significant interests in a range of commodity industries across all mainland states and the Northern Territory. The company is headquartered in Sydney and is a major Australian employer, with over 15,000 employees working across various industries. Our partnership came about with Glencore looking for a local community environmental project with tangible outcomes that would make a real difference for Australian wildlife, and Aussie Ark fit the bill. Aussie Ark is also in the same region as one of Glencore's operating centres (the Upper Hunter) and the company is always on the lookout for local charities to support.

### WIRES

WIRES, Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation, has been rescuing and caring for native animals 365 days a year for almost 35 years. WIRES' mission is to actively rehabilitate and preserve Australian wildlife and inspire others to do the same. Annually, WIRES provide rescue advice and assistance for tens of thousands of sick, injured, orphaned and displaced animals and run around 100 wildlife training courses for thousands of participants. Aussie Ark is proud to have WIRES as a partner and is committed to achieving great things for wildlife conservation alongside this partner.



# AUSSIEARK.ORG.AU



PHOTO BY LACHLAN GILDING

## 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- 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

