



Brumby Bridges

The quarterly newsletter of the ABA

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The ABA

The *Australian Brumby Alliance Inc. (ABA)* was established in 2008 to help facilitate the efforts of like-minded wild horse interest groups throughout Australia. We do this by sharing information and expertise as well as providing a collective voice in regard to the humane management, welfare, preservation and promotion of what we consider to be a National Treasure - *The Australian Brumby*.

*ABA wishes you all a very
Happy, Healthy and
Peaceful Holiday Season!*

ABA News

President's Chat

Well, another year has passed lobbying for sustainable Brumby numbers in national parks and rehoming, where possible, from Park trapping programs. Christmas and New Year are good times to reflect on our achievements this year and rethink next years priorities.

It is always good to take a periodic step back to reflect on life, rate our "burnout" level and contemplate constructive ways to manage "Brumby burnout" or lower burnout if it seems to be too high. Talk with family, friends and supporters. Identify sustainable activities for 2015. We need to stay in good shape to continue the push for Brumbies to gain heritage recognition, sustainable and humane management and to educate the Australian public, national parks and government on the many benefits Wild Brumbies provide to the environment.

After four and a half months, the Snowy's Wild Horse Review 'Conversation' webspace is now closed for comment. Posts can still be reviewed for a while and it is worth a look to broaden understanding of the issues we face when promoting positive Brumby values. It is important we regularly articulate the values of sustainable Heritage Brumby populations living in our Parks.

I have learnt from the chatroom that;

1. The pro-Brumby and anti-Brumby lobby actually share a great deal in common on our love of flora, fauna, landscapes etc. in national parks. Pro-Brumby people were accused, however, of not caring for native flora and fauna, just because we valued horses living in Kosciusko National Park (KNP). An unfortunate result of the polarising design of the questions put to us during the NPWS review. Questions asked us to choose between

native flora/fauna OR Brumbies, no co-habit option.

2. We wasted energy responding to an all or nothing options. The anti-Brumby lobby kept projecting population increases, with no ability to grasp that Brumby supporters acknowledge Brumby populations should be managed at sustainable levels.
3. We who value wild horses in KNP can discuss sustainable population options, but those against seem unable to progress beyond extreme projections, and
4. Most concerning - during the Queanbeyan NPWS meeting, those at the Colong Foundation stakeholder table ALL put humaneness **LAST** as a priority to consider when selecting any control option. (See Straight Talk below for more detail)

It is vital we steer discussion away from polarised views and towards ways to manage sustainable horse numbers in national parks. We are willing to talk sustainable populations, when will the anti-Brumby lobby respond accordingly!

2015 could be our most challenging yet. So enjoy the coming festive season, review burnout strategies and enter 2015 knowing that ABA group members, along with the growing number of other individuals and Brumby support groups are making a difference. Slowly national parks, governments and the community are becoming more aware that both Brumbies and native flora and fauna can co-exist, in sustainable, managed populations for future generations to enjoy see living wild in national parks.

Jill Pickering, President ABA

Straight talk

Public Meeting with NPWS Regarding Kosciusko Brumbies

29 Nov 2014, Queanbeyan NSW

Wow. What a weekend. It was great to meet up with fellow pro Brumby folk, including Jill and Sharon from the Australian Brumby Alliance (Sharon is also one of our VBA members, so she gets around a bit!) as well as Kath and Maddison from the Hunter Valley Brumby Association. Clive and Jack from the Snowy Mountains Bush Users group were also present and the Snowy Mountains Horse Riders, amongst others. The extreme green faction was also there, although not in great numbers.

In addition to “key stakeholders” as National Parks and Wildlife Service call us, there were around 100 members of the general public. The aim of the day was for NPWS to provide the public with information – mostly slanted against Brumbies. For example “aerial culling is humane”, a choice 1-10 that never included a *co-exist in sustainable numbers* option. Factually incorrect statements, such as *fertility control application is not possible unless horses are yarded*, when in fact it has been applied by dart gun on free roaming USA Mustangs for over thirty years. Luckily Colleen was able to persuade NPWS to correct the Queanbeyan audience on this point. The reason whether fertility control requires trapping (or not) is important as NPWS say it costs just over \$1,000 on average to trap one Brumby, so adding trap costs to the price of a \$35 dart applied vaccine is a major cost/time drawback.

The information was then workshopped and discussed; all of us (members of the public and key stakeholders) were asked to respond to questions based on the information provided by NPWS. A major fault in this exercise was that the questions were loaded, attempting to force a choice of Brumbies OR the environment. As you know, we can have BOTH. Many areas in Kosciuszko national parks have healthy environments with healthy Brumbies. On this basis, we were unable to answer all questions – because to answer meant to choose which we considered the most important: flora and fauna versus Brumbies. We needed a “co-exist in sustainable numbers” option since we can

enjoy both together. The questions also failed to include ways to identify what would be lost if the benefits of Brumby grazing to bio-diversity, were removed.

Across the board, we found that the members of the public present were interested, articulate and in many cases, frustrated by the lack of information provided and the clear conflicts in the information that was provided. We’d like to thank all who attended for doing so.

To sit in a room however, where the humaneness of a ‘control’ method was ranked as unimportant by 75% of those asked the question, was disheartening to say the least. We felt however, that this reflected the information put out by NPWS, not the attitude of the public.

We always knew that this was going to be a tough fight; all we ask is that such forums be conducted fairly, with people being given factual information to enable them to make informed decisions. This is clearly not the case and NPWS are now asking the public at large to conduct ‘kitchen table discussion groups’, based on the incorrect information that they are providing. What a waste of everyone’s time and an insult to our intelligence!

The ABA is developing information on a broad range of topics, such as how Brumby grazing reduces fire risks, increases biodiversity and how Brumbies are pivotal to post-settlement history and provide a spiritual uplift to many bush loving Australians. Member groups are also counteracting the NPWS damage claims by posting information on the values Brumbies provide to national parks! Our Brumbies need you!

Colleen O’Brien, VBA

New ABA Secretary

I am Sharon Peterson and I have been involved with Animal Welfare groups and issues for over 20 years and a horse owner on and off for most of my life.

After meeting Colleen O'Brien (VBA), I wanted to become more involved with the Brumbies and the issues that surround their management. It was at the Australian

Brumby Challenge that I fell in love with these wonderful animals.

I am passionate about humane treatment of animals, particularly horses, and look forward to helping the Australian Brumby Alliance and the member groups achieve a better deal for the Australian Brumby.

Sharon Peterson, ABA Secretary

Member News

Save the Brumbies Inc. (STB)

Fertility Control Program

All our treated mares are now happily out with the stallions and so far all is progressing as predicted. The



mobs are settled and Megan is carefully watching behaviour. A preliminary report will be available in mid 2015 and it is our

sincere hope that NPWS will take notice and consider introducing fertility control in suitable areas in national parks as we move forward. Wonders will never cease, it actually rained the day we treated the mares; our intrepid vets coped regardless.

'Spirited' ... Australia's Horse Story...

is an exhibition currently showing at the National Museum in Canberra until 9th March 2015. We were invited to take part in relation to the Brumbies and STB Sakima proudly did the honours for STB. Well worth a visit if in the area.

Craig Downer

Craig Downer is an American ecologist and author of the book *Wild Horse Conspiracy* and we were privileged to host him for a week in October during his visit to Australia.

His trip was organised by MaeLee Sun, co-author of the superb book, "Brumby". Craig visited WA, Alice Springs and the Alpine regions as well as Guy Fawkes and NEBS. We received a pat on the back for our management programs, according to Craig, quite the best he has witnessed.



Craig's book, *Wild Horse Conspiracy* deals with the Mustangs in the USA and disputes many of the so called 'facts' about wild horses. Craig outlines alternative, ecological management plans all to the benefit of the environment, a great read and now Craig is preparing a second book dealing with the Australian environment. Do go to your web browser: CraigCDownerEcologist and learn more about this amazing and passionate man and his lifelong quest for our wild horses. *(Ed: for more on Craig Downer, see [The Editor's Tail](#))*

Open Day at Bellingen

All enjoyed an informative and interesting day. Megan gave a brilliant demonstration on basic handling and the gentle approach; later she gave a further performance in the riding arena and answered questions for the benefit of all. Mike Bekker, our barefoot trimmer, also gave his time and outlined the benefits of correct hoof alignment and regular trimming. There was much interest in Mike's presentation. Thanks to all who attended and to Megan and Mike for their professional expertise.

South East Queensland Brumby Association (SEQBA)

Local journalist and author Christine Butler has written a book about a brumby that was adopted by the Taylor family. She was inspired to write the book - Kamarla - A Brumby's Tale - after interviewing the family for an article in The Gympie Times.



Kamarla when she first arrived at SEQBA

The story is written from Kamarla's perspective as she is taken from a state forest to Terry and Anne Wilson's property and from there adopted by the Taylor family.

Based on the family's account of how Kamarla and the other farm animals interacted, the story includes conversations between those animals the little brumby and showcases how all animals have a personality of their own.

During her many years at The Gympie Times, Christine had the pleasure of interviewing Anne and a number of the

Social Day at NEBS: Sunday 18th January 2015.

Drop in for a BBQ and drinkies. We are always so busy on Open Days we don't get a chance to be sociable so this day is just to relax and enjoy the company of our Friends. Contact Jan for directions and details.

people who had adopted brumbies and she discovered she had a genuine affection for the breed and a concern for their on-going well-being.

For this reason, the bulk of the proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the SE Queensland Brumby Association to help with their on-going good work.

Kamarla - A Brumby's Tale will be on sale before Christmas and a few weeks later will be available as an ebook.

As she is still waiting for the final draft of the book there is no set date for release or fixed price - only that it will be available in time for Christmas, we'll send info around as soon as it becomes available.



Jude Taylor and Kamarla

Victorian Brumby Association (VBA)

Things have been as busy as ever at the Victorian Brumby Association. We have rehomed twelve Brumbies in the past few months and have several in training at the moment that we are looking for homes for right now. We have attended meetings to represent Brumbies from Melbourne, to Echuca to Canberra and have many more to attend as there are currently new plans being developed for the Kosciuszko, Alpine and Barmah National Parks. These plans will be in place for ten years, so this is an incredibly important time where we have a chance to have input to the future of Brumbies in south Eastern Australia.

Equitana

November brought Equitana to Melbourne and wow, what a fabulous event it was! There were huge crowds there and our Brumbies absolutely did us proud! On Thursday,



Jenny Renoufs mare VBA Aurora who was caught from the Alpine National Park as a five year old was representing Brumbies for us and winning fans everywhere she went.

Friday had VBA Clancy at Equitana, also owned by Jenny. Clancy was born after his heavily pregnant Mum, VBA Answer (now living in Queensland with her loving owner) was caught and has thrived with Jenny. Jennys gentle,

thorough training methods were shown off beautifully by both Aurora and Clancy.

VBA Curious George, with his owner, Georgia Bates were our representatives on Saturday and Sunday. George was caught from the wild as a ten year old stallion with his mares and youngsters only three years ago and to have a horse such as George not only



able to function at a huge event like Equitana, but to be in his element and winning fans everywhere is a testament to his owner Georgia. It was also, just like with Aurora and Clancy, a testament to our wonderful Brumby temperaments. It was wonderful to meet so many Brumby supporters, both old and new and we look forward to meeting them again.

VBA Brumbies Big Day Out

This weekend, we have the Brumbies Big Day Out, our annual event, which combines open day, training demonstrations, a Brumbies only Gymkhana and heaps of

fun things to do for the whole family. This will be our first BBDO at our new Brumby Junction sanctuary and we are looking forwards to seeing lots of people and Brumbies here!

2016 Australian Brumby Challenge

We are so excited to announce that our next Australian Brumby Challenge will be held in conjunction with Equitana Melbourne in 2016! We have extended the event to run over 150 days to allow our Brumbies and their trainers a little more time for their amazing transformation, with the finals event to be held over four days at Equitana Melbourne, 2016. To have the chance to showcase our Brumbies at an event of this size is such a huge opportunity for us and we are so excited!



Above: VBA Hero not long out of KNP



Above: VBA Hero, 2014 Australian Brumby Challenge



Above: VBA Dorothy, from Bogong area



Above: VBA Dorothy 2014 Australian Brumby Challenge

Hoofprints - Noteworthy Tracks

Acclaimed Short Film on Mustangs to be screened in Melbourne



Wild Horses tells the story of Mills, an established photographer, who returns to her native Nevada following an urgent call from her grandmother informing her that a band of wild horses close to their hearts, faces government roundup.

Cruelty, courage, love and memory collide as two generations of women bear witness to the brutality common to wild horse roundups in the American West.

In this story, that spans one day, Mills is exposed to a complex issue and follows her heart, choosing to ignore the consequences.

Wild Horses have long been a symbol of American Western heritage. At the beginning of the 20th century, more than two million wild horses roamed the American West. Today, there are more wild horses in captivity than there are in the wild. Thousands of horses are sent to Canadian and Mexican slaughterhouses every year. As you read, the roundups continue and dozens of herds are being forever removed from their lands.

Issues Raised in the Film

In 1971 The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act was enacted to halt the disappearance of these iconic animals from public lands in the American West. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was entrusted to oversee

their management. Claiming damage to the range, the BLM has removed hundreds of thousands of horses from public lands with evident designs to benefit the extractive and the livestock industries, which are in constant need of more land for exploitation. In the midst of this scramble for land and money are the nation's wild horses. They have no powerful lobbyists in Washington to aid them in their struggle for survival.

We can change the course of events before these majestic animals are mismanaged into extinction. *Wild Horses* seeks to add another voice to the cause for the preservation of the Mustangs. For close to a decade, Stephanie Martin has wanted to make a movie that draws attention to this issue. *Wild Horses* is as much a cry for the preservation of wild horses as it is about the moments in our lives where we discover what's really important and make decisions that change everything. We wish to share this film with those who want to fight for the defense of wild horses. Our goal is to shed light on the issue of roundups, keep horses in the wild, and contribute to their lasting protection.

Editor's Note: The website indicates there are plans to make a feature film from this story.

Official site of the award winning short film Wild Horses:

<http://www.wildhorsethefilm.com/>

St Kilda Film Festival Sunday 25 May 7:30pm:

<http://www.stkildafilmfestival.com.au/2014-s2/details/143>

The Editor's Tail

The Wild Horse Crusader

Recently, the wildlife ecologist and author of the book *The Wild Horse Conspiracy*, **Craig Downer** was in Australia and visited several wild horse areas and sanctuaries (see p.4, [Save the Brumbies](#)).

A born and bred Nevadan, Downer grew up amongst Mustangs and has been a strong advocate for maintaining Mustangs in a wild and free environment. He obtained his undergraduate degree at the University of California, going on to a Masters at the University of Nevada and then doctoral degrees at the University of Kansas and the University of Durham in the UK. He is involved in various aspects of mammalian research, including tapirs in South America (tapirs are related to ancestral horses). He is on the Board of the Cloud Foundation, a member of the American Society of Mammologists, and the World Conservation Union, Species Survival Commission.

Environmentally, Downer argues that horses fulfil an important niche in the wild and do not compete with other species for food because of their post gastric digestive system; this gives them the ability to digest drier fodder and their manure is less processed, allowing food for small species and micro-organisms as well as enrichment of soil. He notes that horses are a "climax" species whose populations ebb and flow but always self-limit according to resources, if given enough minimum space to do so.

Downer is also keen to point out the important role and relationship that horses have played in human development and that their ancestry in North America is long and deep. He believes they have earned the right to be free and wild, sharing the land with other species including humans.

Downer is critical of the current Bureau of Land Management programs that seek to limit wild horse

populations to relatively small areas, sometimes with the use of immuno-contraception of which he is against. Behind these policies, he points to other vested interests of the livestock and mining industries as well as hunters who want the horses eradicated and have successfully lobbied the US Government over years to contain and cull the horses.

Downer has developed guidelines for Reserve Design which he believes would allow wild horses to live with other species, benefit and enhance the environment and permit them to self-limit their populations and he wants to get that message out to the public and government authorities.

In my heart, I agree with him, hope he is right and wish we could get there. We are seeing more and more viewpoints in line with his thinking for example, the Rewilding movement and Allan Savoy's ideas on reversing desertification.

(<http://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/tag/rewilding/>,
http://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/tag/desertification
)

But in my head I am less optimistic for the short and medium term. With all the other economic, social and political noise in the world, would governments accept such a proposal that opposes not only their current policies but powerful interests who want them there? Surely, there is some economic sense in Downer's less interventional approach, but would authorities be convinced? In my view, we still have a very long road to travel here.

Continued engagement with authorities and the wider public on the benefits of wild horses in the environment as well as humane management like fertility control, passive

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trapping and re-homing, is at least a step forward towards Downer's visionary goal.

<http://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/how-wild-horses-and-burros-help-the-environment/>

More on Craig Downer at:

<http://thewildhorseconspiracy.org/>

<http://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/proposal-for-wild-horse-and-burro-reserve-design/>

Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

ABA Member Groups

- ☞ Australian Brumby Horse Register
- ☞ Coffin Bay Brumby Preservation Society Inc. (SA)
- ☞ Hunter Valley Brumby Association (NSW)
- ☞ Kaimanawa Heritage Horses (NZ)
- ☞ Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA
- ☞ Save the Brumbies Inc. (NSW)
- ☞ Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group (NSW)
- ☞ South East Queensland Brumby Association
- ☞ Victorian Brumby Association

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