



# Brumby Bridges

*The quarterly newsletter of the ABA*

MARCH 2014

ISSUE 14-1

ABA Inc. Charity/ABN No: 9-784718191

## THE AUSTRALIAN BRUMBY CRUSADE!

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This brave steed was a wild Brumby just over three months before it entered the **Australian Brumby Challenge** with a Knight in Shining Armour. *Read more on the Challenge in the VBA Member News section on page 6 of this issue!*

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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 News

### President's Chat

Firstly, I want to applaud the VBA on running the first *Australian Brumby Challenge* in such a positive and professional way. Congratulations to VBA, all the competitors and their Brumbies. It was a great achievement and, I hope, one that continues in Australia.



Over recent years we are seeing a gradual increase in articles explaining Europe's efforts to 'Rewild' for conservation and boost biodiversity. It is vital we source and share this information to promote positive understanding of why Brumbies, in sustainable numbers, should be embraced by Australians as an asset, not a threat, to our National Parks.

Three National Park Brumby management reviews are in progress; (Barmah Forest, Alpine Region (both Victoria) and Kosciuszko (NSW)). State bodies continue to use selected literary reviews of earlier studies, which in our view are outdated, to back their claims that Brumbies damage National Parks. Australian legislation is also often used to support negative Brumby views - in time this must change to reflect modern management practices applied to bushland.

A disturbing back-flip by Victorian Parks on the Barmah Brumby management advisory group has given the impression that Park's consultation process is insincere, making it harder for future community dialogue with Parks Victoria to be seen as genuine or reflecting 'due process'. The ABA wrote to Mr. Bill Jackson, CEO Parks Victoria in February 2014 to seek assurance that future National Park community involvement will be based on trust, with the contribution from volunteers on Park's advisory groups both respected and their input received 'in good faith'.

January 31, marked the first day of the Chinese *New Year of the Horse*. Those born in the Year of the Horse are said to be stable, talented, adventurous and extremely

energetic. Let's ensure these year of the Horse qualities spread across all our work to preserve the true values of our Australian wild horse, the iconic Brumby.

Four dozen Retuerta horses have been released into the wild in western Spain over the past two years as part of a project by a non-profit group that seeks to turn the loss of rural farming life into an opportunity to boost biodiversity.

The horse project at Campanarios is one of a half-dozen efforts sponsored by Rewilding Europe across the continent. Others include the rewilding of European bison, red deer, beavers, brown bears and white-tailed eagles in Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia and elsewhere.

"We've lost most of the big predators in Europe," said George Monbiot, an environmental columnist for *The Guardian* newspaper and author of the recent book, *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding*. "We've lost all the big herbivores — huge, elephant-sized rhinos used to live in Eastern Europe. We've lost a lot of our middle-sized herbivores. But this can be changed, and I think there's a very exciting future for rewilding here."

As Spaniards abandon rural life for the city, the land they've left behind is rewilding — returning to a landscape unseen for centuries.

The first thing to come back is the underbrush, which used to be grazed by livestock but now grows unchecked — and fuels increasingly dangerous wildfires growing in number and acreage in recent years.

"In the last 40 years, the bush has increased by more than 4 million hectares. That's nearly 10 percent of the country converted to bushland, because we lost the human population — they went to the city," said Benigno Varillas, president of a subsidiary group, Rewilding Spain.

"To control the bush, you need big animals — herbivores — to trample and graze. People have taken their horses and cows away. So this reintroduction [of wild horses] is very important."

Jill Pickering, *President, Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.*

## ABA Website Developments

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One of the features of the ABA Website is to link information relevant to each state under State Pages on the site. Access to these State Pages is via the About drop down menu or by clicking on the map on the Home page. Currently, these pages have some brief information on each state, a map showing indicative locations of wild

horse locations where information is known, a list of member groups and all posts that reference the state. ABA members are invited to view these pages and if you have any additions or corrections, please contact either Sandy Radke, Website Manager or Jill Pickering.

## Member News

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### Hunter Valley Brumby Association (HVBA)

#### *Singleton Brumbies*

The HVBA has been in talks with the Singleton Army Base as preparations get underway to remove the Brumbies.

A tender for a contractor to trap the Brumbies has just been published and we are pleased to announce that the HVBA is the only stake holder to receive the Brumbies.

We will be sure to keep our members updated when trapping gets underway.

#### *Australian Brumby Challenge*

Kath, Sam and Jack made their way to Victoria at the start of February for the final of the first ever Australian Brumby Challenge.

It was an incredible weekend watching all of the Brumbies competing in events after only being trained for 100 days.

Unfortunately we were all so busy throughout the weekend helping the VBA that we did not have any time to take any photos! Lots of photos and videos from the whole challenge and the final can be found on the website at [www.australianbrumbychallenge.com.au](http://www.australianbrumbychallenge.com.au)

The HVBA is now in the very early stages of planning a NSW challenge next year, so stay tuned!

#### *Kosciuszko Brumbies*

Kath and Sharlone, who is now the secretary of the Australian Brumby Alliance, will be heading to the Snowy Mountains.

Unfortunately we will not be bringing Brumbies back with us, but instead attending a two day field trip with NPWS Rangers, RSPCA, ABA, VBA and local groups who are concerned about the drafting of the new Management Plan for the Kosi Brumbies.

We will be taken into various areas of the national park to be shown damage caused to wilderness areas and we hope to spot lots of Brumbies over the two days.

We will be sure to take plenty of photos!

*(ABA President Jill Pickering, VBA President Colleen O'Brien, Peter Cochran President with Clive Edwards Vice-President of SMBUG are also participating in this field trip as part of ongoing meetings with NPWS. – Ed.)*

### Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA

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The OHHAWA has had a Watching Brief on Juna Downs Station, an old bloodline station in the north of WA where we have rescued horses in the past. Recently a contractor at a neighbouring station provided photos of a very healthy mob running on Juna Downs. Despite recent

drought and culls in the past it was great to see such healthy horses still living at peace in their environment.

Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

In late 2013, the Charity received a call from Juna Downs Station saying they had found two young foals who had for whatever reason lost their mothers. OHHAWA agreed to take the foals and below is an account by Sheila Greenwell, the Charity's Vet Consultant, about her adventurous trip collecting JJ and Dinnercamp.

My friend Lynnie and I set out on the Wednesday to head north, we decided we were doing the Thelma and Louise movie all over again...without the murder or the cliff!!

We arranged to meet Terri from Juna Downs at Meekathara. Unfortunately we heard whilst in transit that there was a fire on the station and she couldn't leave for that long but could get to Newman. So we kept going, spending the night in Meekathara. Next day we met Terri in Newman and got the foals on board and headed south.

We were meant to get to Mount Magnet that night to catch up with my better half who works in Leinster. We pointed out he had to be Brad Pitt and he was a bit worried that he gets shot in the movie but we calmed him down on that one! Anyway we get to Meeka, head in the servo and my power steering packs it in and we spray the place in oil, give up on the journey and head to the same motel, call the RAC and they are all set for the morning.

Wayne arrives in the small hours in a haze and is revived by the morning and we abandon the Landie to the truck boys and head south with Wayne. Thirty minutes out of town and his car boils over so off under a tree we go and whip out the thermostat which allows us to limp to Mount Magnet whereupon we call the RAC again. Meanwhile the truck with my Landie pulls in so we tell him not to leave quite yet! There may be a bigger load to cart south!

By pure luck we find a new thermostat in Mount Magnet and start heading south but only get to Paynes Find that night we camped and got home the next day.

The foals meanwhile are getting very used to life on the road. The little fellow JJ slept a lot but the bigger guy, Dinnercamp would get pissed off and try and bite him. Fortunately they were paneled apart in the float.

JJ was named after Juna Junction which is the railway depot in the station. He wandered in there and straight up to the blokes looking for a drink! They reckon his mother was either killed by a train or it separated them and she took off, either way he made the right decision and followed the rails in to the depot!



Dinnercamp was named after the windmill where he was found. Terri found him at the water trough with no other horse in sight so not sure what happened to his mum. Terri brought him back as he was a sitting duck for dingo dinner that night.

The foals have settled in well. JJ has been teamed up with a clucky mare and he now does normal horse stuff but drinks out of a bucket. He is a very quiet likeable little soul.

Should be a great kids pony one day.



Dinnercamp, I teamed up with a quarter horse gelding which has a fair sense of justice and keeps him in his place (in the nicest possible way). He is a gutsy foal with attitude which is probably why he is alive. I reckon polocrosse or cattle work would

be his style, no shrinking violet that one!!!

Obviously they will need a fair bit of time here but ultimately will be sold on the right people. There is a lot of water to go under the bridge before we get to that stage though!!!

## Save the Brumbies (STB)

The New England Brumby Sanctuary is in severe drought and we can't take any more horses until much needed rain. STB will be commencing PZP fertility control at NEBS later this year. On April 12 and 13, STB will be hosting a

clinic and private lessons with Carlos Tabernaberry at our Mt Thyme Sanctuary near Bellingen (*see page 9 in the Hoof Prints section of this issue of Brumby Bridges*)

## South East Queensland Brumby Association (SEQBA)

### *Queensland Horse Home Show*

The Qld State Equestrian Centre hosted its inaugural "Horse Home Show" on Saturday 8th February. SEQ Brumby Association Inc. (SEQBA) were proud to be part of it with a stall in the horse groups' village area. We were located in between the Arabian and the Stock horse associations.

We were able to inform a lot of people about brumbies, with some people having no idea there were brumbies in Queensland. As a result of the stall one couple are coming to look at the mare "Toolara Pearl" who is trained and needs a home.

Those attending the show were heard saying "it's just like a mini Equitana". The day was a great success and QSEC are already planning next year's event which may be extended to 2 days 7 - 8 February 2015.



Anne Willson and WWOOFer Lisa at the Home Show

Helping Anne Wilson at the stall was Lisa Wygrowah, a WWOOFer (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) from Germany.

### *WWOOFer Helpers*

WWOOFers are a great way for your organisation to get an

extra pair of hands a week or two or more when you need some extra help. It costs \$50 per annum to register with the WWOOFing organisation and it's up to you who and when you accept a WWOOFer. You need to provide them with food and accommodation and show them around the

area a little bit in return for 4 hours work per day. For information go to [www.wwoof.com.au](http://www.wwoof.com.au).

Tasks the WWOOFer can assist with, are feeding, picking up manure, weeding, cleaning windows, and whatever unskilled task you might have that needs doing, that you don't have time for because you're too busy training the horses.

### *Brumbies in SEQBA care*

Currently SEQBA has four brumbies in its care: Pearl, Grace and her foal Bo.

Gypsy (*pictured*), a lovely, very gentle filly, has a home to go to and is currently being halter trained.



### *Brumby transport*

Terry Wilson recently finished building a trailer that can be used to transport difficult to load horses and in particular, untrained or very green brumbies. Previously SEQBA had a small truck however the cost of registering the truck each year was excessive at approx. \$1,200 per annum, as we couldn't get a farm discount. The trailer which cost approx. \$4,000 in materials to build (paid for by Terry) can be registered for approx. \$180 per annum, a significant cost saving. So we are back on the road ready to deliver our brumbies to their new homes.

## Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

### *Future of Trapping Program*

Currently SEQBA is waiting to hear what Forestry Plantation Queensland plans to do in the future with respect to the brumby management program in Toolara State Forest.

A consultant, namely Dr Dave Berman, has presented FPQ with a draft Brumby Management Program.

At this stage SEQBA are not privy to its contents and have been advised by Dave that he is also waiting to find out if FPQ intends to continue with the rehoming program.

## Victorian Brumby Association (VBA)

Our **Australian Brumby Challenge**, which ran for 100 days from the 26<sup>th</sup> of October to the 1<sup>st</sup> of February was a huge success, with all except one of our Brumbies finding their forever homes. What an absolutely amazing journey this challenge was! We started with twenty very wild, very woolly Brumbies and twenty hand-picked trainers, most of whom had never trained a Brumby before. Our trainers all had differing methods and approaches, but the key thing that they all had was patience and a love and empathy for horses.

Throughout the 100 days, we stayed in close contact with our trainers, posting their weekly updates on our website ([www.australianbrumbychallenge.com.au](http://www.australianbrumbychallenge.com.au)) as well as adding as much information to our ABC Facebook page so that the general public could also follow their journey.

The finals weekend on the 1st and 2nd of February was an eye opener to many people. The Brumbies looked amazing



and handled an indoor arena with a full grandstand incredibly well. We went through the very

important basic training events on the Saturday, including a one hour group trail ride which included obstacles. The Freestyle classes on the Sunday were incredible, it was hard to hold back tear as we watched Brumbies who had

In the interim it is a welcome hiatus for SEQBA as the drought and large number of horses accommodated on Anne and Terry's small property over the past five years has had a significant impact, and the paddocks will need some time to recoup once the existing four horses have been rehomed.

### *Bunnings BBQ*

The next Bunnings BBQ is scheduled for 11 May 2014. These BBQs provide a welcome input into the association's finances.

been wild only 100 days earlier being ridden in nothing more than neck ropes, doing mounted archery, genuinely engaging with their trainers and enjoying the chance to show what they were great at. The yearlings were so touching – to see the transformation their trainers had wrought and the resulting confident, cheeky, engaged and affectionate youngsters was a thrill.

Our very deserving winners in the Ridden category were: 1<sup>st</sup> place, Tamara Wardlaw and VBA Kosciuszko Trooper, 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Mat Van Der Horst and VBA Gift of God, 3<sup>rd</sup> place, Rachel Clarkson and VBA Rascal. In the Yearling section, we had 1<sup>st</sup> place, Tanya French and VBA Jindabyne, 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Valence Williams and VBA Lana, 3<sup>rd</sup>, Rebecca Ray and VBA It n a Bit.

The event concluded with

an auction of all the Brumbies in the Challenge, with only registered, approved bidders eligible to bid. Many of our trainers couldn't bear to part with their Brumbies and purchased them, with all but one of the remaining Brumbies being sold at auction to wonderful homes, many of whom had previously purchased Brumbies from us.



A huge thankyou to our major sponsors, Barefoot Australia for their support for our event and the wonderful saddles

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and prize packs. Also to all the wonderful volunteers, without which this event would not have been possible.

We are really looking forwards to our next Australian Brumby Challenge now!

### *Other news*

We are still working towards a plan of management for the Brumbies of the Alpine and Kosciuszko National Parks and are also working hard to see Brumbies stay in the Barmah National Park. Our annual Brumby catching season in this

region has commenced and we are heading off on Thursday to pick up our first Brumbies of the season. We expect to take in around thirty Bogong High Plains Brumbies (Alpine National Park) as well as around twenty Kosciuszko National Park Brumbies over the next four to five months, when trapping ceases. It is a really busy time of year for us, settling in all those new faces and then we spend the next twelve months training and rehoming them where applicable. The mares of course are all pregnant, so they stay here until their foals are weaned.



## Hoof Prints – Other items of note....

### Learned Helplessness in Horses

The theory of learned helplessness was originally devised by Martin Seligman in 1967. It is a psychological condition where individuals learn they have no control over painful or aversive conditions, that their actions are futile and that they are helpless to change the situation (1).

When events are uncontrollable the individual learns that its behaviour and outcomes are independent and this produces the motivational, cognitive and emotional effects of uncontrollability (2). This is an effect on three different aspects of an individual, the motivational, cognitive and emotional. In humans this may result in clinical depression and related mental illness. The state may also result in an unwillingness to avoid subsequent encounters with the aversive stimuli, even if escapable, as individuals learn they can't control the situation and give up.

Horses learn they are unable to help themselves when the responses they use to relieve pain or discomfort are unsuccessful (3). When a horse has no consistent way to find a reward, it learns it has no control over its environment and may give up trying to do anything (4). Such horses may become unresponsive to stimuli such as the aids and be reluctant to work. They are often then described as 'stale', 'sour', 'lazy', 'stupid', 'stubborn' or 'sluggish'.

Learned helplessness may be common in the badly ridden horse which is constantly being jabbed in the mouth by the bit. If the horse doesn't habituate to random tugs on its sensitive mouth, it may give up trying to respond to any amount of bit pressure (4). Humans call this a 'hard-mouth' and blame the problem on the horse. The normal solution is to get a harsher, more painful bit. People may

fail to examine their own role in the problem or to realise that it is in fact 'learned helplessness' not a hard mouth. No horse has a hard mouth. The mouth is a soft, wet, sensitive, highly innervated area of the body that remains sensitive regardless of what humans do with bits.

Punishment is also seen as a cause of learned helplessness. An emotional response to excessive or inconsistent (behaviour and outcomes not linked) punishment is described as learned helplessness and may be similar to some forms of depression in humans (4).

In one study it was found that animals who had control over stressors exhibited changes in the excitability of specific neurons within the prefrontal cortex (6). Animals without control showed no increase in excitability and showed signs consistent with learned helplessness and social anxiety (6). Uncontrollable events can significantly debilitate individuals, producing passivity in the face of trauma, the inability to learn and emotional stress (5). When training and management procedures are repeatedly unpleasant for the horse and there is no clear association between behaviour and outcome, learning and performance are likely to be interfered with, in addition to compromising welfare (1).

How does this apply to everyday horse handling? When you want to lead a horse you apply pressure to the halter and the horse moves forward. If you continue applying pressure after the horse has moved forward the horse doesn't understand what you want or how to get rid of the negative stimulus (the pressure on the head). If this is repeated and the horse gets no clear reward (release of pressure) when it moves forward, eventually it will just give up (learned helplessness) and stand there and do nothing when pressure is applied to the halter, (the process of releasing the pressure when the desired behaviour is offered is known as 'pressure and release' or 'negative reinforcement' in training terms). The same thing will happen if you are riding and apply pressure with your legs then don't release when the horse moves forward, and as described earlier, if the pressure is not released on the reins when a horse responds by stopping or turning. As you can imagine the examples are endless as this principle applies to all our horse handling.

It is in our own best interests to be aware of and avoid learned helplessness in our horses. It may seriously affect their ability to learn in training and reduce their ability to perform. It is definitely in the interests of the horse to avoid it with a host of welfare issues associated with it. Learned helplessness in horses may cause an inability to learn, emotional stress, passivity, depression, mental illness and social anxiety. Horse carers everywhere have a responsibility to the individuals in their care and a moral requirement to ensure that no horses suffer from this debilitating syndrome.



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## STB Inc. Proudly Presents Renown Horseman

### *Carlos Tabernaberry*

Clinic dates 12<sup>th</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> April 2014

*Bellingen NSW Sanctuary*

**Main Clinic:** Sat. 12<sup>th</sup> April commencing at 9 a.m. sharp concluding 4 p.m.

Places limited, come with your own horse or book with one of our well-handled Brumbies, excellent facilities available, stables and secure yards, bring lunch. Parking for floats. Coffee, tea etc. compliments STB Inc. on tap all day.

**Fees:** \$200.00 for the full day. Observers: \$40.00. 50% deposit required to secure your place, non-refundable.

**Private lessons:** Sun. 13<sup>th</sup> April. One personal hour with Carlos to sort out all those issues with your horse, float loading, behavioural problems and any other areas of concern.

**Fees:** \$110.00 50% deposit required, non-refundable.  
*Note: time is limited, don't miss out this great opportunity for you and your horse.*

On receipt of your deposit a full schedule and requirements for the clinic will be sent via post. We look forward to meeting you and wish all participants a highly successful and rewarding experience.

**Cheques/m.o. to:** Save the Brumbies Inc. p.o. box 409 Bellingen 2454 NSW

**Direct Deposit to:** Bananacoast Credit Union, A/c Name: Save the Brumbies Inc. BSB No: 704328

**Ref:** Clinic/your name for receipts.

**A/c No:** 170773

For more information on Carlos refer his website:

[www.whisperingacres.com.au](http://www.whisperingacres.com.au)

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## SEQBA Brumby Spotting Tour

*29 March 2014 - BOOK NOW*

The tour includes lots of stories and information about brumbies, and a brumby training display by Terry Wilson. Each brumby spotting tour is unique and sightings are guaranteed.

Make a weekend of it... Arrive in Noosa Heads on Friday night or Saturday morning, stay in one of the many accommodation places at Noosa Heads and visit Noosa

Heads National Park, Hastings Street and Noosa Main Beach on Sunday.

All funds raised contribute to the cost of feeding and worming the brumbies in the care of SEQBA.

Full day tour starting from Noosa 8.15am, return 4.30pm. Tickets: \$90 adults, \$50 children (aged 16 and under), no refunds. Lunch and afternoon tea are included. Phone Anne Wilson on 07 5485 3369 for info and bookings.

## The Editor's Tail

### Rewilding Europe

While Australia and the USA seem hell bent on getting horses out of the wild, a unique entity is doing its best to get them back into a natural environment. Rewilding Europe, a foundation created under Dutch Law in 2011 has been re-populating 5 areas across Europe with species which were common there in the past. The Foundation intends to establish at least five herds of more than 100 horses in appropriate ecosystems by 2022. Through DNA analysis they will select old breeds that most closely match the primitive horse. To date, Konik horses (pictured here) and Retuerta horses have been released in areas in Holland and the Iberian Peninsula respectively.



Alongside other species in these environments, the wild horses will help in ongoing research, conservation and tourism. Time will tell if these ambitious projects will be a success but lessons learned will no doubt be valuable in our understanding of species interconnections in nature.

For more information on Rewilding Europe follow the links below.

<http://rewildingeuropa.com/>

[http://rewildingeuropa.com/home/SearchForm?Search=horses&action\\_results=Go](http://rewildingeuropa.com/home/SearchForm?Search=horses&action_results=Go)

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2014/01/08/260777584/after-2-000-years-wild-horses-again-roam-western-spain>

*Valence and Lana take a bow at the Australian Brumby Challenge*



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## Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

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### **Newsletter Contributions**

Contact Sandy  
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### **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