



Brumby Bridges

The quarterly newsletter of the ABA

SUMMER 2018-19

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ABA wishes you all a very happy holiday season and a peaceful and healthy New Year.

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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 with 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

The last few months have seen a flurry of legal activity with the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) initiating legal action against Parks Victoria to stop it interfering with Brumbies in the Bogong High Plains or any action that might significantly deplete other Alpine Brumby populations.

Our legal costs are high, but inactivity now will allow Parks Victoria to *manage to extinction* every Brumby, starting with those that have called Bogong High Plains home for 140 years.

While, for now, the main Bogong High Plains Brumbies are safe, and the intended removal of 400 east Alpine Brumbies is halved, to continue this position we must win the upcoming Federal Court case.

Injunction legal costs are well over \$50,000 and further costs for the substantive case are estimated around \$100,000. To help with the costs, a crowd funding site is being set up - more news soon.

If we lose the case we become the generation that allowed governments the freedom to drive any Heritage Brumby populations to extinction, so denying future generations the chance to see and learn about their irreplaceable, living Brumby heritage. ([more details below...](#))

In fact, Brumbies in the Singleton Army Base that the Hunter Valley Brumby Association have helped rehome on several occasions, are now under imminent and dire threat of being barbarically aerial shot. Whilst both NSW major parties do not support aerial shooting in NSW, they have no control over the Singleton Brumbies as the army site belongs to the Commonwealth. The Hunter Valley Brumby Association, ABA and locals near the Singleton Army Base have worked hard to persuade the Commonwealth to revisit alternative management options to aerial culling, so far, efforts to present workable, timely, alternative proposals have been ignored.

The Barmah Brumby Preservation Group is fighting save the Barmah Brumby population that has called Barmah forest, now a national park, home for over 150 years to survive a human induced lack of feed. It is an eye-opener to see Parks Victoria spending public money on policing the park and using hidden camera/s, to catch those providing humane solutions to human induced calamities.

On a more positive note, I was *sooo....* impressed to see Melbourne's Equitana present the conclusion of the Victorian Brumby Associations *Australian Brumby Challenge*. The Brumbies were so well behaved, taking to the crowds as if they had been around them for years. ([more p 5 ...](#))

While it is with regret we accepted the resignation of the Snowy Mountain Brumby Users Group (SMBUG) recently, we wish SMBUG every success in the future. SMBUG was a founding member of the ABA, and had been a member for just over 10 years, but in the current climate they feel their group can be more effective without being part of a national umbrella group.

So, after my introduction to the wide and varied issues we are now experiencing, you can look forward to reading more about the achievements of ABA members.

Finally, I want to send my heartfelt wishes to you all for a peaceful, joyful and restorative holiday season and I hope we all emerge in 2019 with renewed energy for ourselves and our beloved Brumbies.

Jill Pickering



ABA's Federal Court action vs Parks Victoria

The Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) filed an application in the Federal Court seeking an urgent interim injunction against Parks Victoria to stop it interfering with Brumbies in the Bogong High Plains and taking action that might

cause a significant depletion of other Alpine Brumby populations.

However late on 13 December 2018, the day before the injunction was to be heard, agreement was reached that Parks Victoria would undertake “to remove *no more than*” 15 Brumbies that have now lived in the Mt Nelse area adjacent to Bogong High Plains, and “*no more than* 200” eastern Alpine Brumbies.

While the Mt. Nelse Brumbies will be rehomed, there is sadly no such guarantee for Eastern Alpine Brumbies that are trapped under the Alpine Brumby Management Association contract with Parks Victoria, despite Parks Victoria’s stated intent to *increase Brumby rehoming capacity*.

Parks Victoria also agreed not to remove any Alpine Brumbies when temperatures are over 29 degrees. Removing Brumbies in hot weather has led to several tragic deaths from accumulative stress that heavily pregnant, lactating, mineral deficient Alpine Brumbies experience when they are trapped and transported during the months of November, December, January and February.

The interim agreement warns Parks Victoria that if they sanction trapping during these 4 months, all trapping responsibility and adherence to appropriate animal welfare standards and laws “*rests squarely on Parks Victoria and its agents.*”

Our fight centres on preventing Parks Victoria from totally exterminating *any* Heritage Brumby population. We continue to maintain Brumby populations can be managed to sustainable levels, but strongly reject Parks Victoria’s intention to ‘*manage to extinction*’ the wild horses that have called the Bogong High Plains region home for 140 years, and to significantly reduce other Brumby populations in Victoria’s Alpine National Park.

The ABA maintains that Parks Victoria is prohibited, by section 15B of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth EPBC Act), from taking any action that has or will have a significant impact on the Brumby population in the Alpine National Park unless it has obtained approval under Part 9 of the EPBC. The ABA is now preparing for the next stage seeking an order prohibiting Parks Victoria from taking the proposed action without first

applying for approval from the Commonwealth Minister for Environment.

The time, money and effort in approaching the Court for an order to force compliance with the EPBC Act would be better spent funding the ABA’s proposed program to research Wild Horse social behaviour, grazing movements as well as positive and negative Brumby impacts, along with other “*species-causing impacts*” across the Bogong High Plains region.

So *Round One* goes to Australia’s Heritage Brumbies, but we have a long way to go to gain an agreement on how to retain sustainable heritage Brumby populations in Victoria in areas they have called home from long before their homeland was declared a national park.

Jill Pickering

Photo supplied by the ABA taken January 2018 on Bogong High Plains



Singleton Brumbies Under Attack

It is with great sadness that, despite so much effort by many to save the Singleton Brumbies, the cull is in progress as Brumby Bridges goes to press.

Despite the introduction of the recent Brumby Act to protect and acknowledge the heritage value of Kosi Brumbies, Brumbies at the Singleton Military Base (under Commonwealth, not NSW jurisdiction) have endured a lethal aerial cull. It is not clear, at time of publishing this

newsletter whether all the horses have been killed, whether some have escaped the bullet or whether some have only been injured.

We are grateful to everyone who has rallied against this

barbaric cull.

View the latest ABA Media Release:

[ABA Medea Release - Singleton Brumbies](#)

Member News

Hunter Valley Brumby Association (HVBA)

Singleton Brumbies

We had just weaned Lexi off her milk a few weeks ago only to receive a call from the Singleton Army Base that another orphan had been found. Kath raced out to the Base to find a tiny two-day old filly being cared for at Range Control. She was found by Tiger Company – hence her new name Tigerlilly, and taken straight to our vets at Dungog for some fluids. And except from being very skinny, she was otherwise in good health.

Two days later, we received yet another call that a young colt had been found in a manmade pit, from which there was no escape and his family were long gone. Brad “*I fell in a*” Pitt joined Tigerlilly and they have been settling in well over the last 3 weeks.



It has been very busy, but both foals are readily drinking their milk formula and are now spending time with Mack and Pandora learning valuable social skills. Both foals are

now going through a bag of formula a week (\$100 per bag) and this will only increase as they grow. If you would like to donate to their care, please just go to our website or contact us.

Can You Help Our Oxley Family?

This summer we are hoping to find a foster family for our Oxley Brumbies – Delta, Ariel, Zorro and Tia. They have been with us for a while now and are a very bonded family. We believe that Delta is Ariel’s daughter and Tia to be her granddaughter, so they are very close, and Zorro has taken the role of protector.

Tia and Zorro don’t mind human attention, but Ariel needs a home where she can just be herself in peace. This is due to having a radio collar fitted more than 10 years ago, roped down in a yard with no sedation, so the ordeal would have been terrifying for her.

With a HVBA foster agreement, you have full support of the HVBA. If you, or anyone you know, might be able to provide a foster home for the Oxley family, we would love to hear from you.

Brumby 250 Tournament

Have you been keeping up to date with the Brumby 250 Tournament? We have just passed the 100 day mark and the results so far have been amazing!

Be sure to save the dates to come and cheer on all of the



trainers and our Brumbies for all of the final events in April 2019 :

- Working Equitation Nationals – Stroud Showground 12th to 14th April 2019.
- Stroud Show – Stroud Showground Friday 26th April led and ridden classes.
- Saturday 27th April will see spectacular freestyle routines and the winner's presentation.



2019 Calendar

Our 2019 calendars have just arrived, and we are celebrating our ten year anniversary! Grab a copy for family or friends for Christmas, just go to our shop and this year we are posting for free!



<http://shop.hvba.com.au/>

HVBA AGM

This year's AGM saw a change in our committee as Madison Young has stood down as Vice President due to family and Uni commitments. The HVBA would like to take the opportunity to thank Maddi for her extraordinary work over the past 8 years, but don't worry she is still volunteering behind the scenes and still a regular at the Sanctuary. We now welcome Kellie Kinder to the role of Vice President. Congratulations Kellie!

The latest updates have just been posted on our website: <http://www.hvba.com.au>

Victorian Brumby Association (VBA)

Australian Brumby Challenge

Another Wild to Wonderful Australian Brumby Challenge was held at Equitana Melbourne November 15-18 this year. Here are just a few of the highlights!

And the Winners are.....

McDowells Herbal Ridden Overall winners:

Champion: Flinders Greentree and VBA Brandy
Reserve Champ: Damien McNickle and VBA Moonshine
3rd: April Harvey and VBA Playboy
4th: Lauren Woodbridge and VBA Lark

Dolly's Dream Yearling Overall winners :

Champion: Holley Pickin and VBA Bago

Reserve Champ: Arden Lee and VBA Titanium
3rd: Jessica Klein Gibaud and VBA Galway
4th: Elizabeth Grant and VBA Avena

Judges choice:

Ridden: Shaniah Dye and VBA Ariat
Yearling: Trai Bryant and VBA Lucky

The McDowells Transformation:

Ridden: 1st Emma Bryant and VBA Waratah
1st Damien McNickle and VBA Moonshine
Yearling: Jessica Klein Gibaud and VBA Galway

People's choice:

Ridden: April Harvey and VBA Playboy
Yearling: Teagan van Gaans and VBA Dynamo

Congratulations to ALL our trainers and Brumbies!



Hoof Prints..... Other items of note

The Horses of Mongolia

Mongolia. One of the great horse cultures of the world. From prehistoric time, through the rule of the Great Khans and to modern day, the horse is valued, treasured, revered and used.

Archeological finds have discovered many sites that reveal horse-human interaction, such as a recent discovery in Central Mongolia where the earliest evidence of equine dentistry was found (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/07/180702154739.htm>).





Genghis Khan led his warriors across the Eurasian continent on the intrepid Mongolian horse, forming the largest empire in human history. His descendants continued to rule, leading the Chinese to build a bloody great wall to keep them out.

Enclosed between Russia and China, Mongolia was “independent” but under Soviet control from 1921-1990 and still has close ties with Russia. The country is varied from the deserts of the Gobi to the

mountains of the Altai. Its capital, Ulaanbaatar is a sprawling, fast growing city that is home to poor ger camps to luxury hotels and apartment buildings. Suppressed during Soviet rule, Buddhism and Shamanism are now having a come-back. The creative arts are thriving and tourism is booming. And so is multinational mining and petroleum development.



Although modern day Mongolian herders have motorcycles, trucks, cars,

mobile phones, computers, television, satellite dishes and solar panels around their gers (yurts), they still rely heavily on horses for herding, hunting, travel and sport and most Mongolians started their lives riding as soon as they can walk. To this day, kids of 6 or 7 often become jockeys in Mongolian races that may be 15 or more kilometers. During the national holiday of Naadam, horse sports feature highly.



The origins of the Mongolian breed are hard to determine. Nomads of the central Asian steppes have been documented as riding horses since 2000 BC. Tests have shown, that among all horse breeds, Mongol horses feature the largest genetic variety, suggesting it is a very archaic breed suffering little human-induced selection.



The Mongolian horse is around 13 hands with very long tail and mane hair. Often the mane is hogged, although not always and not always entirely with some parts cut and others left long.

The horses are sure-footed and extremely balanced, being used to terrain from the level steppe to steep hills and from having grown men pick up sheep while at a gallop!



While horses are generally owned by herders, they are semi-wild, living relatively free for about 9 months of the year and are not fed. Sometimes shoes are put on them in winter to help them dig through snow to find food; otherwise they are not shod or trimmed. There is selective breeding and herders will geld males they do not want to breed.



Apart from riding, mares may be milked (although cow and yak are the main dairy products); airag, or fermented mares' milk is a classic Mongolian drink (along with vodka). Older, injured, or unneeded animals may be used for meat and the hides used for leather and other products.



Although European saddles are sometimes used by locals, the traditional Mongolian saddle is deep, made of wood and often highly decorative. Girths are narrow and somewhat severe. Stirrups are generally short, and riders usually stand for fast trots, canters and gallops. Bridles are made from rawhide and snaffle-like bits are used. Horses are trained to neck rein and reins are generally held in the left hand (so the rider can light a cigarette I am told!), along with a

lead rope attached to a halter under the bridle



Herders hang braids of hair of the animals they loved but are not longer with them

To a westerner, some Mongolian practices may seem a bit rough but overall, Mongolians are very humane to all their animals. Slaughter is humane and pretty much all of the animal is used. There is great respect for animals, both in life and death.

Re-wilding the Takhi



Mongolia is also known for another horse – the Takhi, meaning “spirit” in Mongolian. Known more commonly to western cultures as the Przewalski’s Horse, the Takhi used to roam widely in Asia until last century when hunting and capture caused extinction in the wild; the last wild Takhi disappeared in the late 1960s.

In 1977, a Dutch couple, Jan and Inge Bouman, established the Foundation for the *Preservation and Protection of the Przewalski Horse*. In collaboration with WWF Netherlands, they founded the *Foundation of Reserves for the Przewalski Horse* in 1980 with the aim of re-introducing the Przewalski Horse to its original habitat.



Large “semi-reserves” were established in the Netherlands as an intermediary stage in bring the Przewalski Horse from captivity in zoos around the world back to the wild. In 1980 a specific breeding program was started to produce individuals suitable for re-wilding, both in terms of genetics and behaviour. All wild Takhi alive today are based on a genetic founder generation of 13 animals.

At the same time, surveys were conducted to locate suitable release sites.

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Between 1992 and 2000, five transports of a total of 84 Takhi arrived in Mongolia. Initially the herds were released in enclosures out of sight and earshot of each other for a 1-2 year adaption period. Following the opening of the enclosures, the herds have been closely monitored and studied to ensure the population grows to a genetically viable stage.

Today there are over 2000 captive Takhi around the world but under 1000 in the wild. Wild Takhi are located in Mongolia in the Gobi B Nature Reserve and Hustai National Park.

Takhi differ genetically from domestic horses by having 66 chromosomes, 2 more than domestic horses. However, Takhi can interbreed with domestic horses, with the first offspring having 65 chromosomes and the second generation reverting to 64. Therefore, prevention of cross breeding with domestic horses has been a main concern in the re-wilding project.

So far the breeding program has been successful with between 300-350 Takhi in Hustai National Park. Approximately 30 harems averaging 8-9 animals are living and breeding in Hustai.

Sources not listed in text:

Hustai Nuruu National Park, Born to be Wild, Nature Guide No. 5 2014, Mongolia, ISBN978-3-935803-43-5

Author's personal experience

The Editor's Tail



Horses feature on the Mongolian 10, 20, 50 and 100 tögrög notes – interesting that the horses on the Australian \$10 notes are disappearing.

Having recently visited Mongolia for a horse trek in Zavkhan Province, I feel privileged to have been to a country that holds their horses in high esteem.

Indeed, when I posted on Facebook about Parks Victoria's threat to the Victorian Alpine Brumbies, Haldi, our guide for the trip commented "WHAT!!!" He simply cannot understand why we would do such a thing.

While many are arguing for Brumbies on heritage grounds, I myself am more compelled to question the science that is underpinning the anti-Brumby movement.

The terms Invasive Species and Threatened Species in themselves convey strong connotations of a militarized zone and yet all that is really going on are the principles of Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection, albeit at a faster pace because of human interference.

Migration of many species to new areas has always happened, as water and food sources, climate and competition for resources change. The result is a novel ecosystem that with time balances in nature. Some species die out, some thrive, some new ones evolve. This has always happened.

The notion native species must be protected at all costs is contrary to natural selection and survival of the fittest which is what maintains a healthy ecosystem in the first place.

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Killing one species to protect another is not just unethical and inhumane, it interferes with natural processes such as natural selection.

Rest assured that in 2019 you will hear more from me on this!

But to end on a more positive and joyful note, the 2018 Australian Brumby Challenge focused a bright light on Australian Brumbies and hopefully the HVBA Brumby 250 Tournament will do the same in 2019.

Happy Holidays! Happy New Year !



Haldirash Toigaval from Zavkhan Trekking scored my Australian Brumby Challenge cap!

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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)
- ☞ Save the Brumbies Inc. (NSW)
- ☞ South East Queensland Brumby Association
- ☞ Victorian Brumby Association