

Thank you for this opportunity to explain some aspects of my management practices on my property, [REDACTED] 80% of the area (8.56ha) is protected under a Voluntary Conservation Agreement with National Parks and Wildlife Service and was gazetted in January 2004.

My main areas of involvement are 'managing the area under agreement' and trying to maintain and even increase biodiversity, particularly of fauna, with the control of feral animals.

## ***Theme 2 - Conservation Action.***

**Question 1** - within in the broad terms of this 'point' I feel that there is a lack of appreciation by both the Government and the public as to just how much work and monitoring needs to occur to maintain an optimal standard of biodiversity and protection through my stewardship.

Working alone 95% of the time - \*repairing eroded areas,

\*finding and fumigating rabbit burrows,

\*monitoring invasive weed growth while also attempting to work out better practices in controlling some weeds which are proving very difficult to manage and eliminate eg. *Richardia brasiliensis*, *Opuntia* of various species.

\*mound baiting for foxes and wild dogs where I check and replace baits daily at 4 locations - current count for 2014 is 124 baits taken in 8 months. In past years this figure has reached 180 for 12 months from a 10.19ha block with a road frontage of 300m on 14kms of sealed road (Milbrodale Rd).

\* mowing and clearing boundaries

\* identifying flora (approx 400 species) and fauna (nearly 100 species of birds some of which are quite scarce) inhabiting the area.

As to how much this has cost is near impossible to assess as while the above list is not exhaustive, with peaks at different seasons, it is only my retired situation which enables me to maintain the conservation integrity of the VCA area to my standard which may be lower than what is required or expected.

**Question 2** - Incentives are a valid point but how this can be offered, apportioned or calculated are all moot points but some tangible and/or in-kind methods would certainly be helpful.

In my case I have no need for huge sums of money but 'some' would be helpful in employing contract labour to assist on specific tasks for a finite duration eg. 8 hours a month.

I am currently exploring ways to re-introduce 'mosaic burning' to the site to improve the health and vigour of plants and animals on the block - the costs seem to be very high for the exercise but this is not a reflection on the indigenous people, so much as to the essential need to identify each plant, its flowering and fruiting times and its density of population so that safeguards can be taken not to burn when specific birds and animals feed on the crop of flowers and fruits.

Whether some form of 'Tidy Town' grading or rating; or a formal certification; local publicity promoting the idea of visiting a VCA site if agreed to by landholder; or educating residents of what and why the VCA and conservation are such valuable programs to the community at large; all would be helpful for general education and encourage other property holders to seek conservation protection on their block. I am not aware of any publicity through local media about the VCA or its counterparts offering any benefits to the

community at large.

### *Theme 5 - Wildlife Management*

**Question 1** - while this question addresses the concern for wildlife, be it fauna or flora and in my case 'in-the-wild' the category of feral animals and weeds, there seems little the Act does in the way of mandating the removal or elimination or control with some form of deterrent. From my experience numerous landholders for various reasons, are ambivalent, ignore, see no responsibility or even an obligation to undertake any control measures which impinge on their commercial/recreational activities.

For instance when considering feral cats whose current numbers are put at 15million nationally and who consume 75million creatures a day the effects they have on biodiversity is alarming. Add to that foxes and wild dogs each of whom need 350g of fresh meat a day (from any source) what must they be doing to biodiversity in National Parks and Reserves.

If we were to take a dog or fox and just applying the 350g per animal per day, to the 124 'baited' so far this year (say 150 days prior to taking the bait) would mean each animal would have eaten 52.5kgs of 'wild' kill. Or aggregating the 124 that would equal 6.5tonnes of mammals, birds, lizards, rabbits, etc.

So while natural attrition accounts for some biodiversity loss, climate change badly effecting habitat through lack of shelter and diminishing food sources, rapidly growing numbers of wild dogs and foxes with good seasons and weak if not unenforceable control measures the future seems bleak. Maybe a strong educational program from early school years to teenagers and adults with some focus on how to manage the situation is the only way I can see to minimise the loss or the situation getting worse in quantum leaps with human life coming under threat as packs form to 'hunt' prey.

My thanks for this opportunity and best wishes

Regards

Roy Palmer

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