

# INTERVIEW WITH A RESEARCHER - 2014



**RESEARCH FUNDED BY NATURE FOUNDATION SA**

**RESEARCHER: MISS CASEY O'BRIEN, UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE PHD STUDENT**

**RESEARCH PROJECT: POPULATION MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR THE SOUTHERN HAIRY-NOSED WOMBAT**

**SUPERVISOR: DR DAVID TAGGART**



Casey O'Brien releasing a translocated wombat fitted with a VHF collar into an unused burrow.  
Photo: Sophie Dean

## **What was the aim and purpose of your project?**

In South Australia the distribution and abundance of Southern hairy-nosed wombats [SHW's] varies greatly. Some populations are highly fragmented and threatened, while others are abundant, and can cause significant problems for landholders. In order to better conserve this species the needs of threatened and abundant populations, as well as the needs of landholders needs to be taken into consideration. Several management strategies have been suggested to improve conservation efforts and enhance co-existence between SHW's and landholders, however little is known about the effects they may have on wombat populations. Translocation is one such tool that has the potential to enhance threatened populations, whilst deterrent use is another that may assist in reducing wombat activity in areas of conflict. Our research aims to address these knowledge gaps in the knowledge, by looking at the effects of translocation and deterrent use on SHW's and their suitability as management tools for this species.

### Summarise the results of your project.

Translocated wombats were found to stay within the area in which they were released, though they were found to use more burrows than resident animals. This could be due to the territoriality of resident wombats, and competition for suitable burrows, or unfamiliarity with the release site. Landholders reported high rates of reinvasion into the areas from which the translocated animals were removed, thus conflict was not reduced. The deterrents were found to have very little effect on the activity patterns of the wombats, with dingo faeces appearing to have no effect, and dingo urine only slightly reducing the average number of visits to treated burrows per night. Visit duration increased in the presence of dingo urine, and wombats were observed spending more time being alert around the burrow entrances.

A GPS collared wombat (Milo) captured on its release warren using a motion sensor camera.



**KeepGuard**

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### What is the most exciting thing about this work?

- Collecting dingo urine and faeces from Cleland Wildlife Park, while curious tourists looked on.
- Capturing wombats using a giant butterfly net.
- Working with volunteers.
- Observing wombat behaviour using motion sensor cameras.
- Working with landholders to better understand the issues they face when dealing with wombats and what can be done to manage conflict.

“the most exciting part of my project was the moment when we recaptured one of the translocated female wombats, a year after she was first released, and she had a joey in her pouch. This indicated to me that she had settled into her new home very well.”



Collecting dingo urine at Cleland Wildlife Park, using black plastic sheeting scented with dog urine to encourage the dingoes to scent mark  
Photo: Casey O'Brien