

Wild Dogs in New South Wales

Securing
Our Region



Nikki Bowdler, Amy Eggleton and Sienna Jeffress

Tumbarumba High School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants.

www.wirraminna.org

Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeekDesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

www.envirostories.com.au

Wild Dogs in New South Wales

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School: Tumbarumba High School

Local Land Heroes - Securing Our Region

In 2015, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about their 'Local Land Heroes' who are involved in pest management in the Murray and Murrumbidgee regions. These heroes are local individuals, couples, a business or industries that have made a difference in their local community by contributing to the management of pest animals and plants. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a PeekDesigns education program.



Local Land
Services

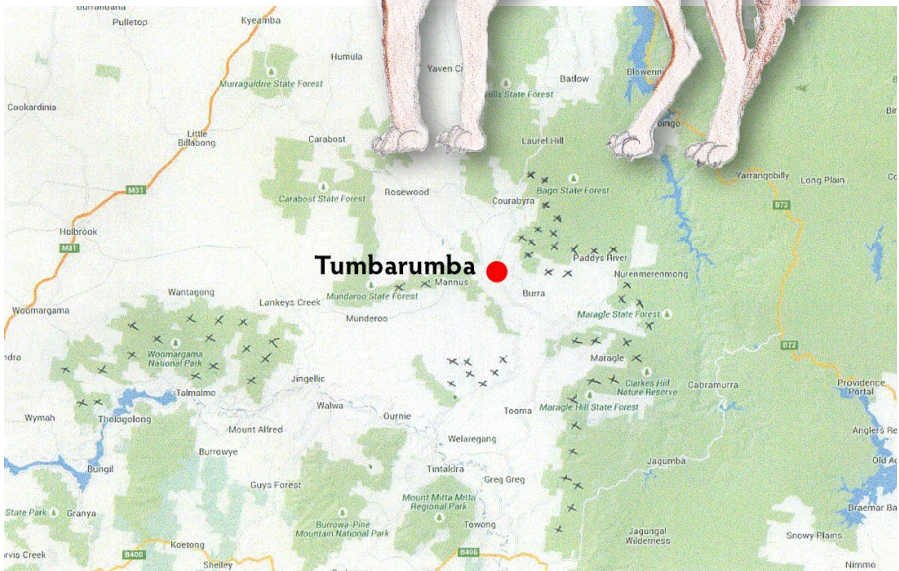
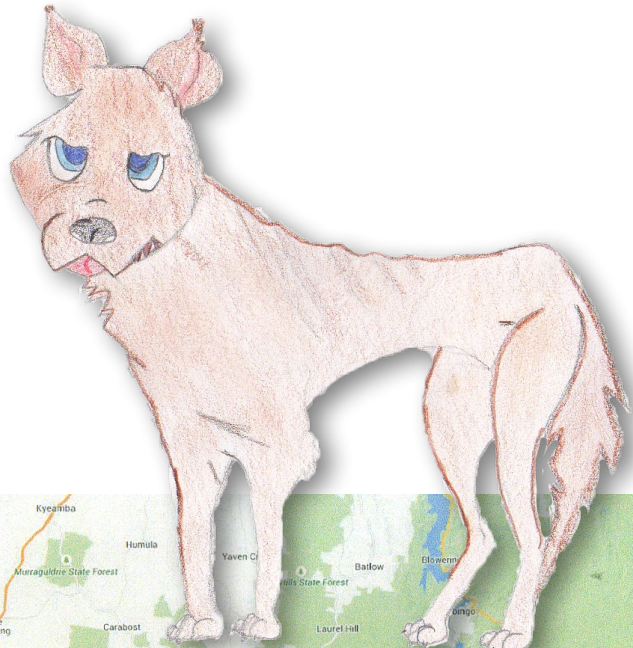


Australian Government



History of wild dogs in the Tumbarumba region

Wild dogs in the Tumbarumba region started to become a problem in the early 1970s but became an even bigger problem in the late 1990s. In general, wild dogs have been a problem in Australia since the early 1940s.



Breeding

Dingoes and wild dogs have different breeding patterns.

Wild dogs breed twice a year, anytime of year but breed in good seasons. Gestation is 63 days. Up to eight pups are born in a den and will stay with the mother and the pack until they are 6 to 12 months old.

Dingoes breed once a year and have up to five pups but generally three. The mating season for dingoes is autumn: March-April. This varies on the location whether they are north or down south.

Wild dogs and dingoes breed less in drought and have higher mortality rates with pups, they do better in good seasons. They can be multiple colors, and can weigh from 9 to 30 kilograms but are usually between 16 and 18 kilograms.

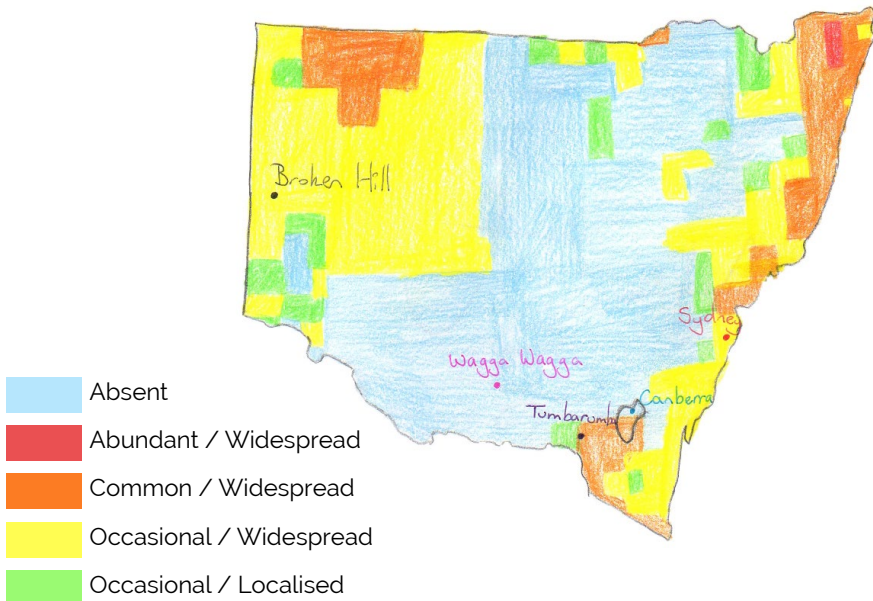




Habitat

The dogs inhabit the deserts, mountain areas and the thick bush lands of Australia. They like to inhabit places with less people. They are found in National Parks, State forests and private properties.

Map: Wild Dog Whereabouts in New South Wales





Food

The dogs eat a variety of food including native animals such as wallabies, kangaroos, reptiles, birds and wombats. They also eat domestic animals like sheep and calves. They may also eat road kill. Wild dogs will eat anything they can hunt from a mouse up to a horse. Their favourite food in the Tumbarumba area is the Swamp wallaby, kangaroo, rabbit and echidna. They will also eat vegetable matter like blackberries, grass and fruit. They do not scavenge much unless it is a poor season.



Why wild dogs are a problem?

Wild dogs cause problems for farmers. They are also of concern for National Parks, as they can destroy and predate on fauna and sometimes even flora. The dogs prey on livestock, particularly the young and the lame. Generally the dogs stay away from adult cattle. If there is a pack of five to six dogs they will attempt to exhaust the animal and attack.

Another concern of the National Parks and Wildlife Services is that the dogs could spread unwanted weeds such as blackberries through their droppings.



The National Parks and Wildlife Service have concern for the people that visit the parks for recreation. The dogs may attack people or carry diseases such as hydatid cysts that are spread through cattle and sheep, the eggs are exchanged from the grass of grazing livestock. This effects the quality and the value of the meat. The animals are then worth less or rejected at the sale yards. Hydatid cysts and other diseases can also be transferred to people.





Government agencies management

The government agencies such as National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Murray Local Land Services have dog plans in place to control the dogs. Sometimes, private property owners will undertake management with the assistance of expert advice. The main agencies involved in wild dog control include National Parks and Wildlife Services, Murray Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries, and Department of Lands. Larger private land holders also include mine managers, forestry managers and Snowy Hydro. Our local council also assists in wild dog control.



**Local Land
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Murray



Wild dog management

There are many ways to manage the dogs.

Including:

- Guard animals such as alpacas, donkeys and sheep dogs are effective in stopping the dog attacks. Guard dogs called Maremmas are also used.
- Electric fencing, shooting.
- Trapping using soft jaw leg hold traps.
- Monitoring using cameras and sand pads to show their tracks, sniffer dogs and tracking.
- Baiting using 1080 poison with ground baits, aerial baiting and M44 ejectors (sprays triggered when a dog bites the bait).

These are all very important in the process of managing the population

Types of traps

There are a number of different traps that are used. All of them have padded soft jaws so that the animal is tightly held but the leg is not broken. The most preferred trap is the "Lanes Trap".



Trapping

A trained trapper and work dog will find signs and indications of a wild dog's habits and routine. The trapper will place the trap where the work dog showed most interest.

A hole is dug in the dirt about five centimeters deep the trap is placed into the hole and stabilised. The trappers place decoy on the trap so that the dog will be attracted to it. The traps are hidden under leaves and sticks and soil tied to a drag (a heavy piece of wood or something) and then the dog is "decoyed" to the area.

The dog is lured to the spot and as it leans towards the smell it puts its foot on a pad that releases a spring loaded jaw that snaps around the dog's leg and holds it.



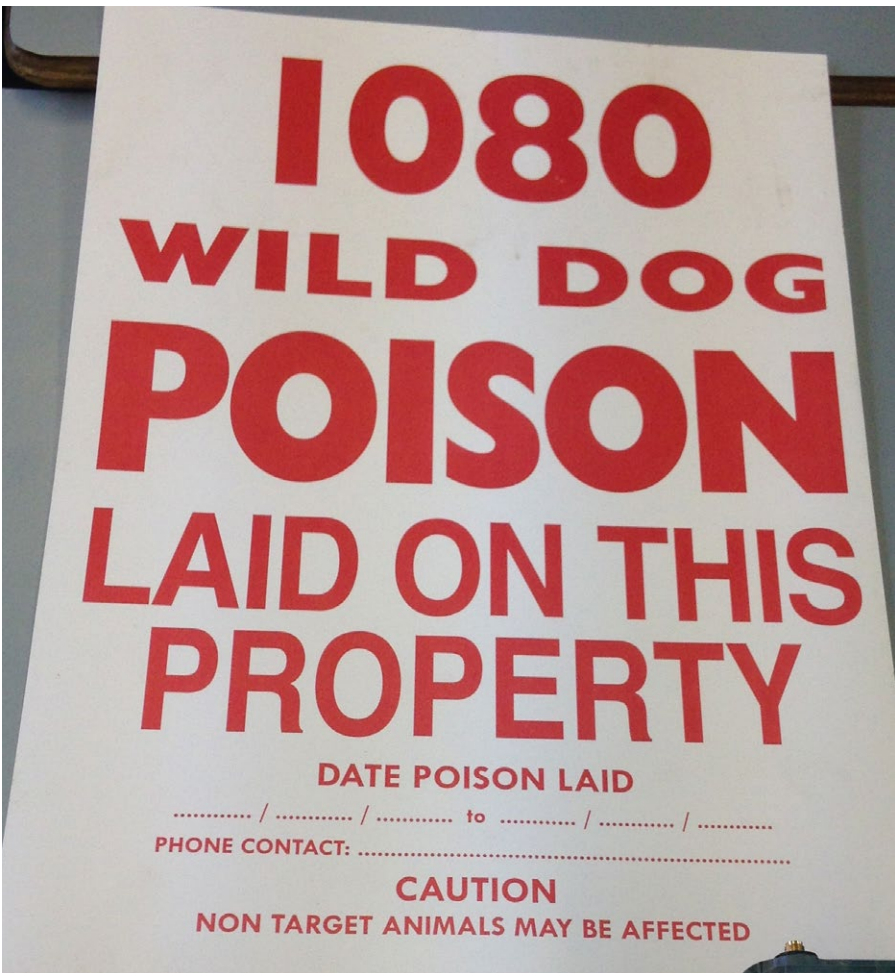
The traps are checked at least once a day. The trappers do not want the dog to be caught there for a long period of time. If a dog is trapped it will be shot immediately when the trap is checked.

In the summer time it is more likely to trap a dog during the night as it is too hot for them in the day to hunt. In the colder months the dogs will be out during the day when it is warmer.



Baiting

1080 poison is added to meat or some other thing like an egg and distributed in a way that makes it attractive to a dog to sniff out and eat. These could be buried as ground baits (to prevent some other animals getting them, or distributed on a wide basis from a plane in what is called aerial baiting.



Another method is to use an ejector. This is a device that is secured into the ground and has a meat or bait attached to the trigger. When a dog pulls on the bait it triggers a spray of 1080 poison into the dog's mouth.

1080 baits can be dangerous to other animals and are not target specific (i.e. anything might take the bait). The baits are spaced far enough apart to not have too many in a home range of native animals. This requires a lot of knowledge about all animals and their habits (both dogs and native animals)

This is why only properly trained people should do this.

“A tool is only as good as the person using it.”

- “Boots” Ian Eggleton





Stephen Wilson

Stephen Wilson is a Biosecurity Officer for Murray Local Land Services in the Tumbarumba region. Stephen is responsible for ensuring that private property owners are doing everything they possibly can to control pest animals on their land.



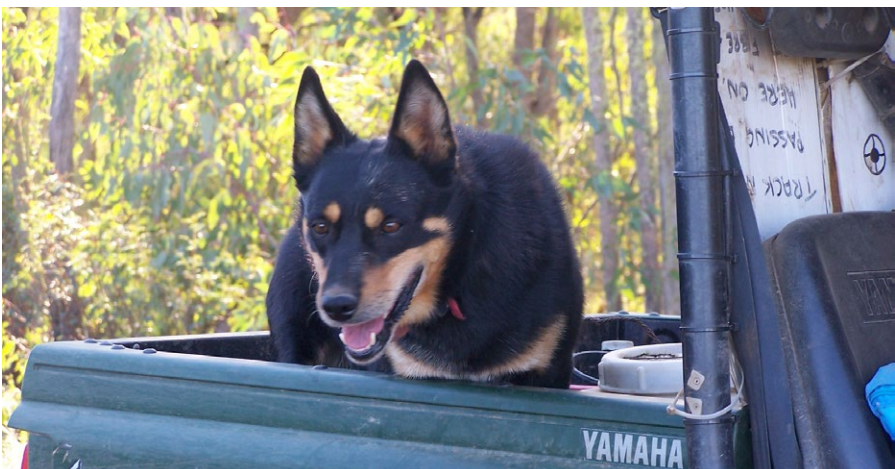
“Boots” Ian Eggleton

“Boots” Ian Eggleton is a Pest Animal Contractor for New South Wales National Parks, he has been in the industry since he was 17. Boot’s job involves baiting, shooting, and trapping wild dogs in Kosciusko National Park, Blue Mountains, and associated nature reserves as well as neighbour boundaries in the area. He also does trapping and baiting in other areas in which wild dogs and dingoes are a problem. Boots believes nature is about holding the balance.

He needs specific equipment for his job including:

- a 4WD vehicle.
- leg hole traps which are adjusted before use.
- a trap setter (a small spade for digging the trap into the ground).
- kneeling pad or bag.
- a sieve.
- decoy - a range of different smells that will attract a dog.
- tools to maintain traps, such as pliers, hammer and wire.
- maps of the area and a GPS.
- camera.
- radio, satellite phone and other equipment for remote communications.
- firearms.
- first aid equipment.
- catch release pole - a noose on a pole to hold a savage dog at a distance.
- a quality supervisor and link to the people you are working for.
- torches and lights.
- warm clothes.
- night vision and thermal imaging equipment.

Boots' work dog, Rip, is very important as Boots will place the trap where Rip shows the most interest. A work dog can find signs that the trapper can't see and helps work out the wild dog's habits and where the dog is travelling.

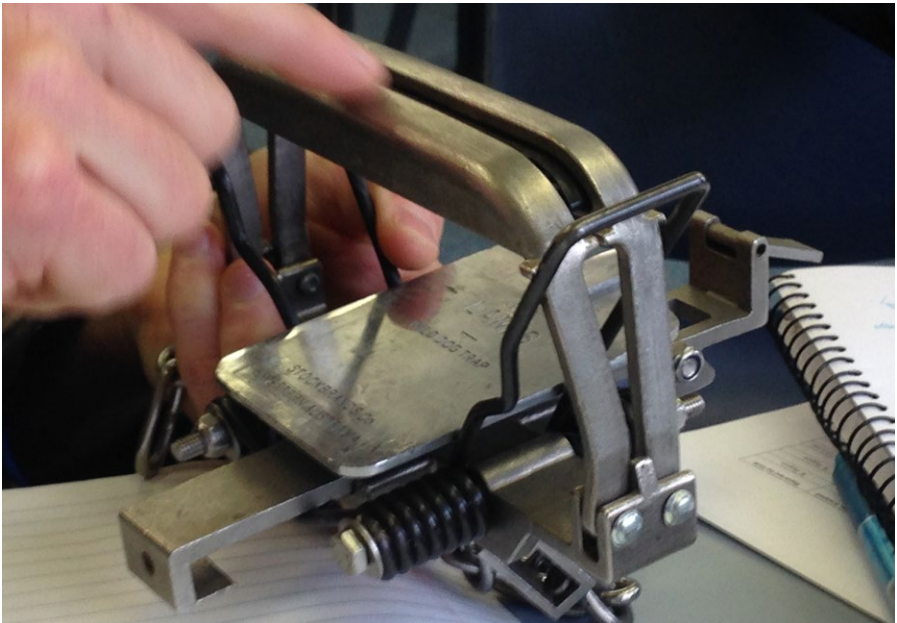


What Boots would like to see be done in the future

He would like to see a greater emphasis on dog trapping rather than indiscriminate 1080 baiting. Trapping needs to be done by well-trained professionals. Poor trapping can cause more trouble than good by teaching problem dogs how to avoid traps.

These dogs can become very big and expensive problems. 1080 baiting still has a role but also needs to be applied by well-trained professionals to reduce impact on the environment and valuable stock.

Boots would like to see properly trained trappers and legislation about how traps are used and checked. This will help to reduce suffering to trapped animals. For example, there are new laws being examined about the minimum amount of time that can pass without traps being checked, such as 48 hours.

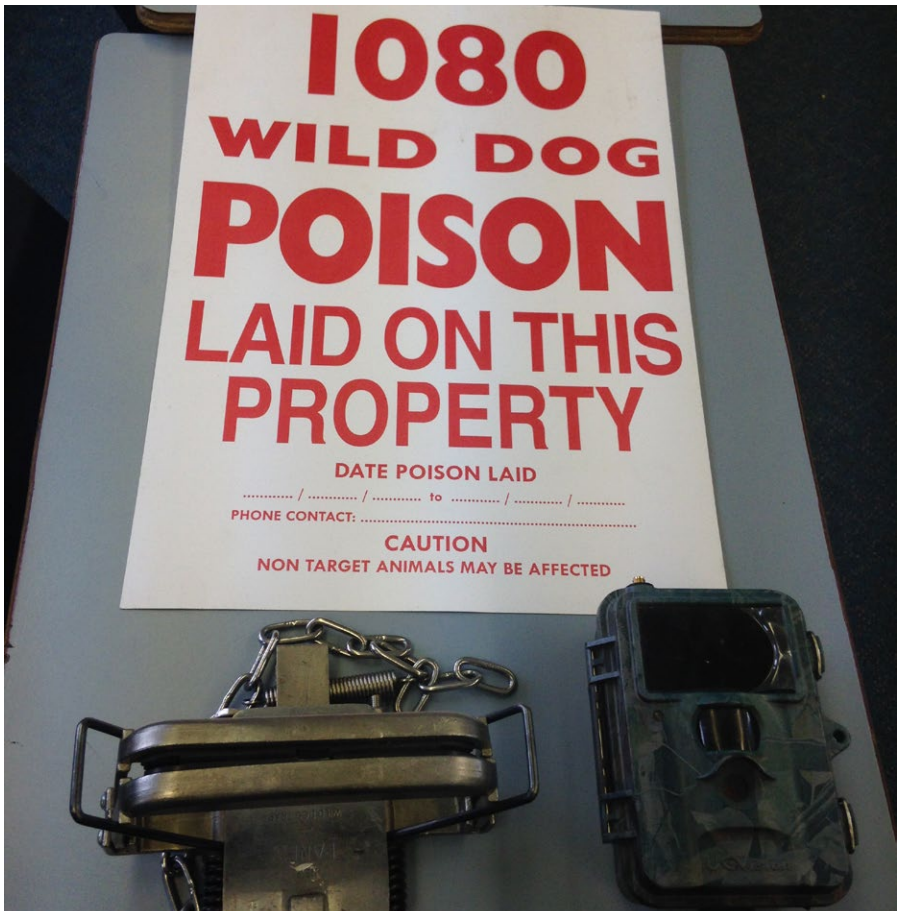


The worst animal on the planet is human for destroying our own environment.

The best tool for dog control is trapping.

Guard animals and fencing only move the animal on to be someone else's problem.

The worst tool/method for control is aerial baiting as it is totally indiscriminate.



The quality of the person undertaking the trapping or baiting is paramount. Poor technique can have impact on non target species, be cruel to animals unnecessarily, turn nuisance dogs into particularly problematic dogs.

Training in this field requires a long time and dedication. This kind of training also requires the profession to be viable as a career to give people the confidence and desire to take on the time and discomfort associated with learning this profession. There needs to be some security in the job to keep and attract quality people to the profession.

To do this job, you need to be as *"tough as old boots."*



Conclusion

Wild dogs and dingoes are a pest because they attack livestock and sometimes threaten park visitors. Not all dogs and dingoes are pests. They also help keep the balance in the bush by keeping down things like foxes, cats, rabbits and kangaroos. As the top predator in natural landscape it would upset the balance to try and take them all out. Taking them all out would be impossible anyway, and cost more than the cost of their impact. Good, balanced control of their numbers, in the right places at the right times and, in particular, when they become problem animal, is the most cost effective approach to managing them. They will always need to be managed, its just getting the balance right.



Amy Eggleton, Nikki Bowdler, Sienna Jeffress
and Stephen Wilson

2015 Year 7 and 9, Tumbarumba High School

*"A good trapper, traps a lot and trains a few,
a bad trapper trains a lot and traps a few."*
- "Boots" Ian Eggleton

CONGRATULATIONS

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and
the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the
2015 NSW Junior Landcare Team Award and will be
competing in the 2016 National Landcare Awards.



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