



MAMMAL SURVEY GROUP OF VICTORIA INC.

SURVEY CAMP REPORT

LOCATION/NAME. *Shelley Camp: Mountain Creek Education Area, and Pheasant Creek Flora Reserve* DATES *1-4 November 2014*

WEATHER: 1 Nov became mostly fine with a moderate west wind after a passing rain band. Over the rest of the weekend the weather was fine gradually warming up with little to no wind and temperatures gradually rising to the mid-twenties. The first two evenings were cold with temperatures down to 3° C. But the final evening, 3 November was mild with temperatures not dropping below 10° C.

DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT SURVEYED. Include brief physical and botanical description, Modifying factors (fire, logging, grazing) geology if known, and any significant faunal or floristic observations.

The two sites surveyed are areas of public land, Mountain Creek Education Area and Pheasant Creek Flora Reserve managed by Parks Victoria. They are located near Shelley in North East Victoria mid-way between Tallangatta and Corryong (VicRoads Country Directory, Map 37 - A4 and B3).

Mountain Creek Education Area, 770ha in area is located at Shelley on the north side of Murray Valley Highway and situated on the Koetong Plateau at an altitude of 600-700 metres. The areas surveyed were along the 2 km Mountain Creek Nature Trail circuit and beside Walker Track well into the reserve about 3 km north of the highway. Terrain is rough and steep with a forest cover containing a dense understorey of Ferns, shrubs, grasses and sedges and middle storey of smaller trees.

Over the area surveyed along the nature trail in the headwaters of Mountain Creek at an altitude just above and below 700 metres the dominant trees are tall Victorian Blue Gums – *Eucalyptus bicostata*, Broadleaf Peppermint – *Eucalyptus dives* and Narrow-leaf Peppermint – *Eucalyptus radiata* with a middle storey mostly consisting of Blackwood – *Acacia melanoxylon* and Silver Wattle – *Acacia Dealbata*. In the second area surveyed along the Walker Track at a lower altitude of 600 metres the forest was dryer consisting mostly of Narrow-leaf Peppermint – *Eucalyptus radiata* and some Brittle Gum – *Eucalyptus mannifera* and Candlebark – *Eucalyptus rubida* with an understorey of shrubs, bracken, grasses and sedges.



Forest habitat at Mountain Creek Education Area



Forest habitat at eastern end of Pheasant Creek FR

Pheasant Creek Flora Reserve, 170ha in area is located 11 Km north-east of Shelley on Shelley Road at an altitude of 650-790 metres above sea level. Flowing from west to east the long narrow reserve is drained by Pheasant Creek and its tributaries. The reserve, almost totally surrounded by softwood pine plantations is a relatively flat, broad valley in the western portion predominantly occupied by riparian swamps and bogs. There is a diverse range of moisture loving plants present which includes low altitude wet heathland, wet grassland, sedge dominated bogs and a mix of the above with or without a woodland tree cover of Mountain Swamp Gum.

To the east and below the entry of the creek near the quarry the reserve is characterized by riparian forest. This forest is dominated by Ribbon Gum, Blue Gum and Narrow-leaf Peppermint with Mountain Swamp Gum present in swampy parts; a well-developed middle shrub layer of River and Woolly Tea tree and Sweet Bursaria cover the ground layer of Fishbone ferns and sedges. As the creek flows eastward it becomes more deeply dissected with relatively intact and steep forested slopes that are drier and shrubbier towards the higher boundaries of the reserve. It was in these habitats to the east of Pheasant Creek where cameras were set along the vehicle track on the final evening (3 Nov) of the camp

Survey Report

A total of 67 species were recorded during the survey. This consisted of 14 mammals, 50 birds and 3 frogs.

No cage traps were set.

Two bat 'Harp' traps were set in Mountain Creek Education Area over two nights, one on the nature trail near a creek crossing and another along a track between the reserve and neighbouring pine plantation. Six bats were captured on the second night (3 Nov) which was warm and mild with the temperature not falling below 10 Degrees Centigrade. All six bats were Little Forest Bats, *Vespadelus vulturnus*.



One of six Little Forest Bats captured on 3 November



The single Brushtail Possum seen while spotlighting

Photos by John Olden

Twenty-three motion sensing cameras were deployed, 16 owned by MSGV and seven belonging to survey participants over three nights From 1st to 3rd of November, making up a total of 64 camera nights. Fifteen cameras captured images, one was not triggered but the bait disappeared from in front of the camera and the remaining 48 cameras were not triggered. Images and video clips were captured of five mammal species; one Common

Wombat, two Black Wallabies, three Bush Rats and one Black Rat at Mountain Creek EA, and a single Agile Antechinus in Pheasant Creek FR. Birds photographed by these cameras during the day include two White-browed Scrubwrens, one Bassian Thrush and two Common Blackbirds.



Common Wombat captured by a Reconyx HC600 camera



A Bush Rat captured by a video camera

Both images were taken at Mountain Creek Education Area



An Agile Antechinus taken from a video clip by a camera set in Pheasant Creek FR

Spotlighting for one hour and 20 mins with two lights on the evening of 3 November, a total of 2.6 spot hours revealed 1 Common Brushtail Possum, five Common Ringtail Possums and three Greater Gliders. The total of number of animals seen was 9, a spotting rate of 3.75 animals per hour.

List of Mammals Recorded During the Survey		Method Used to find species				
Species	Code	Trap	Remote Camera	Spot light	Incidental Sighting	Signs
Agile Antechinus <i>Antechinus agilis</i>	Q1028					
Common Wombat <i>Vombatus ursinus</i>	K1165					Burrow Scats
Common Brushtail Possum <i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i>	K1113			S		
Common Ringtail Possum <i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i>	C1129			S		
Greater Glider <i>Petauroides volans</i>	S1133			S		
Sugar Glider <i>Petaurus breviceps</i>	E1138				H	
Eastern Grey Kangaroo <i>Macropus giganteus</i>	S1265				S	
Black Wallaby <i>Wallabia bicolor</i>	E1242				S	Scats
Little Forest Bat <i>Vespadelus vulturnus</i>	Z1379					
Bush Rat <i>Rattus fuscipes</i>	Z1395					
Black Rat <i>Rattus rattus</i>	Q1408					
Red Fox <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	A1532				S	Scats
European Rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	M1510				S	
Sambar <i>Cervus unicolor</i>	G1527				S	

S – Seen H – Heard

Incidental sightings during the day include 18 Eastern Grey Kangaroos, two Black Wallabies, one Red Fox, one Rabbit and four Sambar Deer. A Sugar Glider was heard one night at Shelley Camp. Signs of mammals detected were Common Wombat holes, and scats from Wombats and Red Fox

50 species of birds were recorded; the most notable being seasonal summer visitors, such as Brush Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher, White-throated Gerygone, Olive-backed Oriole, Cicadabird and Australian Reed-Warbler. Along the track at the eastern end of Pheasant Creek FR a bower and display area with lots of blue objects consisting of Crimson Rosella tail feathers and blue plastic was found after looking for a male Satin Bowerbird seen flying across the track. Other birds of interest were White-necked Heron, Australian Owlet-nightjar, Varied Sitella and a Bassian Thrush caught on one of our motion sensing cameras.



Satin Bowerbird display bower in Pheasant Creek FR

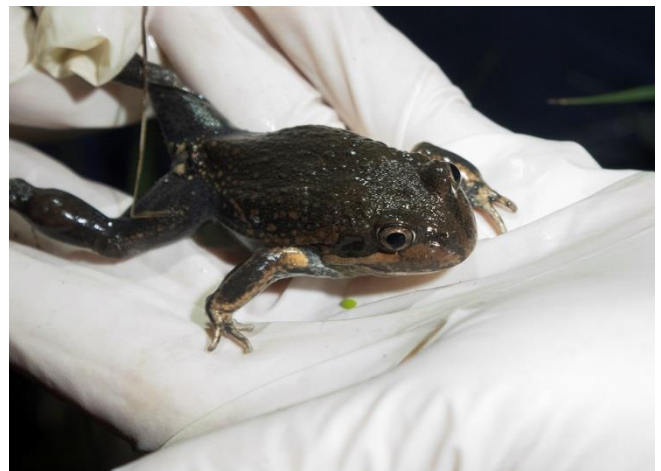


Harp trap set in Mountain Creek Education Area

Photos by Andrew McCutcheon

Other Fauna Species (Reptiles & Amphibians) Observed

One frog species, a single Eastern Banjo Frog *Limnodynastes dumerilli* was captured and identified during a frog watch activity beside Pikes Dam at Pheasant Creek FR. Other frogs heard include Striped Marsh Frogs *Limnodynastes peronii* and numerous Common Froglets *Crinia signifera*.



Early evening frog watch at Pheasant Creek and an Eastern Banjo Frog captured at the Pikes Dam

Photos by John Olden

Reptiles seen and photographed include a single Highlands Copperhead *Austrelaps ramsayi* and Blotched Blue-tongue *Tiliqua nigrolutea* in Mountain Creek EA, and an Eastern Brown Snake *Pseudonaja textilis* at Shelley Camp.



Blotched Blue-tongue and Highlands Copperhead at Mountain Creek

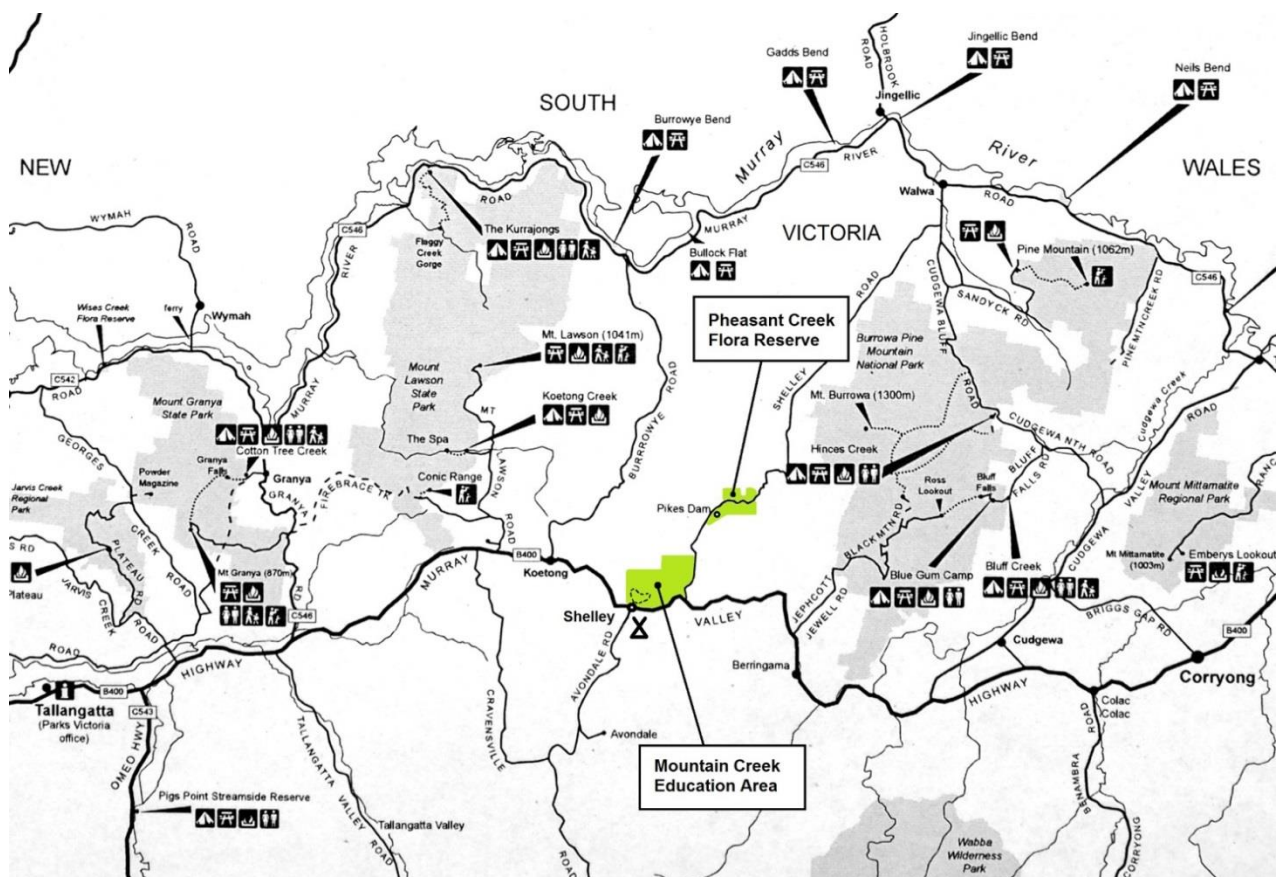
Photos by Nancy McMurray

Notable Findings and Observations

Three Greater Gliders were recorded, all high up on Victorian Blue Gums, *Eucalyptus bicostata* while spotlighting. As spotlighting was conducted in bright moon lit conditions it is possible that fewer animals than normal were seen compared to spotlighting on an evening with no moon, as arboreal mammals are wary of being detected by predatory owls such as the Powerful Owl in bright moonlit nights.

Very few small terrestrial mammals such as Bush Rats and Antechinus were found in both reserves, the possible reason being the presence of Red Foxes, one of which was seen while walking along the Mountain Creek Nature Trail circuit.

LOCATION MAP:



TRAPPING AND SPOTLIGHTING MAPS :



Mountain Creek Education Area 1-3 November

CAMP COMMANDANT: Andrew McCutcheon

CAMP HOST: Lyn Coulston,
Shelley Camp Management Committee

PERSONNEL

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**Andrew McCutcheon – Mammal Survey Group of Victoria Inc.
WSIEAC Approval 22.11**