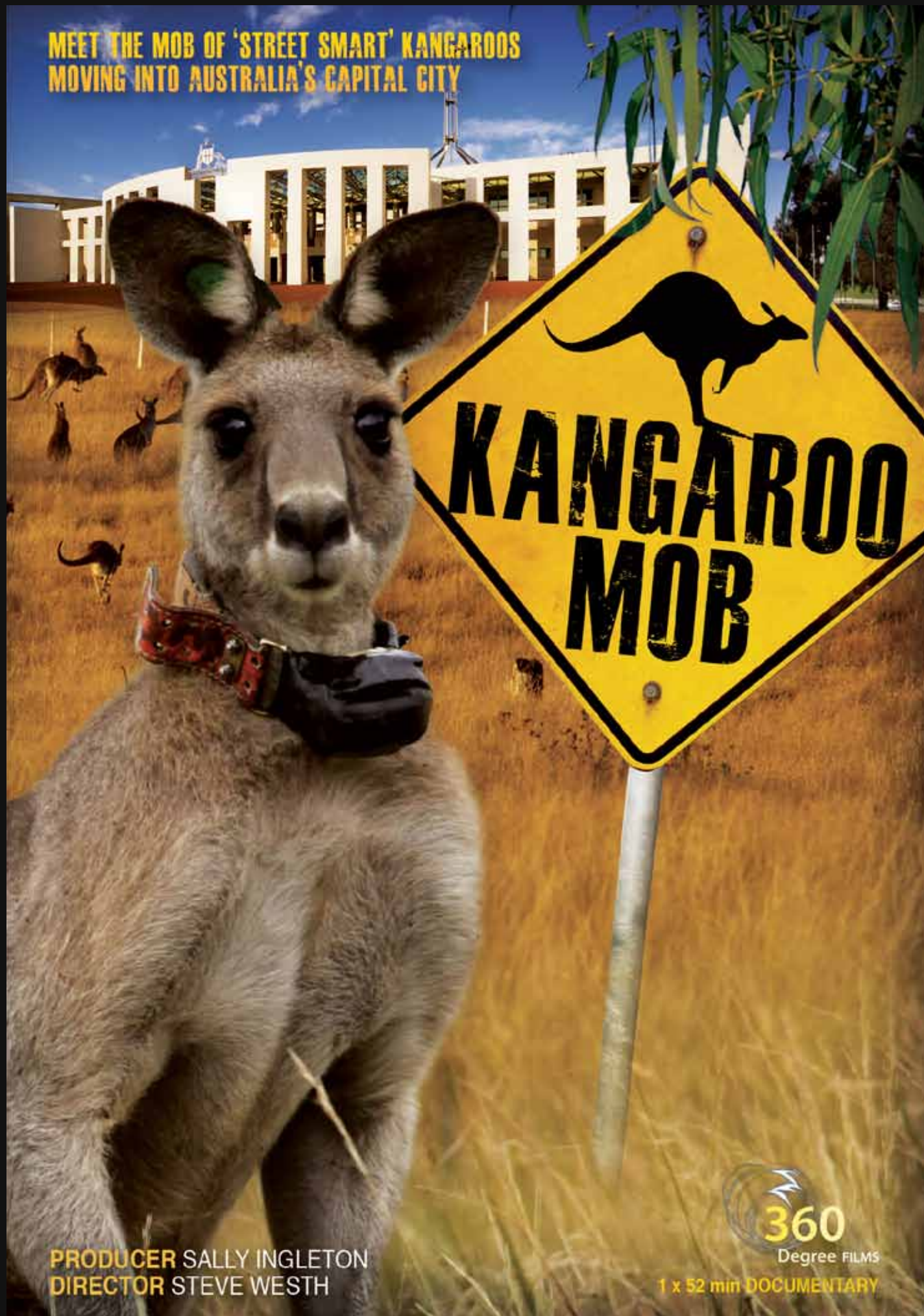


PRESS KIT

MEET THE MOB OF 'STREET SMART' KANGAROOS
MOVING INTO AUSTRALIA'S CAPITAL CITY



PRODUCER SALLY INGLETON
DIRECTOR STEVE WESTH



Degree FILMS

1 x 52 min DOCUMENTARY

KANGAROO MOB

PUBLICITY CONTACTS

Sally Ingleton, Producer 'Kangaroo Mob'

360 Degree Films

PO Box 418 Brunswick 3056

Victoria Australia

Tel: +61 399481922 Fax: +61 3 99481920

Mob: + 61 418 530 550

sally@360degreefilms.com.au

Don Fletcher, ACT Government:

Manager, Communications,

Department of Territory and Territory Services

+61 2 6205 0312 or +61 2 6207 6882.

INTERNATIONAL SALES

National Geographic Television International

Shepherds Building East

Richmond Way

Shepherds Bush

London, W14 0DQ

United Kingdom

Tel: + 44 20 7751 7555 fax: + 44 20 7751 7556

Email: info@natgeotv-int.com

web: <http://www.natgeotv-int.com>



www.360degreefilms.com.au



SYNOPSIS



One Liner

Meet the mob of 'street smart' kangaroos moving into Australia's capital city.

One Paragraph

Meet the mob of 'street smart' kangaroos moving into Australia's capital city and the ecologists following their every move.

Over the course of one drought-stricken year we follow mob leader Black Spot and kangaroo mum Madge with her two young joeys – mischievous Sonny and tiny pouch bound Alice.

Learning to be an urban 'roo is tough for little Sonny, who must negotiate busy roads, and avoid cars and dogs in order to find food. When the city announces a kangaroo cull, his life is in serious danger.



Thanks to the latest scientific technology we uncover surprising new behaviour whilst delving into the controversial issues that arise when sharing your backyard with a large wild animal.

KANGAROO MOB is a warm and entertaining look at what happens when human development encroaches on wildlife habitat and two very different species are forced to co-exist.



One Page Synopsis

Meet the mob of 'street smart' kangaroos moving into Australia's capital city and the ecologists following their every move.

Over one year we follow mob leader Black Spot and kangaroo mum Madge with her two young joeys – mischievous Sonny and tiny pouch bound Alice.

After 15 years of drought, Canberra's Eastern Grey Kangaroos know that the parks and gardens of Australia's "bush capital" provide a reliable supply of the juicy grass but learning to be a street-smart urban 'roo is tough with the kangaroos negotiating busy roads and avoiding cars and dogs.

Inevitably their incursion into human habitat causes problems – damage to property and collisions with cars. It's costing millions and thousands of animals are killed each year. The farmers complain that the 'roos are eroding farmland and damaging their fences. The ACT Government holds an annual kangaroo cull to reduce animal numbers to "sustainable levels".

Confrontations make international news as the situation arouses passions and polarizes opinion. Are the kangaroo's pests that need to be eradicated or a protected national icon to be saved at all costs?

A small team of ecologists, including Don Fletcher and Claire Wimpenny, hopes to provide some answers in a 12-month study, which uses GPS collars and satellite technology to track the kangaroos' nocturnal movements.

Amidst the controversy that rages when people are forced to share their backyards with a large wild animal, the scientists discover surprising new behaviour. It appears that the 'roos are learning to live with people much better than people are learning to live with the 'roos.

Filmed over a year, KANGAROO MOB follows a few remarkable urban 'roos to provide a warm and entertaining look at what happens when human development encroaches and two very different species are forced to co-exist.



PRODUCTION STORY

Growing up in regional Victoria in the 50's and 60's, Steve Westh recalls a pretty negative attitude toward the kangaroos that populated the bush near where he lived.

"The farming community regarded them as vermin", says Westh, "and the people who lived in town all had stories about hitting 'stupid' kangaroos with their cars. Not surprisingly, it was common for country kids to shoot kangaroos and no one really thought too much about it. They were something akin to large rats."

After more than a year directing *KANGAROO MOB*, a 52-minute documentary about the urbanised kangaroos that live in and around Canberra, Westh has changed his opinion of the iconic Australian marsupial.

"If you spend any time in close proximity to a kangaroo you can't help but be charmed by them," he says. "They are very endearing creatures and have unnervingly human characteristics. You start to notice that they have distinct personalities and you become very attached."

A natural history documentary from producer Sally Ingleton (*PENGUIN ISLAND*), *KANGAROO MOB* follows the lives of a handful of savvy kangaroos as they adapt to urban life, and the ecologists who are studying their behaviour.

In choosing the subject of the film, Ingleton recalled the power of the 1992 documentary *KANGAROOS: FACES IN THE MOB* by Australian filmmakers Jan Alderhoven and Glen Carruthers, which gave viewers an intimate look at the lives and personalities of a mob of kangaroos.

"I wanted to tell a story like that but set it in an urban area," she says. "There is a world-wide problem with wild animals moving into human habitat – bears, cougars and wolves in Canada and the United States – and the question of what you do."

Research led Ingleton to Canberra where, after years of drought, the Eastern Grey Kangaroos have learned that the parks and gardens of Australia's bush capital provide an endless supply of green grass. But first they must negotiate busy roads, avoid cars and dogs, and an annual kangaroo cull, which aims to keep the 'roo population at sustainable levels.

The kangaroos' incursion into the capital's leafy suburbs has made global headlines as the native animal and human worlds collide, often with tragic results.



"It's costing millions of dollars in property damage and thousands of animals are killed on the roads each year," she says.

Ingleton then met the ACT government ecologists who were using GPS collars and satellite technology to track kangaroo movement over 12 months. The scientists, Don Fletcher and Claire Wimpenny, had chosen key animals in the mob, named them, and fitted them with collars. Both animals and scientists became characters in the film.

"Not only did the study provide us with a set number of animals that we could film, but also the capability to locate them at any time - day or night. And the data collected by the collars revealed some fascinating behaviour".

Among the chosen few was a big old buck called 'Black Spot', the ageing leader of a kangaroo mob. There was also an adventurous young doe, 'Madge', and her two young joeys, mischievous 'Sonny' and tiny pouch-bound 'Alice'.

Directing a natural-history film for the first time posed new and interesting challenges for Westh.



"It's exciting but also incredibly frustrating at times. The kangaroos don't read the script! Quite often we'd have something in mind - some fascinating behaviour in a suburban street for instance - and we'd go to shoot that and when you got there the animals would do something completely different," he says.

"We needed incredible patience and really good equipment with a very long lens because the closer we got, the more fractious and nervous the animals became - so you're not actually observing normal behavior," Westh says.



Cinematographer Peter Coleman and his assistant Luke Cameron spent many nights lugging camera equipment up hills in the bitter darkness of Canberra's winter in search of the right shot.

"The first few days we'd get as close as possible and start filming, only to have the 'roos sit up and look straight at us. It took a long time before they relaxed enough for us to become 'invisible'. Often times, Peter and Luke would "schlep" the gear up and down hills trying to film kangaroos, and they'd just hop away as soon as you got too close. During the drought many of the roos would be conserving energy so they weren't doing too much - a lot of eating and sleeping. However, once spring arrived, the mob behaviour changed dramatically. There were lots of young bucks vying for available females and young joeys just out of the pouch, learning to hop, being inquisitive, looking adorable."



The production faced an unexpected challenge when the city recorded its highest rainfall in years. It was the end of a 15-year long drought and the end of the circumstances that had driven the 'roos into the suburbs. "The 'roos 'natural' habitat in the hills was festooned with grass and they had no reason to travel anymore," muses Westh, "and one of the film's most interesting storylines seemed to have disappeared."



"I remember Steve ringing me up worried that the kangaroos had left the suburbs and concerned that we had lost our story. I said 'Just film the story that's happening - big rain clouds, roos in the rain, the empty streets, locals telling us they had not seen Madge and so on'. I think in the end it became a strength for the film rather than a weakness, because we were able to show the impact of climate and nature and how their behaviour adapts to the circumstances," Ingleton says.

"It was essential to have enough time to film animals in the field so the story could be shaped during editing", she says.

"I tip my hat to editor Tony Stevens, who was also our main editor on PENGUIN ISLAND. He has done a marvellous job of finding just the right pictures to tell the story of the kangaroos."



Another challenge was filming at night when the kangaroos usually ventured into the suburbs. Their movements were unpredictable, following different routes each day unhindered by fences or trespassing laws.

"We'd find them then they'd cut through people's backyards where we couldn't go so we'd have to go around and try to find them again," says Coleman. After unsuccessful attempts with artificial light and infrared technology, Coleman settled on filming at dusk and dawn using very fast cameras and the available light. "We were using everything from a large HD camera to digital SLRs through to Go-Pro cameras, which are tiny little cameras that you can place surreptitiously and roll them remotely, as well as infra red and specialist lenses."

On other occasions they'd be set up and filming and a dog would emerge and chase the 'roos away.



Occasionally there were moments of drama and conflict, including demonstrations by Animal Rights protestors during the ACT Government's annual kangaroo cull. While the filmmakers had negotiated to film the cull, permission was later withdrawn which meant they filmed only from the point of view of the protestors.

They also encountered red tape when they asked to film the ACT's Wildlife Rangers whose job it is to attend incidents where kangaroo incursion has caused a problem; typically an animal cornered in a backyard or found injured by the side of the road.



And there was tragedy. All involved were dismayed when a favourite subject, Black Spot, ended up a roadside casualty.

"We got a phone call saying that a 'roo had been hit in the area where we'd been filming him the day before," recalls Coleman. "We arrived and it was him. It was very sad because you spend hours and hours with an animal and you get to know it very well. They're all very individual and all have very distinct personalities. He was a lovely old kangaroo. He was very easy to film because he was very used to people."

Ingleton received the news from Director Steve Westh, who was similarly saddened.

“But kangaroos dying is ‘real’ and has to be part of the story. We knew that Don Fletcher had lost a number of the animals involved in the study. We had written into the first treatment that one of the animals would die as a result of road kill,” she says.

The filmmakers hope KANGAROO MOB presents Australia’s national emblem in a new light, going some way to eliminate their bad reputation following overly dramatic stories of home invasions and attacks by wild animals.

“Kangaroos sometimes get a bad rap,” says Westh, “but I think it’s worth pointing out that these reports are wild aberrations – great stories for a sensation hungry media, but in no way representative of normal kangaroo behaviour.”

“More poignant and affecting to me was the number of kangaroos killed by cars each year.” In the Canberra area there are more than 1000 incidents a year where rangers are called to an accident involving a kangaroo. “That’s a statistic of ‘reported’ incidents,” says Westh. “The real toll is estimated to be at least three times that amount.”





MEET THE MOB

BLACK SPOT is a large male Eastern Grey living in the hills above Canberra. At 73.5 kilos, and 14 years old - he's the dominant buck in his mob. Black Spot adapted to Canberra's long drought by becoming a frequent visitor to the well-watered suburban parks and gardens. There is little doubt that access to this endless supply of green and juicy grass has kept him in good condition. This year however, time and Canberra's bitter winters have caught up with him. He's slowing down and other males in his mob begin to challenge his power and ultimately mate with his females. Black Spot's story is a poignant reminder of the fragility of life for older members of the kangaroo mob.



MADGE is a 4 year old mother to two rapidly developing joeys – Sonny, her 2 year old male 'young at foot', and Alice, a tiny female, still pouch-bound. The bond between Eastern Grey mothers and their dependent offspring is unnervingly 'human' at times. Madge is able to suckle both of them, supplying different types of milk from different teats to meet their different nutritional needs. Like most 'adolescents', Sonny has an adventurous nature and often gets into trouble. Madge must keep a watchful eye on him and it is hard not to be moved by her palpable terror when his life is in danger. Data reveals that Madge is perhaps Canberra's most 'urban' kangaroo, spending nearly half her winter grazing time in the suburbs. And she may be one of the 'smartest' roos in the city too, skillfully negotiating her way through busy traffic areas and passing on her street skills to young Sonny.



SONNY is just over a year old when we first meet him. He's at that 'difficult age' being permanently out of his mother Madge's pouch, but still reliant on her for milk. He'll continue to suckle for several more months until he makes the permanent transition to being a herbivore, and independence. Until then, when he is strong enough to look after himself, he's at his most vulnerable. It's a sobering statistic that 70% of Eastern Greys in the Canberra region don't make it to their second birthday. Happily Sonny is one of the lucky ones. In the 12 months we spent filming him and his mother Madge, he survived a freezing winter, frequent forays across and around Canberra's busy roads, a desperate tangle in a barbed wire fence, separation from Madge, and the annual cull. When we leave him, he has a better chance than most of survival. He's a truly 'urbanized' kangaroo. His mum has taught him well.



ALICE is barely 2 months old when her mother Madge is fitted with a radio-tracking collar. Ecologist Don Fletcher discovers her as a tiny, hairless joey, pouch-bound and weighing less than a hundred grams. In the course of the film Alice matures enough to poke her head out of the pouch and see the dangerous world that awaits her. Madge keeps her 'locked in' and safe for more than 9 months, during which she grows fur, gains condition and puts on about 4 kilos of weight. In spring we returned to film the moment when she and most of the other joeys first leave the pouch and get used to using their long spring-like legs. But Alice is nowhere to be found. It seems she is one of the 70% of joeys that do not survive. Her loss underlines the precarious and fragile existence kangaroos face in the wild.

MEET THE ECOLOGISTS



DON FLETCHER is a senior ecologist working for the ACT Government. Since changing career to wildlife research in 1999, and completing a PhD in 2006, his work has focused primarily on the region's Eastern Grey Kangaroos. Given half a chance, he reminds everyone that the species is indisputably the most important native animal of the region as it is vital to conservation of endangered ecosystems, but also an 'ecosystem engineer' capable of changing the environment to the detriment of endangered animals.



In 2009 Don commenced an Urban Kangaroo Movement Study that would provide data about the movement patterns of the city's kangaroo populations. GPS tracking collars were placed on 25 animals in 17 different locations around the city. The concept was that information from the data collected would assist the government to make better decisions about management of kangaroos, urban parks, and roads.



Although the final results are not yet available, many insights were gained even while the collars were still on the kangaroos. For example kangaroos use underpasses beneath roads to a greater extent than previously appreciated. The traditional method of dealing with kangaroo problems in Australia was, and still is, reducing populations by shooting. It remains a controversial method, which Don, as a government 'roo scientist, is called on to discuss in public. The government policy puts him in conflict with Animal Rights and Wild Care groups, an aspect of the job he describes as 'challenging'.



Happily the data being collected in the study is revealing some startling behaviour that has Don excited for the future. The 'roos appear to be adapting to their new urban environment, learning where the best grazing is, and navigating the safest routes to get there.

CLAIRE WIMPENNY. 22-year-old Claire is Don's assistant. She is the 'sharp-shooter' in the team and helps Don fit GPS tracking devices to the 'roos. Claire has a special relationship with a female called 'Madge', whom she can locate at any hour of the day with the help of her antenna tracking system. She has spent many hours following Madge through the bush and into the suburbs.

STUDY OF CANBERRA'S URBAN KANGAROO BEHAVIOUR

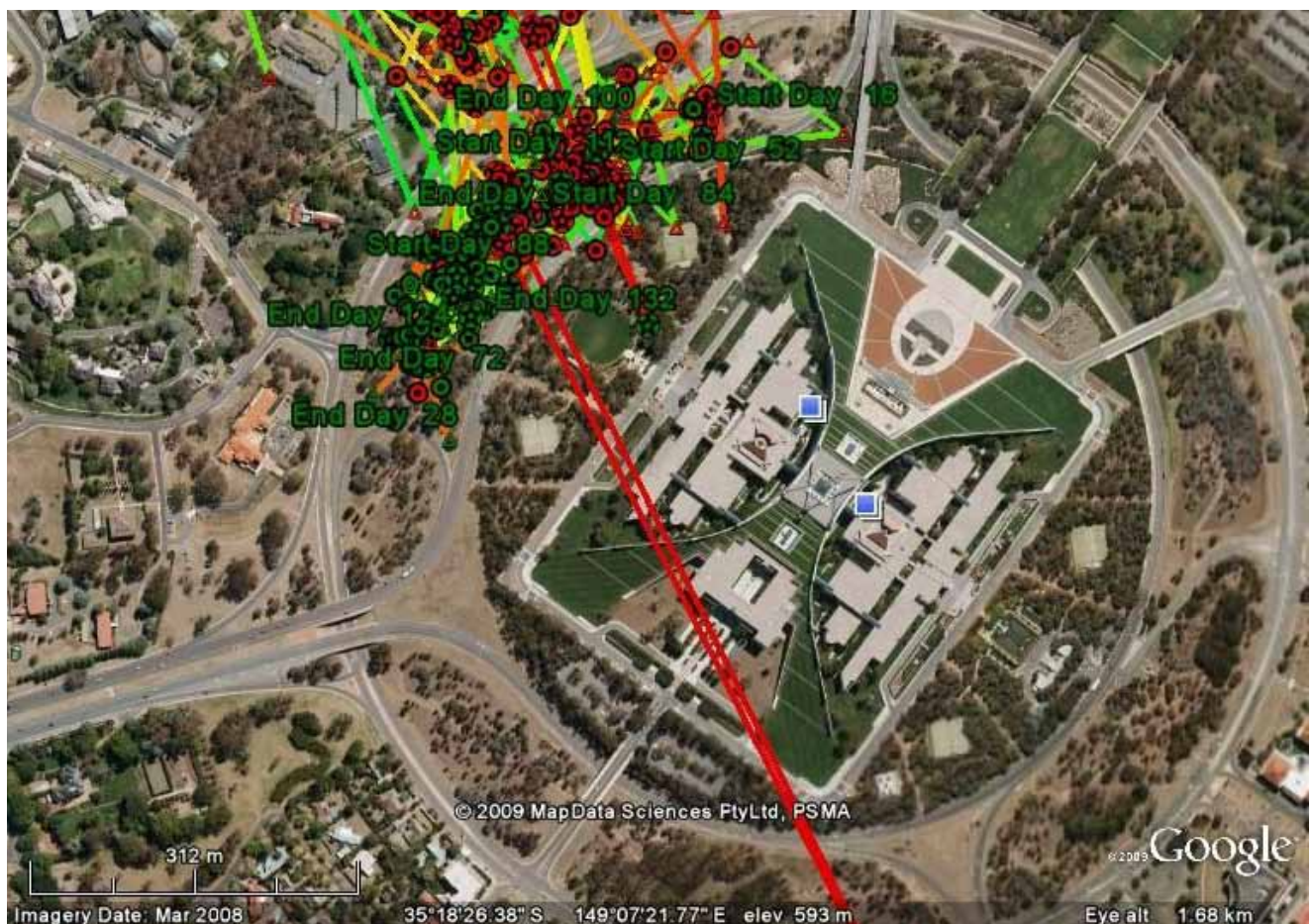
Compared to any other city, Canberra has a lot of kangaroos. Many of them live in small nature reserves right within the city – at least during daytime. Canberra has often been called the 'bush capital' because it has so many urban reserves.

In 2010-11 the natural behaviour of these urban kangaroos was measured using GPS tracking collars that record the location of the kangaroo every hour. The design-tested collars do not harm the kangaroos and they released automatically in March 2011.

Kangaroo locations from a pilot study with GPS collars in 2009 can be examined in map form, thanks to a free software program called GPS Visualizer. To view the interactive map, you will need to install the Google Earth program available at <http://earth.google.com/download-earth.html> and download this Kangaroo Project file (KMZ file 142KB). Then, in Google Earth, go to the File menu, and click Open. Browse to where you have saved the Kangaroo Project file then click on the Open button.

When the file opens, you will see groups of green and red symbols, each group located where there was a collared kangaroo. Zoom down to one of these groups. Green symbols show the kangaroo's daytime locations, with red symbols for night. You can click the individual symbols for the name of the kangaroo, and the time and date it was at that location. Stars are points of the highest precision, triangles are unreliable, and circles are of intermediate quality. Straight lines join successive locations, and do not necessarily show the route used by the kangaroo.

More information is available on research into fertility control. You may also be interested in the recently released ACT Kangaroo Management Plan.



CULLING

There have been occasional kangaroo culls around Canberra since the 1970's. From 1997 farmers were able to cull kangaroos on rural properties and can still do so today as long as they have a licence.

Research conducted in the ACT demonstrates that overgrazing by kangaroos is presenting a serious risk to the conservation of threatened and endangered species and ecosystems. Over the past two years (2009/2010) the ACT Government has undertaken two kangaroo culls (of nearly 4000 animals) in grassland and woodland sites to reduce grazing pressure to protect species and ecosystems at risk. It is understood that amongst the kangaroos many will be females carrying pouch young. The joeys are also killed usually by decapitation.

For more information, please contact: Manager, Communications, Department of Territory and Territory Services on +61 2 6205 0312.



PROTECTING KANGAROOS

There are many opponents to the ACT Government policy of culling kangaroos. A number of animal rights and animal welfare groups are actively supporting and caring for injured kangaroos and abandoned joeys in the Canberra/Queanbeyan region.

Animal Liberation ACT

Spokesperson: Bernard Brennen

Ph: +61 (0) 427 777 044

email: info@al-act.org

Queanbeyan Wild Care

Spokesperson- President Greg Tarlington

Ph: +61 (0) 448 826 256

email: president@wildcare.com.au



KEY CREATIVES ON PRODUCTION

PRODUCER - SALLY INGELTON. Sally Ingelton is one of Australia's most successful documentary producers. She is currently producing AUSTRALIA'S GREAT FLOOD (National Geographic Channel USA). Previous credits include PENGUIN ISLAND (ABC1, BBC1, Arte France) nominated for Best Series and Best Music at the Wild Talk Africa Roscar Awards 2011; multi award winner SEED HUNTER (ABC/Arte France/SVT/RTE) winning a Gold Panda at the Sichuan TV Festival (Grand Prize Nature) and awards in Japan at both the Earth Vision and Japanese Wildlife Film Festivals 2009; Best Conservation and Environment South Africa WILD TALK 2009; Nominee Rockie Award Banff TV Festival 2009; ATOM Award Best Science and Environment Documentary; plus awards at festivals in Finland and China; contemporary current affairs TIBET: MURDER IN THE SNOW for SBS/BBC/RTBF/TSR/YLE and arts documentary JOHN GOLLINGS: EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE (SBS/AVRO) which won the National Institute of Australian Architects Award for Best Architecture in the Media in 2010. Other awards include WELCOME 2 MY DEAF WORLD (AFI Best Documentary nominee 2006) and 2 MUMS AND A DAD (Best Documentary Dendy Award and ATOM Awards 2007).

DIRECTOR – STEVE WESTH. Steve has been making award winning television documentaries for over fifteen years. His films reflect a fascination for capturing stories of 'ordinary' people at significant moments in their lives. "Kangaroo Mob" is his first film where these characters are not 'human'. His recent credits include THE MAKING OF MODERN AUSTRALIA [ABC], THE GREAT ESCAPE: THE RECKONING [ABC, Channel 4 – UK, Discovery] Best Historical Drama Nominee – History Makers Awards 2010, NAVY DIVERS [ABC] Best Documentary Series, Sydney Morning Herald Awards, 2009, GALLIPOLI SUBMARINE [ABC, ITV – UK, ZDF, History Channel] Best Historical Documentary - Festival Mondial de l'image Sous-Marine 2008, DIVORCE STORIES [SBS] nominee for Best Documentary Logie 2007, BOMBALI [Ten Network, SKY TV, Discovery Channel] Hors Concours Award - Banff World Television Festival and Outstanding Documentary WA Screen Awards 2007, STORIES FROM A CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL [ABC], ATOM Award Winner and Nominee for Best Documentary Logie 2004, GREY VOYAGERS [SBS] United Nations Peace Award 2001.

NATURAL HISTORY CINEMATOGRAPHER – PETER COLEMAN ACS Although specialising primarily in documentaries and doco-drama, Peter has extensive experience in natural history films, feature film and Imax. His exemplary cinematography on "Kangaroo Mob" is a highlight of the production. Based in Sydney, Peter's work has collected numerous awards, including the prestigious Australian Cinematographers Society Golden Tripod for BOMBALI 2008 and THE LIVING EDENS: TASMANIA 2003, as well as Gold Awards for DEAD TIRED 2009 and RAIKA CAMELS 1997, and numerous state awards.

CINEMATOGRAPHER – PHILLIP BULL Phil Bull has travelled the world for over 30 years filming documentaries and is now one of Australia's most experienced observational documentary cameramen. Credits include 4 series as principal cameraman for BONDI RESCUE, NAVY DIVERS, and Ingelton's previous films SEED HUNTER, MUDDY WATERS: LIFE AND DEATH ON THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, SILK AND STEEL, THE ISABELLA'S, and many more.

DALE CORNELIUS - COMPOSER. Dale Cornelius has received many nominations and awards for his unique style of music composition for over 100 hours of feature films, documentaries and television shows & series. Composing credits include: TILL HUMAN VOICES WAKE US (winner The Age 'Critic's Choice' for Best Australian Film Score 2002), MARY AND MAX (Nominated Best Music for a Feature Film - IF Awards 2009), CHARLIE AND BOOTS, FOOTY LEGENDS, STRANGE BEDFELLOWS, THE 10 CONDITIONS OF LOVE and AT WORLD'S END (Nominated Danish Film Academy Awards Best Music for a Feature Film). Documentary credits include PENGUIN ISLAND (Nominated Best Music Wild Talk Africa Roscar Awards 2011); ONCE BITTEN (Nominated Best Drama Series AFI Awards 2009); JOHN GOLLINGS: EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE; TRIPLE ZERO HEROES; THE EXTRAORDINARY TALE OF WILLIAM BUCKLEY; FAMILY FOOTSTEPS - Series I & II; TIBET: MURDER IN THE SNOW; CASSOWARIES and REVEALING GALLIPOLI.

TONY STEVENS ASE - EDITOR. Tony is one of Australia's most respected and experienced drama and factual editors. His credits include the 360 Degree Films nature soap series PENGUIN ISLAND. Previous documentaries HUNT ANGELS (AFI Winner 2006), VIETNAM NURSES (AFI Nominee Best Editor); REVEALING GALLIPOLI, TWO MEN AND A BABY, MAO'S NEW SUIT, MUDDY WATERS, SEED HUNTER, JOHN GOLLINGS: EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE, TIBET: MURDER IN THE SNOW. TV Dramas include MY WORST BEST FRIENDS, L'il HORRORS, and the feature film ROAD TO NHILL.

TRISTAN MEREDITH - SOUND DESIGNER. Tristan Meredith is an accomplished sound designer, mixer, narration recording specialist and musician. Over the last 10 years he has worked on a variety of award-winning programs as sound mixer/designer. Just a few of his recent documentary credits include PENGUIN ISLAND, IMMORTAL, JOHN GOLLINGS: EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE, TIBET: MURDER IN THE SNOW, 10 CONDITIONS OF LOVE, INSIDE THE FIRESTORM (AFI Award Best Sound 2010), THE EXTRAORDINARY TALE OF WILLIAM BUCKLEY, CATCHING CANCER and feature credits include BLIND COMPANY, PREY and DAMMED BY DAWN.

BRENDAN COWELL - NARRATOR. Accomplished writer, director and actor, Brendan Cowell graduated from Charles Sturt University with a Bachelor of Communications (Theatre/Media) in 1997. Well known to TV audiences and twice Logie nominated for Most Outstanding Actor in a Drama for LOVE MY WAY. Most recently Brendan appeared in one of the Underbelly Telemovies THE MAN THAT GOT AWAY. Brendan's TV credits also include guest roles in the popular Australian television series WHITE COLLAR BLUE, YOUNG LIONS and WATER RATS. An acclaimed stage performer, Brendan has appeared in numerous Sydney Theatre Company productions including TRUE WEST, DISSIDENT, GOES WITHOUT SAYING (2006) directed by Andrew Upton, FAR AWAY (2004) directed by Benedict Andrews and THE SHAPE OF THINGS (2003) directed by Jeremy Sims. 2008 saw Brendan take on the role of Hamlet in the critically acclaimed Bell Shakespeare production. His feature film credits include the starring role in NOISE and BENEATH HILL 60.

