

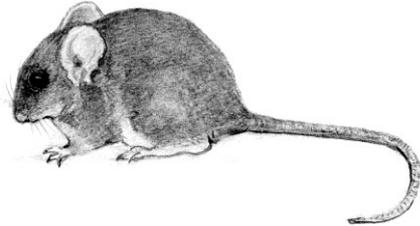
Lost Tracks ... *Peter Crowcroft*

Drawings by Kaye Traynor

For years ANGAIR has worked hard to rehabilitate environments that have been damaged by weed invasion and careless past human usage. This restored habitat could potentially provide refuges for rare and threatened species. The following are some small mammal species that once called our coast home but are either now extremely rare or have become locally extinct due to introduced predators and habitat clearance.

New Holland Mouse (*Pseudomys novaehollandiae*)

Rediscovered near Sydney after 100 years of presumed extinction, trapping and surveys revealed that this



small rodent had populations in the heathlands of Anglesea. Some populations were known to be negatively affected by the Ash Wednesday fires in 1983. Although research in the mid 90's was successful in finding this species, it has not been recorded since. Living in areas that have been extensively restored by ANGAIR such as sand dunes and heathland, it is distinguished from *Mus musculus* by its long tail 10-15% longer than its body (house mouse tail length \leq head and body length).

Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*)

Many years ago as a young boy holidaying at Moggs Creek, I can recall attempting to catch a small and fluffy tailed creature (I tried to catch anything small with four legs).

Fortunately I was outsmarted and the skittish but intriguing creature got away. The experience stuck in my memory though, and looking back it seems possible it was a Phascogale. Listed as Threatened under the

Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, like most Australian animals their home range has decreased considerably since European settlement. Once found in a continuous coastal home range from S.E. South Australia to Cape York, now the populations are more fragmented.

They are seen consistently in camera monitoring around the Brisbane Ranges. They are carnivores that mostly feed on insect and arthropod species. Spending most of their time in trees, they prefer the open dry sclerophyll forest typical of our hinterland between Anglesea and Aireys Inlet –places ANGAIR has improved by removal of considerable amounts of invasive weed species.



Eastern Barred Bandicoot (*Parameles gunnii*)

Once widespread throughout the grasslands and woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains (VVP), *P. gunnii* is now listed as extinct in the wild (on the mainland, this species was common but vulnerable in Tasmania). The VVP area extends from Melbourne to Portland and so the home range of this small marsupial was to the north of Anglesea and Aireys Inlet. However, considering fossils have been found on Bass Strait islands, it seems plausible they could have once lived in this area. Widespread land clearance and predation from foxes diminished this species' home range until the last known population was found in Hamilton. The decision was made to declare the species extinct in the wild and the remaining individuals were relocated to secure breeding facilities. Captive breeding has had some success, and now this species can be observed at a number of secure fenced off sanctuaries, the closest to us being Mt. Rothwell near the You Yangs. Two



bandicoots are known to live in our area, the Long-nosed and Southern Brown. Both have been seen recently in camera monitoring by the Friends of Eastern Otways.

References:

Ronald Strahan (Ed), *Complete Book of Aus. Mammals*. Angus and Robertson 1983.

Van Dyck, Gunther, Baker, *Field Companion to the Mammals of Aus.* New Holland 2013.

FFG Action Statement - #74 New Holland Mouse DSE. (Available Online)

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