

Wildlife Act Review

Submission Comment 241:

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Primary interests:

- Protection and conservation of wildlife and habitat
- Management and control of wildlife causing problems or damage
- Compliance and enforcement

Comment

As a farmer and field naturalist I am concerned about loss of habitat for wildlife in the East Gippsland region. Feral animals increasingly threaten wildlife either directly (cats, foxes) or indirectly (sambar, pigs, horses). Control of feral animals and legislation of appropriate status for feral animals is imperative. In the last 20 years, an explosion in the population of Sambar in East Gippsland has caused widespread damage to vegetation particularly in riparian and gully areas. Much river bank vegetation has been denuded leaving soil exposed to erosion and flood damage and silting of water. threatening aquatic species and exposing wombat burrows to increased erosion during flood times.. Sambar-damage to understory vegetation extends from the coast to the alps depriving wildlife from essential cover and food sources. Recent culling has reduced sambar numbers allowing some regeneration of damaged vegetation. Feral cats continue to be a serious threat to small species (birds, reptiles and small mammals) but as they avoid traps, baiting is likely to achieve better results.

Feral pigs and brumbies cause loss of habitat in some areas of East Gippsland. Destruction of habitat by human activity continues due to clear fell logging, clearing of "fire hazards and for' infrastructure, service easements and drainage works with little or no regard for the value of the vegetation. Training in responsible land management should be mandatory for agency and private and public contractors involved in earthworks and clearing of native vegetation to improve awareness of habitat value. Human offenders remain a threat to wildlife and punishment delivered to those convicted of killing wildlife such as hundreds of Wedge Tail Eagles, is too lenient to be a deterrent.

Increased culling to remove feral animals, and education to Increase awareness in the value of native vegetation are imperative as is increasing penalties for offenders destroying vegetation and killing wildlife.

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