

Your questions answered

*Living Maroondah: a future for
our plants, animals and us*
Saturday, 16th February 2019

During the Living Maroondah event there were many questions posed to our guest presenters. Due to time constraints, not all of these were able to be answered. Our presenters have now addressed these questions post the event.

Presenter Q&A: Graeme Lorimer

Q. *Where habitat has been lost, is this due to increased housing?*

A. Most lost habitat has, indeed, been due to residential development (See Table 6 on page 61 of Volume 1 of 'Biodiversity in Maroondah' (in the Document Library) for more detail)

Q. *Is it likely that the damage of high populations of possums is a result of diminishing habitat and increased edge effect pushing them into competing territory?*

A. The populations of Common Ringtail Possums and Common Brushtail Possums are much higher than was possible prior to development of Maroondah. They have bred up because of: (a) elimination of predators; (b) feeding by people; and (c) provision of garden plants with palatable leaves, flowers and fruits. The unnaturally high populations have resulted in excessive browsing of the surviving indigenous eucalypts growing close to residential areas and parks with palatable planted species.

Q. *•What can be done about foxes and domestic cats so we can protect marsupial mice?*

A. No antechinus (or 'marsupial mice') have been recorded in Maroondah for decades, although I suspect some might exist at Hochkins Ridge or Bungalook Conservation Reserves. If any remain, they probably experience similar levels of predation as prior to settlement. Cats would represent much less predation now than pre-settlement total predation unless a particularly voracious cat lives near the antechinus and is allowed out at night. Fox eradication is totally impractical because research has shown that vacated home ranges are rapidly re-occupied and the population is rapidly restored. Fox control is also somewhat dangerous to humans, pets and other animals and may be counterproductive, as foxes are helping reduce the over-abundance of possums, Black Rats and mice. Predation may well have been a factor in past local extinctions of wildlife but now, other factors are much more important, such as fragmentation of habitat resulting in inviable small, disconnected colonies of animals.

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