

## President's note

Bell-Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD) is a growing problem in South-Eastern Australian forests. With a problem here in the D'Aguiar Range, MEPA recently had a meeting with Stephen Miles MLA – our State Minister for Environment – to discuss the problem. Sections of forest along Mt Nebo Rd – between Westridge Lookout and the intersection with Mt Glorious Rd (aka the PEI Rd) – are an easy place to see the very clear signs of BMAD, where there is a large and growing population of Bell-Miners. QPWS are well aware of the problem and doing all it can, so we thought that there was value in the community adding its voice in support. The primary control measure is fire in the landscape to manage a key factor – the lantana understory that is also implicated in the problem. Subsequent discussions indicate that the QPWS burn-program will include the very visible affected area mentioned above in addition to areas more regularly burnt (e.g. to the West of the Nebo village). Lantana-removal is a key: so we too should try to manage lantana on private land. If you have bell-miners and lantana then you risk the death of eucalypts on your property. Lantana removal has been shown to be effective. So kill some lantana today!

## Getting to Know Some of Our Cute, Furry Critters

Three of the small native animals likely to be seen near or in our homes in the mountains are the Yellow-footed Antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*), the Fawn-footed Melomys (*Melomys cervinipes*) and the Bush Rat (*Rattus fuscipes*). It is important to distinguish them from the introduced Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*). They all look a bit the same so identification is not easy.

### Yellow-footed Antechinus

These are the size of a small rat although they are

Dasyurids, not Rodents. They have rows of sharp top and bottom incisor teeth whereas rodents have two large top and two large bottom teeth.

Antechinus are Marsupials so the females have a pouch.

Distinguishing features are a white ring around the eye, a black tip to the tail, broad hind feet and a pointy snout.



They are cheeky little creatures, not afraid to dart here and there in the house and can be easily caught in a live trap for relocation by using a small dab of peanut butter rolled in oatmeal.

They are mainly carnivorous. If you find a little pile of insect wings, that will be what's left when an antechinus has had a meal. Their droppings are torpedo shaped and thinnish, up to 1.5 cm long.

An interesting feature of their life cycle is that all the males die after mating leaving the mum to bring up the kids. July is mating time. They usually make a nest of grass and dry leaves in a hollow log but often in a cupboard or cosy spot in a house or car. They can have up to twelve young that stay in the pouch for five weeks after which they hang on to their mother as she goes about her nocturnal activities.

NB: given their teeth-structure and habit of bringing in their own nest material, it is very unlikely that antechinus are responsible for chewing car electrical wiring. This is, most likely the Bush Rat or Black Rat.

### Fawn-footed Melomys

They are Rodents, also known as one of the mosaic-tailed rats. They are slightly bigger than the Antechinus and always seem a bit fatter. They have large black eyes and broad feet. Their tails, which are longer than their bodies, are almost hairless with scales looking like tiles that don't overlap, whereas other rats have scales that do overlap and are arranged in rings around the tail with obvious hairs.



They feed mainly but not exclusively on fruit and nuts leaving gnawing marks from their top incisors and long furrows from the two bottom incisors. Peanut butter rolled in oatmeal will catch them in a live trap. Their droppings are small, roundish and knobbly, just 5mm long.

Like antechinus they are nocturnal and mostly live in rainforest areas with thick undergrowth and in lantana patches. They build nests of leaves and grass usually in a tree. They are a major source of food for owls and tawny frogmouths.

### Bush Rat

These are Rodents like the Melomys. They have stiff black guard hairs (i.e. coarse outer hairs) interspersed in their grey fur. They are distinguished from the introduced Black Rat by having a tail shorter than their body whereas the Black Rat has a tail longer than its body. Both have the rodent type ringed tail scales.

They have a varied diet including insects, fruits and grains. Their droppings are about 1 cm long with a bend in the middle whereas the Black Rat's

droppings are straight. The urine of both of them is distinctly smelly.



They are reported to be quite shy, nocturnal and dwell in rainforest, shrubby understory and lantana. Their nests are made in hollow logs and burrows constructed from leaves and grass.

NB: The rats that invade our houses, chew our doors and shred paper to build nests in the ceiling are, more than likely, the introduced Black Rat. For this reason they are known as the House Rat and are known to like climbing.

MEPA has 3 Elliott Traps for sale (\$25). Another really good one is the Mouse tilt trap – the blue and yellow one easily found on the internet under that name.

Maggie Scattini. Drawings by Adrian Sheppard.

## Do your block! *Free bush care service*

Would you like some assistance managing bushland on your block? Advice on weeds or advice on planting local native plants in your garden?

MEPA has a free service offering advice and information (supported by MBRC)

Contact Maggie - 3289 8175 or  
Dominic - 3289 0093 or  
Email: [askmepa@yahoo.com.au](mailto:askmepa@yahoo.com.au)