

KANGAROO NUMBERS

October 2017

“When a sincere man teaches a wrong doctrine the doctrine becomes truth: when an insincere man expounds a true doctrine it becomes error.”Joshu
Real investigation will still win out and expose what is true. There are many excuses for killing kangaroos espoused. One was recounted to me by a man who was manning a Landcare stall at a beekeepers field day recently. I mentioned that his list of suitable bee flora was incomplete. He explained it was only a general list of the various flora that tended to be smaller in size, bush and shrub varieties. At this point I informed him I was not a supporter of Landcare because it was too rigid, and tunnel visioned, by disallowing the use of naturalised Australian flora to be used in the mix for their projects.

In fact, with Landcares concern for natives, I was a bit perplexed that they were supporting planting food species for a naturalised Australian insect. The European honey bee? Because much of the naturalised Australian flora was introduced for the now naturalised Australian livestock. The native flora having been cleared because it was not feed for the white settlers sheep and cattle was now being reintroduced by Landcare? It had the ring of people buying land, bulldozing the native flora and reintroducing it at a later date. He made the statement, there were “more kangaroos in Australia now, than there were ever before in Australia”. This doctrine had been presented to me for acceptance previously, and it was declined then as now. I suggested this wasn’t the case. He assured me it was. By way of proof of this, said it was the water. There was now water more widely distributed, where there was never water before white settlement. So there were kangaroos, large macropods, where none had ever been able to survive previously. Without further thought or investigation, it could appear to be plausible.

He spoke to the experience he had in western NSW. Where they filled in all the dams in an area after a long drought which had already decimated the eastern grey kangaroo population. Filling in the dams saw the eastern grey kangaroos remain in abeyance from, that now, stored waterless area. As well, many of the bird species that should not be in that area, and were not originally in residence, in other than small numbers also left. Birds like galahs, choughs, apostle birds etc.. Birds that only did well where water was in abundance. He also said that it got rid of the goats. I had heard it said that the goat was the last resident of the desert, but I always thought it was the number of animals, not the animal itself.

I had heard about the filling in of dams spoken about many decades previously. When the Victorian government took back land, by removing the leases of farmers in the Sunset country of Victoria around Ouyen. The farmers who were losing their leases threatened to blow up the dams they had constructed to water their sheep. Because it was the water that brought the kangaroos and many bird species that the government wanted to protect, into the area.

The Landcare man said that after filling in the dams in Western NSW, the bird species that were there before the dams, returned. The red kangaroos were better able to handle the original almost waterless conditions of that area, and their numbers stayed within reasonable limits.

He said that water is not a good thing to install on arid land. It encourages the incursion of species that have not adapted, and cannot utilise land that is mainly waterless all year round. Saying in some drought years where water was scarce other than the large river flats, had their kangaroo population reduced because so many died, and this was a natural occurrence, not often seen now.

This sounded reasonable and plausible because I had heard that before and seen it work here. Before the dams were put in the along our main gully, which was mostly dry except for every third or fourth year where it carried or held water for maybe, a maximum period of three weeks. There were no eastern grey kangaroos, and was reminded of the sunset country. Once the dams were built the eastern greys came further up the gully.

Being at a field day, there was limited time to discuss this subject, as he had to attend to the queries of people visiting the stall. Also thought that his view might be as inflexible as Landcare as he obviously didn't question that group philosophy.

The problem with his analogy was he was not considering the baseline numbers of kangaroos and the changes since white settlement. He was working off "now".

Not taking into consideration the land where the kangaroos were plentiful before white settlement was now under agriculture, horticulture, the concrete of cities, suburbs, air ports, quarries and a myriad of other wildlife exclusion zones. These hundreds of thousands of acres, in Victoria and even more Australia wide; of the very best lush country, preferred by white settlers for occupation and use. Were also preferred and once filled with kangaroos and other wildlife. These were dispossessed and perished or killed by the usurpers, in huge numbers.

The greed for ownership that drove white settlers to take up arid land, making it different, suitable for their introduced livestock and own needs, by building dams and installing troughs for their stock to drink. Recreated an environment where kangaroos could breed up, and to some extent, but not entirely, replenish the numbers lost from the more moist climate areas they populated before they were driven from these. The introduced water to achieve liveability for the settler in the arid landscape, went some way as an exchange to allow kangaroos to regain some of their numbers. However,

still not allowing the same density of population, because the food supply was considerably less.

So if we transfer the amount of kangaroos that were, but are no longer, on what was a rich food source for them. Because it is now farmland and areas mentioned above, effective exclusion zones for most wildlife, especially kangaroos. It stands to reason, even with the arid lands with stored water, there would still not be the same amount of wildlife, certainly not the numbers of kangaroos as there were before white settlement. There was no count of kangaroos done, when the white settlers arrived. There can be no accurate count of kangaroos done even now, and estimation of numbers would easily describe more than there are in actual fact, depending on who estimated the numbers not counted.

So one could assume, I certainly do, that the statement above, is incorrect and in actual fact, there are considerably less kangaroos than there were before white settlement.