



The false belief that wombats are like rodents or rabbits, leads to the incorrect assumption that they will undermine farmland.

Burrows are spread throughout a wombat's grazing range so they can bolt to safety if needed. Some of these burrows are just "bolt holes" not much more than a metre in length but large enough to afford the wombat protection from predators.

Wombat burrows are built and used by successive generations of wombats and the suitability and availability of burrows may have an impact on breeding numbers. Destroying long standing burrows increases local burrow building activity as a number of wombats may use a particular burrow which, if destroyed may lead to a number of wombats digging two or three new burrows to compensate for the destruction of their "safety point".

There is a lack of research material pertaining to the Bare Nosed Wombat and much of the information available to farmers concerning wombat studies has been based on species of wombat not found in our area. The multiple burrow entrances of the Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat in South Australia are not a feature of the Bare-nosed wombat. According to Steele and Temple-Smith et al (Wells (Ed.) 1998) the Bare Nosed Wombat's burrow is less than half the size of the Southern Hairy-Nosed wombat burrow.

It is known however that cattle and other hooved animals grazing near riverbanks cause the most erosion and impact on creek and river flow. The use of ATV's, quad bikes etc. weighing 300k up to 1000k with trailers and spray packs have a far more detrimental effect on the riparian zone than a 30k wombat could ever achieve.

The Department of Land and Water Conservation found that "cows eat and trample and destroy the vegetation on the banks that keep the bank stable, cut tracks into the bank that lead to slumping and erosion, eat the instream vegetation so there is nothing to slow the movement of water or to catch and filter out sediments, compact the soil and prevent seedlings from emerging, pug dam sites weakening soil structure leading to erosion and loss of stream/swamp beds, damage the toe of the bank causing them to collapse, create tracks which act as channels that concentrate run off and cause gully erosion"

The Department also commented "this means, in effect, that wombats are having very little influence on total landscape levels of erosion compared to other factors such as over grazing, vegetation clearance and fire. Unfortunately, wombat holes are very visible, and some people tend to blame them for everything". Eldridge D, letter, 2005, p1.

As wombats' burrow they turn over soil and encourage the growth of new plant life by allowing moisture to penetrate into the soil. Without the wombat's natural aerating of the soil, many local plant species would not survive and consequently, many native herbivorous species would be eliminated as well.

The Bare-nosed wombat affectionally known as 'bulldozers of the bush' has been misunderstood and not appreciated for their important role in the Australian ecology.

To find out more check out "Wombat Myths" on our website
www.wombatprotection.org.au/education