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From: Colin Richardson [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, 15 October 2023 12:54 PM
To: NRC
Subject: NSW Invasive Species Management Review.

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Dear Review panel members,

I write to present my concerns about the current situation in NSW as regards invasive species. I am not able to comment on the plant aspect, but have particular concerns about the birds/animals part.

I have been a keen amateur ornithologist for over 50 years. During that period I have notice a major decline in both numbers and diversity of many species. While bushfires, destruction of habitat (increasing urbanisation, deforestation, etc) are a significant factor, the aspect of invasive species and their impact has been overly neglected. I have serious concerns for the long-term survival of much of our native fauna. "Warm fuzzy" creatures such as koalas get the attention, to the neglect of the majority of species that have come under threat.

Let me list some of the species of concern:

- * Mammals: feral cats, feral horses, wild/feral dogs, deer, feral pigs, foxes, rabbits, feral goats
- * Birds: Eurasian Starlings, Common (Indian) Mynas, House Sparrows, Blackbirds, feral Pigeons, Spotted Doves, Goldfinches, Mallard
- * Insects: Fire Ants
- * Amphibians: Cane Toads

Problems:

- * Feral cats: arguably the greatest menace we have to native fauna - birds, small mammals, small reptiles. Cats kill billions of native fauna every year - rivaling the massive bushfires of recent years in terms of numbers of animals destroyed. So far little has been done. The federal Abbott government proposed to reduce their numbers, and the cat-lover lobby claimed he wanted to eliminate their pets. Needed: vigorous measures to kill feral and stray cats throughout NSW; mandatory de-sexing of all pet cats, excepting only licensed breeders; a requirement to keep pet cats indoors, mandatory chipping of all pet cats.
- * Feral horses: especially in the alpine regions - destruction of fragile environment. Need to eliminate all feral horses. Members of the horse lobby oppose any intervention.
- * Foxes, wild dogs: prey on native animals. Efforts to eradicate them not effective, desultory. Baiting is not working well - or there would not be so many foxes as road-kill.
- * Rabbits, pigs, deer, goats: all are destructive to the native environment, and compete for food and resources with native animals.

Past efforts to eradicate rabbits worked for a while, but now little seems to be effective. Removing pigs seems largely to depend on hunting enthusiasts. Goats are rampant throughout far western NSW. On the Silver Hwy, I have seen signs at rest stops to keep out of the bush, so as not to damage the environment, while at the same stops, I have seen dozens of goats, which are far more destructive to the environment than any human walking through the bush!

* Starlings, mynas, sparrows, blackbirds and others: compete with native birds for nesting spaces, and for food. They are aggressive and many native species cannot compete. Their numbers are such that entire habitats can be taken over. As far as I know, there are NO measures being taken to reduce their numbers - the threat they pose seems to be ignored. (I consider starlings and mynas to be rats-with-wings, and sparrows, mice-with-wings. They are that destructive.) Mallards: interbreed with our native Black Ducks, thus hybridising a native species.

* Fire Ants: not yet (I hope!) in NSW - but close to our border. But they are a major threat, and it would only take a raft of them to get on our river systems to invade much of the state. Sadly the federal and Queensland governments have cut back on controls.

* Cane Toads: present in NE NSW, and specimens have been found as far south as Sydney. Reporting is in place - but not many seem to know about it. More vigorous measures needed.

I realise there are other species invasive to NSW, of which I am less well informed: such as carp, slider turtles, spiny toads, crazy yellow ants. These also need attention.

I read through the NSW State of the Environment report at https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.soe.epa.nsw.gov.au%2Fall_themes%2Fbiodiversity%2Finvasive-species&data=05%7C01%7Cnrc%40nrc.nsw.gov.au%7C6299d4b715de4bc03cde08dbcd219749%7C1ef97a68e8ab44eda16db579fe2d7cd8%7C0%7C0%7C638329316392091668%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Iik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=E1XmWF9cxcLFmBEGykE9K3LmAQWbDQS3vrYBH3vW%2FPI%3D&reserved=0

- and despite all the discussion of the invasive mammals, plants, toads, fish, insects, etc, I found almost no mention of invasive birds. True, they may not (much) directly kill native species - though some eat baby birds - but they are still a major threat through competition for food and breeding sites. This seriously needs attention.

Thank-you for your attention.

Yours truly,

Colin Richardson

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