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SEEING DOUBLE DOUBLE

Mike Murphy



This rare photograph of a kangaroo with two joeys in its pouch was taken at a *LFW* property near Walpole. What makes it rare is that the joeys are not twins but from different mothers. They are part of a small mob of hand-raised kangaroos that have been released into the wild but return frequently to the home of their carers, Mike and Penney Murphy.

Three females had joeys about the same time and on this occasion one of them, called Tingle, appeared at the house clearly distressed and making a coughing sound. Mike and Penney went out to find the cause and discovered Tingle's joey was missing from its pouch. They began searching the bush, following tracks the kangaroos regularly take to a nearby creek and along firebreaks. Tingle went with Penney and at one point stopped and indicated she wanted to go down a particular track. Penney followed and Tingle led her to Tallulah, another female, standing in a clearing in some thick bush. Mike joined them and he and Penney began searching the area, presuming something had happened near there to cause Tingle to lose her joey.

Coming back to the clearing, where Tallulah and Tingle were still standing, Penney noticed that Tallulah's pouch looked bigger than usual. As Tallulah is used to being handled, Penney approached and inspected the pouch, finding two joeys inside. Presumably Tingle's joey had either jumped into Tallulah's pouch by mistake or it had become separated from its mother and Tallulah had found it and taken it in. Tallulah was not giving up her new acquisition, however. When Tingle approached she got a box round the ears with one of Tallulah's paws.

Mike and Penney set off back to the house and the two females followed. On the back lawn Tallulah lay down with Tingle close by, watching her closely. Soon the two joeys began moving. Several legs appeared, then one head with four legs and eventually two heads.

Coincidentally, Mike and Penney then received a phone call from a friend who reported he had a joey whose mother had been shot. Would

they take it and look after it? Penney thought it might be a solution. Perhaps Tallulah could keep her two, which she seemed reluctant to give up, and Tingle could have the new one. But by now Tallulah was showing signs that there was not enough room in her pouch for two and the joeys were squashing each other, with Tallulah's joey, the slightly younger and smaller of the two, looking as if it might be in trouble.

Deciding it was time for expert advice, Mike called Carol Lander at Roo Gully, near Boyup Brook who said the second joey had to be removed from Tallulah's pouch or one or both of them would not survive, and the new joey should not be put in another mother's pouch. There was only one working teat in the pouch, Carol said, and it could not supply two joeys. Also, the milk Tingle was supplying might not be appropriate for the age and development of the new joey. Fortunately, Carol also had advice on how to remove the two joeys from Tallulah's pouch. Mike offered her some dried apple, one of her favourite snacks, and held it down near the ground so that she had to bend down to eat it, allowing her pouch to fall open. Penney then pressed gently from the back of the pouch and put her hand in very carefully to pull out the tangle of arms, legs and heads. Tingle was watching all this with close attention.

The two joeys popped out, looking a little startled. Tallulah made a small grunting noise and her joey rolled back into the pouch, with Tingle's joey also quickly finding its rightful home. For a long time the two mothers stood still, looking rather dazed at the experience they had shared, and then they hopped off together into the bush.

When the incident was reported to another kangaroo expert, Lynda Staker, in Queensland, who has written the 'bible' on how to hand raise macropods,

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CHILDREN TAKE THEIR VOICES TO CANBERRA

Jo Tregonning



*Children from Baldivis Primary School meet Hon Julia Gillard in Parliament House to discuss funding opportunities for their projects.
Photo: BCF Inc.*

Ten years ago in the face of radical change from rural to urban living, children at Baldivis Primary School determined to preserve some of the region's fast diminishing natural environment. From early beginnings in 2001 when the site became a *LFW* property, children and the community have transformed the former farmland block into a vibrant educational centre surrounded by beautiful bushland. It is now known as Baldivis Children's Forest and hosts annual planting events, educational programs for schools and community, and boasts an excellent diversity of flora and fauna.

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Lynda's response was: "It is quite uncommon for a female to allow another's joey near her, let alone allow it into her pouch! I think you are very lucky to have witnessed such an event."

Meanwhile, the other joey was brought in and Mike and Penney cared for it that night but decided not to keep it and found another carer who was prepared to take it over the next day.

Mike Murphy is a retired journalist and part-time editor of 'The Walpole Weekly'. His wife Penney is a Silver Chain nurse in Walpole. They live at Crystal Springs, 14 km from Walpole. Email: mjmurphy@westnet.com.au

A whopping 25,700 seedlings have been planted in the degraded tuart woodlands and Outridge Swamp, and the past four years has seen a 70–90 % seedling survival rate. A successful feral bee control program and installation of wildlife nest boxes has seen possums and large monitor lizards recolonise the old treated hollows. The excitement of children spotting these animals on night stalks is great to hear. Aboriginal cultural learning has formed an important part of developing the Forest and a bush tucker garden, artwork, mia and development of the district's dreamtime trail are physical evidence of Aboriginal learning at the Forest.

Since 2006 the multi-award winning Children's Forest project has been recognised in State, national and international arenas for biodiversity conservation, education and Aboriginal cultural reconciliation. Children speak at numerous events and conferences, the most recent being at the International River Health Conference in Canberra during October 2009 where 'kids teach kids'. Twenty-nine Baldivis Primary School children presented workshops on the Forest project and their work studying water quality in local wetlands and the Serpentine River. They also met with Environment Minister Peter Garrett and Education Minister Julia Gillard in Parliament to highlight a need to fund environmental educational programs such as the Forest project and the Department of Water's Ribbons of Blue program. Visit www.baldivis-childrens-forest.com.au for more information.

Jo Tregonning is the Project Officer, Baldivis Children's Forest.