



Getting on board the Bandi-wagon: Insights from two citizen science urban conservation programs

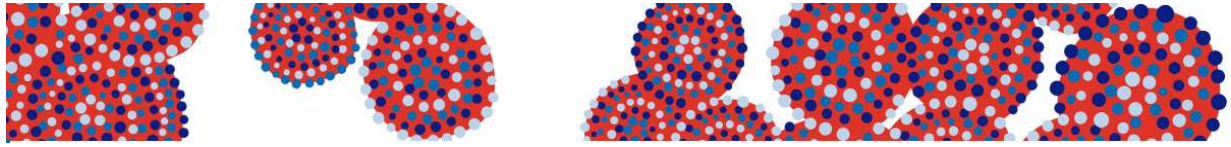
Abstract

Across Australia, various species of bandicoot are threatened by the ongoing destruction of bushland habitat to make way for expansion of residential development. Our socio-ecological system has recently focused on minimizing contact between human residences and wildlife. Building designs feature six-foot steel fences, and discussion forums feature threads on pest management, extermination, and low-maintenance fire-proof living. The dream of a patch of land with some grass to kick a ball means the pressures on cities to expand are significant. Simultaneously, many threatened species remain within city boundaries. Can we reorganize our approach to new developments and embrace the opportunity to build bandicoot friendly suburbs? Previous research across Australia shows that bandicoots frequently use modified habitats, linear remnants and residential properties, and that human residents are generally optimistic about their nosey neighbours, with a few recurring concerns. The Victorian Government-funded Southern brown bandicoot outreach program brings together community members, schools, developers and local council initiatives to further positive interactions between bandicoots and their new neighbours, and make the suburb a friendly place for everyone to live –not just humans. The Backyard Bandicoots program in Western Australia is a collaboration between Murdoch University researchers, the City of Mandurah, and local residents. This program aims to raise awareness of quenda (the local bandicoot species), encourage healthy interactions between humans and quenda, and better understand the role residential gardens play in conservation of urban species. We will discuss insights from both programs, including the core role values-based communication has played in being able to get the community on board the Bandi-wagon.

Speaker Profile

Charlotte Fletcher

As Southern Brown Bandicoot Outreach Officer at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Charlotte is responsible for designing and implementing community engagement initiatives centred around creating a bandicoot friendly community. This work aims to help build connection to nature in residents of south east Melbourne and raise awareness about the existence of endangered



bandicoots in residential areas and appropriate conservation actions. With a BSc (Hons) in ecology from the University of Sydney and M Sci Comm (Outreach) from the Australian National University, Charlotte has previously developed and/or delivered education and family programs at USyd, ANU, the Australian National Maritime Museum, Melbourne Museum and Questacon. Her work at RBGV sits at the exciting intersection of programming, citizen science and behaviour change for conservation.

Amanda Kristancic is co-author but will not be presenting on the day.

Website links

→ <https://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/southern-brown-bandicoot>

