

Life on the Mountain

iⁿ M O N T A G e Glimpses of Mount Roland, 2023-2024

Recorded in association with the Mount Roland Land Care Mountain Monitoring Program

Area covered: sites monitored were located in close proximity to the Mount Roland walking track, from O'Neills road to Kings road, as shown below.

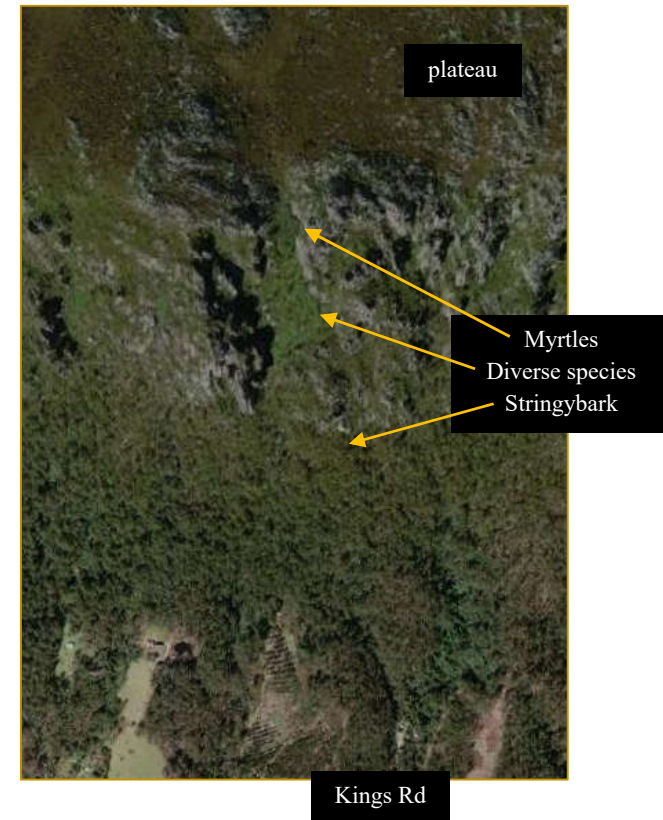
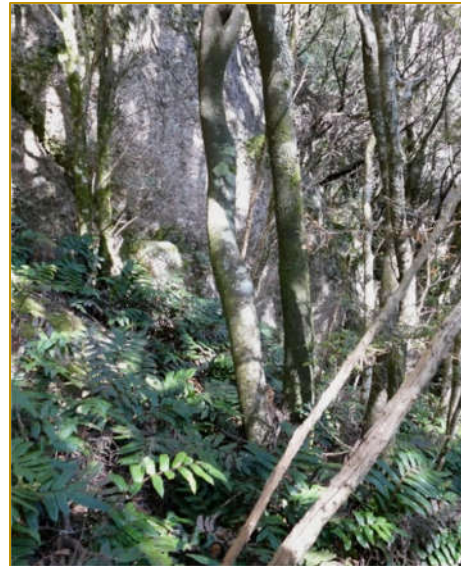


From Kings Road to O'Neills Road

The northern-side ascent of Mount Roland, via “the face track” from Kings Road, moves steeply through what begins as open forest dominated by *Eucalyptus obliqua* (brown-top stringybark) with a variety of understory plants, including musk, dogwood, narrow leafed acacia and purple cheeseberry. There are a number of orchids in this area as well.

As the mountain's outcrops become more dramatic, the stringybarks give way to a greater diversity of small to medium plants, peppered with white-top stringybarks, *E.delegatensis*. This transition area soon begins to include myrtle beech and sassafrass. From below the mountain, the three shades of green along the face track are clearly visible – the olive green of the brown-top stringybarks, the lighter green of the diverse range of smaller species plus *delegatensis*, and then, nearer the plateau, the deeper green of the myrtle leaves.

The photos shown immediately below provide an example of the steep terrain in the upper region of the face track with the montages of images on the following pages revealing examples of the animal life that can be found there.



Example 1



This site in the brown-top stringybark (*E.obliqua*) section of the lower face track featured pademelon and a number of birds, including a dusky robin, a bird whose numbers are in decline. Also present: grey shrike thrush, currawong, some smaller unidentified birds, a dragonfly, many moths, and a lizard. Jan 2024

Example 2



This montage of images was constructed from stills taken from videos recorded about two thirds of the way up the face track. They were collected between October 9 and 31, 2023, and include the following species: Bassian thrush, Tasmanian scrubwren, olive whistler, long-tailed mouse, ringtail possum and brushtail possum.

Example 3



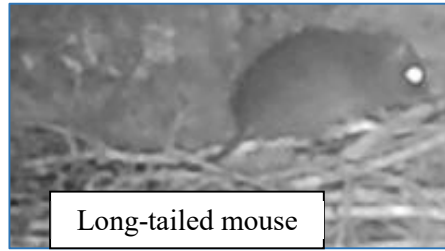
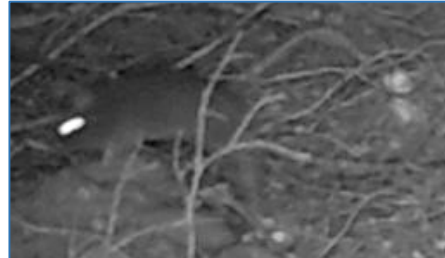
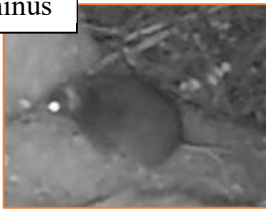
This busy site under a small myrtle copse at the face-track edge of the plateau was monitored for several weeks in November, 2023. The plateau in this area is quite wet and contains numerous boulders, like that faced in shot. See next page for species.



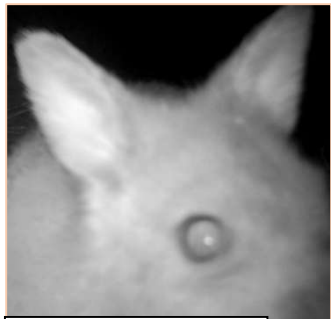
Brushtail possum



Dusky antechinus



Long-tailed mouse



Pademelon above,
moth below



These two scrubwrens are a little nervous about the approach of what would seem to be a dusky antechinus.

Samples of camera trap results from the face-track edge of the plateau, November 2023



Thornbill



Scrubwren, note similarity between thornbill and female scrubwren.



Bassian thrush to left and a series of photos of olive whistlers to the right.



Examples of the terrain above the face track, relevant to sites 3, 4 and 5:



Example 4

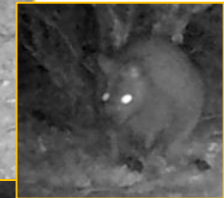
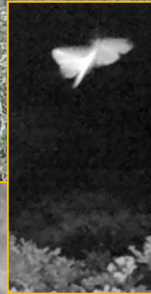


At this site on the plateau, above the face track in a wet area containing high shrubs and many animal tracks, 2 wombat, 2 brushtail possum, 1 echidna (not in place), 1 possible scrubwren and several Bassian thrush videos were recorded, with all but the scrubwren utilising the same path. December 2023.

Example 5



Camera results at this site on the plateau above the face track (Oct 2023) showed lengthy visits by pademelons and brushtail possums. Bassian thrush and scrubwrens were seen several times, as were numerous night- and day-time insects.



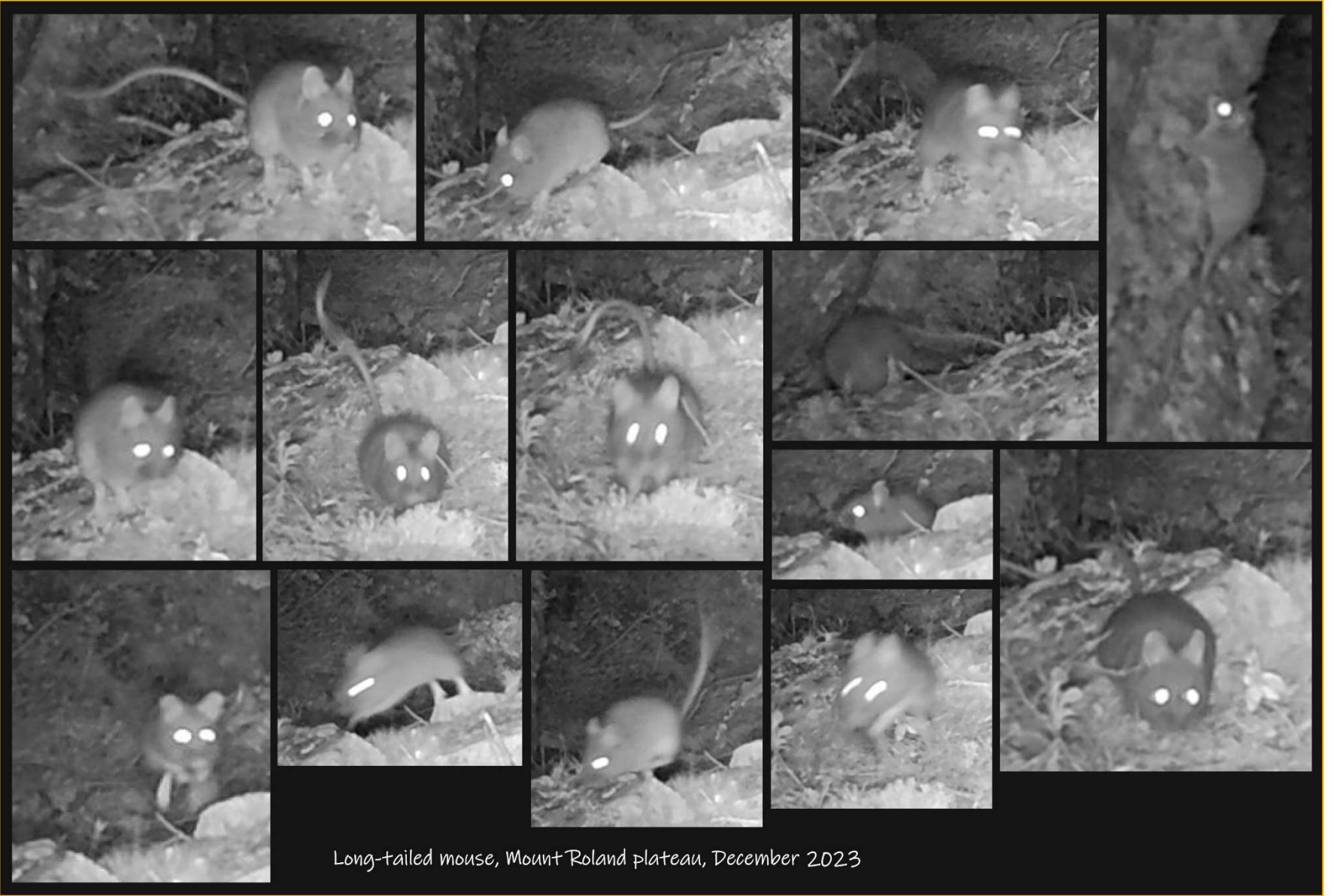
Example 6



This quoll was filmed in a copse of myrtles between and around large stones on the Roland plateau, Oct 23 – Nov 14, 2023. Other creatures observed later at the same site can be seen on the following page.



This montage reveals an active long-tailed mouse (at least one), as well as an occasional sharper-nosed, shorter tailed mammal, perhaps a dusky antechinus (climbing at right). There is also a leaping lizard, a long-feeler cricket, possibly a dragonfly, scrubwrens, and a female crescent honeyeater as well as a cat. Dec 2023 – Jan 2024. Further footage of the cat and long-tailed mouse is provided over the page.



Long-tailed mouse, Mount Roland plateau, December 2023

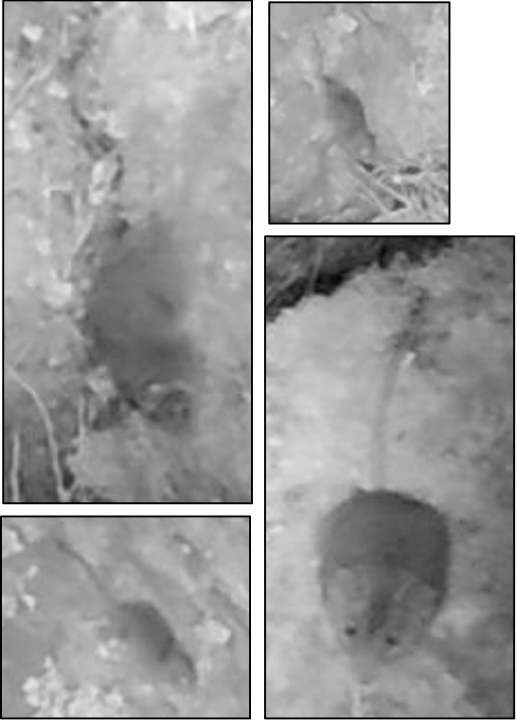
Example 7



The cats' larder – there are many sheltered “rock gardens” on the plateau where small trees and shrubs are able to grow and where numerous small birds and animals are active. A cat with kittens was recorded at this site alongside scrubwrens, a swamp antechinus, a white-footed dunnart, skinks, and moths. The dunnart and antechinus would run under the large rock on the left, appearing top and/or bottom, and moving frequently from side to side. Jan-Feb 2024.



Cat n Mouse:
 This cat with teenage kittens was recorded on the Mount Roland plateau in late January, 2024, not far from where a solo black cat was recorded late in 2023. Both videos were taken in small sheltered spaces between outcrops where numerous small birds and mammals were also active.

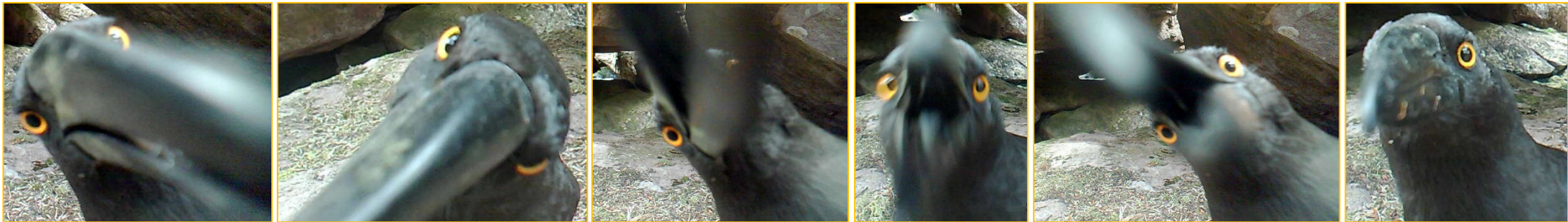


This site appears to have included at least one (likely) swamp antechinus (top right), which darted quickly from place to place, and a more exploratory, thin-tailed, sharp-faced white-footed dunnart (with an almost concave nose arch, shown left).



Example 8

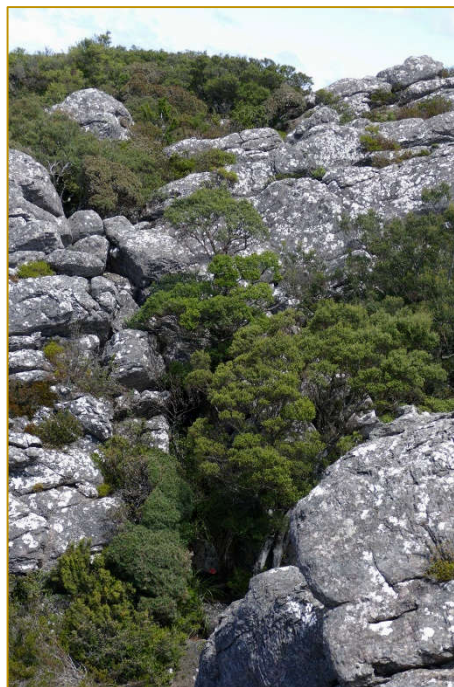
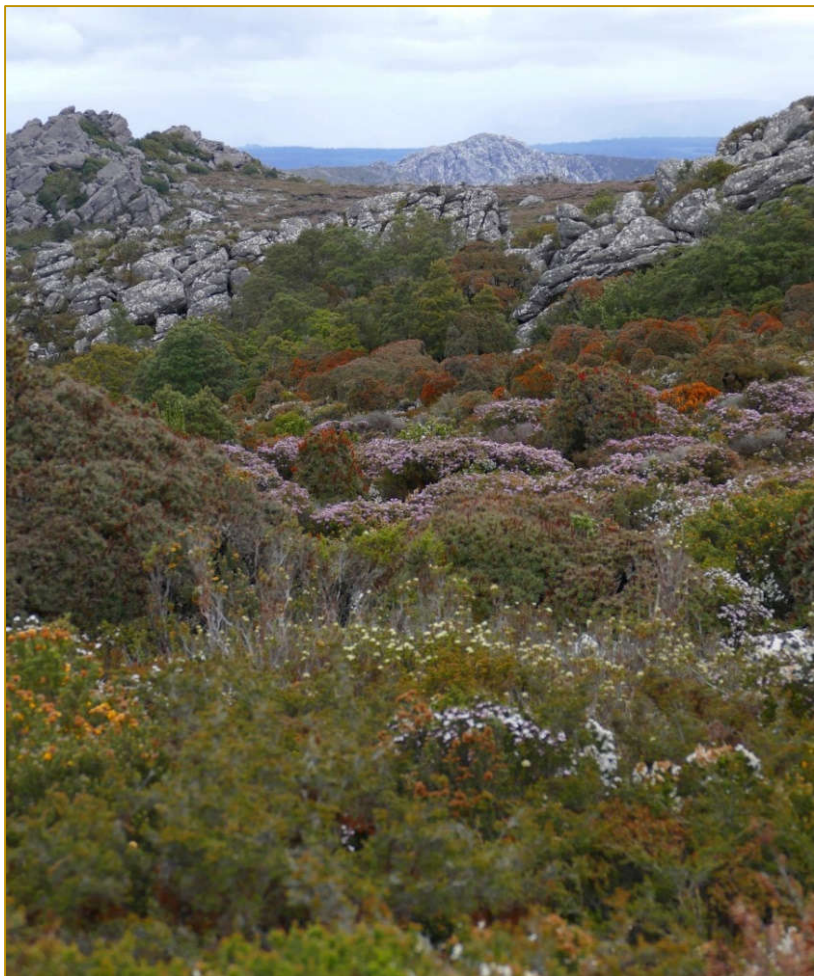
Meet Zali! In three sittings over two days, 9 days apart, Zali appeared in 62 videos. November-December 2023.



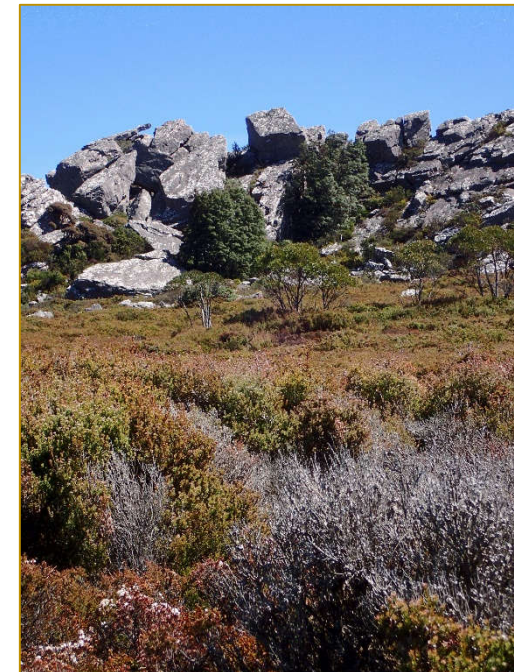


When Zali wasn't around, this passage under boulders on the Mount Roland plateau also revealed a Bassian thrush, scrubwrens, and what appears to be a long-tailed mouse. November-December 2023.

Examples of the terrain surrounding sites 6, 7 and 8:



Examples of the mid-plateau terrain, low foliage with craggy outcrops and occasional myrtles, surrounding sites 9, 10 and 11:



Example 9



Under a myrtle at the top of a scree slope below the low foliage on the Roland plateau, the camera captured an olive whistler, scrubwrens, a thornbill, Bassian thrush, a snake and some kind of tailed creature (bottom left). Note the wombats (next page) were also at this site.



Over several weeks in November, 2023, three videos of wombats were taken, always of the wombat taking the same swift route in the same direction. Note the full pouch for the top wombat, suggesting there are at least two different wombats represented.



A second installation at the same site was brief due to camera failure but did record, over a few days in December, this wombat mum, a currawong, and a scrubwren. Battery issues continued, but thornbill and possible antechinus (shown out of position) have been added from also truncated January footage.



When finally the batteries were working again at this site, it was the bird life that dominated: three scrubwrens (2 adults and a full-grown, still-feeding young), green rosellas, an olive whistler, a crescent honeyeater, Bassian thrush, and likely a juvenile and/or female pink robin. Also using the site, in addition to wombats (see next page) was at least one Bennett's wallaby, a small rodent and a bumblebee. Jan-Feb 2024.



⇒Jan 21, 11.44pm



⇐Jan 22, 3.43am



⇐Jan 22, 5.26am



⇒Jan 24, 10.25pm

WOMBAT ROAD



⇒Feb 01, 10.40pm

⇐Jan 25, 5.34am

⇐Jan 29, 5.56am



Bare heeled



⇒Feb 03, 5.52am

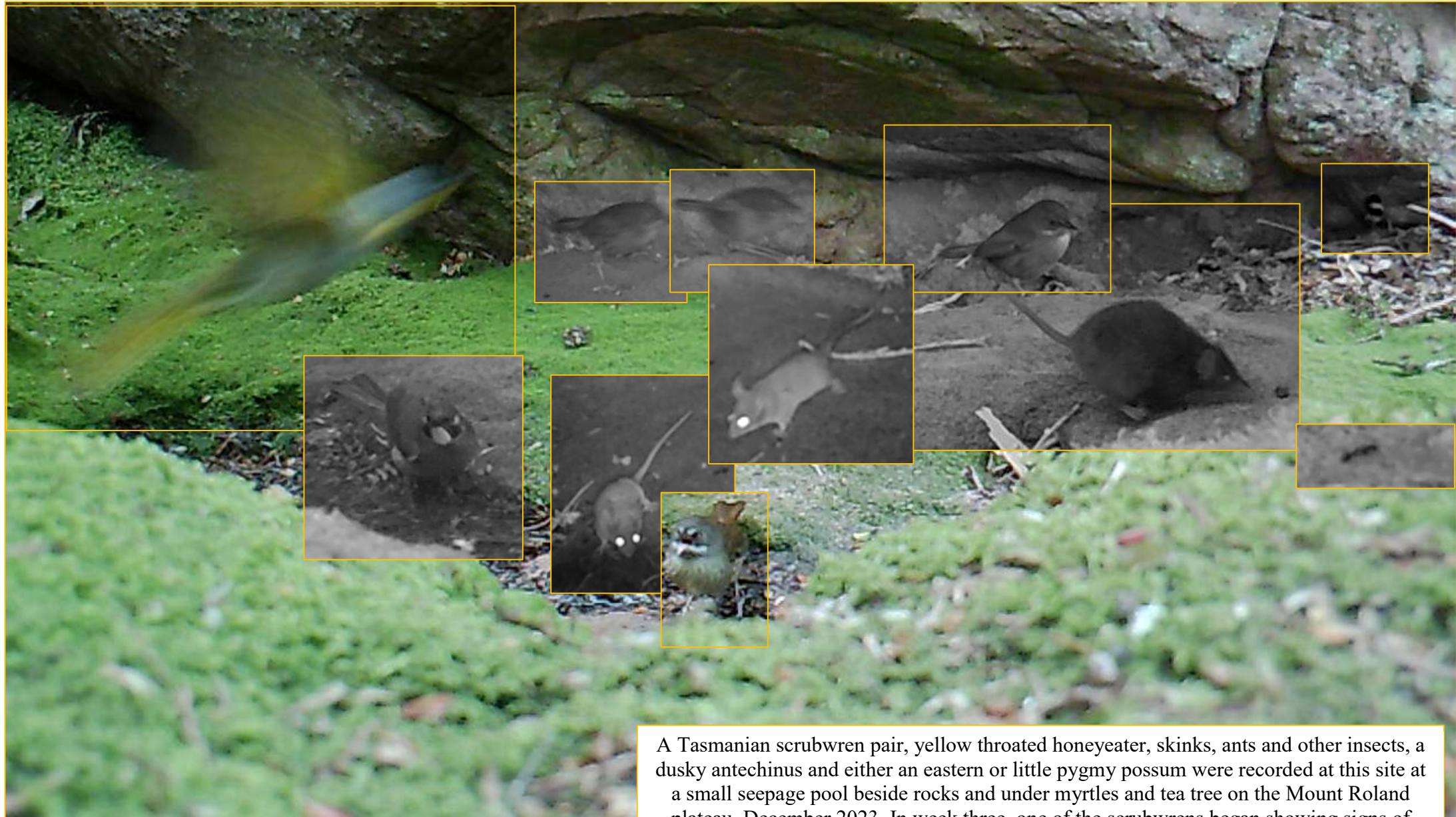


⇐Feb 06, 4.19am



⇐Feb 06, 5.24am

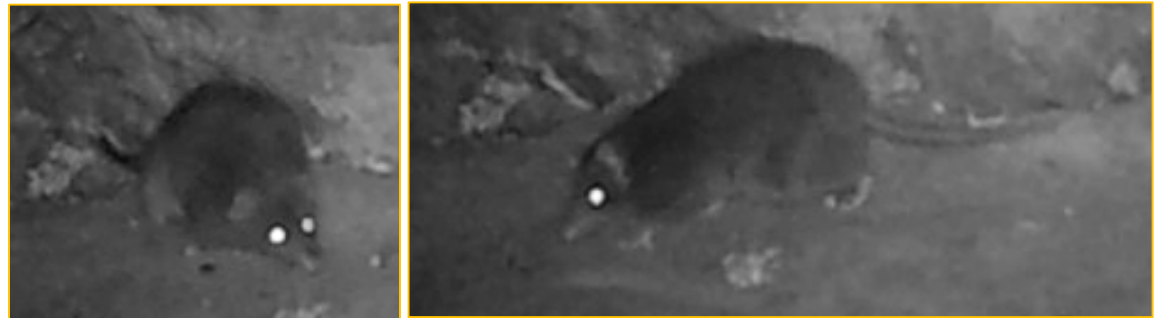
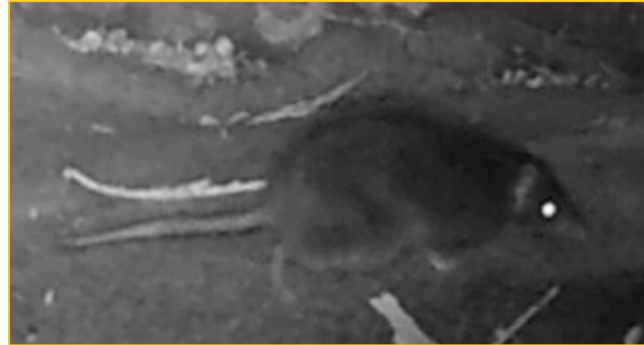
Example 10



A Tasmanian scrubwren pair, yellow throated honeyeater, skinks, ants and other insects, a dusky antechinus and either an eastern or little pygmy possum were recorded at this site at a small seepage pool beside rocks and under myrtles and tea tree on the Mount Roland plateau. December 2023. In week three, one of the scrubwrens began showing signs of significant distress caused by the camera – see the page after the next.



The December 2023 camera trap placed at this site for three weeks recorded several visits by (the same or different) eastern pygmy possum (too large and robust, perhaps, to be a little pygmy possum) and at least one dusky antechinus.





A pair of Tasmanian scrubwrens frequented this small seepage pool among boulders, under myrtles and tea tree on Mount Roland plateau. Dec 2023.



This reaction to the camera began in week three.

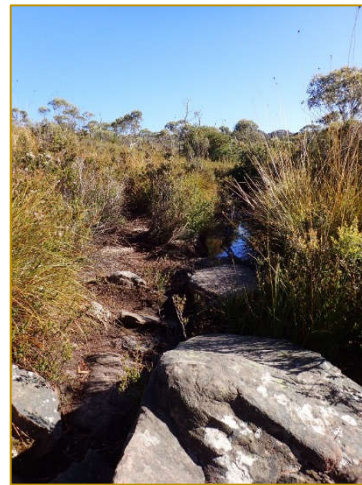


Example 11



This exposed site was thoroughly compromised by wind triggers, draining battery supply before there was any significant chance to gather footage of animal life. The obvious highlight, beside half a bird and half a skink, was the little pygmy possum shown. Jan 2024.

The terrain for sites 12 and 13 is increasingly dominated by buttongrass and tea tree:



Example 12



Many animal tracks through tea tree and gums appear around the bridged stream on the plateau. Species pictured here include a wombat, several scrubwrens, a bumblebee and what would appear to be a pigmy possum. Oct-Nov 2023

Example 13



Note that this pygmy possum, while unclear in the stills, is evident as such in the video.

Amid the buttongrass and tea tree of the plateau area a little north of the Mount Roland saddle, the camera trap captured an active swamp rat, an inquisitive currawong, scrubwrens, an olive whistler, at least one bumblebee, a little pigmy possum, a skink, at least one yellow-throated honeyeater and footage of a crescent honeyeater (prolific but not often at ground level). Dec 2023 – Jan 2024. Details follow.



The crescent honeyeater, left, was caught once on camera, one of few captures despite prolific presence in the upper branches of the plateau foliage.

The yellow-throated honeyeater, below, visited twice (one or two birds). The species is generally seen less often than the crescent honeyeater.



The swamp rat(s) at this site was active over seven extensive visits and was filmed digging, eating, cleaning and scratching itself. The short nose distinguishes it from the dusky antechinus and the shortish tail and heavier body separate it from the long-tailed mouse.



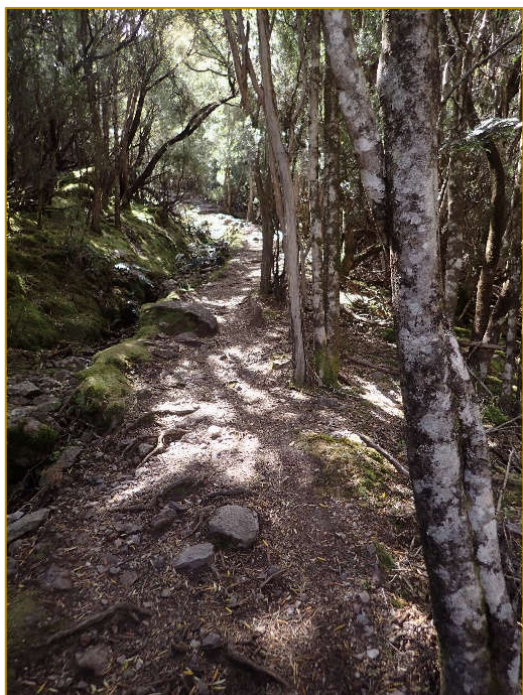
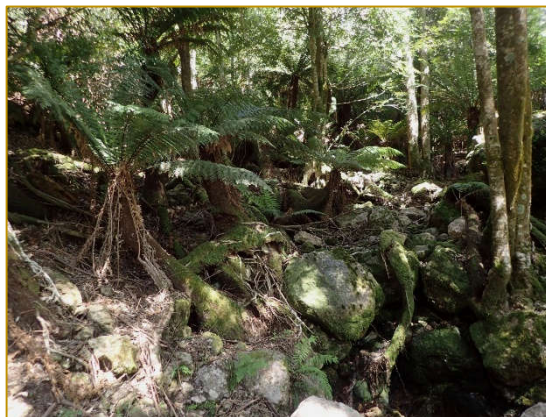
The currawong(s) over the page displayed numerous behaviours over 4 visits to the site, seeming to be more inclined to try to illicit a response from the camera than to be aggressive towards it. Certainly, though, the camera is a distraction for the bird.





Meet 'Mali', Jan 2024

Below the plateau, with the track running beside O'Neills stream, the forest becomes higher:



Example 14



Active echidna, a bronzewing and a pigmy possum were accompanied at this site (approaching the Roland saddle on the O'Neills descent) by the appearance of a cat. Scrubwrens, two additional mouse-sized creatures and a currawong were also recorded. Dec 2023.

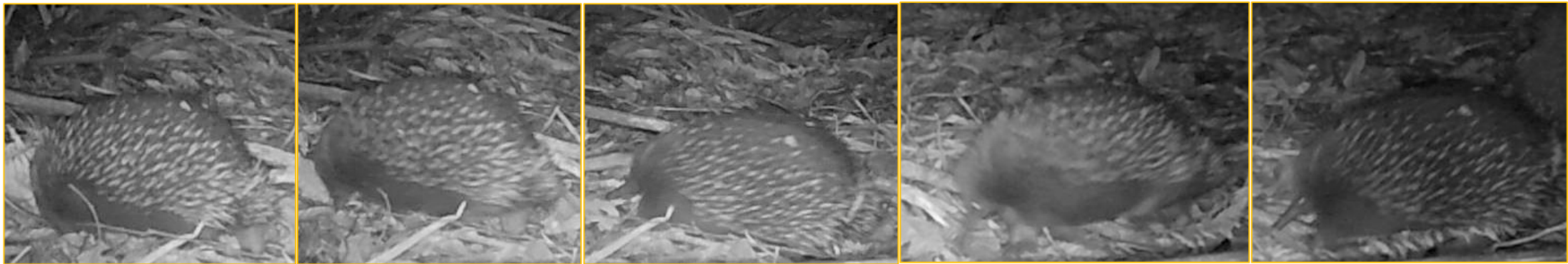
Example 15



This site near Blackheart Creek on the O’Neills descent track from Mount Roland was especially active for echidna (see next page). A pademelon and a bluetongue skink were also identified as well as two smaller rodent-like creatures, one perhaps a swamp rat and the other smaller, lighter and sharper nosed, possibly a swamp antechinus. Moths and flies were also recorded. Dec 2023.



Illustrations of echidna activity near Blackheart Creek on the O'Neills ascent track to Mount Roland. The sequence below illustrates that some pace can be achieved for the right piece of breakfast. Dec 2023.





This site, revealing a black rat, possibly a dunnart (or perhaps a house mouse), pademelons, Bassian thrush, a currawong, a brush bronzewing, some crickets and various insects, was low down on the O'Neills ascent track, more or less opposite the Van Dyke Junction. While not captured on camera, pink robins, scrubwrens and grey fantails were also seen. Jan-Feb 2024.

This is an in-progress survey, to be continued.