

Mr Cutter.

I believe you would be aware of the latest DPI press release

With regards to the second DPI report "Reports of large black cats in NSW" which you would have been involved in.

"vertebrate pest experts from the NSW DPI, who have considered potential evidence"

Which experts and what potential evidence did they examine.?

We tried in vain to present DPI with reports/photos etc but Bill Atkinson told us we were too late and we are baffled what evidence your department would have to even contemplate let alone evaluate.

We have FOI the DPI several times over the years and the only "evidence" your dept appears to have, consisted primarily of newspaper clippings. Which may be great when issuing ex cathedra like "analysis" to the an uncritical media or giving replies to ministers. But from a scientific perspective, it falls well short of what we should expect from a government organisation that implies it is driven by science.

Material considered including video, film, photographs, casts of footprints, faeces for DNA analysis and fur and hair samples

What material.?

The second report forgot to mention that all the experts the DPI chose to evaluate hair/faeces etc had no idea what large felid hair and scats actually looked like. We blind tested them all, and they all failed.

Who tested for faeces DNA.?

And the dna from saliva from a suspected felid kill, came back "not canid".... twice. This was not accepted, so, after some more shopping round, the result came back, "canid" from the third test.

I believe the term for this is "data snooping".

Claims that there have been numerous attacks on livestock, peacocks and wallabies. In most cases it has not been possible to determine what predator actually attacked the livestock and wildlife but there is no evidence that the damage was caused by an exotic cat.

As you are well aware, one of the photos in the first DPI conclusion showed a wallaby with tear marks in its leg which were consistent with claw damage. Since dogs do not grab animals with claws and leave nail rip marks on the animals it does not leave any other large predator than some form of felid. If you are aware of some form of predator that can do this, then please tell us...with some form of evidence.

A number of trees with large scratch marks on them have been photographed. Similar scratches have been seen on galvanised iron on a shed at Grose Vale and in the New England area of NSW. It has been postulated that the scratches were made by a large cat however there is no evidence to support this theory.

As you would be aware, the first DPI report stated.

These scratches are not consistent with a native animal as they are too big and deep in the tree to be a koala, goanna or possum. nor are they from a domestic cat

Why was this left out of the second conclusion.?

The trees scratches at Grosevale, were examined by Bill Atkinson and the National parks.

Neither thought they were done by an Australian native animal.

I presented Atkinson with a list of emails from herpetologists who did not believe the marks were consistent with Australian animals.

Your department would still have this list for you to contact and we look forward to you telling us your conclusions after you have been talking to these specialised experts.

Parsimony would suggest that it leaves the suggestion that the scratches were made by a form of felid, as valid.

Unless you can think of something else that can climb trees/leave marks on trees on the way down.?

Please provide any evidence if you have a different conclusion to felid.

Some of the paw prints have been found to be consistent with those of a medium sized cat. However none of the evidence provides conclusive evidence of the existence of a large-cat and the most likely origin of the prints is from dog paws.

As you would be aware , we are dealing with secondary evidence, not primary evidence. The use of the words "conclusive evidence" is odd in that context and is slightly misleading.

Why did your department write two reports.?

I look forward to your reply.

Mike Williams