

Introducing a new member of the Family.

The Year 2020/21 has not been easy on anyone. Everyone has a story and mine is no more important or special than the person next to me. However, the loss of Paleface, Mumma, Bogong, Jinka, Pocket, Faith, Annie, Archie and numerous others really took its toll! Not just on myself, but on all of those that have any attachment to the Brumbies.

The terrible fires swept through the park with such intensity that it was not until days after the flames had passed that it was safe to enter. During this time, I headed up daily, sometimes twice a day, searching for a sign, any sign, that showed anyone of Paleface's Mob somehow surviving. Sadly, the sign just never appeared.

The Snowy Mountain Hwy post fire.



As time went on, knowing of their last location and the intensity of the fire, it was clear that they were lost. The grieving was not just for Paleface, but everything he stood for. The epitome of the brumby, the intimate knowledge he shared with us, the way he allowed us to enter his world and observe day to day life. Spending hours, sometimes days, with them created a rapport with them that I honestly started to feel that it was one that could never be replaced.

Palefaces Territory still smoldering post fire.



A lone Brumby found a patch to graze after the fires passed.



Months passed and though I continued to photograph the Snowy Mountain Brumbies, I must be honest, the loss was still eating at me and, admittedly, I felt disconnected. I was starting to question if I/we would ever find something like the connection we had with Paleface once again.



The glories of watching a young Brumby Stallion build his herd, the story of loss and the story of growth, the story of tenacity and survival and even more so, the story of how strong the family bonds are, the story of love.... and the way they see it, is something that I yearn for, to be part of, to be inside their world and to have the ability to share it all with you.

As a photographer, I believe a good photo comes from not the desire to show off but from the desire to show yourself. It comes from a place of knowing, a place of vulnerability between the subject and oneself. After the loss it felt like I was starting over. Even though I was surrounded by many familiar Brumby faces and if that is what it takes then that is what I wanted to do. It was just a matter of finding that connection with one special Brumby and allowing it to grow.

One perfect day, my eye caught a flash of chestnut and there he was, in all his glory! An absolutely stunning colt with a splash on his belly. Yes, yes he was handsome like many of the other colts but this fella, there was something about him, a glint in his eye, a knowing that he was special that created a charisma that was infectious, a charisma that left you wanting more!

My First sighting of the special colt.



With excitement, I noticed something I hadn't felt in a long time.....butterflies! My eyes lit up and whilst I observed this fella, I noted very quickly that he seemed to have that magic and magnetic quality that I have been looking for. He also was laid back enough that he

should allow us into his life, just hitting his prime. It definitely won't be long until he sources some mares and he himself becomes a proud leader, building a family of his own.

Over the coming weeks I spent time, tracking him, observing his territory, his behaviors with other Stallions, Colts and bachelor's and was discovering him to be a real cheek. He was well liked and tolerated by all, very laid back but by no means a push over and very worldly for his age. He would trot through the mobs and greet each Stallion with a squeal of joy then move onto the next, ensuring he missed not one before heading back to the four bachelors that were his constant companions.

The bachelors, constant companions.



At this time the trapping at Long Plain entrance was starting to hit full swing. This fella would pop by but, with relief, I noted he didn't frequent the trap site for some irresistible goodies. That was until he did! One early morning I was busy photographing the glorious gatekeeper and his mob when I heard a whinny from behind, turning around my heart sank, it was him!

Greeting the lead stallions as he works his way across the plain.



He seemingly was left behind by the boys and, as daybreak hit, he must have realized as he was most certainly on a mission! After a swift meet and greet with those around him, off he went in a good covering trot. I raced back to my car and, with binoculars in my lap, I followed him for no less than 7 kilometers with nothing but a quick stop for a drink. He then disappeared off long plain and up into the back gully via the trees. This was the last time I laid eyes on him.



Over the next coming weeks, I started getting worried. Both this special colt and his companions were nowhere to be seen. Hoping with all my might that he had not been trapped, the news finally came in that, indeed, he had!

The re-homers do a fantastic job in finding each brumby their special place in the world but I couldn't let this fella go. I knew he would be in safe hands, but the journey just didn't feel like it was finished..... After discussing him with Marg from The DNA Registry I discovered that they too, not only felt the same about him, but had the intense feelings towards him when he was out on Long Plain and also thought he had that something special.

I swung into action to put together a plan of possibly donating him. As the days progressed the talks got even more serious and, after working with Mountain Brumby Sanctuary along with Rosewood, it was finally official. He was going to start his new life here in the Monaro Plains.

Now known as SPLASH, the day he was transported was the first time I laid eyes on him again. He travelled really, really well and was not fussed about anything at all. That laid-back temperament was coming through even completely unhandled and with his world turned upside down. He was delivered safely to his new home for handling at Kylee and Henry's place and settled in with the same acceptance he showed towards the mobs across the plains, he really was proving to be a special boy!



Meeting Splash

As days turned into weeks, Splash's training progressed. Under the safe, gentle guidance of DNA Committee members Henry Filtness, Kylee Hepburn and Greg Harmer he absolute thrived and you could see that he was happy.



When I visited Splash, boy was I super impressed! He is the same boy, full of cheek, happy to express himself, and very laid back being the almost perfect student. He has bonded with both Henry and Kylee and you can see the respect and trust he has for his human mentors and, though he has lost his freedom, Im just so excited to be a witness to his journey of being a Brumby advocate to raise awareness for the Snowy Mountain Brumby.

Splash is now officially owned by the Snowy Mountains DNA Registry and currently being exposed to all things domestic. The registry hopes to get him out to events in the future representing the Brumby. I am confident whatever is asked of this boy by his trusty humans I know, without question, he will follow.

To keep up with Splash's journey please head to the FB page Snowy Mountain Brumby DNA Registry.

