

Report by Chris D. and Caroline

First time doing the 2 by 2. I (Chris) teamed up with Tim Harrington (Team: "A bunny reference"), who was unnervingly enthusiastic. Unnerving because neither of us had paddled much of late. Doubtless he's got a sore back now though, from carrying me. He paddled magnificently. By the way - that's James H' dad....the guy who just won silver at the Nationals.

The relay format is pretty exciting. Its 2km flat out then rest, right? Except you've got to do it four times. It feels a lot longer than 2km the third and fourth time. The best part, though is doing it as a team, as you don't want to let your partner down. The other great bit is the cheeky banter between teams during the rest. Kevvy M – best on water. It was pretty warm. There was a small shaded bit on the water that offered some sanctuary and a chance for some chat.

The team to watch was Rich Yates and Duncan Johnstone in a double, paired with Esther (Team: "Eggs with legs and pegs"). Rich has been paddling superbly of late and Duncan always tried to play it down. Esther was heard to complain that the boys were not giving her sufficient rests between her stints. Very first world problem, the boys going too quick.

Cass O'Connor and Steve Shelley paired up (Team: "Bun on board"). This is right in Steve's wheelhouse (used to being at the pointy end of Div 3); 2km then a rest. Cass is remarkable. 8½ months pregnant. Not only that, but incredibly hard to catch. And even when one did catch her, she just sat superbly in the wash. Steve suggested that it wasn't nice to pick on a pregnant lady. There was definitely no quarter given – by Cass.

There was a real tussle between the "Rascally Rabbits", Kev M. and Andy P., with the "Cal and Myx Bunnies", Tim McNamara and Phil Geddes. After duking it out for 16km, it came down to a grandstand sprint finish between Kev and Phil. Kev won maybe by a coat of paint. Of course, Kev suggested it would have been a moot point if his partner (Andy) didn't persistently line up for his leg 20m behind the start line.



Quickest on the water outside of the double - would have been Nam, combined with Elke as Team: "Egg-streme paddlers". Elke was dressed up in a White Rabbit costume. They had a great paddle. Nam resisted the generous offers to weigh his boat down.

The "Energizers" have been handicapped harshly this time as Caroline wanted to set new standards for Anne S. and Kim S. Both not very happy about their treatment paddled heartily, like energizer bunnies do, with at least no official complaint. Anne mounted a giant Lindt bunny to her Flash, big enough that Grace claimed it as a doggy toy.



Grace did not want the ridiculous looking bunny ears but embraced it purely for her mum. Derek S. and Justin P. as Team "Fried and BBQed", were also wearing bunny ears, fully embracing the relay theme of the Easter month. Tim Mc even crafted his own bunny ears with what looked like socks on Christmas antlers.

Great fun morning. Caroline combines running the event and meticulous time keeping with a healthy dose of banter. The morning tea table was rich and particularly colourful this month with close to hundred chocolate eggs counted.



Here a brief history on bunnies in Australia

Introduction and spread in Australia

Rabbits were first introduced to Australia in the late 18th century with the First Fleet, but these early populations did not proliferate widely. It wasn't until 1859 when Thomas Austin, a wealthy settler, released 24 wild rabbits from England into the wild for hunting purposes on his estate in Victoria. The absence of natural predators, combined with the ideal living conditions, allowed the rabbit population to explode across the Australian landscape.

Environmental and Agricultural Impact

By the early 1900s, rabbits had become a plague, severely impacting the environment and agriculture. They contributed to serious soil erosion and competed with native species and livestock for food. Rabbits have contributed to the loss of native vegetation and the extinction of several small ground-nesting birds and mammals. They have also caused immense economic damage to the agricultural sector, with the cost of controlling rabbits and repairing environmental damage running into millions of dollars annually.

Control Measures

The rapid spread of the rabbit population prompted various control measures, including fencing, trapping, and poisoning. In response to the overwhelming rabbit population, scientists began to explore biological control methods. In 1950, the myxoma virus was deliberately released into the wild rabbit population. This virus causes myxomatosis, a disease that initially reduced the rabbit population dramatically, with mortality rates up to 99% in some areas. However, over time, the rabbits began to develop resistance to the virus, and the population started to recover.

In a continued effort to control rabbit numbers, a second biological control, the rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV), also known as calicivirus, was introduced in 1996. This disease also proved initially effective but was less so than myxomatosis in areas with cooler, wetter climates where the virus spread less effectively.

Legislative Measures

The Australian government has also enacted various laws aimed at controlling the rabbit population. The Rabbits Act of 1880 was one of the first, imposing an obligation on landowners to destroy rabbits on their properties. Even today it is illegal to own rabbits as pets in Queensland due to their environmental impact.

The Image of Bunny Rabbits

The contrasting perceptions of rabbits in Europe and Australia are deeply rooted in their historical backgrounds, ecological impacts, and cultural significance. In Europe, the rabbit has a long history of domestication and is often associated with positive imagery and folklore. Rabbits are common pets in European households, appreciated for their cuteness and companionship. The presence of numerous breeds, each with distinct characteristics, has further endeared them to the public.

In contrast, the introduction of rabbits to Australia as an invasive species with no natural predators, causing widespread environmental destruction and significant agricultural losses consequently has led a largely negative public perception. They are often seen as pests that need to be controlled; however, it is crucial to understand that these little creatures did not swim across the ocean to come to Australia and should not be blamed for the consequences of human actions. The starkly different perceptions of rabbits in Europe and Australia illustrate how cultural contexts shape human-animal relationships.