

Across the OUTBACK

OCTOBER 2010

PRODUCED FOR OUTBACK SA

NUMBER 51

Boom times for outback wildlife

Reece Pedler, Community Fauna Officer

The Arid Lands region has undergone an amazing transformation in the last year – last spring it was dying trees and terrible dust storms, this spring we have mud, lush greenery, carpets of flowers and wildlife going nuts!

This means exciting times for wildlife and the SA Arid Lands NRM Board are keen to hear about the interesting critters you might see on your travels.

Desert animals are well known for their ability to deal with the boom and bust of the outback in all manner of ways. These range from bunkering down underground to wait for rain, heading elsewhere while the going is tough, clinging on in low numbers in various refuges, or even dying off and leaving eggs ready to hatch when things improve.

Now is the amazing boom time when some of the most incredible spectacles take place with species like native Plague Rats building into enormous numbers to exploit the seeds and vegetation that has sprung up.

The myriad of tracks that they make can be seen on sand dunes in the Cooper and Diamantina Country with the areas where they have dug resembling a ploughed paddock.

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Spangled Grunters pushing upstream across the Oodnadatta Track at Stuart Creek causeway



Sturt's Desert Pea

Appointment of the Pastoral Board

The formal process to appoint the eighth Pastoral Board was completed in August with Michael McBride re-appointed as the Presiding Member, only one change to the membership of the Board, and no change to the deputy members.

Brian Bartsch retired from the Board at the end of his three-year term. Mr McBride said the Board is grateful for Brian's contribution and for his expertise in livestock management and wishes him well in his retirement.

Leonie Paulson was appointed as a new member to the Board. She is experienced in public policy development and governance processes and has a strong understanding of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* and its inter-relationships with related natural resource management legislation.

She is currently a consultant with a national law firm based in Adelaide and was formerly a solicitor in the Crown Solicitor's Office.

Mr McBride also welcomes the members who have been re-appointed to the Board and looks forward to working with all members to administer the *Act* and to further the sustainable management of our rangelands.

A member of the Board for about 25 years and Presiding Member since 2004, Mr McBride's appointment to the Board is for a period of one year with the other members appointed for three years.

'My appointment for 12 months provides an opportunity for succession planning to occur, and I believe ideally to provide a pastoralist who can make the time and commitment to this interesting and rewarding role as the Presiding Member.'

The process to nominate and appoint members to the Board is set out in the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*.

PASTORAL BOARD AND PROGRAM CONTACTS

The Pastoral Board of SA
Soil & Water Environs Building, Entry 4,
Waite Campus, Waite Road, Urrbrae, SA
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Public access to pastoral lands
David Oag (08) 8648 5174

Lease assessments
Craig Baulderstone (08) 8303 9752

Lease inspections and tenure
Chris Turner (08) 8303 9755

PASTORAL BOARD 2010 MEETING DATES

Meeting 123 Thursday 21 October,
Adelaide

Meeting 124 Thursday 15 December
Adelaide or Pt Augusta

THE NEW BOARD



**Michael McBride,
Presiding Member**

Nominated by the Minister for Environment and Conservation from a list of three sheep producers from inside the Dog Fence submitted by the South Australian Farmers Federation.
Deputy: Julie Mould

Douglas Lillecrapp

Nominated by the Minister for Environment and Conservation from a list of three cattle producers from outside the Dog Fence submitted by the SAFF.

Deputy: Sharon Oldfield

Roger Wickes

Nominated by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries as a person with experience in land and soil conservation of pastoral land.

Deputy: Helen Lamont

Vicki Linton

Nominated by the Minister for Environment and Conservation for her knowledge of the ecology and management of the pastoral land of South Australia.

Deputy: Lisien Loan

Leonie Paulson

Nominated by the Minister for Environment and Conservation for experience in the administration of pastoral leases.

Deputy: Brenda Anderson

Iris Iwanicki

Nominated by the Minister for Environment and Conservation from a list of three persons submitted by the Conservation Council of SA (CCSA).

Deputy: Fraser Vickery ■



WATCH FOR WEEDS

With the regeneration that is occurring over much of the rangelands following the soaking rains the Pastoral Board is urging lessees to be mindful of the potential spread and proliferation of pest plants and weeds.

Lessees need to be vigilant to detect and remove any weeds that may be introduced to their properties from both floodwaters and through the re-introduction of stock.

The major floods we have seen in many of the creeks and rivers have the potential to spread weeds from upstream properties many kilometres away and as far afield as Queensland.

Many lessees are also gradually re-stocking their runs in response to the improved conditions. With the wet conditions, both stock and stock trucks can have a heavy load of mud on them and this can be a potential source of weed seeds.

To limit the introduction of weeds from livestock and trucks, lessees need to be mindful of good hygiene practices such as changing trucks when stock are spelled and removing as much mud from trucks as possible.

While the current regeneration of the rangelands is a relief to us all, the rains can stimulate the proliferation of introduced weeds as well as beneficial rangelands plants.

Review of unimproved values and pastoral rentals

Mark W Kay, Supervising Valuer, State Valuation Office

The Valuer-General has undertaken an annual review of unimproved value of pastoral land in 2010, a requirement of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*.

Under this *Act* the Valuer-General is responsible for determining the unimproved value of the land, and fixing the annual rent for the lease as a percentage of the unimproved value of the land.

The Valuer-General is represented in 10 regional offices throughout SA by specialist rural valuers who undertake continual analysis of rural sales.

The current annual review will be completed in October 2010 and forwarded to the Pastoral Board in relation to the rent notices to be issued in November 2010.

The determination of the unimproved value of individual pastoral properties and fair rates of return for the land include consideration of the following factors:

- » the most recent land type classifications and associated information
- » carrying capacities
- » property sales and price movements within the pastoral industry
- » prevailing market conditions
- » climatic conditions
- » property location
- » access to markets.

Based on this information the annual rate of return on leases used for pastoral purposes will remain unchanged at 2.7 per cent.

However the advised rents for this year will increase slightly on average due to increases in the unimproved value of the land. It is also expected that there will be some varied changes and increases in the value of individual properties as a result of fixing detected anomalies in the current unimproved values.

The Valuer-General continues to work through an inspection and analysis program which will see a full and comprehensive review of the unimproved value of pastoral land delivered in November 2011. ■



Further information
Visit the SA Arid Lands NRM Board's website www.saalnrn.sa.gov.au for a factsheet on exotic weeds.





Science sheds new light on Bladder Saltbush regeneration

Craig Boulderstone,
Principal Scientific Officer

Recent years of extended drought has seen widespread death of Bladder Saltbush, a key indicator species for rangelands condition, and this article examines the likelihood of regeneration in light of new scientific findings.

A palatable and long lived perennial species, and an important component in our chenopod shrublands, recent pastoral lease assessments indicate that Bladder Saltbush (*Atriplex vesicaria*) recruitment has been notably absent in the North East Pastoral region despite the recent rains.

Its mortality has also been recorded in long-term ungrazed study areas such as the TGB Osborn Vegetation Reserve at Koonamore and the Arid Recovery Area at Roxby Downs with monitoring teams in the latter also reporting a lack of recruitment.

Bladder Saltbush germination and recruitment

A 2010 *Austral Ecology Journal* paper provides some interesting insights into the germination and recruitment of Bladder Saltbush. For example, the study indicated that:

- » Bladder Saltbush has a relatively dynamic short-lived seed bank and there are occasions when seed availability is low, even at lightly grazed sites.
- » Bladder Saltbush is a winter recruiter with germination requiring a minimum of 50mm of rain spread over several days and an optimum temperature of 16-20 °C.
- » Recruitment can't always be explained in terms of rainfall with temperature, evaporation etc also having an effect.



Area with widespread Bladder Saltbush death but also healthy survivors for seed production and, inset, healthy Bladder Saltbush foliage

Implications

These observations indicate that while rainfall events have occurred in South Australia's rangelands in the winter months, the extended dry period has meant there has not been the seedbank available for regeneration. For regeneration to occur, there will need to be sufficient seed produced by the remaining live plants followed by good winter rain.

While Bladder Saltbush is a prolific seeder in good conditions, it is important that grazing on the remaining live plants is minimised so that seed production is maximised. This will provide the seedbank an opportunity to replenish and for recruitment to occur and mature.

Many of the areas seen during assessments with extensive Bladder Saltbush death still tend to have at least 10 per cent live plants remaining, and dead shrubs have retained nutrient rich plant mounds that tend to make the best recruitment sites.

Our assessment sites have shown areas with considerable soil loss between plants and mounds, particularly in areas affected by strong winds, but the remaining mounds will greatly assist with recovery.

Read the full *Austral Ecology* article by Leigh Hunt: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1442-9993.2009.02087.x/pdf> ■

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUTBACK GRADUATES

Several Outback SA residents recently obtained their Postgraduate Certificate in Rangeland Management, amongst them Bernadette Giles (Wintinna Station), Joyleen Booth (Murnpeowie Station), Heather Miller (Port Augusta), and Jacinda Fennell (Port Augusta), with Barb Fargher (Wirrealpa Station) and Bill MacIntosh (Gum Creek Station) expected to graduate later this year.

They join last year's graduates Louise Gavin (Wilmington), David Oag (Port Augusta), Jeff Stringer (Port Augusta) and Peter Paisley (Roxby Downs).

Based at the University of Queensland's Gatton Campus, Rangelands Australia is an Australia-wide initiative providing a variety of short and postgraduate courses for people involved in rangelands management. Postgraduate coursework is characterised by external distance study with some subjects offered as an intensive course. Students of the Postgraduate Certificate must satisfactorily complete eight units within three years.

The *Port Augusta Transcontinental* recently published a terrific account of Bernadette Giles' experience and included excerpts from 'rangelands champion' Sharon Bell (Dulkaninna Station) who offered insight into the challenges that face isolated and mature-age students, particularly juggling work, study and family, adjusting to an online study environment, and taking on new ideas and concepts.

Further information

If you would like to read the full *Port Augusta Transcontinental* article contact jenny.barker@sa.gov.au. Visit www.rangelands-australia.com.au for further information on Rangelands Australia



IMAGE

Bernadette Giles (Wintinna Station) and Joyleen Booth (Murnpeowie Station)

Friends Forum brings more rain to the Outback

Simon Lewis, Secretary, Friends of Mound Springs

Rain may have prompted a change to the agenda but it did not dampen the interest of 200 enthusiastic Friends of Parks representatives who gathered at the Eldo Hotel, Woomera for their annual Forum from 20-23 August 2010.

Friends Groups from across SA attended, from the Gawler Ranges to the Riverland and from the Simpson Desert to the South East, with the excellent season giving participants a rare opportunity to view wildflowers, pools of open water and uncharacteristic greenery.

The speakers provided an excellent overview of local and regional features.

Iris Iwanicki and Lindsay Campbell described, respectively, the social history and strategic defence role of Woomera, while Tom Gara spoke about Aboriginal pre-history and history.

Geoff Axford, Alex Clarke and Reece Pedler described the natural history of the Far North, while Colin Harris and Travis Gotch focussed on the mound springs and their cultural and biodiversity values.

At the Forum dinner, John Read set the cat amongst the pigeons with some thought-provoking but entertaining comments on feral cats and their control.

Local tours included trips to the Range facilities at Woomera, Roxby Downs and the Olympic Dam mine and Andamooka.

Planned tours to Arid Recovery and to mound springs on the Oodnadatta Track were cancelled after rain closed the Borefield Road but, after some quick thinking by the Forum organisers, an alternative trip to Coober Pedy (on the bitumen!) was a thorough success.

There are over 140 Friends of Parks groups across the State, providing voluntary support to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in park management and in other activities supporting the Department. Many thanks must go to the wide range of sponsors who supported the event.

Further information

www.communitywebs.org/FriendsofParks/ ■



AWARDS

A feature of every Friends Forum is the presentation of awards in recognition of the outstanding achievements of volunteers over the preceding 12 months.

FRIENDS OF PARKS AWARDS

Presented by Woomera-born Mr Michael Harbison, Lord Mayor of Adelaide

Best Biodiversity Project

Sporting Shooters Association of SA (Hunting and Conservation Branch)

Most Supportive Staff Member

Jen Pitman (Southern Lofty)

Friends Group Achievement of the Year (incorporating the McLaren Shield)

Friends of Sturt Gorge Recreation Park

DENR AWARDS

Presented by Mr Mike Williams, A/Executive Director, Regional Services

Outstanding Achievement - Individual Contribution

Frank Gordon, Friends of Telowie Gorge Conservation Park

Outstanding Achievement - Volunteer Group Project Award

- » Campground Hosts
- » Friends of Belair National Park
- » Friends of Shorebirds SE

High commendation

Sporting Shooters Association of SA (Hunting and Conservation Branch), feral animal control work, Flinders Ranges

Spotty and vulnerable – a fishy mystery

Henry Mancini, Water Projects Officer

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board is working to protect a vulnerable fish species after evidence that individuals in remaining populations may be suffering from a disease.

In partnership with SARDI, the Board has been investigating the extent and population numbers of the Flinders Ranges Mogurnda (*Mogurnda clivicola*) and will be maintaining a monitoring program to ensure population levels are not decreasing.

The Flinders Ranges Mogurnda has been recorded in only three separate locations in a small area of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park which lies approximately 750km north of Adelaide and 110km from Leigh Creek.

There are now only two populations remaining where they can be found in adequate numbers to sustain viable population sizes – one of these is thought to be a translocated population while the other is known to be a remnant population.

Population size has been steady over the past 20 years of monitoring but there is evidence that the remaining two populations of the Mogurnda are suffering from a type of skin disease which may be a form of 'cancer'.

This causes a discoloration, consisting of black spots, of its usually distinct colourful body patterns. It is not certain what is causing this abnormality but there are several possibilities: sun-spots from ozone depletion; a response to naturally occurring uranium in the system of which closely related species of Mogurnda have been shown to be highly sensitive; or in-breeding as a result of its restricted range.

With the latter possibility, the reduced genetic variation could be a natural consequence to keep population levels in check within restricted small pools.



IMAGES

Above: Spot the Mogurnda. A section of a Great Artesian Basin fed spring where the Mogurnda are found; the water shows a high level of algal growth indicating warm temperatures and high nutrient levels

Below: A disease-free Flinders Ranges Mogurnda



Photo: Dale McNeill, SARDI

Further research and monitoring is the key to unlock the mystery of the Mogurnda.

Also known as the Flinders Ranges Purple Spotted Gudgeon, the species name 'clivicola' means 'hill-dweller' and underlies the fact that they are found in groundwater fed streams in steep rocky hill country.

Further information: A report describing the key features of the Mogurnda and what can be done to protect the remaining populations of this critically endangered species will soon be available at www.saalnm.sa.gov.au. In the meantime contact the Water Projects Officer for further information 8648 5977 ■

ALGEBUCKINA, AN OUTBACK MAGNET

Situated on the Neales River about 55km south-east of Oodnadatta, the Alge buckina Waterhole is a key refuge in the Arid Lands region for wildlife and tourists alike.

The permanent nature of the waterhole means that in times of drought, long after other waterholes have become dry, it provides a critical safe haven for fish, birds and other native animals.

For tourists travelling the Oodnadatta Track, it is also a tourism drawcard as it is home to the longest bridge in SA which used to take the Ghan train over the Neales River, and its shady banks provide welcome relief and good fishing.

The impact of increased tourist numbers is being seen at Alge buckina.

The removal of key species (eg Coolabah) for firewood can upset the vegetation canopy, and compaction of the waterhole banks through camping and vehicles can lead to erosion and loss of groundcover, in turn leading to increased sedimentation.

Litter reduces the aesthetic appeal and there is the potential for the contamination of the waterhole through human waste.

The Board is working with the tourism industry to identify how we can better cater for increased tourist numbers while maintaining the visitor experience and also protecting the ecological value of this critical wildlife refuge.

Critical refugia

Henry Mancini, Water Projects Officer

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board is working with local landholders, the Aboriginal community and tourism industry to identify, maintain and secure priority aquatic ecosystems associated with important drainage lines, floodplains and wetlands in the Arid Lands region.

Currently concentrating on the Neales River catchment in the Marla-Oodnadatta district, the Board is investigating both the ecological functions, biophysical characteristics, and cultural significance of the region's waterhole and wetland systems to ensure they are sustainably managed for future generations.

There is currently a lack of knowledge regarding arid wetland systems and this project will improve our understanding of the natural fluctuations associated with seasonal factors, including during drought and flood, and pre-flow and post-flow events, but also our understanding of human impacts.

By working with local landholders, the Aboriginal community and tourism industry, the project combines technical data, historical records and local knowledge to identify the key processes that influence the function of the Neales River catchment.

The project is utilising fish monitoring experts from SARDI to gauge the health of the waterholes, hydrology to determine waterhole depths, and geomorphology to understand the

interaction of vegetation, soils and geology within the catchment.

The project will generate information that will inform visitors about the importance of these highly valued wetlands.

The project also incorporates the Ecological Management Understanding process which uses landscape analysis and mapping to identify key management issues in partnership with landholders with the aim of increasing productivity and maintaining ecological integrity.

Restoration works are currently being undertaken along the Neales catchment to restore natural water flows by addressing erosion issues for biodiversity outcomes. This includes knocking down gully heads and putting in checkbanks.

A management action plan and summary of technical data with key management outcomes will be available at the end of the year. This will include identified onground works that can be implemented as funding becomes available.

Further information
Water Projects Officer 8648 5977 ■



Alge buckina Waterhole

Secrets from the deep

Jennie Fluin, GAB Project Manager

Some interesting findings are coming out of the *GAB project*; we reveal some of these here and the implications they have for the management of this critical groundwater system.

The *GAB project* is strongly multidisciplinary, incorporating many different methods of scientific investigation. A snapshot of some of the key findings from the various disciplines include:

- » Project data indicates that the SA section of the Great Artesian Basin has been in a natural state of decline for at least the past 10,000 years with pressure naturally falling independently of extractions.
- » Current modelling suggests that hydrological recharge in the western margin is 10 times lower than previous estimates.
- » Analysis of gas emissions from Great Artesian Basin springs has shown that some springs have a direct connection to the Earth's mantle, many kilometres below the ground surface.
- » There are now approximately 5,000 mapped spring vents in SA, with approximately 70 per cent of these active; these springs are listed as a threatened community under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
- » Twelve new, endemic species of macro-invertebrates have been identified from SA springs since 2008.
- » Fossil analysis from spring sediment cores has shown that *Phragmites* has always been a natural part of the spring vegetation community.
- » Removal of Date Palms at Dalhousie Springs has returned at least 120 megalitres per year to the local springs. This return of environmental flows will increase as more palms are removed.

Principally, the data will refine the current Water Allocation Plan for the Far North Prescribed Wells Area thereby increasing our capacity to sustainably allocate the resource.

This will become increasingly important in coming years as the demands on the Great Artesian Basin intensify due to the projected growth in mining, petroleum and geothermal industries in the region. ■



NEW INDUSTRY SUPPORT OFFICER

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board welcomed Peter Newman to the team in July in its new role of Industry Support Officer.

THE ROLE

Peter will be the Board's contact for the various industries operating in the region (eg pastoral, tourism and mining/petroleum), non-government organisations (NGOs), and landholders who are interested in partnering in joint projects that derive environmental returns (or Significant Environmental Benefits (SEB)).

Peter is currently focussing on the mining, tourism and pastoral industry activities in the Gawler Craton minerals area – in the Arid Lands region the area roughly between Port Augusta, Marla and Tarcoola – where most of the region's mining activities are occurring.

Peter will also be coordinating comments on behalf of the Board on mining proposals and proposed policies affecting the Arid Lands region.

With the position part funded by the Native Vegetation Council, Peter's role will also be a one-stop-shop for native vegetation issues in the region and he will be involved in reporting or commenting on vegetation clearance applications.

Landholders who have any questions around the management of their native vegetation on their property are encouraged to contact him.

THE MAN

Peter has 25 years experience working with NGOs running youth, employment, training and community development programs in the Port Augusta and outback region and in Adelaide. Many of these programs involved the delivery of conservation and environmental projects with joint employment and environmental outcomes.

Originally trained as a teacher, Peter has also worked in mining, market research and outback tourism.

Peter comes to the Board from Bungala Aboriginal Corporation where he was Area Manager for the APY Lands for two years looking after staff and liaising with local Anangu in 10 communities and later as Manager for Employment & Training.

Further information
Contact Peter Newman 8648 5977



Coordinated by the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board, the *GAB project* aims to further our knowledge of groundwater processes in the western margins of the Great Artesian Basin to increase our capacity to sustainably manage the resource.

Due for completion in 2012, the four-year project engages staff from various agencies, including some of the world's best hydrogeologists, ecologists, spatial analysts and geophysicists.

With \$17 million in funds, project partners include the National Water Commission, Department for Water, Flinders University, the University of Adelaide, and the Northern Territory Government.

Further information: GAB Project Manager 8648 5977

Athel Pine control and replacement

This year's widespread rain throughout the Arid Lands region means Athel Pine seedlings are likely to be emerging. This article advises how landholders can remove them and suggests some native replacement plants for mature trees.

One of 20 Weeds of National Significance, Athel Pine (*Tamarix aphylla*) is a common sight in station gardens, around watering points, ruins, and communities. It has naturalised in over 20 known locations in the Arid Lands region and the many existing amenity plantings may continue to be a source for new wild populations.

Producing up to 500,000 seeds per tree, Athel Pine seed fall usually occurs in Autumn and the moist conditions this year will have provided an ideal environment for the establishment of Athel Pine seedlings.

It is much cheaper and easier to control Athel Pine in the seedling stage and landholders are encouraged to follow these steps:

- » Check areas around and downstream of existing planted trees
- » Record location of any seedlings found (use a GPS or mark on a map) and inform the SAAL NRM Board's Pest Management Officer
- » Control any seedlings found either by hand pulling or spray (using herbicides recommended in the National Athel Pine Best Practice Management Manual)
- » Check the area and complete any follow up treatment.

If you do have mature Athel Pine trees in your garden, next to the homestead, the back shed or the bore,

or along the fence consider developing a five year plan to remove and replace them with suitable native alternatives.

Replacement species should be local plants that are adapted to the conditions and will give you what you need – shade, windbreak and beauty!

Further information

Contact Greg Patrick, the SAAL NRM Board's Pest Management Officer 8648 5977

The SAAL NRM Board's approach to Athel Pine management is part of a national strategy coordinated by Kay Bailey, National Athel Pine Coordinator. The National Athel Pine Best Practice Management Manual and other factsheets and posters are available on www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/athelpine/ or contact Kay 8951 9213. ■



Athel Pine infestation near Lake Frome

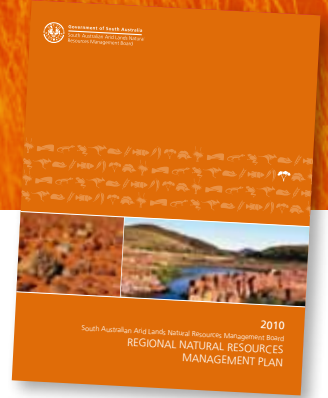
Ben Sheppard



Athel Pine seedlings

REMINDER TO LANDHOLDERS

Athel Pine is a declared weed in SA and under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* landholders should control Athel Pine plants occurring within 100 metres of drainage lines. If you need advice on how best to carry out your control works please contact the SAAL NRM Board.



Boom times for outback wildlife

Continued from Page 1

Birds which have been absent for years are turning up, seemingly out of nowhere, with budgies, cockatiels, quail and song larks breeding like crazy. Ducks, swans and a range of other waterfowl are spoilt for choice with surface water everywhere.

Rarely seen predators such as Letter-winged Kites are taking advantage of all the small mammals and breeding. These mainly white birds of prey with big red eyes are nocturnal and hunt at night, much like an owl.

Frogs have unearthed themselves after years buried below the soil and fish are on the move. Some of the more extreme colonisers can even be seen flipping between puddles or swimming along in tiny trickles of water to reach new waterholes.

This is an amazing time to be in our region. If you have seen something of interest we'd love to hear about it – who knows what sort of rarely seen critters may turn up.

Further information

Reece Pedler, Community
Fauna Officer, 8648 5977 ■



Reece Pedler, the Board's Community Fauna Officer, works to find out more about the habitat, behaviours and ecological significance of our more poorly understood arid-zone fauna. Many of these species are cryptic, secretive, nocturnal or just plain scarce. The key to increasing our understanding of these creatures is to have as many eyes as possible on the lookout. If you have seen or found something of interest give him a call 8648 5977.

Have you got your copy of the NRM Plan?

The SAAL Regional NRM Plan will guide all activities in the region in relation to NRM for the next 10 years ensuring they are sustainably used and available for future generations.

Released in August by the Minister for Environment and Conservation Paul Caica, the Regional NRM Plan provides a range of programs to protect valuable ground and surface waters; ensure sustainable industries; help pastoral land management; conserve natural ecosystems; and encourage community participation.

It also explains how the delivery of the Plan should be funded.

The Board sought community input throughout the development of the Plan consulting with the public and key stakeholders and culminating in a 14-week consultation period beginning in October last year when the Board released a draft version. The public consultation report prepared after the draft was released for feedback is available on the Board's website www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au

Get your copy

The Regional NRM Plan can be downloaded from the Board's website www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au or hard copies are available from the Board's office 8648 5977 ■



IMAGES

Above: Pink variety of Sturt's Desert Pea

Left: The native Plague or Long-haired Rat caught in the spotlight on the Diamantina River floodplain



Welcome new NRM Group Members

After issuing a call for nominations earlier this year, the SA Arid Lands NRM Board welcomed seven new members to its NRM Groups. Five of the new members are profiled here.

Maree Morton, Marree-Innamincka NRM Group

Employed by S Kidman and Co Ltd on Innamincka Station, Maree joined her local NRM Group because she feels it's important for the SAAL NRM Board to have the expertise and knowledge of community members who live and have practical knowledge of the region. Maree says 'it's important to help the Board members make informed decision that we as landholders have to live with, together with the scientific research.'

Glenys Aird, North Flinders NRM Group

Glenys lives in the old township of Beltana and is a semi-retired teacher and librarian. This year she has been working as Teacher-Librarian at the Leigh Creek and Marree schools on a part-time basis. Glenys lived in Beltana in the 1980s and early 90s, and her long-standing interest in the area prompted her to become involved in her local NRM Group. She hopes to be a useful member and maybe provide a different perspective on some issues.

Katie Hulmes, Kingoonya NRM Group

An Environmental Superintendent at OZ Minerals Prominent Hill Operation, Katie says that ever since she was a young girl she's had a keen passion and interest for environmental issues. She also has a special interest in the efficient use and management of water, waste and energy, and groundwater. Katie says working with the Board and the associated NRM Groups is the perfect place to work with local community and industry alike to achieve desired outcomes. Katie looks forward to working with her local NRM Group and the many exciting projects ahead.

Glen Norris, Kingoonya NRM Group

Glen Norris manages Bon Bon Station Reserve for Bush Heritage Australia. Glen joined his local NRM Group to gain a better insight into what NRM issues the Kingoonya community faces and to become involved with and hopefully contribute to positive NRM outcomes. Glen is particularly interested in the challenges that pastoralists face in a harsh yet resilient region, particularly from a primary productivity perspective and he aims to work with pastoralists towards positive NRM and productivity outcomes.

Michael Freak, Gawler Ranges NRM Group

Michael works for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources as Senior Ranger on the Gawler Ranges National Park. With issues like feral animals and weeds not stopping at property boundaries, Michael says being a NRM Group Member will allow him to collaborate with landholders who have similar issues so together they can look at landscape management approaches.

Other new members are Peter Paisley (Kingoonya NRM Group) and Katina Boyd (Marla-Oodndadatta NRM Group). ■

NRM Groups are the on-ground contact for the Arid Lands community, feeding district information or concerns relating to the natural resources in the region up to the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board. There are currently five NRM Groups operating at the district level each with a maximum of seven members.

NRM GROUP CHAIRS

North Flinders	Leonard Nutt
Gawler Ranges	Sandy Morris
Marla-Oodnadatta	Douglas Lillecrapp
Marree-Innamincka	Janet Brook
Kingoonya	Julie Mould

FURTHER INFORMATION

For a full list of members for each NRM Group, to find out which district you belong to, or for NRM Group meetings, agendas and minutes, visit the SAAL NRM Board website: www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au/AboutUs/OurNRMDistrictGroups.aspx



Poached Egg Daisies



OUTBACK ROUNDUP

Art of Nature winners announced

A photo taken in the Simpson Desert Conservation Park was the winning entry in the 2010 Department of Environment and Natural Resources' *Art of Nature* photography competition. The competition received more than 1700 entries, and close to 10,000 votes.



James Bowyer

The entry categories for 2010 were Animals, Plants, Wild Places, Connect with Nature and Artistic with entries for each category showcasing the beauty and diversity of nature in SA's parks.

The winning photos will feature in the 2011 *Art of Nature* calendar, with \$1 from every calendar sold going to DENR's Bilby Recovery Program at Cleland Wildlife Park.

Further information www.artofnature.sa.gov.au ■



Wild thing you make my heart sing...

Wildflowers are blooming in the Flinders Ranges and Outback SA with the region looking the greenest it has in 15 years and the wonderful hues showcasing the bumper season. Sturt's Desert Pea can be found in large areas from Port Augusta going north towards Roxby Downs, where they can be seen in vast quantities. Michael Anlezark from the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden in Port Augusta said he had seen an area the size of six footy ovals full of the Pea. ■

Changes to child protection laws in SA

Recent changes to child protection laws in SA will commence on 1 January 2011. If your organisation provides services to children, under the changes you may need to:

- » Conduct criminal history assessments on people working with children; and
- » Lodge a statement about your child protection policies with the Department for Families and Communities by 28 February 2011.

Further information

To download a lodgement form or complete the statement online visit www.families.sa.gov.au/childsafes or contact DFC on 8463 6468 or DFCChildSafe@dfc.sa.gov.au ■

TOURIST NUMBERS UP

Results from a 2010 survey of tourism operators about the impacts of Lake Eyre filling reveal business is up generally. This is after a slow start caused by travellers' uncertainties about road access because of the rains.

The Flinders Ranges National Landscape project has been chosen for a major Experiences Development Strategy review to start in December. Being one of Australia's 15 National Landscapes puts the Flinders Ranges into a select group of regions which will get greater marketing exposure internationally. The benefits to regional operators are clear but the program also challenges regions to raise their standards and address key gaps in what they offer travellers.

Further information

Peter Cahalan, Regional Tourism Manager, Flinders Ranges and Outback South Australia Tourism (FROSAT), 8641 3455

UPDATING SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

The South Australian Government is inviting you to have your say on the ideas, goals and priorities that will guide the state for the years ahead through South Australia's Strategic Plan.

The Plan is a blueprint for our prosperity and wellbeing, to deliver a society where health, equality, safety, enterprise and creativity underpin a quality of life that is the envy of the world.

The inaugural Plan was launched in March 2004 and updated in 2006. It's time to revisit the document with an even broader consultation process enabling thousands more South Australians to take part in the update process.

Further information www.saplan.org.au

RICE report

Four new staff recently joined RICE giving the team the opportunity to develop new strategies and directions to meet the needs of remote and isolated families living in regional SA.

Based in Port Augusta and established in 1976, Remote & Isolated Children's Exercise Inc. (RICE) services geographically isolated families residing in SA with children aged 0-12 years.

Services include:

- » Family Home Visiting program
- » Health services and information, including screening, antenatal support and child health checks
- » Education support through activities, kits, workshops and Kindy of the Air via the Centra Symposium Program
- » Family support provided by a Child and Family Worker to help individuals, families and communities
- » In-home care through the Outback Childcare program
- » Crèches at Hawker on Fridays, Orroroo on Mondays, Activity Days and remote crèches.
- » An extensive toy and book library for children and parents on a loan system
- » Playdays (on request) across the Far North – from Maree to Marla and Olary to Glendambo.

Further information
www.rice.org.au or
8642 4477 ■

IMAGE

(L to R) Leanne Powell (Executive Officer), Pam Salter (Playgroup/Resource Coordinator), Jenny O'Hanlon (Nurse), Samantha Mundy (Operations Coordinator)



ARE YOU ON THE ACROSS THE OUTBACK MAILING LIST?

Across The Outback is a free publication that is issued to over 1000 individuals or organisations with a stake or interest in the Arid Lands region.

If you would like to join the mailing list or update your details please contact the Editor jenny.barker@sa.gov.au.

Please include your name, mailing address and email address (to receive electronic notification).

CALL FOR CONTENT

Across The Outback
December edition

Content due by COB
Friday 26 November

Contact the Editor (details on back page) for further information.

Outback Calendar

SA RURAL WOMEN'S GATHERING
MELROSE

15-17 October

BLINMAN GYMKHANA

16 October

NATIONAL WATER WEEK

17-23 October

NATIONAL RECYCLING WEEK

8-14 November

SA ARID LANDS NRM BOARD
MEETING

7-8 December

These are a selection of events extracted from the *Calendar of Events* administered by the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board available at www.saalnrn.sa.gov.au

If you would like to receive notification when the *Calendar of Events* is updated please send an email to jenny.barker@sa.gov.au ■

THIS SPACE COULD BE YOURS!

Across The Outback remains committed to reporting on government activities in the region in the single publication and we welcome contributions from other agencies. We'd also like to hear from non-government organisations, Progress Associations or Friends groups operating in the area. Tell us what you're doing to support your community and if we have space we'll try to accommodate you.

For further information contact the Editor jenny.barker@sa.gov.au or 8463 3354. A fee per article may apply.

Visitor numbers up in the Flinders

Nicola Trebilcock, Ranger, Northern Flinders district

The rains in Outback SA and Qld have resulted in a high number of visitors to the Flinders Ranges and the two National Parks – Flinders Ranges and Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges – are looking lovely and green.

To September this year the Wilpena rain gauge has recorded 457.6mm and the Oraparinna gauge has recorded 439.7mm. The vegetation appears to be recovering well and many of the Eucalypts we thought might not make it have made a valiant rebound and are again providing park visitors and the native wildlife with shade.

We are pleased to announce that Nudlamutana Hut in the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park will be available for booking from late October 2010.

Nudlamutana Hut was built from stone in the early 1950s and is

located in a charming valley near the boundary between the park and Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary.

The hut sleeps up to four people in one bedroom plus a sleep-out. The hut has solar lighting, gas hot water, shower facilities, and kitchen with a fridge and cooking facilities.

Thanks to everyone who helped repair Nudlamutana Hut to its former glory, particularly Ken Anderson, Peter Slee and Roger Collins. Strong support from the Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges Co-management Board, DENR Executive and Park Friends is also appreciated.



Nudlamutana Hut



John Read

WESTERN BROWN SNAKE

Snakes are protected by law under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and are an important part of the natural environment helping prevent overpopulation of animals such as the introduced rat and mouse.

In the Arid Lands, the most common venomous snake encountered is the Western Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja nuchalis*). It shelters in wood heaps, under corrugated roofing iron and in piles of rubbish, all of which are often found in close proximity to houses in regional areas.

Road users should take care to avoid hitting snakes on outback tracks.

Clean up in time for snake season

As the weather warms up, snakes will be emerging from winter dormancy to bask in the sun, feed and breed, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources provides some pointers for reducing the incidence of snakes on your property. The key is to limit the availability of food, water and shelter.

Limit food

Take steps to reduce rats and mice, and store bird seed and chook feed in sealed containers. Avoid using bait to control rats or mice. If necessary, ensure baits are secure from pets and wildlife.

Limit shelter

- » Remove or reduce cover (hiding areas)
- » Keep the grass low
- » Keep your garden tidy
- » Keep wood heaps away from the house
- » Keep a tidy shed
- » Manage building materials
- » Clean up rubbish around your home
- » Store outside boots off the ground and always check for snakes before putting them on.

Limit water

Place water containers away from the house as snakes do drink water, especially in hot weather.

Never attempt to catch or kill a snake, as it will defend itself when threatened or confronted – most snake bites occur when people try to catch and kill a snake.

Children and pets should be kept away from the snake – consider deterring inquisitive pets by hosing them with water.

Seek immediate medical or veterinary attention if a person or pet is bitten by a snake.

For more information on how to maintain your property to reduce an encounter with a snake visit the Living with Wildlife website: www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/living-with-wildlife/lw_wildlife_snakes.html ■



Consider your livestock during locust spraying

Controlling locusts will be a high priority in much of the east of South Australia this Spring and landholders are advised of measures they can take to avoid contaminating livestock and to protect Australia's export markets.

The most effective means of controlling locusts is to spray the juvenile (hopper) stages with an appropriate insecticide, either by air or ground rig.

However, the chemicals used have the potential to cause unacceptable residues in grazing livestock which can cause problems for our export industry.

In 2008-09, Australia exported 67 per cent of its total beef production (export value \$5 billion), and 62 per cent of its sheep meat production (export value \$1.46 billion).

This heavy reliance on export markets means Australia must guarantee the integrity of its products and their freedom from unacceptable chemical residues.

Livestock can be exposed to the chemicals used to control plague locusts and wingless grasshoppers by direct overspraying of livestock; grazing of pastures or crops that have been sprayed or onto which spray has drifted; and feeding fodder (hay, grain) that has been sprayed directly or exposed to spray drift.

What can you do?

Control authorities use trained ground and aerial operators to mix and apply control chemicals and landholders should apply the same level of professional care to protect their livestock during locust control.

There are several steps you can take to prevent unacceptable residues in livestock at the time of sale:

- » Find out when locust spraying is likely to occur in your area.
- » Check what chemicals control authorities are using and observe relevant Export Intervals (EI).
- » Determine what chemicals are best suited to your enterprise when undertaking your own locust control spraying.
- » Read and follow the label directions, always:
 - » using the correct treatment rate;
 - » observing the harvest and grazing withholding periods (WHP) or alternative EIs set out in the product label or APVMA permit.
- » Confirm that all relevant EIs have been met before selling stock for slaughter – especially if meat may be destined for an overseas market.
- » Keep records of any spraying activity.
- » Consult with neighbours about planned spraying activities (both yours and theirs), particularly near property boundaries.
- » Fill in the National Vendor Declaration (NVD) correctly, remembering penalties apply for providing false or misleading information.

Further information: If you are unsure, seek further advice from chemical manufacturers, chemical suppliers, contact your local PIRSA office or visit www.pir.sa.gov.au

NATIONAL VENDOR DECLARATION

It is essential that the National Vendor Declaration (NVD) is completed correctly, including the relevant question which relates to withholding periods (WHP). The WHP question within the respective NVDs can be found as follows:

- » Cattle: question 7
- » Sheep and Lambs: question 5
- » Goats: question 4
- » Bobby Calves: question 3
- » EU Cattle: question 6

The NVD is underpinned by state and territory legislation and penalties exist for providing false or misleading information.

Landholders who have observed Export Intervals are encouraged to make a statement to this effect in the 'Additional Information' section of the declaration.

Landholders who require additional information about WHPs should contact their local PIRSA office.

REPORT LOCUST SIGHTINGS

LOCAL CONTROL CENTRES

Orroroo 8658 1456

Loxton 1800 833 451



SADI entomologist Ken Henry inspects locust hatchings



Government
of South Australia

Across the Outback is prepared and edited by Jenny Barker (SAAL NRM Board).

It is published every second month for the Outback SA Government and Community Alliances.

It is currently jointly funded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources; the Pastoral Board; Primary Industries and Resources SA and the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board.

Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Please contact jenny.barker@sa.gov.au or 8463 3354



Jenny Barker

Outback tracks 30 tonnes lighter

Stuart Paxton

Thirty tonnes of rubbish were recently removed from the region thanks to the Great Tracks Cleanup, an annual not-for-profit venture which aims to clean up the tracks and roads in Outback SA.

A convoy of seven 4WD vehicles and trailers, a 4WD truck and camp kitchen departed Leigh Creek for a six day round-trip in July with a crew of 22 volunteers from Leigh Creek, Roxby Downs, Yorketown, Brisbane, Melbourne and Macclesfield.

Rubbish collected included general camping and household rubbish, tyres and tyre debris, rims, diffs, truck, trailer and vehicle parts, bottles and cans.

While the volume of rubbish was down on previous years, it was still a significant amount considering the roads were closed for up to three months with flood and rain damage.

The rubbish was delivered to the Santos Recycling depot for processing and the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure compound at Leigh Creek.

This year's BUGGA award was presented to Greg Franklin owing to the amount of breakdowns and mishaps that occurred to him, although it must be said Greg did supply two trailers, a ute, the truck and the camp kitchen trailer so the odds of him winning were high.

Special thanks to Santos for the donation of a defibrillator and substantial first aid kit which will be loaned to the Leigh Creek SES Unit when they are not in use during the Cleanups. ■

TARGETED TRACKS IN 2010

The recent outback floods and rain, restricted this year's Cleanup to the following roads and tracks:

- » Leigh Creek to Lyndhurst Road
- » Strzelecki Track to Innamincka
- » Della Road
- » Dillon's Highway
- » Adventure Highway in Queensland to the Dig Tree
- » Innamincka to Cameron's Corner Road
- » Merty Merty Road
- » Mt Hopeless Road from the Strzelecki Track to Arkaroola
- » Arkaroola to Copley

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

- » SA Arid Lands NRM Board
- » Department of Transport Energy and Infrastructure (North and West Region)
- » Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- » Flinders Power
- » Santos
- » ODT Australis-Olympic Dam
- » Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary
- » Depot Springs Station
- » State Emergency Service
- » BHP Billiton

WHEN TRAVELLING IN THE OUTBACK REMEMBER TO:

- » slow down when passing work crews – this will save lives
- » leave only your footprint – take all your rubbish with you
- » enjoy the outback and travel safe.

IMAGES

Far Left: On the Mount Hopeless Road approaching Gammon Ranges National Park

Left: Truck filling up on the Mt Hopeless Road heading to Arkaroola

Below: About to leave Leigh Creek



Sue Hancock



Stuart Paxton



Stuart Paxton