

# Across the OUTBACK

APRIL 2011

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## Bursting with life or loved to death?

### Lake Eyre Basin and outback tourism

With three consecutive flood years in the Lake Eyre Basin (LEB), national and international interest in its iconic outback attractions is at an all time high. Here the Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee considers some of the challenges that accompany these positive changes and progress towards developing a regulatory framework to manage tourism impacts.

The filling of Lake Eyre and the opportunity to see Australia's dryland rivers at their wettest and greenest has proved a major stimulus for tourism and created a growing awareness of the uniqueness of these inland environments.

However the associated desire to travel and learn puts pressure on limited outback infrastructure and fragile environments.

#### Visitor numbers

In 1998 an estimated 8000 people in 3000 vehicles crossed the Simpson Desert while visitor estimates for 2001 were over two million people for key areas within and adjacent to the LEB.

Since then numbers have risen dramatically, with a fifteen per cent increase annually according to some local operators, and tourism now needs to be considered as a major industry in the Basin.

*Continued on back page...*



One of many desert 4WD convoys enjoying the outback

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Single-car ferry across Cooper Creek, Birdsville Track





# Role of the Pastoral Board in mining applications

Glenn Gale, Manager, DENR Landscape Conservation Branch

The Pastoral Board has a strong interest in mining activities undertaken in the rangelands and there are a number of areas that the Board examines when making comment on a mining application.

These include:

- » Impacts on Public Access Routes and Stock Routes
- » Applications from holders of mining tenements to take water from a natural source or storage point on a pastoral lease.
- » The affect of the mining activity on the viability of a pastoral lease and its management.
- » Determining the agreed conditions for the closure (rehabilitation) of a mining operation.

The impacts on the operation of a pastoral lease vary from one mining proposal to another and are not always directly connected to the size of the mine.

*Even a mine with a small footprint can have a major impact on a lease, through the volumes of traffic on haul roads, dust management, and location of roads in relation to pastoral infrastructure etc.*

In terms of the closure (rehabilitation) of a mining operation it is up to Primary Industries and Resources South Australia to set the final conditions but there will be situations when the Pastoral Board's view will be sought in addition to that of the lessee.

This includes the management of infrastructure such as roads and tracks, as well as the management of the site of the mine and associated pits and waste rock dumps.

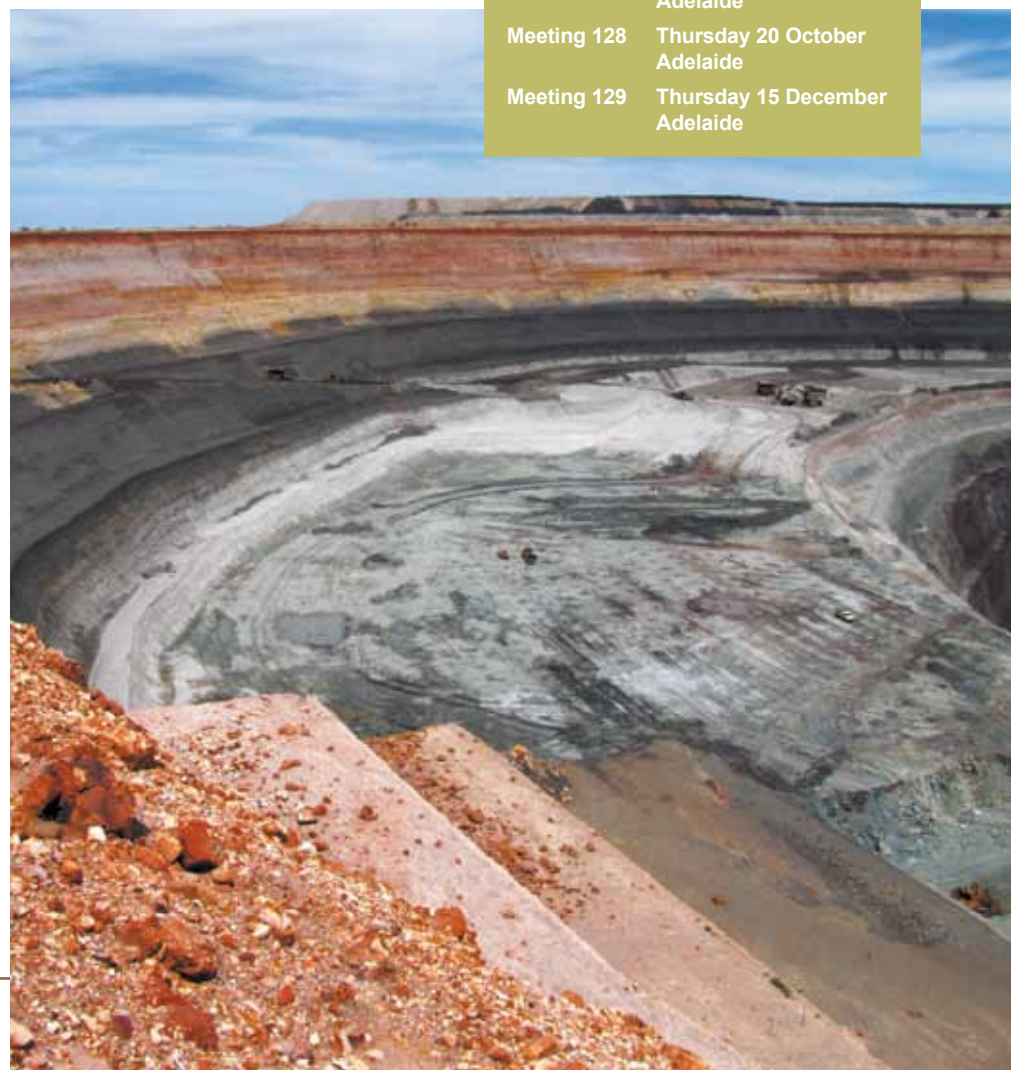
While the Pastoral Board is very aware of the benefits of the mining industry to the region it is keen to minimise both the disruption to the operation

of pastoral leases and the impacts on the condition of the rangelands.

As part of the consultation process for mining applications, comments are also sought from the pastoral lessees affected.

### Further information

For information about your legal rights and what to expect regarding proposed exploration and mining operations on (or near) your property download a copy of *Guidelines for Landholders; your rights in relation to mineral exploration and mining in South Australia* at [www.pir.sa.gov.au/minerals/forms\\_and\\_guidelines](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/minerals/forms_and_guidelines) ■



### PASTORAL BOARD AND PROGRAM CONTACTS

**The Pastoral Board of SA**  
Soil & Water Environs Building, Entry 4,  
Waite Campus, Waite Road, Urrbrae, SA  
(GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001)

**General enquiries**  
Phone (08) 8303 9751  
Fax (08) 8303 9320  
Freecall 1800 678 447

**Presiding Member**  
Michael McBride 0427 087 966

**Program Manager**  
Glenn Gale (08) 8303 9345

**Pastoral Board matters**  
Glenn Gale (08) 8303 9345

**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 2011 MEETING DATES

Meeting 126	TBA June Regional
Meeting 127	Thursday 18 August Adelaide
Meeting 128	Thursday 20 October Adelaide
Meeting 129	Thursday 15 December Adelaide





Matthew Turner

## Counting outback residents and travellers

Pastoral Program staff and the SA Pastoral Board, along with other peak bodies, have been working with the Census team based at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in Adelaide on their approach to counting remote residents and travellers in South Australia.

The next ABS Census of Population and Housing is happening soon, on Tuesday 9 August 2011.

The Census provides a comprehensive snapshot of Australia every five years, forming the basis of planning for government and private services and infrastructure, including those for remote areas of the State.

As the largest peace time operation in Australia, the ABS employs 43,000 people nationally, aiming to deliver and collect approximately 14 million Census forms and count every individual in Australia (except foreign diplomats and their families).

This includes people living in, or visitors travelling through, remote areas of South Australia.

Stay tuned for more information on this in a later edition closer to the Census. ■

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A CENSUS COLLECTOR?

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is recruiting 2300 Census Collectors from across South Australia between 9 April and 5 May. Census Collectors will receive between \$1,300 and \$2,800 for the casual position and will be employed from 1 July until 8 September.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Applicant information kits are available online at [www.abs.gov.au/census](http://www.abs.gov.au/census) or call 1800 420 182 by 5 May 2011



Matthew Turner





## 2011: will new rainfall records be set?

David Oag, Pastoral Inspector

Figures obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology website show rainfall figures were close to the highest recorded at some stations after exceptional rainfall in the northern pastoral areas of South Australia in 2010 – and the trend is continuing into 2011.

Innamincka recorded 732mm in 2010 – not far off the highest annual rainfall recorded (866mm) at this weather station in 1974 – and a further 196mm has already been received this year to 21 March.

The rainfall recorded at Oodnadatta during 2010 was the third highest on record (351.4mm), and 2011 is rapidly approaching a similar figure with nearly 250mm recorded at Oodnadatta by mid-March.

The whole of the upper Cooper Creek catchment area in Queensland has continued to receive monsoonal fronts which will see flows down both the Cooper Creek and Diamantina/Warburton River systems for several months to come.

It is interesting to compare these figures to the total rainfall received in 2009, the last year of the drought. ■

Selected weather recording stations	Total rainfall 2009 (mm)	Total rainfall 2010 (mm)	2011 rainfall mm (to 21 March)
Amata	236	447.1	345.2
Birdsville	119	774.8	245.8
Broken Hill	177	472.6	396.4
Coober Pedy	148	179.8	138.4
Innamincka	180	732.8	196.0
Marree	134	353.3	102.3
Oodnadatta	158	351.4	237.8
Port Augusta	222	306.4	162.6
Woomera	140	242.8	120.0
Yunta	167	315.2	212.4

Figures obtained from Bureau of Meteorology [www.bom.com](http://www.bom.com)



Alex Clarke

Balcanoona Creek crossing, Gammon Ranges National Park.



Jeff Stringer

The Strzelecki Track



## Outback Communities Authority committed to consultation

The Outback Communities Authority (OCA) has begun formally consulting with the outback community on policies and plans that will guide its future operations.

Following a consultation period earlier this year, the OCA adopted a policy guiding the way it consults and engages with communities.

Importantly, this policy will ensure people who live and work in the outback have convenient opportunities to participate in future consultation processes about infrastructure and service provision.

The OCA is expected to start consulting in April on its Strategic

Management Plan, which outlines its specific goals and spending plan for the year ahead as well as strategic directions for the future.

If you are a resident of unincorporated areas visit the OCA's website to register to receive information by email, post or phone.

### Further information

[www.oca.sa.gov.au](http://www.oca.sa.gov.au) ■

### NEW OCA OFFICE

The Outback Communities Authority (OCA) office is now located at 12 Tassie Street, Port Augusta.

The government-owned building has a more functional board room that can better accommodate outback community members who wish to observe board meetings, as well as a larger reception area which will be set up to provide customers with more of the information they need.

The OCA is sharing the heritage-listed building with the Department of Primary Industries and Resources SA and is located just up the street from its former Marryatt Street office.

Contact phone numbers, email addresses and the OCA's postal address remain unchanged.

## Warru release

The February edition of *Across The Outback* reported on progress towards recovering the population of the warru, or black-footed rock wallaby, in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands – and now five warru raised in captivity at Monarto Zoo have been released into a predator-proof enclosure in the APY Lands.

The Warru Recovery Program was established in 2007 to increase the distribution and abundance of warru in South Australia, but also to provide genuine training and employment opportunities for Anangu.

Taking part in the release of the warru during her two-day visit to the APY lands this week, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Grace Portolesi said the program highlighted a valuable partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together to retain the survival of a species.

According to Warru Ranger Eric Abbott from APY Land Management, the recovery program has been so successful that Anangu involved in the project are developing new Tjukurpa,



Warru at Ormaston Gorge

Brownyn Dutch

or dreaming stories, for the warru that have been raised in captivity and will return.

More warru will be released into the enclosure later this year.

The Warru Recovery Program is a partnership between Anangu, APY Land Management, the Department of Environment and Natural

Resources, the Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources Management Board, the Australian Government's Working on Country program, Conservation Ark/ZoosSA, Ecological Horizons Pty Ltd and the University of Adelaide.

### Further information

Matthew Ward 8222 9248 ■





## New Regional Manager for environment and natural resource services in Arid Lands

The integration of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board staff and the Outback office of DENR is well underway. Here we introduce Geoff Axford, the Regional Manager, who will manage the delivery of environment and natural resource services in the SA Arid Lands Region.

Having lived and worked in the SA Arid Lands Region for most of his working life Geoff is no stranger to the complexities of the outback and the demands on its natural resources.

He has held a variety of positions with the former Department of Environment and Heritage, including working as a project officer in the Witjira (Dalhousie Springs) National Park to support its co-management; ecologist; conservation programs manager; and most recently as Regional Conservator, a position which headed up the Department's Outback office.

Prior to this he held positions with the Australian Government coordinating their Natural Heritage Trust program in the Rangelands and he was also a Landcare Officer, a role that provided support to the region's Soil Boards which would later be replaced by the existing community-based NRM Groups.

*As a Pastoral Inspector for the Pastoral Board and manager of Granite Downs Station, a former cattle enterprise, Geoff has a good understanding of the region's pastoral industry.*

Through the 80s and 90s Geoff spent close to 10 years working on Granite Downs Station, north of Marla.

During this time Granite Downs Station transitioned from a commercial cattle station to be incorporated into the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands.

Geoff remained on the property for five years employed by TAFE to set up a cattle operation and train young Aboriginal people in all manner of

station skills from horse-breaking and stock management to book-keeping.

Geoff's long association with the region, the community, and its unique natural resources mean that he is well placed to take on the challenges of the Regional Manager position.

With the natural resources of the Arid Lands Region supporting three major industries in pastoralism, tourism and mining, he is aware of the challenges of managing the region's resources sustainably and for the benefit of everyone.

Geoff is also keen to work with NRM Boards and others to build on past strengths and achievements, deliver on-ground programs and projects that are valued by landholders and add value to their businesses, and continue the effective management of natural resources in the region.

And his connection with the old Soil Boards means that he is a keen advocate of the community-based

NRM Groups that advise and drive many of the activities of the SAAL NRM Board.

Geoff was appointed to the position in January and he has been kept busy overseeing the integration of the Board's staff with DENR's outback office, attending NRM Group meetings and generally getting a feel for the NRM Board's business. ■



Matthew Turner

Sunset in the Simpson

### THE INTEGRATION: WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The new DENR was established in July 2010, bringing together the former Department of Environment and Heritage and most of the natural resources management activities previously supported by the former Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, including support for the eight NRM Boards and the Pastoral Board.

The new integrated model combines environment and natural resource management in the one agency with a single workforce that will support the Natural Resources Management Boards, the community, and other government agencies to manage natural resources.

The role of the NRM Boards will be strengthened as they are better supported to engage the community in managing natural resources. A more streamlined NRM service will mean more resources for on-ground works.

The new integrated service will use a landscape approach to manage natural resources across public and private land.

There will be a single face for environment and natural resource services in each of the regions (and online) making it easier to access services.

Environment and natural resource services across the State will be fully integrated by July 2012.

In the SA Arid Lands Region, integration of DENR's outback office and the SAAL NRM Board is occurring behind the scenes, but on the ground, it remains business as usual.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**  
Contact the SAAL NRM Board  
8648 5977 or DENR office in  
Port Augusta 8648 5300





## HAVE YOU SEEN AN INTERESTING CRITTER?

The SAAL NRM Board has had a number of enquiries particularly about small mammals and we're keen to hear if you turn up something of interest, particularly while the good season is upon us.

With birds, reptiles, small mammals, flying insects, caterpillars, spiders and other invertebrates all in high abundance, most outback residents will be able to attest to the benefits of the exceptional season for a range of wildlife.

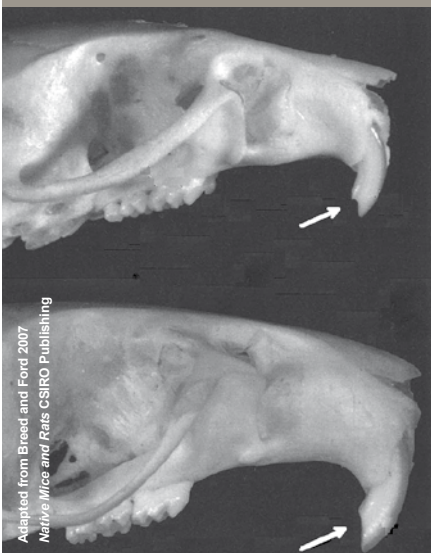
Most animals in the arid zone are well adapted to cash in on the abundance of extra food that is produced during such an exceptional season.

This boom in wildlife is part of a natural cycle providing an important food source for a number of native predators. In time their numbers will decline and they will again hang on in small numbers waiting for the next good season.

## COULD THAT MOUSE BE NATIVE?

High numbers of house mice are currently being reported from towns, mining camps and homesteads across the region but a range of other native rodents and small marsupials, such as dunnarts, are also in high numbers and can be confused with the house mouse.

One of the most notable differences between introduced house mice and other native rodents is the presence of a notch in the back of the house mouse incisors (their top front teeth – see picture). This can be viewed on a live mouse with care! House mice also have a characteristic 'mousey' smell. A range of other characteristics can also be relevant – contact Reece for more information.



Adapted from Breed and Ford 2007  
Native Mice and Rats CSIRO Publishing

## What rat is that?

Reece Pedler, Community Fauna Officer

The SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board has received a number of queries about the Long-haired (or Plague) Rat with many people not realising that they are a native species and that their presence in high numbers is just a part of the natural boom cycle.

The Long-haired (or Plague) Rat (*Rattus villosissimus*) epitomises the 'boom and bust' of Australian fauna, surviving in low numbers in refuge areas in the landscape during dry times, then breeding up into enormous numbers in good years.

This species is well known mainly from the Channel Country areas of the far north-east of South Australia, where it breeds and spreads across the landscape in good rainfall years – at times moving across the countryside in fronts which can sometimes move at several kilometres per night!

Many outback residents tell tales about these Long-haired Rats after periods of exceptional rainfall – including reports of the rats demolishing saddles hung up in trees in stock camp and chewing boots and ears of men lying in their swags!

In high numbers, the presence of the species is obvious by their burrows, well worn paths across hard ground, or multitude of tracks carpeting sandy areas.

Sometimes areas where they have been digging are so extensively disturbed that they resemble a ploughed paddock! ■

**Above:** Robert Kahn in front of the Marree Telecentre with a Long-haired Rat (*Rattus villosissimus*) found in the town recently. Long time residents report that the last time the rats made it to Marree was after the big wet years of the mid 1970s

**Right:** A native Desert Mouse (*Pseudomys desertor*) found recently by Jason Dawes of Farina Station. Finding this rarely encountered native mouse demonstrates the value of being on the lookout!

**Below:** Long-haired Rat

**Left:** Skulls of the introduced house mouse (top) and a native mouse of the genus *Pseudomys* (bottom)



Gordon Litchfield

**FURTHER INFORMATION**  
Reece Pedler, Community Fauna Officer, aridlands@saalnm.sa.gov.au or 8648 5977



Gordon Litchfield





## DIAMANTINA PIG CONTROL

Land managers in the far north-east of South Australia are urged to get involved with a pig control program which aims to significantly reduce feral pig populations on properties along the Diamantina and Warburton river systems in South Australia and Queensland over the next three years.

Responding to concerns raised by the Marree-Innaminka NRM Group and local landholders in the far north-east district, the project is a cooperative effort driven by landholders, the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board and Desert Channels Queensland.

It is the first time pig control in this region is being attempted at a landscape scale on pastoral properties.



Plans to determine current pig densities in the Diamantina region have been delayed by the recent rains but will take place when the river contracts to normal levels.

Landholders will be assisted to control pigs and will contribute to the development of a landscape-scale management plan which describes the on-going actions to maintain feral pig management in the Diamantina region after this project ends.

Feral pigs are considered to have a significant negative impact on the environment and agriculture with estimated costs to Australia of \$100 million annually and it is an offence to keep or release them under South Australia's *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*.

Feral pigs are omnivorous – they graze on native vegetation and feed on lizards, snakes, turtles and ground-nesting birds. They also degrade riparian systems by disturbing soil and vegetation and are a potential source of a number of diseases and parasites which could affect livestock and humans

The SAAL NRM Board has identified feral pigs as having a high feasibility of containment and is working to prevent the spread of the animal species to key sites of high economic, environmental and/or social value.

The project is funded by the Commonwealth Government's Caring For our Country program.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Jacinda Fennell or Greg Patrick 8648 5977

## Pastoralists share total grazing pressure experience

*Kate Forrest, Acting Community Engagement Manager*

Pastoralists were the key to success of a national workshop to discuss total grazing pressure management held in Adelaide in February – and landholders who missed out will soon be able to get up to speed by way of a web-based forum for producers.

The forum attracted nearly 50 people from across the country with 17 pastoralists participating from South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. Other attendees included government representatives and staff from various NRM organisations.

The goal of the forum was to bring together producers who are managing total grazing pressure on their properties to propose how best they can be supported by government and industry to continue these activities, and how other pastoralists can be encouraged to undertake total grazing pressure management.

The type of activities being used by the pastoralists at the forum ranged from implementing new infrastructure to controlled grazing regimes across their properties, harvesting feral animals and implementing more strategic grazing practices through property planning.

*The common theme  
was understanding and  
management of the resources  
they had at hand.*

Participating pastoralists supplied case studies on how they manage total grazing pressure on their properties, what they see as the biggest issues regarding total grazing pressure management, and possible solutions to be considered.

This information-sharing generated so much conversation amongst attendees that one of the outcomes of the forum is to establish a producer network to continue discussions.

Led by Ben Forsyth (WA) with the support of Ashley McMurtie (NSW), the network will be run by pastoralists for pastoralists and will begin with a web forum/discussion page as a low cost option.

Participants were also keen to see greater recognition at a national level of the value of total grazing pressure management in improving land condition in the rangelands of Australia.

This will be coordinated in conjunction with the National Rangeland NRM Alliance as part of their initiative to raise the profile and investment in the rangelands.





## WHAT IS TOTAL GRAZING PRESSURE?

Total grazing pressure refers to the combined effects of all grazing animals, native or introduced. It is important to manage in the rangelands because it is the major driver of sustainable land management, resulting in positive results for production, environment and people.

Total grazing pressure is managed in different ways by different producers but the overriding principle is to understand and manage the impact of grazing animals to improve vegetation diversity and cover.

The SAAL NRM Board provided funds for the coordination and facilitation of the event which was managed by Rural Solutions SA. The Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation also assisted pastoralists to attend by paying travel and accommodation costs.

### Further information

Workshop notes will be issued to all participants and a summary document is being prepared for wider distribution. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the summary document contact Kate Forrest 8648 5977.

For further information on the producer network and online forum contact Ben Forsyth 0427 551 114 ■



## Iga Warta rabbit control

Ros Consoli, Aboriginal Engagement Officer

With the good season rabbit numbers will be on the rise and the Iga Warta community and the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board are working together to protect an important native bush plot.

The revegetation area was established to restore dwindling populations of Iga (Native Orange, *Capparis mitchellii*), Uti (Quandong, *Santalum acuminatum*) and Udllura (Native Sandalwood, *Santalum lanceolatum*) with the latter species desecrated after harvesting and selling of the tree in the early 1900s.

Members of the Iga Warta community have put in years of work propagating native seeds from the North Flinders and take great pride in the area but they are seeing more rabbits. Young saplings, particularly the Native Orange, are now under threat.

The project will assist with fencing the site to protect it from human traffic, rabbits and goats, while a management plan will be developed and implemented to guide how best to reduce rabbit numbers from this rocky and mountainous area.

Feral animal workshops will inform the community of feral threats and management techniques – these will focus on rabbits but information will also be given for cats and goats and a feral animal identification table will be developed to assist the community in future monitoring of the feral threats in their area.

Iga Warta is located approximately 600km north of Adelaide within the North Flinders region of the Arid Lands. ■



Terrence Coulthard in the nursery

## HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Our goals as Aboriginal Engagement Officers are to help the SAAL NRM Board better engage with Aboriginal communities in the Arid Lands and to provide an opportunity for Aboriginal communities to successfully achieve their project outcomes. Does your community have a project in mind? Call 8648 5977 or look out for the car when we are on community. Ask for Ros or Jon.

## DUNJIBA HOOKEYS WATERHOLE PROTECTION

Jonathon Fatt-Clifton, Aboriginal Engagement Officer

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board in partnership with Dunjiba Council (Oodnadatta) and the Community are working to protect Hookeys Waterhole by erecting a floodgate to close off the site and by removing bamboo.

The project responds to community concerns about gaps in the existing fencing around the waterhole which has seen cars drive into the site, destabilising the banks where there is minimal vegetation, and causing obvious degradation.

A workshop will be held with the council, school, progress association, and general community members to discuss options for preventing further devastation to the waterhole.





# DINGO UPDATE



Heather Miller

## APRIL 2011 ISSUE 13

The *Dingo Update* brings you the latest news from the Dingo Research Project, an initiative of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board, as well as ongoing management news. North of the Dog Fence the Board is investigating the impacts dingoes have on beef cattle in baited and unbaited areas to determine optimum dingo management strategies. South of the Dog Fence, the Board is busy delivering the landholder-initiated *Biteback* program for dingo control, a critical program for protecting the region's sheep industry.

## News from north of the Fence

Since we last reported from north of the Fence there have been a few changes to the Dingo Research Project but the year has commenced with a fresh injection of funds and new partnerships. Here's a snapshot of what's been happening.

### New funds

The Dingo Research Project has received a fresh injection of funds from the State NRM Program to build on initial funding obtained from Santos through the SAAL NRM Board's Industry Partnerships Program, allowing the project to continue into 2011.

In addition to her work with the *Biteback* program south of the Dog Fence, Heather Miller (Dingo Project Officer, SAAL NRM Board) is now the point of contact for the Dingo Research Project. The project also has a steering committee and support from other Board staff.

The Board has also contracted Steve Eldridge (Desert Wildlife Services) to continue the on-ground dingo research activities, and he has completed another round of dingo and wildlife track activity surveys and dingo scat collection to add to the existing body of data collected from baited and unbaited treatments.

Steve has been involved with the project since it commenced in 2008 and is familiar with the sites and the methods used.

### Pregnancy testing

Cattle pregnancy testing for this season has begun with initial testing and monitoring occurring in 1080-baited and unbaited areas on Cordillo Downs Station.

*By measuring lactation failure in cows on a number of stations in the Arid Lands region we will better understand calf loss caused by dingoes in baited and unbaited areas.*

Hopefully the wet conditions will not hold up further mustering and pregnancy testing so that results from the baited and unbaited areas can be obtained and compared.

### New partnership to trial new poison

The SAAL NRM Board has also developed a collaborative arrangement with the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) which, with support from Meat and Livestock Australia and

Australian Wool Innovation, will trial new poison baits containing PAPP (para-aminopropiophenone) on Quinyambie Station.

PAPP is selectively more toxic to wild canids than many native species and has an effective antidote. This wild dog field trial follows work in NSW and Qld and will contribute to its registration as a new wild dog control. Simon Humphrys (Invasive Animals CRC) will be managing the trial on Quinyambie in consultation with the Board for the current year until June. This will include pregnancy testing of cattle before the site is restocked to estimate how many calves should be there next year and get a better handle on the impact of predation on cattle production.

### Further information

Heather Miller 8648 5977 ■

## COULD YOU USE A DOGGER?

Expressions of interest are being sought from landholders in all districts south of the Dog Fence for access to a dogger.

Providing landholders with access to a dogger is an important component of the *Biteback* program for dingo control with trapping most effective when it follows a coordinated baiting program to specifically target dingoes that have not taken the bait.

Landholders approved for the program will need to employ and pay for the services of the dogger themselves but they will be reimbursed through the grant process.

The SAAL NRM Board have sourced a number of doggers but landholders are welcome to suggest others.

Funding for the dogger service is provided by the SA Sheep Industry Fund and applications can be made to the SA Arid Lands NRM Board.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Heather Miller 8648 5977 to register your interest and for assistance with the application process.





## *Biteback* – are you on board?

Those landholders south of the Dog Fence who are yet to discuss their options (or concerns) about dingo control with the *Biteback* team are urged to get in touch with the relevant coordinator as soon as possible.

Information from landholders indicates there are increased sightings of dogs and while they may not be causing stock loss now due to the abundance of easy prey, stock losses will occur once this food source runs out.

To reduce dingo impacts south of the Dog Fence, *Biteback* encourages landholders to combine best practice dingo control methods with a coordinated landscape-scale approach to dingo management, and provides landholders with access to a range of control methods.

Heather Miller has been coordinating the *Biteback* program on behalf of landholders for the past fifteen months and has overseen the delivery of the program to all areas south of the Dog Fence, except the western Gawler Ranges which will begin in July.

Heather has visited the Kingoonya, North East and North Flinders/Marree areas in the last month to provide a meat injection service while Jacinda Fennell has been delivering *Biteback* in the eastern Gawler Ranges.

Heather brings 12 years experience living on pastoral properties in South Australia while Jacinda grew up on remote cattle stations in Queensland and South Australia giving both of them an understanding of the challenges facing pastoral communities.

### Further information

Contact Heather or Jacinda  
8648 5977 ■

**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	Mark Fennell
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/Overview.aspx](http://www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au/AboutUs/OurNRMDistrictGroups/Overview.aspx)

## News from Kingoonya

The Kingoonya NRM Group headed to Prominent Hill for their last meeting to take a closer look at mining activities and to discuss natural resources management concerns in the district.

The meeting included a number of guest speakers prompting enthusiastic discussion from both group members and non-members.

Melanie Carson (Native Vegetation Council Research Officer, Department of Environment and Natural Resources) talked about the funding opportunities available through the Native Vegetation Council; Katie Hulmes (Oz Minerals Limited and Kingoonya NRM Group member) presented the environmental achievements and future directions of Oz Minerals; Peter Newman (SA Arid Lands NRM Board) discussed opportunities for Significant Environmental Benefits (SEBs) in the region; and Reece Pedler (SA Arid Lands NRM Board) updated the Group on his work with threatened fauna in the region.

Group members also discussed the roll out of the *Biteback* program for dingo control and how to ensure the success of the program throughout the district; seasonal conditions; and increasing rabbit and mice populations.

Special thanks to all who attended and Katie for her tremendous efforts at organising venues, people, food and the paperwork and a tour of the mine and Oz Minerals SEB area.

Prominent Hill is a copper-gold mine owned by Oz Minerals Limited and located 130 kilometres south-east of Coober Pedy. ■



Julie and Rick Mould

## NEED HELP WITH RABBITS?

With rabbit numbers on the rise, the SAAL NRM Board is seeking expressions of interest from land managers in the Arid Lands region who would like to participate in a rabbit control workshop.

The workshop will cover rabbit ecology and best practice rabbit management techniques, include practical demonstrations of rabbit management methods such as baiting, warren destruction and fumigation, and training on the basic use of a GPS handset, a useful skill for mapping and coordinating rabbit control across your property.

Locations are still to be advised and will depend upon the number and location of

interested landholders.

Management methods will target warren destruction, the key to long-term cost-effective rabbit control as rabbits depend on their warrens for breeding success and for protection from predators.

First proposed to the SAAL Board by a landholder, this initiative was endorsed by the Kingoonya NRM Group who thought it would be well supported throughout the community.

### REGISTER YOUR INTEREST NOW!

Contact Lisa Taylor, NRM Officer,  
8648 5977







## Have your say on Caring for our Country...

A review of the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative is looking at the effectiveness of the program and achievements to date and will explore options for natural resource management delivery in the future.

An important part of the review will be consulting with Australia's natural resource management stakeholders. The views and experiences of our partners and stakeholders are an essential part of informing the review and will help identify program improvements that are practical and focused.

In addition, specific feedback from the recipients and applicants of Caring for our Country funding about the outcomes of investments will help tell the Caring for our Country story and inform the review.

A public discussion paper is now available to start the ball rolling.

Submissions are invited until 20 May 2011.

Further information [www.nrm.gov.au/review/index.html](http://www.nrm.gov.au/review/index.html) ■

## ...and the draft Australian Framework for Landcare Action Plan

The Australian Landcare Council is seeking your comments on a draft of the Australian Framework for Landcare Action Plan with your involvement helping to strengthen and reinvigorate the Landcare movement into the future.

The Action Plan supports the Australian Framework for Landcare which was released in September 2010.

The Australian Framework for Landcare builds on two decades of knowledge, experience and achievements to address a range of current and emerging environmental challenges.

The Framework is a guide for Landcarers and sets out the vision, main features, guiding principles and key elements of the Landcare approach. These underpin the actions and measures of the Action Plan.

The Australian Landcare Council welcomes feedback on the proposed goals and actions and any suggestions on the activities and actions you or your group can take to contribute to the achievement of these goals.

Comments are due by 17 June 2011.

Further information [www.landcareonline.com.au](http://www.landcareonline.com.au) ■

### DESERT DETECTIVE DAY – FREE FAMILY EVENT

The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, in partnership with Emu Consulting, is hosting a free family fun day on Sunday 24 April from 10am to 4pm.

Activities include a desert detective game, art and photography workshops, face painting, a native animal and environmental display, a mystery box, bushucker tastings, jitterbean native produce tastings and sales, plant propagation demonstrations, guided tours of the garden, and other surprises. Everyone is welcome.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.aalbg.sa.gov.au](http://www.aalbg.sa.gov.au) or  
Dawn 0438 341 153

### SEND US YOUR DEAD RABBITS

People who find freshly dead, but otherwise healthy looking rabbits that may have died from rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) or calicivirus, are urged to send the rabbits' livers to the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre.

Studying the virus from dead rabbits will help unlock how it has changed over time ensuring any new strains that may be released are as different as possible from the current strains.

Small portions of liver tissue from the dead rabbits – around two centimetres square – should be frozen in a plastic bag or container.

Alternatively, just collect and freeze the whole rabbit. Sometimes predators take rabbit's liver very quickly but the virus can be extracted from heart or kidney tissue or bone marrow from hind legs.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information or to arrange collection of samples contact  
Research Officer Tarnya Cox  
02 6391 3952

*Adapted from NRM Notes, March 2011*

### NEW OUTBACK CALENDAR

The SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board has introduced a new web-based 'events calendar' to roundup all the exciting events and activities that bring people together in the Arid Lands region.

Visit [www.saalnm.sa.gov.au/AboutUs/UpcomingEvents.aspx](http://www.saalnm.sa.gov.au/AboutUs/UpcomingEvents.aspx) to see what's happening in your area.

### SEND US AN EVENT!

We're particularly interested in events that relate to natural resources management in the SA Arid Lands region but any event that brings the people of the Arid Lands together is welcome. Events may include gymkhanas and race days, field days, public meetings, forums, open houses, conferences, workshops, festivals etc.

Just email the details to  
[jenny.barker@sa.gov.au](mailto:jenny.barker@sa.gov.au)

### SUBSCRIBE TO THE MAILING LIST

Every month the Board sends an email requesting information on new events but it also serves as a reminder to people to check the calendar for upcoming activities in the region.

Please email [jenny.barker@sa.gov.au](mailto:jenny.barker@sa.gov.au) if you would like to subscribe to this service.



## Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference

20-23 June, Sydney

Registrations are now open for the 15<sup>th</sup> Australasian Vertebrate Pest Conference, a not-for-profit event held every three years to bring together researchers, managers, students and policy makers dealing with pest animals.

Anyone working in the area or interested in animal control should attend. New tools and methodologies will be discussed as well as the vital community aspects of pest animal control. Animal welfare and community attitudes to human-wildlife conflicts will be explored.

Further information [www.avpc.net.au](http://www.avpc.net.au)

Adapted from [www.avpc.net.au](http://www.avpc.net.au) ■

If you are a landholder and would like support to attend this sort of event contact the SA Arid Lands NRM Board 8648 5977

## PestSmart Toolkits on the way

The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), with community consultation, is developing a series of PestSmart toolkits information packages tailored towards landholders and land managers.

Toolkits are being developed for rabbits, wild dogs, foxes, feral pigs and feral cats as well as the introduced fish species European carp and tilapia, both of which are present in the Cooper Creek system.

Information will be provided in various forms such as fact sheets, case studies, technical manuals and scientific reports.

The PestSmart Toolkit will provide an accessible gateway to the improved best practice management of major pest animals through the development of innovative extension materials and will synthesise the practical insights from the Invasive Animal CRC's extensive seven year research and development program.

The PestSmart Toolkits will be showcased through workshops across Australia.

Further information Keryn Lapidge 8357 1222

Adapted from *NRM Notes, March 2011* ■

Simpson Desert dune

## SEND US YOUR PHOTOS!

Anything goes just as long as it exemplifies our unique region, its landscape, wildlife and, of course, its characters. Perhaps you captured a few snaps at the local gymkhana? Maybe you've caught an unusual creature on camera? Or maybe you were just in the right place at the right time...

Whether you're a budding photographer or just got lucky with a particular shot, please send your photos to [jenny.barker@sa.gov.au](mailto:jenny.barker@sa.gov.au). Clearly indicate what (or who) is shown in the photo and the photographer's name.

## ARE YOU ON THE ACROSS THE OUTBACK MAILING LIST?

*Across The Outback* is a free publication that is issued to over 1200 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](mailto:jenny.barker@sa.gov.au).

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

## CALL FOR CONTENT

*Across The Outback*  
June 2011 edition

Content due by COB  
Friday 27 May 2011

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

## 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](mailto:jenny.barker@sa.gov.au) or 8463 3354. A fee per article may apply.



## 'Rat-pack' for yabbing on the Cooper

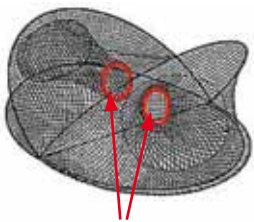
Barrie Cotton, DENR Ranger, Innamincka

To help combat water rat deaths caused by illegal Opera House yabby nets at Innamincka, local rangers have developed the 'Rat-Pack', a free kit to convert illegal Opera House nets that they will hand out for free during regular patrols this coming winter season.

Catching yabbies along the Cooper Creek at Innamincka has been an enjoyable past time for many visitors to the Innamincka Regional Reserve. They are easy to catch, great fun for the kids, and are a culinary delight whether barbecued, stir fried or simply boiled.

Recently, however, the rangers at Innamincka have noted an increase in water rat deaths due to the use of illegal Opera House yabby nets, usually by inexperienced tourists who are unaware of South Australian fishing legislation.

A legal Opera House yabby net will have no more than two rigid entrance rings (these rings are the entry points for yabbies into the trap), which are both no larger than 7.5cm in diameter. The purpose of the 7.5cm entry ring is to prevent other native species from entering the nets.



A Legal Opera House yabby net featuring two rigid entry rings, 7.5cm in diameter

Without these 7.5cm rings installed, small native animals such as turtles and water rats can enter the nets and become trapped, often resulting in their death. Illegal Opera House nets have either no rigid entry rings installed, or the rings installed are larger than 7.5cm in diameter.

Developed for the inexperienced tourist, the Rat-Pack contains legal size PVC entrance rings (7.5cm), zip ties, and some simple instructions and a fact sheet to convert an illegal Opera House net in just minutes.

Experienced fisherman found to be intentionally using illegal Opera House yabby nets will be liable to be expiated by ranger staff.

### Further information

Alex Clarke, DENR Regional Ecologist – Deserts, 8648 5300 ■

## WATER RATS

Water rats (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) are one of Australia's largest native rodents and when sighted along the creek they appear like shiny otters. They can grow up to 40cm long (not including their tail), their hind feet are webbed, and the tail has a defined white tip.

Sleek and fast and well suited to a carnivorous aquatic lifestyle, water rats feed on yabbies, dragonflies, water beetles, mussels, spiders and occasionally birds and frogs. They can also kill cane toads without being poisoned.

Water rats were once hunted for their fur, and in 1938, due to increasing hunting pressure, they were protected by government legislation.



## DENR INNAMINCKA UPDATE

Alex Clarke, DENR Regional Ecologist

### INNAMINCKA CAUSEWAY

A project which is investigating potential improvements to fish migration across the Innamincka Causeway during periods of low flow, while still maintaining the causeway's functionality, has been delayed by persistent local rainfall and steady flooding. Plans are underway to visit the site in the middle of this year to move the project forward.

The Innamincka Causeway is known to stop fish moving upstream during low Cooper Creek flows. Most freshwater fish in Australia need to move to access food and shelter, avoid predators and seek mates and habitats for reproduction.

The project is a collaborative effort between Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Santos, SARDI, the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, the Marree-Innamincka NRM Group, and PIRSA, with funding secured by Santos and DENR.

### EXPANDING PEST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Meanwhile, DENR will expand its pest management activities across the Innamincka Regional Reserve and Coongie Lakes National Park over the next three years after successfully receiving funds through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative. The project's progress and achievements will be posted in *Across the Outback* over coming months.



Innamincka Causeway





# Unexplained neurological disease in horses

Biosecurity SA is continuing to receive reports of horses showing unusual neurological signs including ataxia (wobbly legs and difficulty walking), muscle tremors, and sensitivity to touch and while there have been no reports from the outback area horse owners should monitor the health of their horses.

Since the middle of February a total of 20 neurological cases in horses have been reported by private veterinarians to Biosecurity SA and similar cases are being reported in Victoria and NSW.

In South Australia, these reported neurological cases are spread across the State from the Riverland, down the length of the Murray and in areas both north and south of Adelaide from Port Pirie to Victor Harbor.

All reported horses are being tested for a range of mosquito borne viruses including Ross River virus and a group of viruses called 'flaviviruses' that includes Kunjin Virus and Murray Valley Encephalitis virus.

Laboratory results so far indicate that Kunjin virus may be responsible for the clinical signs in two horses in the Riverland but these horses also tested positive to Ross River virus.

*Three horses from the South East have tested positive to Ross River but have not been exposed to flaviviruses.*

Other horses have been tested but due to the increase in demand for laboratory testing these results may take a few weeks to be received.

There is no suggestion that Hendra virus is involved in this syndrome with horses tested for this virus returning negative results.

There is no known risk to humans from direct contact with horses infected with mosquito transmitted viruses.

However humans, as with horses, can be infected from the bite of an infected mosquito for some diseases.

Owners can attempt to protect their horses from mosquitoes by using repellents, covering them up, keeping them indoors at times of high mosquito activity (dawn and dusk) and minimising possible mosquito breeding areas. ■

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If your horse is unwell or behaving strangely contact your local veterinarian, PIRSA veterinarian or PIRSA Animal Health Officer. Biosecurity SA can then work to undertake a disease investigation on cases with neurological signs.

Alternatively contact Mary Carr 0437 328 592 or the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline 1800 675 888







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; Biosecurity SA (a division of 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](mailto:jenny.barker@sa.gov.au) or 8463 3354



...from page 1

### Tourism impacts

Tourism is a significant contributor to regional economies and employment in the LEB and underpins infrastructure development.

It can also have measurable impacts on places of natural and cultural significance including soil erosion or compaction from driving off-road and along channels and waterholes, poor waste disposal, over-use of limited water supplies, wood collection for fires, transport of weeds, and direct effects on biodiversity (fishing, hunting, and disturbance).

In most cases, impacts are the result of sheer numbers and intensity of use. Impacts are most severe at individual sites, but spread to wider surrounding or downstream areas. Cumulative effects over many years are especially damaging.

### The management challenge

Unlike the regulatory controls that exist for mining and pastoralism, there is no framework across the Basin under which the range of management entities can specifically share knowledge and information about tourism impacts, develop joint approaches to management, and take consistent, effective steps to manage tourism impacts.

This is despite tourism's status as a land use of similar scope and importance to mining and pastoralism.

Agencies and organisations dealing specifically with tourism in the Basin focus largely on the promotion of tourism, rather than on managing its impacts.

The management of tourism impacts defaults to a wide range of scattered, and largely uncoordinated, processes and organisations, including national parks agencies, local councils, and private landholders.

Effective management of tourism impacts on particular sites is often beyond the resources of these individual entities and often outside their core business. ■



Matthew Turner

Entering the Lake Eyre Basin, Birdsville Track



Matthew Turner

Motorbike tracks on Simpson Desert claypan

## AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION

Fortunately, outback tourism also presents a significant opportunity for raising awareness of natural and cultural resource management in the Basin, improving knowledge and understanding among travellers and the tourism industry of the sensitivity of LEB natural and cultural assets to potential damage from tourist activity.

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Management of tourism impacts on LEB natural and cultural resources needs coordinated attention across the LEB. The Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is in the process of gathering information and planning an approach to these issues, and welcomes feedback, views and information from the community.

Contact Joc Schmiechen, Tourism Industry member of the LEB Community Advisory Committee, if you would like to provide your views and feedback on these issues or leave comments directly via the LEB CAC website.

LEBCAC is an interstate committee appointed by the LEB Ministerial Forum to provide community advice and feedback on matters related to the LEB Intergovernmental Agreement

[www.lebmf.gov.au/index.html](http://www.lebmf.gov.au/index.html)