

Across the OUTBACK

OCTOBER 2011

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Phase 3, Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative announced

Work has now begun in South Australia on the third phase of the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative (GABSI) that will help protect the precious water resource, saving up to 45 litres of groundwater every second.

The Gillard and Rann governments have jointly committed \$2 million to help save water in the Great Artesian Basin, protecting the region's ecosystems and industry.

'The Great Artesian Basin is a critical water resource for industries and the GABSI is an important initiative aimed at conserving and managing a large volume of Australian water resources on a sustainable basis,' said Minister for Water Paul Caica.

South Australia has participated in the first two phases of the GABSI through a \$1.94 million State investment

which has seen free flowing artesian bores rehabilitated and controlled pipe-watering systems installed across the Basin to maximise water savings.

In the third phase of the GABSI, South Australia will seal two large free-flowing bores (Big Blyth and Johnson No. 3) on the western side of the Basin, rehabilitate Camel Creek, a high-pressure bore in the middle of the Basin, reduce a number of bores around Marree into a single system, and replace infrastructure.

GABSI is also supported by \$1.2m from BHP Billiton and in-kind contributions by pastoral landholders to install the piping systems. ■

Further information

Nico Krüger, Hydrogeologist,
Department for Water
8463 6699

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Reg Dodd



Reg Dodd



Reg Dodd

Thanks to Reg Dodd for sharing these amazing photos of a Wedge Tailed Eagle chick from the Marree region, another native species taking advantage of the good season. Normally Wedge Tailed Eagles nest in trees but due to this part of the region being so flat and tree-less the parents of this chick have nested on a high point on a rocky outcrop.



Michael McBride retires from the Pastoral Board

Lynette Taylor, Pastoral Liaison Officer

Michael McBride retired from the Pastoral Board in August after serving 27 years on the Board with seven of those years as the Presiding Member. This article provides some background to Michael's time with the Pastoral Board and the changes that he influenced.

In 1966 Michael and his wife purchased Rowena, a Western Lands lease located north-east of Broken Hill. Soon after the purchase, in conjunction with Michael, the Soil Conservation Service of Broken Hill compiled a 'management plan' for Rowena. Finding this a very useful tool in understanding the land processes, Michael's interest in using scientific assessment to measure land condition grew, and through his work subjectively measuring wool at Gillman Woolstores, he soon realised that industry too had to become more objective in regard to measuring rangeland condition.

A practising pastoralist and a member of a long established pastoral family from Wilgena Station, Michael was nominated to the Pastoral Board by the United Farmers and Stockowners of South Australia and appointed on 19 January 1984.

He was the first non-government, non-departmental appointee under the *Pastoral Act 1936* and one who was able to bring an industry viewpoint to the Board. At that time Jim Vickery was the Chairman of the Pastoral Board and Don Hopgood the Minister of Lands.

In 1989 the new *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation*

Act gave the Board a major new responsibility when it was charged with overseeing the scientific assessment of properties before leases are issued.

Under the terms of the Act, all leases within South Australia's pastoral areas subject to pastoral tenure were to be assessed as a precondition of the first extension of the 42-year term and the determination of lease conditions.

The assessments would provide benchmarks for future monitoring and a basis from which land management conditions, including stocking limits, could be established.

The new lease assessment program began in the Kingoonya District in October 1990, with completion of the lease assessment program in 2000. During the assessment program, about 5500 permanent photopoint sites were established.

In March 2004 Michael was appointed as the Presiding Member of the Pastoral Board, a position he held until his retirement.

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

To be announced

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 128 Thursday 20 October
Adelaide

Meeting 129 Thursday 15 December
Adelaide

Michael is well known and respected for his extensive knowledge of the pastoral lessees and their families, and of the communities in the rangelands. He has also been very active in the development of Indigenous Land Use Agreements and the promotion of the rights of access to pastoral land by traditional owners.

A new Presiding Member for the Pastoral Board is yet to be announced. ■

Right: Paul Caica, Minister for Environment and Conservation, presents Michael McBride with a gift at a morning tea to mark Michael's retirement and the 28th anniversary of the Pastoral Assessment Program in South Australia. Held in September at the Waite Campus, Urrbrae, the event was also attended by Allan Holmes, Chief Executive of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, current and past Board members, current and past assessment and inspection officers, and pastoralists.





SA: BELOW AVERAGE SPRING RAIN EXPECTED

The recent above average rains experienced across much of the State in the last 18 months may be coming to an end with the Bureau of Meteorology announcing that there is a strong probability of below average spring rains in southern Australia. This low rainfall, combined with high fuel loads associated with large areas of browned-off herbage, lends itself to a bad fire season.

BUSHFIRE INFORMATION

Check the CFS website
www.cfs.sa.gov.au for the latest
information and bushfire safety advice
or call the Bushfire Information
Hotline on 1300 362 361

FURTHER READING

For further explanation of the Southern Oscillation Index and La Nina and El Nino visit www.bom.gov.au.
Vines, B. and Noble, J. Aspects of rainfall patterns in eastern Australia.
The Australian Rangeland Society Range Management Newsletter. No. 11/1 March 2011.

Predicting rainfall patterns

Carolyn Woods, Pastoral Assessment Officer

A recent article in the *Range Management Newsletter* indicates that there is some predictability in the drought and flood cycles that seem to provide such extreme changes in rainfall and climate, particularly in eastern Australia.

These drought and flood cycles were observed through rainfall patterns and results obtained from the Southern Oscillation Index which relates the changes seen in sea temperatures across the Pacific Ocean to rainfall experienced throughout Australia.

There appears to be three rainfall cycles, one long-term of 18.6 years, a short-term 6-7 years, and a less influential 10-11 year cycle.

*The long-term cycle
correlated with years 1908,
1926, 1945, 1964, 1982
and 2001 which were times
of very severe drought.*

All of these below average rainfall years led to correspondingly bad fire years in eastern Australia. In central Australia these cycles tend to be of longer duration where large rainfall events tend to occur in cycles closer to 30 years.

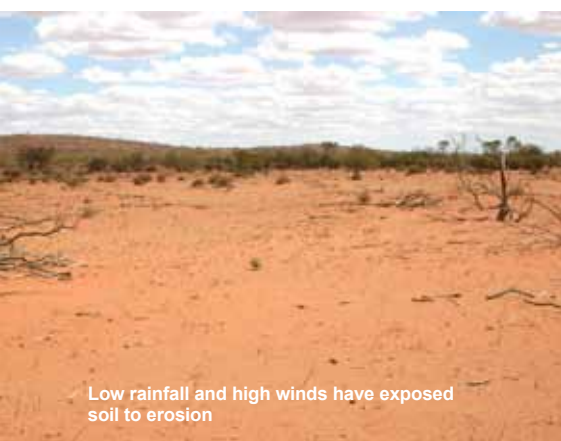
Conversely there have been very wet years 1917-18, mid-1930s, mid-1950s, mid-1970s, mid-1990s, and 2010-2011. The mid-1990s events were experienced in Queensland and the Northern Territory rather than the southern states.

Flooding rains in 2010 and 2011 corresponded with record high sea-surface temperature in the western Pacific Ocean.

The short-term (6-7 year) cycle and medium (10-11 year) cycle also provide some predictability to the intervening years of low rainfall and drought.

While these cycles do not provide all of the answers to weather patterns experienced in eastern Australia, they do provide some information on what to expect.

The future will hopefully bring a better understanding of rainfall patterns which could assist lessees to manage precious water resources. ■



Low rainfall and high winds have exposed soil to erosion



Speargrass field

New bird record for SA

Terry Dennis

The Plum-headed Finch (*Neochmia modesta*), pictured here feeding in seeding grasses near Cullyamurra Waterhole on Cooper Creek, has reached South Australia for the first time.

Although recorded previously as far west as Thargomindah and Boulia in post-flood years, this nomadic species is normally found in central and eastern Queensland and New South Wales.

The widespread flood events in recent years across the Queensland Channel Country has converted open gibber landscape to continuous grasslands and enabled some bird and mammal populations to build and expand their normal range by following the newly available habitat opportunities.

Found by ornithologist Terry Dennis and party in mid-July, the record excited several other South Australian bird enthusiasts who subsequently travelled to Innamincka and were rewarded by finding them still in the same area of the Innamincka Regional Reserve over several weeks. ■



Plum-headed Finch

Terry Dennis



Great Egret

John Irvine

MARREE BIRD WORKSHOP

Friday 28 October, 3-5pm
Marree Town Hall

With Australia's usually arid interior currently attracting waterbirds from across the nation and the world, bird enthusiasts are invited to attend a free workshop presented by Birds Australia at Marree in October.

The *Wetland Birds of the Arid Interior* workshop will look at wetland birds and their habitats within the Marree area and include presentations on birds as indicators of wetland health, how to identify the wetland birds of the region, the important place Marree holds in the *Atlas of Australian Birds*, and details on how you can contribute to this national monitoring program. The workshop will be followed by a field trip to Lake Harry to get a firsthand look at its inhabitants.

Attendees will be provided with goodie bags chock full of feathery facts along with light snacks and refreshments.

The workshop is supported by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Further information Chris Purnell
c.purnell@birdsaustralia.com.au

BURROWING BETTONGS ARE BOOMING

Beginning with the release of just 30 individuals between 1999 and 2001, a recent survey has revealed the Burrowing Bettong population inside the Arid Recovery Reserve has risen to 1500.

A team of staff and dedicated volunteers spent a week rising at 4am, trekking through sand dunes and making peanut butter sandwiches in an attempt to attract the Burrowing Bettong, with the main aim to gather enough information to develop a population estimate.

Classified as a vulnerable species by both Australian and world standards, Burrowing

Bettongs once occurred in most of arid southern Australia but became extinct in mainland Australia in the 1940s.

There are now natural populations on just three small islands off the coast of Western Australia.

For further information on the work of Arid Recovery see the August edition of *Across The Outback*.

Arid Recovery is working alongside Australian Geographic to raise funds for the threatened Burrowing Bettong. Donate at www.australiangeographic.com.au or at an Australian Geographic store.



Cooper Creek ferry loads and limits

As the number of vehicles travelling north continues to grow, the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure reminds outback motorists and tourists to stick to vehicle load and length limits when boarding the Cooper Creek Ferry, particularly when driving a motorhome or caravan.

The Cooper Creek Ferry was modified before being brought back into action a couple of months ago to allow longer vehicle and trailer combinations to be transported but there are still limits in place to keep people safe.

The maximum load for vehicles boarding the Cooper Creek Ferry, including passengers and freight, is 10 tonne gross.

The maximum length of a vehicle that the ferry can carry is 9.8 metres and vehicles with excessive rear overhang may experience difficulties with access.

Trailers are only permitted when the total length of towing vehicle and trailer does not exceed 9.8 metres and they must remain hitched to the towing vehicle while on the ferry.

Conventional caravans are not permitted.

High clearance off-road vans may be allowed with the maximum length of vehicles over six tonne 7.8 metres.

Signs displaying the conditions of use of the ferry are installed at Marree, Birdsville, Mungeranie and at the ferry crossing.

Entry onto the ferry is at the discretion of the ferry operator and penalties for breaches apply.

The Cooper Creek Ferry crosses the Birdsville Track 137 kilometres north of Marree and around 90 vehicles cross each day. ■

Further information
www.dtei.sa.gov.au

VOLUNTEERS BLAZE TRAILS AT STRANGWAYS AND THE PEAKE

Twenty-six Friends of Mound Springs (FOMS) volunteers gathered in May with picks, rakes and scrapers to establish about 6km of walking trails at Strangways Springs and The Peake which will enhance the visitor experience and improve protection for the cultural and natural features at each location.

Both sites are off the Oodnadatta Track and are of national importance because of their combination of mound springs and ruins of Overland Telegraph Repeater Stations.

The group has been involved in protective works at the two locations for the last three years having worked with S Kidman & Co and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the installation of protective fencing and informative signage.

In 2010 they secured a State NRM Grant of \$9,600 to complete this work by establishing self-guided walks through the springs and other cultural features at both Strangways and The Peake.

The group was guided by trail construction experts Rob Marshall and Sue Barker, with trail markers established at points of interest and brochures prepared to guide walkers around the trail loops.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Colin Harris, FOMS President,
8331 3571 or Simon Lewis,
FOMS Secretary 8272 8496



Friends of Mound Springs volunteers bending their backs at The Peake

Share the load on your property

Apply now for help with your pest management or land rehabilitation project

Land managers have until 17 November to apply to do pest plant and animal control or land rehabilitation activities on their properties as part of the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board's Pest Management and Rangelands Rehabilitation program.

Why should you get involved?

This is an opportunity to participate in a coordinated land and pest management program. The SAAL NRM Board will share in the costs, help you with the paperwork, and provide technical support, and if your application is successful, you will be able to select the contractor and work the project into your schedule. Best of all, your participation will assist and improve the productivity and condition of your land through sustainable land management.

How will your application be assessed?

Expressions of interest will be reviewed according to regional priorities and available funding. Those deemed most suitable will be developed into project applications with the assistance of SAAL NRM staff who will contact the land manager directly. Successful applications will include some landholder contribution to project costs, either in-kind or cash.

And if your application is successful?

We will advise you if your application is successful. At this time, you are free to select a contractor to do the work at a time that works into your schedule (as long as it is before our final deadline). Upon completion of work, a final property inspection is carried out by SAAL NRM staff at which time you send us your invoice for payment of the agreed financial contribution.

Who can apply?

Land degradation, weeds and feral animals are significant problems facing all land managers. We have funding available to assist 'land managers' so if you're a Progress Association or community group, or manage Aboriginal or pastoral land, you are eligible to apply.

Are there particular activities that the program funds?

There are a range of activities that will be considered including a number of priority pest animal and weed species that are serious threats to rangelands condition. Land rehabilitation projects may include erosion control and revegetation, contour furrowing, water ponding, and revegetation. ■

APPLY NOW

Applications close 17 November.
Applying is simple – contact the Board for a copy of the application form 8648 5977 or download a copy from the website www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au



A LANDHOLDER PERSPECTIVE

Gary Fuller has ripped in excess of 6500 rabbit warrens and destroyed 250 African Boxthorn on Wabricoola in the North East Pastoral district with the support of the SAAL NRM Board's Pest Management and Rangelands Rehabilitation program.

Gary has seen a great improvement in natural vegetation over the area ripped during the drought years, and particularly since the spring rains of 2010.

'Areas that were once damaged by rabbits and drought are now covered with bush and grasses and there is no evidence of rabbits on large areas of the property. With low stocking rates much of this vegetation should be retained which will minimise dust storms and erosion in years to come.'

The rabbit control program started in mid-2007 with time set aside each year until ripping was completed in mid-2011.

A paddock or area would be mapped using a handheld GPS unit mounted on a motorbike. The data collected would then be stored on a computer to be downloaded back to the GPS unit when required. A contractor with a crawler dozer was engaged to rip rabbit warrens while Gary would use a GPS mounted on a motorbike to locate other warrens, relaying these through to the contractor using UHF radio. Follow-up is required in some cases with phostoxin tablets for difficult areas or roaming rabbits.

Meanwhile, over 2007/08, 250 African Boxthorn plants in difficult locations across Wabricoola were sprayed with a herbicide and diesel mixture leading to a 100 per cent success rate.

Gary encourages land managers to apply for support funding for similar pest control or land rehabilitation projects under the Pest Management and Rangelands Rehabilitation program, stating that the support the program offered made his long-term goals affordable and achievable.

'Without the support of the Board's staff and funding this work would not have gone ahead under the economic climate of the last decade.'

The SAAL NRM Board would like to thank Gary for sharing his experience.



African Boxthorn removal



RABBIT CONTROL WORKSHOP

With the good season, rabbit numbers are on the rise so it's a good time to refresh your knowledge about the latest in rabbit control.

FIND OUT ABOUT:

- » Rabbit ecology
 - » Biological control
 - » Best practise control methods including baiting, warren destruction and fumigation
 - » Training on the basic use of a GPS handset to map and coordinate rabbit control across your property
- Management methods will target warren destruction, the key to long-term cost-effective rabbit control.

ARID RECOVERY OFFICE

(Cnr. Charlton Rd & Olympic Way, Roxby Downs)

MONDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2011
10am-3pm

RSVP

Lisa Taylor
SAAL NRM Board, 8648 5977

Kowari survey turns up native rats

Reece Pedler, Community Fauna Officer

Residents of the State's north would not be surprised to hear that recent Kowari monitoring surveys near the top of the Birdsville Track in the Marree-Innaminka NRM district encountered large numbers of long-haired rats, another example of the booming wildlife as a result of this exceptional season.

About 650 native Long-haired (or Plague) Rats (*Rattus villosissimus*) were captured during the 10 days of survey over May and June.

Meanwhile, the number of Kowaris (*Dasyurus byrnei*) captured was well down on previous years. This is thought to be due to the monopolisation of traps by native Long-haired Rats and exceptionally high amount of food available to Kowaris which made them much less interested in the fish oil and dog biscuit bait on offer!

Many thanks to the properties involved for their support of these surveys.

Don't forget to get your copy of *Kowari Country*, a SA Arid Lands NRM Board booklet released in June this year that's aimed at increasing understanding of Kowaris, the types of habitat they use and the land management practices that may benefit them. ■

Contact the Board 8648 5977 for a copy.



A native Long-haired Rat lured to an Elliot trap baited to catch Kowaris

WOMA RESULTS

Across The Outback has been following progress with this project ever since the first fuel vouchers were offered in return for sightings of Woma Pythons. The results have now been finalised, with nearly 90 sightings received from across the region. A report has been distributed to nearly 150 people who contributed to the project.

The study aimed to improve our knowledge of the distribution and status of the Woma Python in South Australia to guide efforts to conserve this threatened species.

For a copy of the report or results poster contact Reece Pedler 8648 5977





ANDY THE ANT KEEPS THE KIDS ENTERTAINED (AND EDUCATED)

Released by the South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board in October, *Andy the Ant's Arid Adventures* is a free, 20 page, full colour activity pad, perfect for keeping the kids inspired – and occupied – during travel through the Arid Lands region.

Kids follow Andy the Ant across the Arid Lands region, meeting Robby the Rascally Rabbit, Camilla Camel, Barry the Bearded Dragon, Wanda the Wedge-Tailed Eagle, and Pete and Pam the Pastoralists, then test their knowledge with exciting activities including sudoku, crosswords, dot-to-dot and find-a-word.

The activity pad encourages children to use their observation skills too with Spot-o-cards encouraging kids to keep their eyes peeled and tick off the various native and introduced plants and animals they see along the way.

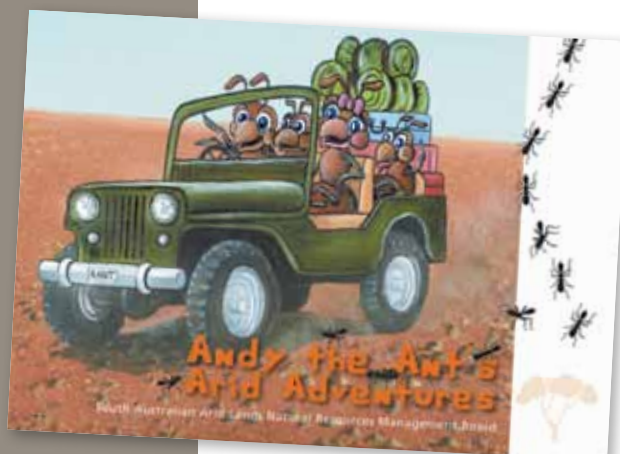
Andy the Ant will help school-aged kids understand the region's unique plants and animals, its people, and the pastoral, mining and tourism industries that the region's natural resources support – and adults may learn something too: did you know emus can swim?

Andy the Ant's Arid Adventures also contributes to the achievement of the SAAL *Regional NRM Plan* which sets the direction for natural resources management in the Arid Lands region to 2020 and includes targets to engage children and schools in regionally relevant NRM issues.

The publication was developed with funding from the Australian Government's *Caring for Our Country* program, input from former teachers and with endorsement from the South Australian Tourism Commission.

PICK UP YOUR COPY

Andy the Ant's Arid Adventures is available free-of-charge at the major visitor information centres in the region including Birdsville, Marree, Oodnadatta, William Creek, Innamincka, Roxby Downs and Port Augusta. Further details are available from the SAAL NRM Board 8648 5977



Stuart Highway pick-up

Great Tracks Cleanup nets 32 tonne of rubbish

Twenty-one Great Tracks Cleanup Crew members, their families and friends took part in the annual cleanup in July, collecting over 32 tonnes of rubbish from South Australia's outback tracks and roads. The total kilometres travelled by all vehicles on the six day trek was 23,376 km with this year's cleanup including the legendary Oodnadatta Track.

This year the volunteers cleaned the Marree Track from Leigh Creek, then the Oodnadatta Track from Marree through to Marla, as well as subsidiary tracks from William Creek to Coober Pedy to Oodnadatta, Dalhousie Springs and return. The final part of the cleanup was the Stuart Highway from Marla to Woomera, Woomera to Roxby Downs as well as the Borefield Track, and, on return home, some members cleaned up the Pimba to Olympic Dam Road.

This was the first trip that the group experienced wet conditions, with heavy rain falling at Dalhousie

Springs. Road conditions worsened as the group made its way towards Marla and the group set up camp near Hamilton Station to wait for the track to dry out and carry out welding repairs to trailers.

Rubbish included general camping and household waste, various truck, trailer and vehicle parts, galvanised iron sheeting, rusty water tanks, fuel tanks, bottles and cans. Steel and recyclables were delivered to recycling centres and all other rubbish to local landfill sites.

The 2011 Great Tracks Cleanup was sponsored by Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure (North and West Region), the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board, Alinta Energy, and Depot Springs. Thanks to Hamilton Station; to Department of Environment and Natural Resources for allowing us to camp in the maintenance area at Dalhousie Springs owing to full camp grounds; and to Errol's Repairs at Marla – Errol re-welded the hitch of the camp kitchen donating the cost in appreciation of the work we were doing cleaning up outback tracks. ■

LEB Aboriginal Forum held in Tibooburra

Ros Consoli, Aboriginal Engagement Officer

The Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Aboriginal Forum was held in Tibooburra, NSW from 13-15 September, attracting around 75 people from Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory, including a mix of Aboriginal people, government and non-government organisations.

Presentations

Representatives from many organisations presented the work that they are doing in the Lake Eyre Basin each of them highlighting the unique characteristics of the LEB including the need to manage the conservation values of all aspects of the land and its resources. There was a particular focus on water and the need to maintain those natural flows across all borders.

There were three presenters from South Australia. Dean Ah Chee spoke about conservation efforts in Witjira National Park, Mick Starkey spoke of his work with the rockholes project in the Gawler Ranges and shared the many successes, and George Cooley presented as representative of the Aboriginal Community Advisory Committee to the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum.

Aboriginal LEB Map

Much of the final day was dedicated to consulting over the Aboriginal Map of the LEB which, once complete, will provide a pictorial overview of the diversity of Aboriginal groups, places, cultures and histories that are connected to the LEB.

After having an opportunity to view a draft version, the forum participants were split into groups to discuss the various layers of information

that could go on the map, advising of the information that they could contribute, what they would like to see, and more importantly, what they would not like to see.

At the end of the session it was clear that even though a massive amount of information was recorded from these groups, much more consultation will be necessary for some of the information layers.

For further information on the Aboriginal LEB Map, see the June edition of *Across The Outback* or contact Michelle Rodrigo, Lake Eyre Basin Communications Officer, 08 8951 9255.

Recommendations

The final hours of the forum were dedicated to producing recommendations for the federal Environment Minister. A key area of discussion was the importance of considering groundwater and the Great Artesian Basin when talking about the management of the Lake Eyre Basin – both systems are interconnected and both ground and surface water is important to

Aboriginal people. Queensland's Wild Rivers legislation and its impact on Lake Eyre, its Queensland tributaries, and the communities they support, was also a topic of interest.

The SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board offered support to attend the forum to Aboriginal people residing in the LEB who have an interest in managing the Basin's water and landscape attracting registrations for the forum from four language groups. ■



Above: Mick Starkey speaking about the Gawler Ranges rockholes project



Left: Dean Ah Chee (Irrwanyere and park ranger with DENR) spoke about conservation efforts in Witjira National Park, shown here with Bruce Hammond (Indigenous Land Management Facilitator – Australian Government)

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.



DINGO UPDATE

OCTOBER 2011 ISSUE 15

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.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact the Dingo Management team 8648 5977

South of the Dog Fence

Despite some delays with the early October rain, there's been a lot of activity around the *Biteback* program with two workshops taking place in the Gawler Ranges district, and 20 to follow in the coming months in the North Flinders-Marree, Kingoonya, and North East districts.

As reported in the last *Dingo Update*, these workshops provide an opportunity for landholders to discuss how best to use the subsidised baits, freezers, traps and lures now available to the *Biteback* program thanks to Australian Wool Innovation and Biosecurity SA, as well as aerial baiting, and the future of dingo control in the region.

The workshops coincide with the bi-annual meat injection service.

Landholders who attend the workshop can also pick up a copy of *Wild Dog Trapping*, a new instructional DVD produced by the Cooperative Research Centre for Invasive Animals

which draws from the experience of six professional dingo controllers to demonstrate the use of nationally approved trapping devices for the control of dingoes and foxes.

Dates and locations for the workshop and injection service are available on the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board's website: www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au or call the Board.

Dogger funds still available

The Board has received eleven applications from landholders for doggers with about half of those applications so far approved.

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.

Contact the SAAL NRM Board if you could use a dogger on your property for assistance with dingo control. This initiative is funded by the Sheep Industry Fund. ■

INTERESTED IN MONITORING DINGO MOVEMENTS?

Landholders who are interested in monitoring dingo movement to plan control on their property can apply to the SAAL NRM Board to borrow an infra-red motion detection camera. Cameras could be strategically located to determine whether a dingo is frequenting the same area on different days. Where the cameras are not being employed for the *Biteback* program they are available to landholders for other fauna recording.

An infra-red motion detection camera captures a dingo inspecting a trap baited for Kowari during a recent Kowari survey. See page 7



North of the Dog Fence

The SAAL NRM Board thanks Santos for committing a further \$625,000 over the next three years to the Dingo Research Project.

Funding will be used to maintain 1080 baited and unbaited areas on the three participating properties (Cordillo, Quinyambie and Todmorden) as well as conducting wildlife activity surveys and collecting and analysing dingo scats for dietary content on those areas. Cattle pregnancy and lactation failure data will continue to be collected, while an annual progress report will provide an analysis of the collected data.

The funds will assist Santos with dingo management around Moomba too.

A 'living with the dingo' workshop will report key research findings to Santos staff and technical advice will be provided to pest control contractors regarding effective dingo management strategies around Moomba.

Dingo bait approvals

The Marla-Oodnadatta NRM Group have initiated a flow chart for the process of obtaining dingo bait approvals north of the Dog Fence. This is currently under review with the Marla-Oodnadatta and Marree-Innaminka NRM Groups. ■

Cleaning up our feral cat problem

John Read, Ecological Horizons

A new method of cat control takes advantage of the fact that cats hate being dirty. It promises a humane and relatively calm death and, unlike current methods of trapping, one that doesn't require the cat to be dispatched or moved. This article reports on the initial trials which have returned mixed results.

For many wildlife managers the most troublesome pest they have to deal with is the feral cat, a skilled hunter of nearly all wildlife that also transmits disease, hassles pets and causes social nuisance by wailing, spraying and defecating. And, unlike foxes and dogs, cats are active hunters that prefer live prey so they don't take baits unless they are starving.

How it works

The lure of a squealing rabbit, a squeaking bird or an alluring scent, attracts cats to a pipe that excludes larger animals like kangaroos, stock and people. An automatic soap dispenser mounted on top of the pipe and containing hundreds of doses, squirts poison onto the back of entering animals, and then resets itself automatically. Only those animals tall enough to trigger a beam near the top of the pipe are squirted, with shorter, non-target species like reptiles, rabbits, rodents and birds passing harmlessly through the pipe. The cats ingest the slow poison during grooming, dying at some distance from where they were dosed. Pipes are placed along fencelines, creeklines, near dumps and other places where cats concentrate.

The trials

Trials of small diameter (200mm) and large diameter (270mm) pipes at Roxby Downs and on Kangaroo Island indicated that large diameter pipes were preferable for both minimising non-target species dosing (eg goannas, crows etc.) and for squirting cats, with all activations in large diameter pipes made by cats.

However, most cats attracted to the pipes did not enter them. By the time they looked inside the pipes the cats could normally tell that the lure was a fake often spraying the pipes to show researchers exactly what they thought of them!

There are now plans to trial an array of sensors, rather than a pipe, to prevent non-target species from being sprayed. This sensor-based device can be hidden several metres from the lure so that cats encounter it before they get suspicious.

Many exiting applications for an automated spraying device, including control of other pests and even vaccination of stock and wildlife are also being considered.

Trials were funded by grants from the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board and the Cooperative Research Centre for Invasive Animals and were carried out largely by Andrew Bengsen on Kangaroo Island, and Clint Taylor and Travis Hague at Arid Recovery. ■

Further information

John Read, ecological@activ8.net.au





OUTBACK ROUNDUP

Need help with feral animal control?

The Hunting and Conservation Branch (SA) of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) has issued a reminder that its services are available to all landholders and not just conservation organisations.



Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby

The Hunting and Conservation Branch works on a variety of government, university and NGO conservation programs on private property and reserves.

Activities have involved the removal of feral animals including rabbits, goats, camels, cats and foxes with their efforts contributing to a reduction in grazing pressure and feral predation of native species.

The Hunting and Conservation Branch have made a substantial contribution to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' *Bounceback* program where their expert skills in goat and fox control have been integral to its success.

In 2000, with Australian Government funding assistance, the group established the Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby Preservation Association Inc which purchased 140km² of mountain range adjoining the Flinders Ranges National Park, creating the Bunkers Conservation Reserve for the protection of remnant colonies of this species. ■

Further information Kaz Herbst, 8339 3507 or www.hunt-cons.asn.au

FERAL PHOTOS COMPETITION – LAST DAYS!

Members of the public are encouraged to submit their photos to a Feral Photos photography competition being held by the Cooperative Research Centre for Invasive Animals to help raise awareness and illustrate the damage caused by pest animals across the country.

Photos should show pest animals in their habitat, the damage caused by pest animals, or the various control methods that are available.

Photos provide strong visual evidence of pest animal impact and if used continuously, can help land managers and government agencies to monitor changes across the landscape.

With great prizes up for grabs, people are encouraged to get creative about how they can record and report on pest animals in their area.

Entries must be submitted by 31 October.

FURTHER INFORMATION
www.invasiveanimals.com/feral-photos

FOSSILS ROCK 2011 WITH LEO SAYER

International pop music icon, Leo Sayer will perform for one night only at the inaugural *Fossils Rock* concert in the Parachilna Town Square on Saturday 29 October 2011 supporting the development of an interpretive space depicting Ediacaran fossils.

The performance will feature Leo at his finest and will include songs from his early albums that have not been in his live set for many years, and pop classic hits that continue on radio airwaves around the world.

Celebrating 40 years in the music industry with the release of his re-mastered Greatest Hits CD, Leo has been touring Australia since the beginning of 2011.

His performance is a tribute to the town of Parachilna and his love of Outback Australia.

With the Flinders Ranges one of the best places in the world to see Ediacaran fossils, the event will support the development of an interpretive space in the Parachilna Town Square that will depict these internationally significant fossils. More than one billion years of Earth's history is recorded in the fossils which hold clues to understanding the evolution of life on Earth.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.prairiehotel.com.au

Tickets www.moshtix.com.au or 1300 438 849



OUTBACK ROUNDUP

New (and old) faces for SATC

Following recent changes to the regional operations of the South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) (see *Across The Outback*, June 2011), tourism operators in the Outback region will be interested in a number of new appointments that will directly affect them.

Industry Partnerships Manager

Formerly the Flinders Ranges and Outback South Australia Tourism (FROSAT) regional manager, Peter Cahalan is now the Industry Partnership Manager, supporting the State's 11 tourism regions as they work through changes and develop individual Destination Action Plans.

Regional Marketing Manager

Regional Marketing Manager Mark Phelps has returned to South Australia after working in regional tourism interstate. Mark has been meeting with regional industry representatives and expects to be in the Outback in the coming weeks. He is one of a number of SATC staff members whose regional expertise will assist the development of Destination Action Plans.

Regional Sales

Tamara Modra is the Outback region's contact in the new Regional Sales team and is working with Outback operators to help them transition to becoming bookable online.

Destination Development team

Craig Dunstan has joined SATC's Destination Development team and is focussing on developing new experiences in several regions including the Flinders Ranges and Outback. Most recently he has worked with Australian Air Holidays to develop new South Australian itineraries, including a new one to the Flinders Ranges. ■

Further information 8463 4500

GAMBLING HELPLINE

Living in an isolated area does not mean that you are far from Gambling Help Services – there are a number of free and confidential services available if you or someone you know has problems with gambling.

TELEPHONE

The Gambling Helpline 1800 060 757 is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for counselling, information and referral.

WEBSITE

Visit www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au for online counselling and information.

FACE-TO-FACE

Local Gambling Help Services offer counselling and support including outreach:

- » Unitingcare Wesley, in Port Augusta and Whyalla 1300 456 946
- » Aboriginal Family Support Services Port Augusta 8641 0907

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.

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

CALL FOR CONTENT

Across The Outback
December 2011 edition

Content due by COB
Friday 25 November 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
or 8463 3354.

A fee per article may apply.

Weed surveys at the Innamincka Regional Reserve

Alex Clarke, DENR Regional Ecologist

Recent weed survey and control activities at the Innamincka Regional Reserve revealed no new invasions of Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) since the last surveys in 2001, although significant increases in the distribution and intensity of several undeclared weeds were found.

Conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in collaboration with Rural Solutions, the survey's findings will assist DENR to focus its strategic weed control this year, and inform future planning decisions for the coming months and years.

The surveys were largely focused on identifying new invasions of WoNS species. Several WoNS occur upstream of Innamincka and given the recent heavy flooding and rainfall, it was expected that some WoNS species could have made their way down the Cooper Creek and into the Reserve.

The WoNS of most serious concern are Prickly Acacia (*Acacia nilotica*), Parkinsonia (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) and Mesquite (*Prosopis* spp.). These weeds pose considerable risk to the biodiversity and natural beauty of the Reserve and Coongie Lakes National Park. Once established these weeds are difficult to completely remove, so the best approach is regular surveys to catch any infestations early.

Although not WoNS declared, several other serious weeds are already known to exist at Innamincka – some of these include Mexican poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*), Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*), Blackberry nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), and Mimosa bush (*Acacia farnesiana*).

While no WoNS were found during this year's survey, the team did find an alarming increase in the distribution and intensity of Buffel grass across the Reserve. Several major creek-lines, some that flow directly into the Cooper Creek, were infested to the point best described as Buffel grass 'monocultures'. Buffel grass was also found along many of the Innamincka roadsides and tourist areas.

A small infestation of Noogoora burr (*Xanthium occidentale*) was also found at Innamincka for the first time, along with new Mexican poppy infestations. Several heavy Mimosa bush infestations were also surveyed, and Kidman's Pastoral Company will be working with DENR to control these infestations over the coming months and years.

The weed surveys are part of a wider project funded by the Australian Government's *Caring for Our Country* program to expand DENR's conservation activities at the Innamincka Regional Reserve and Coongie Lakes National Park. A survey of Coongie Lakes National Park has been postponed until 2012 due to flooding and waterlogged roads. ■

WHAT IS A WONS?

Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) are federally declared pest plants that pose a serious risk to, or significantly impact upon, both the environment and primary production. Twenty of the worst pest plants from across Australia were endorsed by the Australian and State governments in 1999 based upon the invasiveness of the weed, its impact and potential for spread, and socio-economic and environmental values.

Further information www.weeds.org.au



Innamincka Causeway, 1959

Santos

FISH LADDER ON INNAMINCKA CAUSEWAY MEETING

Representatives from the various agencies involved with the Innamincka fish ladder project met with concerned locals at Innamincka in July to discuss the project, with fish biologist Martin Mallen-Cooper providing expert knowledge to inform the discussions.

The Innamincka fish ladder project was set-up to investigate the feasibility of modifying the existing Innamincka Causeway to allow fish to move across the causeway during low Cooper Creek flows.

Persistent local rainfall and flooding have de-railed visits to Innamincka by specialists and stakeholders for the past year or more but the feasibility study will be finished by November this year.

The next phase of the project will involve a structural assessment of the causeway by the Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure (DETI), followed by engineering and costing estimates for the new fish ladder. The search for funding and resources to build and install the fish ladder can then begin.

The project is a collaborative effort between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Santos, South Australian Research and Development Institute, DETI, the Marree-Innamincka NRM Group, and Primary Industries and Resources SA, with funding secured by Santos and DENR.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Alex Clarke, DENR
Regional Ecologist
8648 5300



Noogoora burr, Montkeleary Creek

Ben Shephard



Buffel grass, Oonabrinta Creek

Ben Shephard



ANIMAL HEALTH SERVICES

Trent Scholz has returned to the role of Animal Health Officer for northern pastoral SA after taking long service leave and reminds landholders he is available to assist with their animal health needs.

Contact Trent for:

- » Sheep lice inspections
In addition to providing information on lice management, Trent can inspect your sheep for lice to give you some assurance before they are sent to market.
- » Disease investigations
Notify Trent if you observe something that looks unusual in livestock, birds or wildlife. If appropriate, a visit will be arranged and an investigation undertaken.
- » Livestock Health certificates for interstate stock movements.
- » National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) enquires, tag orders, animal/mob movement questions, database transfer enquiries.
- » General animal health enquiries.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Trent is based at 12 Tassie Street, Port Augusta and can be contacted at
Trent.Scholz@sa.gov.au
8648 5160 or 0427 970 453

Camel tracking in the Simpson

Nick Secomb, Project Manager

Satellite collars were attached to twenty-five feral camels in the Simpson Desert in August to establish where the camels occur, and in what density – and landholders are urged not to remove these animals from the landscape.

With the benefits of a good season comes the challenge of finding feral camels which have dispersed across a landscape that has plentiful water and feed, and the collars will improve our understanding of regional feral camel movements and whether or not congregations are occurring.

It will also inform a study on the environmental impacts of camels in the north-west Simpson Desert.

Fitting collars onto feral camels is a difficult exercise and, to get full value from the operation, it is hoped to have collared animals in the field for up to four years.

While other feral camels in a herd can be controlled, landholders are asked to leave the collared camels to their business so we can continue to get full benefit from these animals. ■

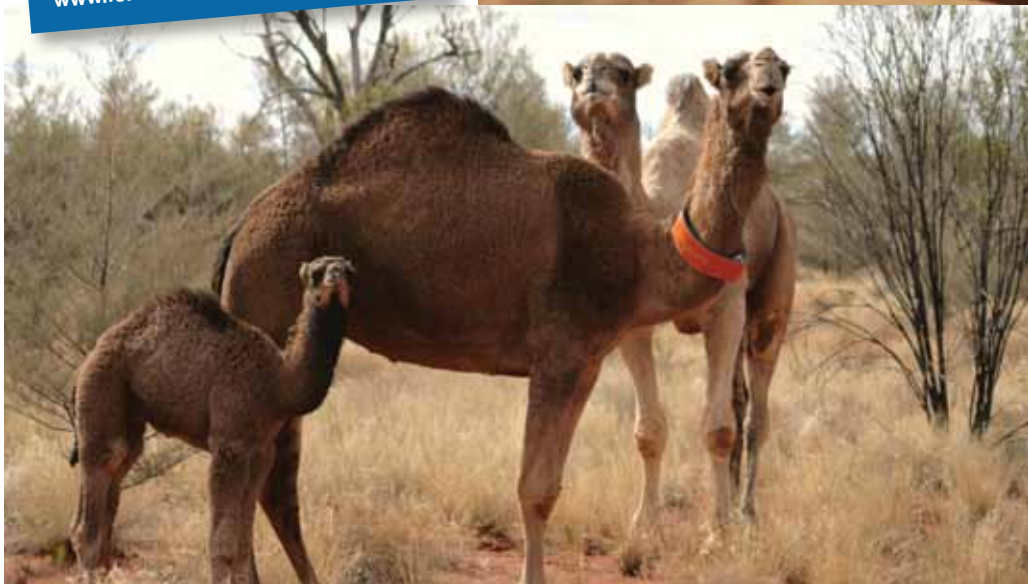
Further information

Nick Secomb, Project Manager,
State Feral Camel Management
Project, 0428 831 896

Any feral camel sightings or
damage should be reported via the
new CamelScan website
www.feralscan.org.au/camelscan



A feral camel fitted with tracking collar





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 or 8463 3354

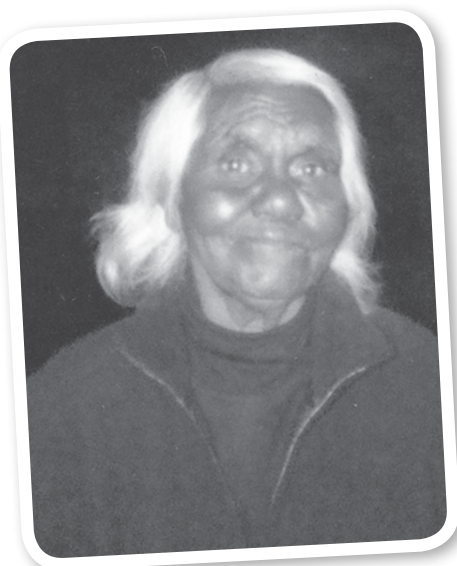


The life of Rene Johnson

Greg Campbell, S. Kidman & Co (with details supplied by Rene's son Chris Johnson)

Photo and article provided with the kind permission of Rene's family

Rene Johnson, a Yandruwandha woman of the Cooper Creek country in the north-east of South Australia passed away in Wilcannia in September. Rene was 80 years old and was the last woman of the Yandruwandha to be born on traditional lands at Merty Merty Station.



Rene's family represent not only the long association of Aboriginal people to the Cooper, but also the earliest of contacts with European explorers.

Rene's father, Merty George, lived to around 106 years of age and was buried at Merty Merty. Merty George's family group were the people who rescued John King from the ill-fate suffered by his colleagues, Burke and Wills. During his months with this family group King is thought to have fathered a daughter, Annie King, also known as Yellow Alice and an auntie of Rene Johnson.

It is notable that Rene's passing in September is exactly 150 years since King's rescue by Alfred Howitt in September 1861.

Rene Johnson's mother married three times and was commonly known as Topsy Parker. She took this name from her second marriage to Peter Parker (Wayawayaya) who was tragically killed in a horse race at the Innamincka Races.

Topsy then married Wilpie, an influential man and custodian of traditions who was born at the Coongie Lakes and later worked as a police tracker. Among the cultural responsibilities he carried, Wilpie performed the traditional ceremonies as a rainmaker. In his rainmaker capacity Wilpie became known to Sidney Kidman who would call upon Wilpie's services during visits to Coongie and Innamincka, stations owned by Kidman from 1904.

Through her mother's marriages Rene had one full sister, Rita (now deceased), two half-sisters Elsie and Sissy and half-brothers Norman (fathered by Peter Parker), Brett and Jimmy (fathered by Wilpie and both now deceased). Norman and Elsie live at Lyndhurst and Sissy in Coober Pedy.

As displacement, poverty arising from concentration in camps, new diseases and government policies all took their toll on traditional Aboriginal life, Rene Johnson was moved to Durham Downs, then Silverton, Tibooburra, and finally Wilcannia.

She married Frank Johnson (Butterboy) and had seven children: Patricia, Delphine (Dello), Trevor, Vicki-Anne, Kerry, Chris and Glen. The children were variously removed by authorities and raised in several locations throughout New South Wales. Most returned to Wilcannia in their adult lives.

The lives of Rene Johnson and those of her mother and father represent our modern history from traditional Aboriginal life, the earliest contacts with European explorers, pastoral development, changing government social policies, and now the fibre optic age.

Rene lived to assist and witness the development of Indigenous Land Use Agreements over her traditional country, recognising the history and association of her family to the Yandruwandha/Yawarrawarrka lands of north-east South Australia. Rene's passing ends a rich and turbulent chapter in Australian history. ■

