Across the OUTBACK

APRIL 2012 PRODUCED FOR OUTBACK SA NUMBER 59

Unique arid lands fishery sheds light on catchment health

Henry Mancini, Senior Water Projects Officer

For only the fourth time, a unique sustainable fishery at Lake Hope on Mulka Station which operates only every 10 years is in full swing – and its catch could provide important information on the health of the Cooper Creek catchment.

For some *Across The Outback* readers it may be hard to believe that a fishery is operating in the SA Arid Lands region but the Lake Hope fishery is just another product of the region's 'boom and bust' system.

Located about 160 kilometres south-west of Innamincka, Lake Hope is a terminal lake which fills with water from the Cooper Creek about every 10 years usually after the big flow events that lead to the filling of Lake Eyre.

Operated by Mulka Station manager Gary Overton, who has the only commercial fishery license in the region, the fishery is activated under strict license conditions when flow volumes at Innamincka reach a certain level during flood events.

Consequently, it has been in operation only three times previously – in the mid 1980s, 1990s and 2001.

To ensure its sustainability the fishery requires new equipment to be purchased at the commencement of each operation for effective and efficient fishing and to provide consistent size fish for the market.

There are also restrictions around fish size and catch and only small amounts are caught to satisfy market demand. As the nets are designed to catch a narrow size range of fish there is little in the way of by-catch.

During harvest, less than 4 per cent of the fish population of the lake is taken – with the remainder eventually rotting in the sun and consumed by scavenging wildlife when the floodwaters retract as part of the natural 'boom and bust' system.

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Lake Hope

Indigenous Land Use Agreements

In response to recent enquiries on lessee responsibilities around native title, the Pastoral Board provides some background here on Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs).

An agreement between a native title group and others, ILUAs are arrangements that pastoralists and native title groups may find beneficial as they provide an opportunity to clarify relationships, roles and responsibilities of each party about the use and management of land and waters.

An ILUA allows the parties to negotiate flexible agreements to suit their particular circumstances and can be negotiated over areas where native title has, or has not yet, been determined, including areas where there is no current native title claim.

ILUAs can be part of a native title determination, or agreed separately.

ILUAs can deal with matters such as:

- communication between the parties
- native title holders agreeing to a future non-pastoral development
- how native title rights coexist with the rights of other people, including how Aboriginal rights under section 47 of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* work in practice
- protection of Aboriginal heritage
- extinguishment of native title
- compensation for affects on native title

The National Native Title Tribunal is the administration body for ILUAs, with the Registrar of the Tribunal responsible for making administrative decisions about the registration of ILUAs.

Courts are not involved in the ILUA process – it is conducted between the parties who wish to negotiate the agreement. Those parties may contact the Tribunal for assistance in negotiating the ILUA.

When registered with the Tribunal, ILUAs bind all parties and all native title holders to the terms of the agreement. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

National Native Title Tribunal
08 8205 2000

The Tribunal has produced a booklet that provides guidance on the important issues parties could canvass during negotiations; download a copy here www.nntt.gov.au

In South Australia, the South Australian Native Title Resolution website has template examples for negotiations between pastoral lessees and native title claim groups; visit santr.com.au

EXISTING SA PASTORAL ILUAs

Pastoral ILUAs have been negotiated as part of native title negotiations in Yankunytjatjara/Antakirinja, Yandruwandha/Yawarrawarrka, Gawler Ranges, Antakirinja Matu- Yankunytjatjara and Eringa native title claims.

Currently pastoral ILUAs are under consideration in other areas, particularly the Arabunna, Dieri and Kokotha Uwankara native title claims.

Each of these negotiations has resulted in some changes to the template ILUAs which have been negotiated over recent years. The cost of negotiating ILUAs separate to other negotiations could be quite high.

PASTORAL BOARD AND UNIT CONTACTS

The Pastoral Board of SA
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KESWICK SA 5035
(GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001)

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

Presiding Member
Geoff Mills

Pastoral Board matters
David Hanna (08) 8226 2127

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 2012 MEETING DATES

Meeting 130	**Thursday 21 June Adelaide**
Meeting 131	**Wednesday 15 August Adelaide**
Meeting 132	**Thursday 11 October Adelaide**
Meeting 133	**Thursday 13 December Adelaide**

Field computers pay off in pastoral data collection

Craig Baulderstone, Principal Scientific Officer

The Pastoral Lease Assessment Program has firmly entered the information age with staff now using 'tablets' (or field computers) for data entry.

In the past, Pastoral Lease Assessment staff have spent a substantial amount of time, usually about one hour per vegetation monitoring site, entering field data into the Arid Lands Information System (ALIS) from office computers. Recently this data has been entered directly in the field using tablets, removing the risk of error inherent in transferring the field data from paper to ALIS, and saving the team considerable time carrying out data entry both in the office, and in the field.

Other advantages of the tablet include:

- Data is validated by the tablet in the field and will not accept records if something is missed or does not meet other tests
- Access to a searchable database of South Australian plants maintained by the State Herbarium of South Australia which provides up-to-date species lists and names
- Map data is easily edited and recorded
- A GPS within the tablet tracks all movements, assisting with map updates and relocating sites, particularly saving time in rediscovering old, faint or overgrown tracks
- Automated data transfer from the field tablets to ALIS
- New, simple data formats have led to data entry savings and improved data quality

The first large Pastoral Lease Assessment was recently completed in the North East district and involved an assessment of 65 photopoint sites and 60 paddocks. It is notable that staff were able to complete the work in half the usual field time with the new tablets a key factor in the increased efficiency. Further time savings were realised back in the office where field data entry was no longer required. ■

WHAT DATA IS COLLECTED?

Data collected at a vegetation monitoring site includes date, observers, location, features of the landscape, photos, presence and impacts of herbivores, plant species and their abundance and dominance, erosion, and comments on various condition-related aspects of the site.

Craig Baulderstone with one of the new field computers

Koonamore photographic archive online

Craig Baulderstone, Principal Scientific Officer

The longest photographic archive in Australia to record the recovery of a degraded rangeland is now available for viewing online.

Since 1926, the University of Adelaide has researched the recovery of a degraded rangeland at Koonamore, a sheep station in the north-east district of South Australia, using repeat photography to record the changing vegetation.

To help represent the change that has occurred over the years in an easily viewed format the collection has now been digitised, and the repeat photography of 67 permanent sites has been converted into a video series, *Recalling the Past: Responses of a degraded rangeland*.

Comprising 76 volumes and available for viewing in high definition on YouTube, the approximately six minute long video presentations enhance the detection and interpretation of the vegetation (and soil surface) changes that have occurred over time, especially if the video is viewed in reverse.

The landscape responses are significant and surprising.

The Koonamore Photographic Archive is valuable because it records the severe El Nino droughts of the 1930s, the arrival of Myxomatosis in the 1950s, and the 1973-74 extreme wet period.

However, it also serves as a continuing reference for vegetation responses in the absence of domestic stock under the severe climatic fluctuations that characterise the Australian rangelands.

Digitisation of the archives and the video series was an initiative of Dean Graetz (formerly CSIRO) and Russell Sinclair (University of Adelaide), with assistance from the Pastoral Board in providing essential equipment.

Watch the videos

The simplest way to access the series is via two dedicated websites.

tinyurl.com/3algxrx

» Provides explanatory background to the Koonamore project and the series, followed by links to each video. The annotated still images used for the video production are available to view as a slide show, and to download.

tinyurl.com/32ovg9o

» Provides the background and YouTube links, along with immersive panoramic photography that displays the landscape context of most of the photographic sites. ■

Further information
Russell Sinclair 8313 4730, russell.sinclair@adelaide.edu.au

ABOUT KOONAMORE

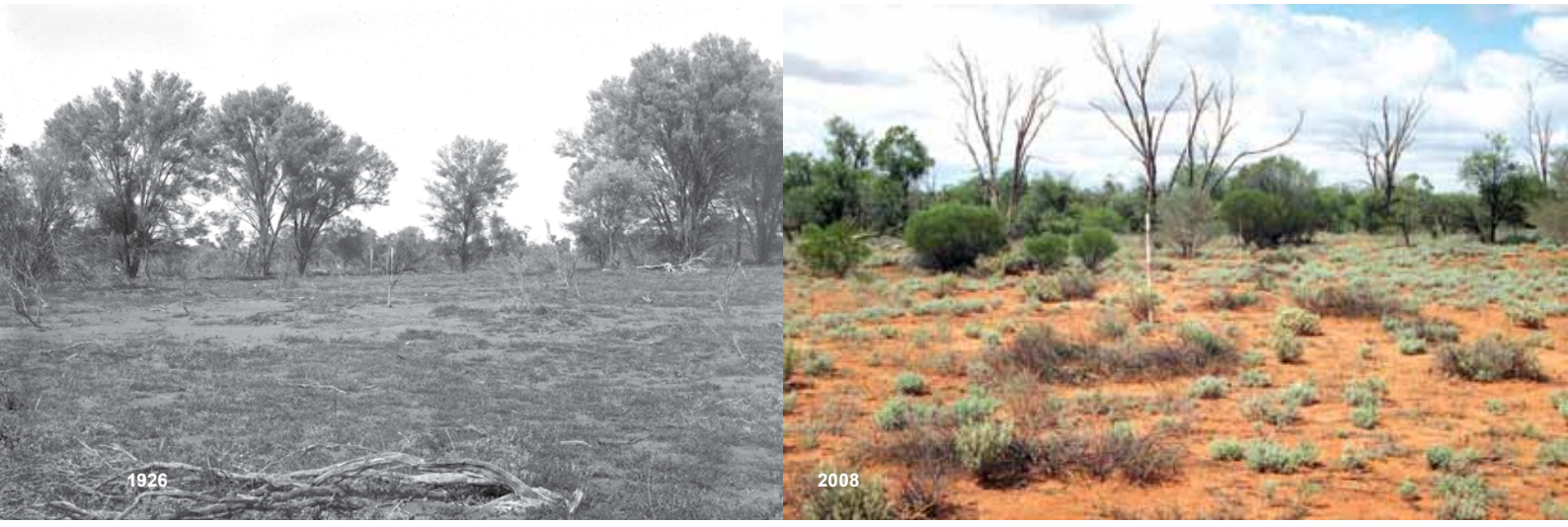
The TGB Osborn Vegetation Reserve, Koonamore is located 400 kilometres north-east of Adelaide. Nearly 90 years old and owned by the University of Adelaide, in 1925, a badly overgrazed area of 400 hectares on Koonamore Station was fenced by Professor TGB Osborn to permanently exclude sheep and (hopefully) rabbits.

The goal was to study:

» the regeneration of natural vegetation, particularly of saltbush and trees in an over-grazed area, when all grazing influences, including those of rabbits, are removed
» the effect of grazing of known intensity on the process of regeneration
» the ecology of the area and particularly the autecology of the species that are most valuable economically.

Koonamore is one of the longest-running monitoring sites of its type in the world.

From: *ees.adelaide.edu.au/about/fieldstations/koonamore/Koonamore.pdf*



Koonamore quadrat 200: Seen in good health in the 1926 photo, by November 2008 many of the old Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) trees have died but a healthy stand of young Mulga are re-establishing helped along by the lack of grazing by sheep or rabbits

Look out for us at your local races

The SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board and Department of Environment and Resources (DENR) will have a stronger presence at events this year with plans for a stall at a number of the local races.

The stalls will provide land managers and townsfolk with a convenient opportunity to pick up information to help with their local land and pest management and biodiversity conservation efforts.

As well as being a good opportunity for a yarn with key staff, visitors to the stall can learn how to access funding to assist with pest and land management activities, and about the Ecosystem Management Understanding™ project, an informal approach to land management which is now running on 14 properties in the region.

You can feed back information to us too.

At previous events, our Threatened Fauna Officer, Reece Pedler, has been excited to learn about possible Woma Python, Plains Wanderer, and Flock Pigeon sightings, and we are always happy to talk about your experiences with dingoes and pass that information back to our Dingo Project Management team.

We also hope to have some of the SAAL NRM Board and NRM Group members present too.

Our events coordinator, Perri Carter, is particularly experienced with keeping kids entertained with fun activities to help them learn about their environment including colouring-in and making animal scats (or poos!) – and, if you have a long drive home, there will also be copies of our kid's publication *Andy the Ant's Arid Adventures* on hand to keep your kids entertained.

Perri has a degree in Environmental Science and has developed a keen appreciation of the region, its varied ecosystems, and wildlife, through her work with volunteers and tracking native critters at Arid Recovery, and a childhood spent camping, bush-walking, rock-climbing, and orienteering throughout the Flinders Ranges. ■

Further information
Perri Carter, Community Engagement Officer, 8648 5300

SEE YOU IN YUNTA ON 28 APRIL

Look out for us at the stall at the Yunta Picnic Races and Gymkhana on 28 April where Threatened Fauna Officer Reece Pedler will be talking to locals about his Dusky Hopping Mouse project.

WHERE NEXT?
With over 50 per cent of South Australia making up the SA Arid Lands region, there is a lot of ground for us to cover, so the chosen events ensure a broad coverage of the key districts in the region.

- Oodnadatta Races and Gymkhana, 12 May
- Nonning Gymkhana, 19 May
- Marree Picnic Races, 9 June
- Glendambo Gymkhana, 6 October
- Blinman Races, 20 October

Combined Arid Recovery and SAAL NRM stall at BHP Family Day, Roxby Downs, November 2011

…From page 1

As soon as there are appropriately sized fish for the market, the fish are caught, put on ice and transported to Adelaide and then on to Melbourne and Sydney where they're often bought for the restaurant trade.

The main species caught are the Yellow Belly – also known as Callop or Golden Perch (*Macquaria* species) – and Barcoo Grunter (*Scortum barcoo*). In 2001-02, the fishery harvested about 140 tonnes of Callop, which fetch between $7 and $15 a kilogram.

Fishing usually lasts until there is a decline in the condition of fish, which is usually about 18 months, and at the peak of its operation the fishery employs 3-4 staff.

As a terminal lake of the Cooper Creek catchment, SARDI and the SAAL NRM Board, through liaison with Gary Overton, are realising that Lake Hope is an important indicator of the ecological health of the system – what we observe here can be an indication of what is happening further up the catchment.

Fish catch is an important measure of this – if Lake Hope yields good numbers and sizes of fish, and there is little disease, then the system is probably functioning in a healthy state.

Importantly, Gary has kept data from each catch stretching back to the mid-1980s. He has used consistent sampling at one locality providing a unique opportunity to analyse this information to gauge, and ultimately manage, the system's health.

Lake Hope is also an important opportunity to learn about how a sustainable industry that operates at limited times can function in the SA Arid Lands region and contribute to the nation's food security through the sustainable harvest of native freshwater fish.

There are numerous long-term benefits of learning about the Cooper Creek catchment and understanding its ecology including how to manage for climate change, and the effect on changes in flow on native fish species and waterbirds. ■

Further information
Henry Mancini 8648 5300

COOPER CREEK PROJECT

Interest in the fishery stems from the SA Arid Land NRM Board's 'Cooper Creek project' which is investigating the natural features and human influences on key waterholes and wetlands along the Cooper Creek.

The Cooper Creek catchment is an important but relatively poorly understood wetland system and the project uses the rare opportunity of the large 2010-11 flood to gather important ecological information to improve our understanding of how the catchment responds to flooding.

The data gathered is expected to inform management strategies for the catchment including parks and tourism.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Henry Mancini 8648 5300


Mimosa Bush

NEWS FROM MARLA-OODNADATTA

An initiative of the Marla Oodnadatta NRM Group, a project aimed at controlling the spread of prickly Mimosa Bush (*Acacia farnesiana*) in The Peake Creek catchment is underway, with Rural Solutions contracted to survey the area and extent of Mimosa Bush in the catchment targeting sites nominated by land managers.

Targeted management techniques – both mechanical and chemical – will be determined by participating land managers and Group members once the initial survey has been undertaken.

Mimosa Bush is spreading in The Peake River catchment and increased numbers develop into dense thickets and have the potential to choke drainage lines, prevent stock access to waterpoints, particularly around dams, and reduce biodiversity.

Mimosa Bush is a light green, rounded, spreading, multi-stemmed shrub between 4-7m high. Leaves are bipinnate and up to 5cm in length and there are up to 4cm pairs of straight white spines at the leaf base. The flower is a yellow cylindrical ball which develops through autumn to early summer.

Further information
Janet Walton, NRM Officer, 8648 5300


Mimosa Bush

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 website: www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au/AboutUs/OurNRMDistrictGroups/Overview.aspx

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	Maree Morton
Kingoonya	Julie Mould

Your chance to join your local NRM Group

Applications are now open for membership of the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board's district-based NRM Groups and members of the Arid Lands community with an active interest in natural resources management in their area are encouraged to apply.

There are currently five active NRM Groups in the region representing the North Flinders, Marree-Innamincka, Marla-Oodnadatta, Kingoonya and Gawler Ranges districts.

Vacancies exist within all of the NRM Groups except Kingoonya and the Board is particularly keen to establish a sixth NRM Group in the North East district.

Community members involved at this level are a vital, practical link for the communities they represent providing a local perspective and ensuring the Board's programs are locally relevant.

The majority of Group members live in the district or are involved in natural resources management in the area.

Groups are skills-based with members selected based on their knowledge of areas such as local community affairs, mining and petroleum, tourism, primary production, soil conservation, water resources management, local governance, Aboriginal heritage and business administration.

NRM Groups are actively engaged with the delivery of projects and have been instrumental in driving a range of the Board's recent projects and initiatives.

The North Flinders NRM Group, for example, have driven the *Biteback* program for dingo control, now being rolled out across the Arid Lands region in areas south of the Dog Fence, and are involved in oleander and cactus control in the Flinders Ranges.

And the Marla-Oodnadatta and Kingoonya NRM Groups have both set up trials of the Ecosystem Management Understanding™ project, an informal approach to sustainable land management that combines pastoralist experience with scientific expertise.

The Marree-Innamincka NRM Group have been involved in a biological survey of plants and animals in the district following exceptional rain events as well as the development of an informative and concise brochure for travellers on the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks.

And the Gawler Ranges NRM Group were instrumental in alerting the Board to a growing dingo problem and supporting the Board's application for industry funding to bring forward the roll-out of *Biteback* to the eastern Gawler Ranges. ■

TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST

To register your interest in becoming an NRM Group member or for further information contact the NRM office 8648 5300 or visit our website www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au

APPLICATIONS CLOSE 25 MAY 2012

WHAT'S THAT PLANT?

The recent rains in the region have resulted in the germination of a number of uncommonly seen plant species and the North Flinders NRM Group is planning a plant identification workshop to provide attendees with an opportunity to brush up on their plant identification skills.

Planning is underway but the workshop will be held in mid-May in the North Flinders district.

Further information will be made available closer to the day but contact Assistant NRM Officer Matthew Westover 8648 5300 if you would like to register your interest.

DINGO UPDATE

APRIL 2012 • ISSUE 17

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 5300

South of the Fence

Approximately 70 landholders participated in the recent bait injection services held from February to April across the North East, Gawler Ranges, North Flinders-Maree and Kingoonya districts.

With aerial baiting to commence on some properties in April, it is imperative that landholders remain vigilant with their ground baiting control. Coordinating the current ground baiting program with aerial baiting will give a thorough coverage of dingo control during the autumn months. Please remember that aerial baiting does not replace ground-baiting – it will only be used in areas on participating properties that are inaccessible to vehicles.

Meanwhile, the buckets of manufactured baits that were freely distributed to landholders who attended the injection services can now be obtained half-price from the Dingo Management team. These are 'shelf-stable' baits and can be kept in a locked cupboard, to be put out in between the injection services.

Dogger funding extended

The 13 landholders who successfully applied for a dogger to assist with their dingo control have a little longer to employ one after an extension was gained from the South Australian Sheep Advisory Group allowing funding to be expended by the middle of May. The landholders are spread across *Biteback's* four participating districts and many have experienced delays with hiring a dogger due to recent rainfall. ■

HAVE YOUR SAY

With *Biteback* funding due to finish at the end of June, participating landholders are encouraged to share their experiences of the program. Currently being compiled on behalf of the SA Arid Lands NRM Board, a survey will help evaluate the *Biteback* project, particularly in terms of whether local area planning has changed the way they will work with their neighbours in coordinating future pest control.

Further information will follow but the survey is expected to take place in mid April and will be available online and in hard copy.

Applications are underway for further funding for the *Biteback* program.

North of the Fence

Increased dingo activity and calf predation on properties north of the Dog Fence have led to an increase in applications for dingo baiting by landholders in the South Australian Arid Lands region that are north of the Dog Fence. As a result, bait injection services have been provided at Mungeranie, Todmorden, Merty Merty, Nilpinna Stations and the Arckaringa turn-off.

North of the Dog Fence dingoes are neither specifically protected or declared, but are regarded as legitimate wildlife species with a valuable ecological role. In this area they are only baited at times necessary to provide temporary protection to calves when alternative prey sources are low due to seasonal conditions.

The previous three years excellent conditions have led to a marked increase in dingo numbers and landholders can apply to the Board for baits if they are experiencing calf damage. The application process has been refined with a seven-day turn around for approvals. Applications can be made online www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au or by calling the Dingo Management team.

Meanwhile, Innamincka Station is now taking part in the Dingo Research project joining Cordillo, Quinyambie and Todmorden Stations in this investigation of the relationship between dingoes, 1080 baiting, calf predation/lactation failure, and biodiversity. Innamincka Station will now maintain 1080 baited and unbaited paddocks so we can identify the proportion of calf losses attributable to dingoes, the environmental factors associated with increased calf predation, and the ability of baiting to protect against predation. The Dingo Research Project is due for completion in 2014 when the Board expects to have gathered the necessary data to better manage dingoes for cattle production and biodiversity outcomes. ■

Australian Rangelands Initiative

Kate Forrest, Coordinator, Rangeland NRM Alliance

The Rangeland NRM Alliance is leading the development of the Australian Rangelands Initiative (ARI) to increase recognition that the Australian rangelands, with its inherent links between productivity, biodiversity, social and financial issues, needs to be seen and approached in a different manner.

The ARI will include the development of a plan to assist the Australian Government to meet its requirements regarding rangelands management, and demonstrate how this plan could be delivered through regional NRM bodies and other invested parties.

Already the development of the ARI is getting support from within the Australian Government and some rangelands based industry and scientific providers.

If it is successful in its aims, land managers should see a more streamlined and coordinated system for NRM activities from the national to regional scale, greater resourcing, and better NRM programs focusing on the issues important for their region.

The Australian Rangelands Initiative will target two key areas.

1. **Building a national rangelands agenda**

   This will create a national awareness of the importance of Australia's rangelands, leading to a commitment to implement the *National Principles for Sustainable Resource Management in the Rangelands* as endorsed by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council in 2010.

2. **Improving ground cover/ biodiversity**

   As the key driver of natural resources improvement in the rangelands, the ARI will work to improve ground cover and therefore biodiversity extent across the Australian rangelands. By improving ground cover, the actions from the ARI will have a significant impact on erosion including preventing soil leaving the landscape through dust storms and increasing carbon storage across Australia's rangelands.

The ARI is expected to be completed in time for the Australian Rangelands Society Conference in Kununurra in September. ■

Further information
Kate Forrest 8648 5300
or Neil Judd (Chair) 07 4656 8500

THE RANGELAND NRM ALLIANCE

Established in 2008, the National Rangeland NRM Alliance is a collaboration of 14 natural resources management bodies from across Australia which represents 80% of Australia's land mass. The Alliance works with the Australian Government and other funding bodies to get rangelands management on the national agenda, improve the delivery of rangelands NRM at a national level, and improve sustainable rangelands management.

The SA Arid Lands NRM Board supports the Rangeland NRM Alliance hosting the group's Coordinator through the Regional Landcare Facilitators program. The Alliance's current Chair is Neil Judd of South West NRM in Queensland.

MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

South Australia
- SA Arid Lands NRM Board
- SA Murray Darling NRM Board
- Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Board

Queensland
- Desert Channels Queensland
- Cape York NRM Group
- Northern Gulf Resource Management Group
- Southern Gulf Catchments
- South West NRM

Northern Territory
- Territory NRM

Western Australia
- Rangelands NRM

New South Wales
- Western Catchment Management Authority (CMA)
- Lachlan CMA
- Central West CMA
- Lower Murray Darling CMA

Mt Willoughby team set new record for rare lizard!

Reece Pedler, Threatened Fauna Officer

A record 15 Bronzeback Legless Lizards were captured on Mt Willoughby Station Indigenous Protected Area in March during a three-day survey targeting the nationally vulnerable and notoriously hard to find species.

Working in spectacular breakaway country, a team of six Mt Willoughby staff and family used rakes to search leaf litter beds, and capture, measure and photograph Bronzebacks from six sites where they had not previously been recorded.

The large number and range of adult and young captured suggests that there is a large and healthy population of Bronzebacks on Mt Willoughby.

The Bronzeback Legless Lizard (*Ophidiocephalus taeniatus*) is a poorly understood reptile which spends a secretive life beneath the leaf litter of arid zone shrubs.

Known only from a handful of sites between Coober Pedy and the Northern Territory border, Bronzebacks are renowned amongst biologists as painfully hard to find, with days of searching in appropriate habitat typically yielding few, if any, captures.

These new captures demonstrate for the first time that the species distribution is continuous between Coober Pedy and the Arckaringa Hills and represent the most westerly records of the species to date.

The work will continue with further searches for Bronzebacks in adjacent areas as well as on-ground actions to protect and improve the species' habitat. This may include training local community members in chemical handling and weed control to address the threat posed to Bronzeback habitat by weeds such as Buffel Grass.

A collaboration between the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board's Threatened Fauna and Aboriginal Engagement programs, the project is funded by the Australian Government's *Caring for our Country* program and supported through Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) Jonathon Fatt-Clifton. ■

Mt Willoughby Bronzeback team: Allan Taylor, Peter Willis, Peter Willis Jnr, Aaron Fenner, Shontelle Lennon and SAAL NRM Indigenous Engagement Officer/Regional Landcare Facilitator Jon Fatt-Clifton

William Lennon, Peter Willis and Jon Fatt-Clifton are joined by Shontelle Lennon as the first Bronzeback is retrieved from the leaf litter

Wood collection prohibited in Witjira National Park

Visitors to the Witjira National Park, located 887 kilometres north-west of Port Augusta, are no longer permitted to collect wood for campfires after a decision by the Witjira Co-management Board to protect the park's precious and fragile arid biodiversity.

The wood campfire is an iconic experience but years of firewood collection by visitors – including some irresponsible collection and use – has prompted the Board's decision.

Recruitment of wood-bearing shrubs and trees can take a long time, which can leave areas near visitor sites denuded of wood.

Furthermore, some visitors choose to break off or cut down trees and shrubs, some of which may have cultural significance.

Trees may look dead during drought but can be dormant and still green.

Wood provides shade, shelter and homes for a variety of birds, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates while rotting wood provides organic matter and nutrients for another generation of trees and shrubs.

The Witjira Co-management Board made the decision after stakeholder consultation during September to November 2011.

Wood fires are still permitted at designated camping areas. However, from 2013 wood collection and wood fires at designated camping areas will no longer be permitted within the Witjira National Park.

In the South Australian Arid Lands region, wood fires are currently not permitted within Lake Eyre National Park or Wabma Kadarbu Mound Springs Conservation Park. ■

HERITAGE HEROES

Nominations are now open for South Australian Heritage Heroes Awards 2012 and the public are encouraged to nominate volunteers who have made a significant effort to protect, record and celebrate our State's heritage.

It is an excellent way to honour volunteers and their role in our community, conserving heritage for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

Community groups, individuals, heritage consultants and advisors, local councils, conservation and heritage organisations and government agencies are all encouraged to apply.

Nominations are invited in three categories:

» Individual Heritage Volunteer
» Heritage Volunteer Group
» Youth Heritage Volunteer/Group

The SA Heritage Heroes program is a collaboration between the South Australian Heritage Council, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre at UniSA.

Nominations close on Friday 27 April 2012. Further information www.hawkecentre.unisa.edu.au

WARNING AGAINST ILLEGAL HUNTING

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is asking members of the public to report illegal hunting activity to police after native animal remains were recently discovered in a number of locations in the Upper South East, indicating unlawful use of firearms and possible cruelty offences.

Eastern grey kangaroos were found with severe injuries that would have caused significant suffering before the animals died.

Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* a person must not, without permission, hunt or have possession of any firearm or device for the purpose of hunting in a park or reserve.

DENR works closely with the South Australia Police and other government agencies to identify and apprehend offenders illegally hunting within reserves which can attract a fine of up to $100,000 or two years imprisonment. This applies whether the animals are on a national park or on private land and there are additional penalties for taking animals on a park.

The Animal Welfare Act 1985 has penalties of up to $50,000 or four years imprisonment for killing any animal in a cruel manner.

Firearms, vehicles and other equipment used for hunting on parks are subject to seizure and can be permanently forfeited.

Illegal hunters are also putting park visitors and neighbours at serious risk when illegally shooting within parks.

Residents, visitors and landholders, particularly those residing adjacent to parks, who observe any suspicious activity on their property or in their local area, are strongly encouraged to report it to the local police.

The 'Commercial and Non-Commercial National Codes of Practice' outlines the required minimum standards for humane shooting of kangaroos and wallabies: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/wildlife-trade/publications/kangaroo/practice.html

Annual trapping at Arid Recovery

Over five days in February and for the fourteenth year in a row, Arid Recovery completed its Annual Trapping event, netting 932 animals in one of the longest running monitoring programs in the arid zone.

Using a combination of Elliot and pitfall traps, small mammals and reptiles are targeted at sites inside and outside the 123 square kilometre fenced Arid Recovery reserve.

This year dedicated volunteers and staff pulled out 173 reptiles from pitfall traps while nearly 759 small mammals fell for the peanut butter and oat ball baits.

Although numbers aren't as high as last year's catch of over 1000 animals this is most likely due to the drying off of much of the vegetation and because last year's trapping was undertaken in the middle of a mouse plague.

Fourteen years of data is showing six times more small mammals are captured inside the reserve compared to outside, highlighting the devastating impacts of feral cats, foxes and rabbits.

Further information and photos
www.aridrecovery.org.au or
www.facebook.com/AridRecovery

ABOUT ARID RECOVERY

Located just north of Roxby Downs, Arid Recovery is an ecosystem restoration initiative based in the South Australian outback and dedicated to the restoration of Australia's arid lands.

Feral cats, rabbits and foxes have been eradicated from a total of 60km² and this has provided an area of complete protection into which four species of locally extinct mammals have so far been reintroduced.

Arid Recovery is a unique example of a highly successful partnership between industry, government, education and community.

Arid Recovery volunteers, Bruce and Rob, set up a pitfall line

Plains Rat (*Pseudomys australis*) K Mera

Desert Mouse (*Pseudomys desertor*)

Earthquakes: drop, cover, hold

Following the 6.1 magnitude earthquake recorded in the state's Far North on 23 March, the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure is reminding South Australians about safety actions they can undertake to help protect themselves should an earthquake occur in their vicinity.

While the risk of earthquakes in South Australia is considerably lower than in other parts of the world, seismic activity is by no means rare and we can't predict when or where an earthquake will occur.

When shaking starts, the best advice is to 'drop, cover and hold' – that is, drop to the floor, take cover under a sturdy piece of furniture, and hold on to the leg of the furniture.

Alternatively, shelter on the floor against an interior wall away from windows, fireplaces, bookcases or other heavy and potentially unstable furniture items.

If people are outside, it is important that they move away from buildings and other structures such as powerlines and trees, and if driving, people should pull over to a clear location and stop and stay in the vehicle with seatbelts fastened until the shaking stops.

Research has shown that these practices protect people in most earthquake scenarios.

Further information
www.sa.gov.au/emergency/earthquake

ForwardIT – explore your online world

Designed with novice users in mind, ForwardIT is a website developed by the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology providing free learning materials to assist people to use the Internet.

It provides a range of easy to understand articles, videos and instructions to help users develop their online skills, increase their understanding of how to use the Internet, and make sense of Internet jargon.

ForwardIT has a user-friendly design so that people can use the website by themselves or with the support of a friend or family member, and there is a free iPad application to download providing mobile access to the learning materials.

ForwardIT is available for use by agencies to deliver digital literacy skills as part of their existing programs and is being rolled out to libraries, community centres and not-for-profit organisations across the State to help staff, volunteers and their clients develop their own digital literacy skills.

Further information
www.forwardit.sa.gov.au

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
June 2012 edition

Content due by COB
Friday 25 May 2012

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

NEW COMMITTEE TO REPRESENT OUTBACK TOURISM OPERATORS

A newly formed Outback Tourism Working Party consisting of members across Outback SA will be the main tourism body responsible for representing the outback region's tourism operators with support from Regional Development Australia Far North (RDAFN).

The working party includes representatives from Oodnadatta, Coober Pedy, William Creek, Innamincka, Marree and Port Augusta as well as the Roxby Downs Council, District Council of Coober Pedy, Outback Communities Authority, and RDAFN.

Assisted by the attraction of water in Lake Eyre, the region has experienced a prosperous few years and the group is currently working with the South Australian Tourism Commission and Flinders Ranges and Outback SA Tourism to develop products and experiences to prepare for and benefit from future growth.

The region has many drawcards and attractions and tourism operators and travellers need to be reminded that the region, and the Lake itself, are spectacular even when there isn't water about.

The Group will link together regularly via phone and in person with some funding and administration support from RDAFN.

OUTBACK TOURISM WORKING PARTY MEMBERS

- Rob Coro, Desert Cave, Coober Pedy (Chair)
- Jo Fort, The Outback Loop (Innamincka/ Birdsville Hotels) (Vice Chair/Secretary)
- Adam Plate, Oodnadatta Roadhouse
- Yanni Athanasiadis, Umoona Opal Mine, Coober Pedy
- Trevor Wright, Wrightsair, William Creek
- Trent Brown, GSL Aviation, Marree
- Pauline Hedger, Wadlata Outback Centre, Port Augusta
- Pat Katnich, Outback Communities Authority
- Michelle Hales, Roxby Downs Council
- Damien Clark, District Council of Coober Pedy
- Paula Osborn/Carmelo Crisa, Regional Development Australia Far North

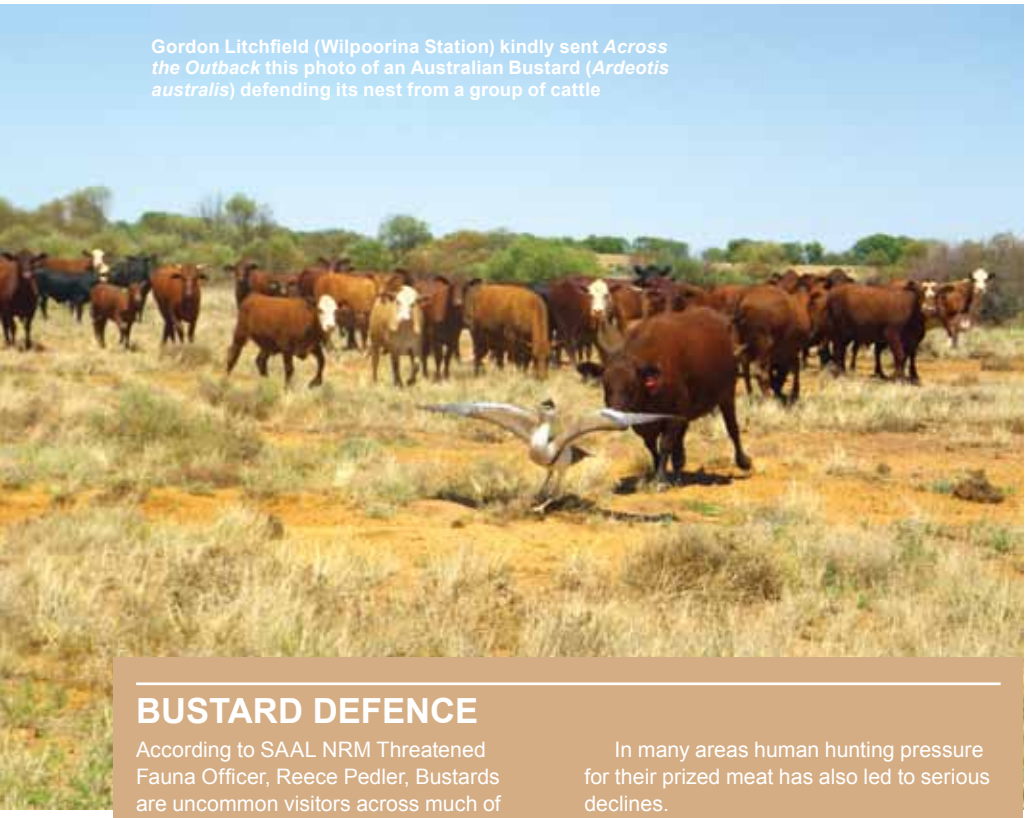
FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any concerns about tourism in your area – for example, around recognition and promotion of Outback SA at the State and national level, infrastructure issues or access to information for outback tourism operators – contact your local working party representative directly or through Regional Development Australia Far North 8641 1444.

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.



Gordon Litchfield (Wilpoorina Station) kindly sent *Across the Outback* this photo of an Australian Bustard (*Ardeotis australis*) defending its nest from a group of cattle

BUSTARD DEFENCE

According to SAAL NRM Threatened Fauna Officer, Reece Pedler, Bustards are uncommon visitors across much of our region and have rarely been recorded nesting so far south. They are much more frequently seen in the far north-east of SA and are more common in northern Australian states. Their decline across much of southern Australia is due to changes in habitat and introduced ground predators such as cats and foxes.

In many areas human hunting pressure for their prized meat has also led to serious declines.

Bustards breed after rain, laying one or two eggs on bare ground and, in the SA Arid Lands region, these highly nomadic birds often appear in areas that have had recent rain or have been recently burnt. Here they can cash in on grass seeds and insects (particularly grasshoppers) or fire-cooked critters such as small mammals and lizards.

Have your say on Agriculture Blueprint

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) is calling for input into the *Blueprint for Australian Agriculture* asking people with an interest in the agricultural industry and the wider supply chain to contribute to its development.

The *Blueprint for Australian Agriculture* is a document which will set out the road map for the future of the agricultural sector and its supply chain, based on what farmers, transporters, processors, retailers, agribusinesses, NRM groups, agricultural educators, and others within rural communities have told us.

Complete an online survey and tell us the issues, challenges, opportunities and risks you see facing agriculture now and in the future.

Alternatively, come along to one of the Blueprint forums to be hosted across Australia by the NFF and Westpac from March to May 2012. In South Australia, the forum will be held in Adelaide on 2 May 2012.

Further information
For more information or to register for the forum, complete the online survey www.research.net/s/BlueprintforAustralianAg or call the NFF on 02 6269 5666

GET ON BOARD FOR NATIONAL TREE DAY

Planet Ark is calling on environment groups, community groups, councils, schools and businesses to get involved in National Tree Day and help inspire people in their communities to learn about their natural environment and do something positive to help protect it for future generations.

This year National Tree Day is on Sunday 29 July 2012, with Schools Tree Day scheduled for Friday 27 July but you may register a site or activity on any day that suits you.

National Tree Day is not just about tree planting – you can register other activities such as follow-up maintenance at a previous planting site, weed control, bush regeneration or seed collecting. Activities like guided walks, gardening workshops, kids activities, and plant or mulch giveaways are also popular for Tree Day, either in addition to, or instead of, tree planting or maintenance activities.

GET INVOLVED!
To register a National Tree Day activity or find out more about what's involved, visit the Tree Day website at treeday.planetark.org or call the National Tree Day Hotline on 1300 88 5000

ALERT SA – SOCIAL MEDIA FROM EMERGENCY SERVICES

Alert SA is a new website dedicated to social media feeds from the State's emergency services, automatically bringing together social media messages from South Australia's emergency services via Twitter, Facebook and RSS.

It is a one-stop shop for anyone looking for the latest emergency messages with the site providing direct links to obtaining information from emergency services.

The website features social media messages from South Australia Police, Country Fire Service, Metropolitan Fire Service, State Emergency Service, and the Bureau of Meteorology.

FURTHER INFORMATION
www.alert.sa.gov.au

MOVING SHEEP?

If you are moving your sheep to another property, abattoir or saleyard, there are some key things to consider.

Each animal should be checked for a valid National Vendor Declaration (NVD) ear tag before it leaves your property. Be particularly aware of older animals tagged before the current National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) regulations came into force, and ensure that sheep introduced from other properties also meet NLIS requirements.

Sheep of Western Australian origin are permitted to have a WA tag with a sheep brand but the tag must have the NLIS logo to be a valid NLIS tag. If you are unsure about the tags or the property of origin of the sheep you are moving, retag them with a pink NLIS tag of the property they are being moved from.

If you are sending a consignment that has sheep with a Property Identification Code (PIC) tag different to the property of origin ensure all the PICs are recorded on the NVD.

The NLIS system assists traceability and helps protect the livestock industry. Sheep tags and paperwork are checked at markets and fines will apply for non-compliance.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the NLIS system or completing paperwork for stock movements contact Trent Scholz, PIRSA Animal Health Officer 8648 5160 or 0427 970 453

Sheep health

Trent Scholz, PIRSA Animal Health Officer

If you occasionally find dead or bloated sheep on your property or simply accept a certain loss rate in your ewe flock, the problem may be related to a range of diseases that can be managed with a vaccination program.

Clostridial disease (including pulpy kidney and tetanus) and cheesy gland can significantly impact sheep production.

Abattoir data has shown that sheep sent from pastoral South Australia regularly have significant levels of cheesy gland, which impacts carcass yield.

A clostridial and cheesy gland vaccination program requires an initial shot followed by a booster 4-6 weeks later, then an annual booster.

The need for the first booster can mean another muster, which is often seen as an impediment to a proper vaccination program.

One way to minimise additional labour may be vaccinating lambs at marking, with a booster at weaning, and an annual booster at shearing.

Given current stock prices are $100/head or more, and welfare considerations, it may well be worth getting that booster shot in – saving just a few sheep will counter the additional cost of getting the sheep back into production.

If you are not currently vaccinating, consider a vaccination trial with two comparable paddocks, one where a proper vaccination regime is implemented, and a second where the sheep are left unvaccinated. Keep careful records of production out of each paddock and compare notes after a season.

BUFFEL GRASS MANAGEMENT

A state strategy on buffel grass management is currently being drafted, addressing concerns about its weed potential in South Australia. To register your interest in commenting on the draft when it is released for public comment please contact Tim Reynolds, Biosecurity SA 8303 9501.

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 Regions 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

Mt Deception, Flinders Ranges – looking SW towards Lake Torrens

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. Clearly indicate what (or who) is shown in the photo and the photographer's name.

Islands in Lake Frome

Lake Frome, with Gammon ranges in background

Exceptional rains filled watercourses and dams on the lower Birdsville Track

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