Across the OUTBACK

OCTOBER 2012 PRODUCED FOR OUTBACK SA NUMBER 62

Share the load on your property

LAST CHANCE TO APPLY FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE PEST MANAGEMENT & RANGELANDS REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Natural Resources SA Arid Lands is seeking expressions of interest by 9 November from land managers who are looking to do pest plant and animal control or land rehabilitation activities on their properties – and we will share in the costs.

Why should you get involved?

We 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.

Who can apply?

Land degradation, weeds and feral animals are significant problems facing all land managers. If you're a pastoralist, Progress Association or community group, or manage Aboriginal land, you are eligible to apply.

Are there particular activities that the Board will fund?

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.

How will your 'expression of interest' 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 Natural Resources SA Arid Lands staff. Successful applications will include some landholder contribution to project costs, either in-kind or cash.

And if your application is successful?

If your application is successful, you may 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 Natural Resources SA Arid Lands staff at which time you send us your invoice for payment of the agreed financial contribution.

See page 4 for case studies.

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African Boxthorn removal

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Australian Rangelands Society Conference

Perspectives from the Pastoral Unit

David Oag, Pastoral Inspector

A number of Pastoral Unit staff attended the Australian Rangelands Society Conference in Kununurra in September.

This year's conference was a terrific opportunity to compare notes with colleagues from other states and improve our knowledge of the issues that are affecting us all.

In terms of pastoral condition, the management of grazing for sustainable outcomes was a key theme of many of the presentations.

Improving the management of total grazing pressure – the combined effect of all grazing animals, native or introduced – is important to ensure the sustainable carrying capacity of the land is not exceeded.

Total grazing pressure is managed in different ways by different producers. But the overriding message from the conference is that if we can understand and manage the impact of grazing animals, we will improve vegetation diversity and cover, productivity and profitability.

I was particularly pleased to learn that South Australia's system of pastoral land management is functioning well.

Our rangeland monitoring network of photopoints, assessment and inspection regimes appears to be well respected by the other states.

We are recognised for our processes for negotiating stocking limits and monitoring land condition that are built into the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*.

Conference-goers were able to select from several field trip options which reflected the different rangelands uses of pastoralism, conservation, horticulture, and tourism.

Several Pastoral Unit staff went to Newry, a rangelands cattle station on the border with the Northern Territory. We learned that there was a large amount of feed but not much in the way of nutrients so supplementary feeding is an annual part of their management strategies.

This was interesting because in South Australia, we only use supplementary feeding in severe drought – for example, to hold on to breeding stock.

So what were the take home messages?

A lot of the presentations at Kununurra were about developing the pastoral industry to create more stock.

This means more fencing and waterpoints, improved cattle handling facilities, and segregating and pregnancy testing cattle to track their genetic traits.

Early maturing cows and calves are hereditary traits. If producers can identify early maturing heifers and get them up to weight the cows will calve earlier in the life cycle.

Further information
Contact David Oag, Natural Resources Centre SA Arid Lands 8648 5300 ■

AUSTRALIAN RANGELANDS CONFERENCE

The Australian Rangelands Society Conference is held every two years.

Rangelands take up 80 per cent of Australia's landmass. In these natural systems healthy native vegetation is critical to the productivity and profitability of the land, and rangelands are managed differently to the more developed areas of the country.

The Rangelands Society Conference is an important opportunity for those involved in land management in the SA Arid Lands region to connect with their counterparts from across Australia.

The next Australian Rangelands Conference will be in 2014 and is likely to be in the Northern Territory.

A landholder perspective

The SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board sponsored two land managers – Glen Norris (Bon Bon Station) and Douglas Lillecrapp (Todmorden Station) – to attend the Australian Rangelands Society Conference in Kununurra.

Glen Norris manages Bon Bon Station Reserve, a former sheep-grazing property near Coober Pedy which is owned by Bush Heritage Australia, a not-for-profit conservation organisation dedicated to protecting Australia's unique animals, plants and their habitats.

This was Glen's first Australian Rangelands Society Conference and he found the opportunity to network with people from different land uses and from multiple roles a highlight.

'The rangelands focus for this conference meant that there was an opportunity to interact with a variety of like-minded people and develop

Boab Tree in East Kimberley grasslands

strong linkages through talking and sharing ideas.'

He was particularly grateful for the opportunity to provide a conservation perspective to the Q&A panel where he joined four other land managers to answer questions on their different management styles and philosophies.

'This was a great way to get a number of different views on topics raised by the conference participants including food security, the value of biodiversity on-farm, carbon rights, fire management, and the live export trade.'

He was impressed with the presentation by Steve Petty (Northern Development Company) which looked at pastoral intensification in the Victoria River District of the Northern Territory and demonstrated that good biodiversity means good productivity.

The field trips – devoted to pastoral management, conservation management, horticulture/agriculture and tourism – gave a great insight into the different land uses and users in the East Kimberley region.

Meanwhile, Douglas Lillecrapp (Todmorden Station) also enjoyed the opportunity to talk to rangelands users and scientists and the opportunity to visit Newry Station, reporting back his concerns that the rangelands are facing increasing operating costs and an increasing risk from fire. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are a land manager in the SA Arid Lands region and you would like sponsorship to attend the 2014 conference contact the Community Engagement staff, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300. Visit the Australian Rangelands Society website www.austrangesoc.com.au to download the Kununurra Conference Proceedings.

PASTORAL BOARD AND UNIT CONTACTS

The Pastoral Board of SA
Level 1, 1 Richmond Road
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 133 **Thursday 13 December Adelaide**

Cactus control, Yardea Station

For some years, Sandy Morris of Yardea Station in the Gawler Ranges district has been working to remove wayward weeds that had established at the homestead and were beginning to spread to other areas of the property.

In 2010, having rid himself of African Boxthorn and Onion Weed, he turned his attention to a cactus garden – largely a species of Prickly Pear – which 'had jumped the fence and gone nuts.'

'It had managed to get away with this sneaky activity simply because it was growing in the garden of a rarely used cottage some distance from the homestead – and I knew that if I left them untreated they'd become too widespread for me to do anything about them.'

Sandy, who for six years has been a member of the local Gawler Ranges NRM Group, sought advice and chemicals from NRM staff and filled out the 'straightforward' application form for assistance through the Pest Management and Rangelands Rehabilitation (PMRR) program.

'Soon I was supplied with stuff that, when mixed with diesel, had a magical effect on cactus,' he said.

'They just laid down and died.'

While acknowledging his cactus control program was a very small project, Sandy has said he wouldn't hesitate to utilise the PMRR program again.

And it seems Sandy's hard work in weed control around the homestead is paying off.

'While I still come across the odd young boxthorn, I'm glad to say that I haven't seen any Onion Weed for at least five years.'

And the cactus?

'Occasionally the odd cheeky new shoot attempts to rise from the carnage, but it's soon laid low by a casual squirt.' ■

Yardea 'cactus garden'

Rabbit warren ripping

TO APPLY FOR FUNDING
Contact Natural Resources SA Arid Lands
www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au
8648 5300
aridlands@saalnrm.sa.gov.au

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PMRR CASE STUDIES

Rabbit control, Holowiliena South Station

David and Carol Warwick of Holowiliena South Station have ripped about 4000 rabbit warrens since 2008 thanks to the Pest Management and Rangelands Rehabilitation (PMRR) program, with the financial assistance enabling them to vastly expand earlier work that had been undertaken privately.

By running their rabbit control program in conjunction with the other programs for dingo (Biteback), rabbit, and goat control, the Warwicks have taken an integrated approach to their property management, seeing the benefits of this work through the regeneration of native grasses, bushes and trees, especially following the drought.

Without this financial assistance they say they would never have been able to treat such an extensive area.

'We have got great value for money from the PMRR program with the monies going directly into the program and not wasted in other areas such as administration.'

They also credit the program for being ongoing and not just one-offs allowing them to work with their neighbours and local groups such as Cradock Landcare to combine their treatment efforts and coordinate the use of contractors/equipment. ■

Health check-ups for surface water

Jackie Watts, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Officer

The health of major rivers and key permanent waterholes in the SA Arid Lands is being assessed to identify any existing problems and emerging threats which can help prioritise future projects aimed at ensuring a healthy and sustainable surface water resource.

Brachina Creek, North Flinders

Seventy priority aquatic ecosystems have been selected for fieldwork in the Flinders region (including Balcanoona, Brachina and Oraparinna Creeks) and the Lake Eyre Basin (including Algebuckina and Hookeys waterholes).

Information is being collected on water quality, associated flora and fauna, and any existing or emerging impacts to the site that may arise from mining and tourism activities, feral animals, or weeds.

For each site, this includes assessing water chemistry, turbidity, macro-invertebrates, aquatic vegetation, shade cover, bank erosion, siltation and pollution indications, as well as an assessment of the nearby area to provide context.

The work contributes to several targets in the SAAL Regional NRM Plan where they relate to improving and/or maintaining the extent, condition, water quality and flow regimes of priority aquatic ecosystems.

It will provide important baseline information against which future results can be measured.

Fieldwork commenced in autumn, covering 12 sites in the western Lake Eyre Basin and 40 sites in the Flinders region. The second round is due to occur this spring covering 18 sites in the eastern Lake Eyre Basin and the same 40 sites in the Flinders region.

The intention is to repeat the fieldwork every five years in order to highlight any changes in condition and to inform management interventions over time.

The work is being undertaken on private and public lands by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in partnership with the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management Board (NRM).

The EPA and SAAL NRM Board thank those land managers who have provided access to their properties for the collection of this information.

Across the Outback hopes to be able to report on results next year.

Further information
Contact Jackie, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300

Yardaparinna Creek, Macumba Station

New signs planned for iconic Cooper Creek sites

Henry Mancini, Senior Water Projects Officer

Iconic waterholes and cultural sites within the Cooper Creek catchment will soon be better protected with work underway to develop and install signs at key tourist sites to minimise visitor impacts.

The signs are a response to the increasing number of visitors to the Cooper Creek catchment and are intended for heavily-used tourist sites.

They will add to the visitor experience by improving their understanding of how the catchment functions and supports the native plants and animals.

They will also encourage visitors to better protect the sites by educating them on how they can reduce their impact (eg through camping etiquette, firewood selection, and vehicle use).

A team with skills in ecology, fish monitoring, visitor information, tourism and cultural heritage management visited several waterholes and heritage sites in September, identifying management issues, working up messages for the protection of the sites, and establishing the best locations for the signs.

The work, which is an outcome of the 'Cooper Creek project' (see box), focused on locations in and around Innamincka, through to Moomba, Lake Hope, and the Killalpaninna mission site near the Birdsville Track.

The team were also joined by several members of the Dieri Aboriginal Corporation and a member of the Yandruwandha/Yawarrawarrka (YY) Traditional Land Owners (Aboriginal Corporation) who provided critical insight into the cultural importance of their traditional lands and contributed to identifying site management issues and management options.

The work is being undertaken in consultation with Parks SA and, importantly, the signs will complement and build on the messages in the existing signage in the Innamincka Regional Reserve.

At this stage, signs are planned at the Innamincka town common, Cullyamurra, Ski Beach and Minkie Waterholes; Moomba; Embarka Waterhole; and the mission site at Lake Killalpaninna.

The work builds on fieldwork carried out in November 2011 and April 2012 to investigate the health and threats to waterholes in the Cooper Creek catchment.

A working group of representatives from National Parks and Wildlife SA, the mining, pastoral and tourism industries, and the Dieri and YY Aboriginal communities will be consulted in the development of the information, with the signs expected to be in place by 2013.

Thanks to the land managers who provided access to their properties for this work. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION
Contact Henry, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300

Luise Hercus and Jake Gillen

The Bethesda Mission ruins at Lake Killalpaninna

Some of the existing signage at Innamincka Regional Reserve

‘COOPER CREEK PROJECT’

The ‘Cooper Creek project’ is investigating the natural features and human influences on key waterholes and wetlands along the iconic Cooper Creek in the far north-east of South Australia.

The Cooper Creek catchment is an important but relatively poorly understood wetland system which supports unique and important biodiversity and a range of industries, including pastoralism, mining and tourism.

In order to manage this unique resource into the future, the project is gathering information on these activities and on pest impacts to determine their influence on the catchment.

It also uses the rare opportunity of the recent floods to collect important ecological information to better understand how the catchment responds to flooding.

The information will inform management strategies for the catchment.

Commencing in 2010, the three-year ‘Cooper Creek’ project is being delivered on behalf of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board with funding from the Australian Government’s *Caring for Our Country* program.

GET INVOLVED

Community members are invited to a workshop planned for Innamincka in April 2013 which will be an opportunity to exchange information and ideas on the findings of the ‘Cooper Creek project’.

This will be an opportunity to gather local knowledge and improve partnerships in the management of the Cooper Creek catchment.

Representatives of the mining and tourism industry, pastoralists, local Innamincka townsfolk, Aboriginal community members, visitors, and anyone interested in the long-term management and protection of the Cooper Creek Catchment are encouraged to attend.

To register your interest contact Henry, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300

Lake Killalpaninna, one of the proposed sites for tourist signage

Sharing knowledge

Henry Mancini, Senior Water Projects Officer

Luise Hercus attended the Cooper Creek trip to share her experience of Aboriginal culture in the SA Arid Lands region. Luise has a long history with the region – she first began recording Aboriginal languages here in 1965.

She has written grammars of Aboriginal languages in Victoria and in New South Wales (Paakantyi from the Darling River) as well as South Australia (Arabana-Wangkangurru and Wirangu), and also dictionaries, sketch-grammars and papers on linguistics and place-names.

Luise mainly worked in the Simpson Desert, around the Birdsville and Strzelecki Tracks and the Lake Eyre region, recording and documenting stories and songs of Arabana, Yaluyandi, and Kuyani peoples. She has also done some work with the Dieri and Adnyamathanha peoples.

‘People particularly wanted to record songs and stories because they did not want them to be forgotten,’ said Luise. ‘The traditional way was being lost as older people were dying.’

‘There was a lot of sharing of ceremonies between groups,’ she said. ‘Ceremonies brought together the different groups as they celebrated the travels of Ancestors across the landscape.’

When Luise first went out to the region, people were working on the stations and they were able to visit important sites, look after them, and keep their traditions going.

‘Sadly, this has changed,’ said Luise. ‘There are less people employed on stations and there is less work.

‘The old stockmen are no longer out there, and younger people are losing immediate contact and are not able to connect to the same extent with their country, stories and sites.’

‘Languages of north-east South Australia are being lost with the passing of the oldest and best speakers, but things are beginning to look up with excellent programs in place for the teaching of Arabana, Adnyamathanha and Dieri.’

During the trip it was important for Luise to reconnect with local Aboriginal people to help in passing on information and to keep the traditional stories and songs alive.

‘The trip was about re-visiting the sites and giving copies of recordings made in the 1960s to the Dieri and Yandruwandha-Yawarrawarrka representatives who were with us.’

While playing the recordings, Luise provided further explanation and background to the traditional owners who were present.

And she’s not finished with the region yet!

‘I will keep coming back for as long as I can,’ she said. ‘I’m still working – currently on the fire dreaming stories around the Macumba region – and I want to keep providing the information to the traditional owners and talk to as many people as possible.’

Thank you to Jake Gillen for assisting Luise on the field trip.

Further information
Contact Luise Hercus, Visiting Fellow, Australian National University 02 6125 4779 ■

DINGO UPDATE

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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 and sheep industry fund the landholder-initiated *Biteback* program for dingo control, a critical program for protecting the region's sheep industry.

NEXT BAIT INJECTION SERVICES

North Flinders	22-25 October
Kingoonya	20-22 November
North East	4-6 December

The Gawler Ranges bait injection service occurred on 2-3 October.

STOP PRESS

Just as *Across the Outback* was going to print we received word that Gail Gago, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, has approved a further three years funding from the Sheep Industry Fund to continue *Biteback*.
Visit www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au for further information

Land managers continue to benefit from *Biteback*

Industry funds for the *Biteback* program may have expired in June but the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board continues to direct funding towards wild dog control and the work of the Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Dingo Management Team.

Biteback offered land managers a coordinated landscape-scale approach to their wild dog control efforts encouraging them to collaborate and use integrated best-practice control methods such as ground baiting, trapping and shooting to reduce wild dog impacts.

And land managers south of the Dog Fence are still benefitting from the program which has significantly improved their capacity to manage dingoes on their properties.

Biteback saw freezers installed at 14 locations across the district to ensure baits are continually accessible to land managers – and the Dingo Management Team continues to provide a bi-annual bait injection service to landholders to restock their freezers.

Biteback also established 21 Local Area Planning groups, cooperative groups of land managers who determine and map where wild dog predation and movement is occurring, and target and control their wild dog control efforts across the district. These groups remain active and all land managers are encouraged to join.

Traps are also available for loan.

Land managers should continue to report their wild dog sightings to the Dingo Management Team and their Local Area Planning group so a more comprehensive picture of wild dog sightings and stock loss is established.

The Dingo Management Team will continue to meet with each group twice a year.

Dingoes don't recognise property boundaries and so it is essential that all landholders work in cooperation to address the dingo problem – National Parks south of the Dog Fence, for example, are baited both through *Biteback* for dingoes and *Bounceback* for foxes, which can also cause stock losses.

An application for additional industry-funding for *Biteback* has been submitted and we are awaiting the outcome. ■

Land managers are encouraged to contact the Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Dingo Management Team 8648 5300 to discuss any concerns they may have around dingo control.

Understanding coal seam gas impacts

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) field staff will be visiting various properties in the SA Arid Lands from mid-September this year to gather information about water resources in areas that may be affected by potential coal seam gas or large coal mining developments.

The information will help improve our scientific understanding of the surface and groundwater resources associated with coal bearing basins in South Australia, including the SA Arid Lands region.

It will also provide a more accurate understanding of water related impacts from potential future coal seam gas or coal mining operations in the region.

Although DEWNR already has relevant data (eg from satellite imagery and aerial photography) from the SAArid Lands, it is important to collate, ground truth and verify the existing data.

This information will be an important reference for water management decisions into the future and will inform the fieldwork component over the next two years.

Fieldwork will continue through to 2014. Further information and updates will be provided as the program progresses.

This work is part of the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on Coal Seam Gas (CSG) and Large Coal Mining Development, established by the Australian Government in November 2011 to strengthen the regulation of coal seam gas and large coal mining developments that may have significant impacts on water resources.

Further information
Contact Birgitte Sorensen, Leader Program Operations, 8463 6942

WHAT IS COAL SEAM GAS?

Coal seam gas (CSG) is the name given to naturally occurring gas trapped, by water and ground pressure, in underground coal seams.

Coal seams store both gas and water. The water is under pressure from the weight of overlying rock material, holding the gas in place and when the water pressure is reduced the gas is released. The extraction process (production) involves the water pressure being reduced through the drilling of a well into a coal seam and then the water being gradually pumped out of the seam, which allows the gas to flow to the surface in the well.

There are vast CSG resources spread across Australia's many coal basins. It has been commercially produced in Queensland for more than 15 years and currently supplies the fuel used to generate about 17 per cent of Queensland's electricity needs. Gas-fired power stations create less than half the greenhouse gas emissions of equivalent sized coal fired power stations.

WHEN IS MINING LIKELY TO START?

This fieldwork does not signal the beginning of CSG mining or large coal mines. It is about establishing, through scientific research, the actual and potential impacts of CSG and large coal mining activities on water resources in areas with a high potential for mining.

CALL FOR BUFFEL GRASS MEMBERS!

The Kingoonya Buffel Grass Action Group is calling for land mangers and volunteers in the Kingoonya area who are keen to minimise the spread of Buffel Grass in the district and to take on a more collaborative and coordinated approach to its control.

Started by the Kingoonya NRM Group in June, the Group brings together land mangers to share knowledge, skills and resources to achieve better outcomes.

The Group will share information and expertise on successful and unsuccessful treatment methods, combine mapping and other spatial data on known Buffel Grass infestations, and prioritise treatment areas.

The Group will also be able to share labour, tools and equipment, mapping resources and infrastructure.

This will mean that they have the 'arms and legs' to control Buffel Grass at the right time and access to equipment including two 600 litre Quickspray units

For an evaluation of the threats to South Australia's rangelands from Buffel Grass see *Across the Outback*, June 2012 edition.

Further information
Contact Glen Norris 8672 8932 or gnorris@bushheritage.org.au

Restoring the Dalhousie ruins

Tony Magor, District Ranger (Desert Parks)

Efforts to stabilise the State Heritage-listed Dalhousie Ruins continued in June with Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources staff joining volunteers and contractors to carry out conservation works.

The Dalhousie Ruins are the remains of the old Dalhousie homestead, stockyards and out-buildings, living and working structures that were built in the 1870s when the area was established for pastoralism.

Today the Dalhousie Ruins form part of Witjira National Park managed by the Witjira Co-Management Board.

Conservation works to stabilise these ruins first occurred in 1994 to rebuild and cap walls to slow decay.

This year, the main focus was the blacksmith's shop where cement mortar was chiselled out and then repointed with lime mortar.

The team were excited to find a flagstone floor in the workman's quarters which required careful removal of sand and stone debris, and tourists visiting the ruins were fascinated to see old methods and materials being used to re-stabilise the buildings.

Further conservation works are planned to protect the ruins against the ravages of the arid climate and preserve them for the appreciation of future generations.

Thank you to those involved on the ground and behind the scenes.

Witjira National Park is an area of 7700 square kilometres located in the far north of South Australia, about 100 kilometres north of Oodnadatta.

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources works with Lower Southern Arrernte and Wangkangurru traditional owners to cooperatively manage Witjira National Park through the Witjira Co-management Board.

Rock-wallabies bouncing back

Trish Mooney, Bounceback Project Officer

Aerial surveys have revealed that populations of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby within Bounceback-managed areas are being maintained or have increased in the last 12-15 years, particularly where fox and goat control programs have been maintained.

As part of the Bounceback program, aerial surveys of Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies have been carried out every few years in the Flinders and Olary Ranges, covering approximately 1000 kilometres along pre-determined ridge-top routes.

Most zones have been surveyed since 1997 – later for some north Flinders sites – with several decades' data required to separate long term recovery trends from the boom and bust cycle characteristic of the rangelands.

Results are suggesting that the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby population has grown in response to the recent good seasons.

There have been steady increases in Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby numbers on- and off-park in the central and northern Flinders Ranges and Olary Ranges, where Bounceback's long term broadscale pest control programs have been in place.

Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby numbers in the Flinders/Gammon Ranges north of Hawker have more than doubled since 2000, with around 4000 counted in a recent 2012 survey.

Particularly high numbers were recorded on Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park and Arkaroola Sanctuary.

In the ranges south of Hawker, the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby population has remained relatively stable over the last 15 years, with decreases in some areas attributed to lack of long-term intensive pest control.

Meanwhile, observation of tagged animals has revealed a sustained rock-wallaby population recovery in the Gawler Ranges National Park as a result of coordinated fox and goat control programs.

Further information
Contact Trish, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300

BOUNCEBACK AND THE YFRW

Now in its 20th year, Bounceback is a broadscale ecological restoration project operating across a range of landholdings including national park reserves, privately managed sanctuaries, and pastoral properties in the Flinders, Gawler and Olary Ranges.

The protection and recovery of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby is a major component of Bounceback, with the project area encompassing most of the species natural range in South Australia.

Yellow-footed Rock-wallabies were once very common but, by the mid-20th century, hunting for fur and fox predation and competition with goats for food and shelter brought them to the edge of extinction.

Key partners include the Adnyamathanha community, Landscape Partnerships, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Biosecurity SA, Bush Heritage Australia, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Nature Foundation SA, NRM Boards, the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby Preservation Association, Zoos SA, and local landholders and tourism operators.

Postcard to Parks

I am writing to say thank you to SA National Parks following our three-week camping trip visiting Waukaringa Ruins, Hawker, Flinders Ranges, Mount Chambers, Leigh Creek, Strzelecki Track, Innamincka, and Cameron's Corner.

We were traveling with our five young children, and friends with their four young children, both of us with camper trailers.

We bush camped for most of our trip, and this is the main purpose of my letter, to thank you for the great campsites found throughout the National Parks we stayed in.

Our trip, highlighted by having easy, wonderful campsites, in spectacular countryside, has helped give us treasured family memories.

And we have been able to give our children a greater appreciation for the history, diversity and natural beauty of this country.

It is also worth noting that your fees were very reasonable, and helped make this an affordable visit. We have found in other places that occasionally an unpowered site has been almost as expensive as an accommodated stay.

So thank you again for helping to make it a real, and enjoyable experience for our family.

Gemma Riley, NSW

Commodore Station gifts land to National Park

The owners of Commodore Station, Ian McAuley and Carola Cox, donated a 26 square kilometre parcel of land to Flinders Ranges National Park with the gift marked by a commemoration held at the station homestead in July.

Located on the north-west boundary of the Flinders Ranges National Park, the land is now protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

'With its steep gorges and an area that outwashes on the slopes, the land is an asset to not only the National Park, but also the wider community,' said Paul Caica, Minister of Sustainability, Environment and Conservation, at the commemoration.

'It includes some scenically impressive range country and some steep gorges and this donation will enable the State Government to increase the amount of land proclaimed under the Act, giving iconic species and their habitat greater protection.'

The owners of Commodore Station are descendants of the original pastoralist, Michael McAuley, who took up land in the area in 1882. The land is the only property in the area to be held by its original family.

'Quite apart from its geological importance and the significance of this land to the Adnyamathanha people, there is a significant family history and deep connection attached to this land which has been maintained by the family for almost 130 years,' Mr Caica said.

Mr McAuley said while the decision to part with the land had not been easy, he hopes it will be enjoyed and protected for future generations while Ms Cox said she hoped others would agree that such a unique section of Commodore Station and the Flinders should be shared by all Australians.

The land will now be managed into the future for conservation by the Flinders Ranges National Park Co-management Board, a partnership in which the Adnyamathanha people work with Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources staff to share responsibility and decision-making for the management of the Park. ■

Minister Paul Caica, Michael McAuley, Jack McAuley, William Cox, Jack McAuley, Ian McAuley, Carola Cox, Mike McAuley, Peter McAuley and Simon Cox

PRESCRIBED BURN AT INNAMINCKA

Tony Magor, District Ranger, Desert Parks

A prescribed burn – the first ever – was carried out at Innamincka in September to reduce the fire risk from the high fuel load caused by the previous two years' good rains and to provide local Geodynamics staff with training in fire management.

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) staff worked with the Innamincka Progress Association, Innamincka Station, CFS, and local geothermal and petroleum companies to prepare and undertake the burn.

The two objectives were to provide a fire break on the eastern side of the Innamincka township, and to train Geodynamics staff in managing fires.

The accreditation of these staff in fire fighting will provide an important resource for the region in the event of a bushfire.

With the fire trainers on-site, the crew waited for their window of opportunity – too much wind is too dangerous to burn but no wind means the sparse grass on gibber won't burn.

The burn occurred in favourable conditions with the wind dropping out just as the fire was lit.

Although only about 30 per cent of the 17 hectares was burnt, it still provided an additional fire break for the town and the Geodynamics team completed their training exercise.

The Innamincka burn occurred just prior to DEWNR's announcement of the commencement of its spring prescribed burn program for South Australia. Prescribed burns are not typically undertaken in the SA Arid Lands region as the 'boom' and 'bust' nature of the climate means the high fuel loads are not generally present.

Thank you to those involved in making the burn happen.

Further information
Contact Tony, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300

ARE YOU BUSHFIRE READY?

The period from September 2011 to February 2012 saw several large fires over much of Outback SA, including Innamincka Regional Reserve, due to dry lightning strikes. Make sure you are bushfire ready this summer.

Information on bushfire preparedness is available from the CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au

OUTBACK ROUNDUP

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
February 2013 edition

Content due by COB
Friday 15 February 2013

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.**

FURTHER INFORMATION

contact the editor
jenny.barker@sa.gov.au
or 8463 3354
A fee per article may apply

The Great Artesian Basin Coordinating Committee released a full colour poster map of the Great Artesian Basin in July. The map tells the story of the Great Artesian Basin from its Gondwana beginnings through to its critical modern day importance in the lives of many thousands of people across key sectors of the Australian economy. To order a copy of the poster map, please email your name and contact details to gabcc@secretariat.com.au or phone 02 6295 7573.

Innamincka working bee

Trevor Coleman

Members of The Friends of Innamincka Reserves held their meeting and working bee at Innamincka in August 2012, contributing 924 volunteer hours.

The Friends undertook general housekeeping and maintenance inside and outside of the Australian Inland Mission building; tidied up campfire sites, including clearing vegetation, controlling erosion, removing flood debris, replacing broken bollards and cabling, and erecting new fencelines; cleared vegetation around signage; and checked tracks for feral weeds.

The group also weeded and tidied gravesites at the cemetery; removed weeds and debris from fenclines and yards in the town area to reduce fuel loads and improve appearance; and continued their ongoing survey of birdlife in the Park.

On our 'days off' we drove the Loop Road and also went to the racecourse to help the Innamincka Sporting Club with their preparations for their annual raceday.

All of the Friends enjoy their time and are pleased to contribute to the upkeep and appearance of the Parks and town facilities and contribute to the Innamincka Races.

Contact Trevor
tcntc@optusnet.com.au

A Grey Grasswren captured during the surveys

Surveys shed light on secretive Grasswren

Reece Pedler, Community Fauna Officer

Surveys are unlocking the secrets of one of Australia's most poorly understood bird species – the Grey Grasswren – to better understand its habitat and distribution and the genetic relationship between populations from different floodplain sites.

Occurring in the Diamantina River, Eyre Creek and Cooper Creek floodplains of northern South Australia and adjacent areas of Queensland, the surveys have revealed Grey Grasswrens from a few new areas – but strangely they have not been detected in other areas of extensive and seemingly suitable habitat despite much searching.

Grey Grasswrens were totally unknown to science until the late 1960s when they were described from a population on the Bulloo River floodplain near the New South Wales/Queensland border. Further populations found in South Australia on Goyder's Lagoon in 1976 were later described as a sub-species.

Although the Goyder's Lagoon and Bulloo River populations are known to be distinct from one another, the relationships between these populations and others on the Eyre Creek, upper Diamantina and Cooper Creek are unknown.

Given that these tiny grasswrens are very poor fliers and rarely venture far from thick floodplain vegetation, the lack of connecting habitat between these sites probably means that there is no mixing between grasswrens from these different areas and they are likely to be completely separate populations or even sub-species. Genetic testing of feather samples taken from grasswrens as part of this project will be compared with samples from specimens held in museums across Australia to solve these questions.

The surveys are being conducted by ornithologist Andrew Black and a team of grasswren specialists on behalf of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board and with funding from the Australian Government's *Caring for Our Country* program.

Further information
Contact Reece, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, 8648 5300

The Grey Grasswren (*Amytornis barbatus*) is much prettier than its drab name suggests, with a distinctive black beard-like marking to which the species name *barbatus* refers (Latin for 'bearded'). They are slightly larger than fairy or 'blue' wrens which are also seen in these floodplain areas (closer to the size of a Willie-Wagtail) and are usually much more secretive, only occasionally showing themselves between thick clumps of Lignum or Old Man Saltbush.

Grey Grasswrens are listed as 'vulnerable' under state and national legislation and are found in floodplain habitats associated with major inland river systems.

Andrew Black with grasswren specialists

Land manager surveys provide NRM perspective

Jackie Watts, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Officer

A selection of pastoral land managers in the SA Arid Lands region are being surveyed to establish their current level of skills, knowledge and participation in natural resources management in the region. This will highlight any gaps and opportunities for improvement in the delivery of NRM programs and services.

Sixty pastoral land managers were randomly selected to take part in the survey with 10 selected from each of the six NRM districts in the region.

The sample selects from the full range of pastoral tenures in the region – ie. industry-owned (eg mining and pastoral companies), family-owned, NGO-owned and Indigenous-owned – and the full range of pastoral land uses (ie. sheep; cattle; combined sheep and cattle; and no stock).

Questions focus on discovering how people plan and make decisions about managing their properties; where they go to find more information or assistance when addressing particular issues; their property goals; and the local issues that concern them.

Land managers are also asked about the length of their experience on the land, in or out of the region, and about their familiarity with existing NRM products and services and how these might be improved.

The SAAL Regional NRM Plan contains two long-term targets that aim to increase the number of people actively engaged in natural resources management by 30 per cent and ensure that these people have the information, knowledge and skills required for sustainable land management.

With the intention to repeat the interviews every five years, this initial survey will provide important baseline information to show how we are tracking in meeting these targets.

The work is being conducted in consultation with the University of South Australia's Ehrenberg-Bass Institute on behalf of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board.

Due to the complex nature of the questions, the in-depth interviews are being conducted one-on-one, and are entirely voluntary, with all results confidential and stored without identifying information.

Across the Outback will broadly report on the results in a future edition.

Thanks to the participating land managers for their cooperation.

Further information
Contact Jackie, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300

WHAT ABOUT ME?

In addition to pastoral land managers, there are a range of other groups who are actively involved, or have a stake in, natural resources management in the SA Arid Lands, including volunteers, Progress Associations, Aboriginal communities, non-pastoral mining companies and tourism operators, for example.

A separate survey is currently being prepared which will better suit the range of different interests of these groups.

If you belong to one of these groups, this will be your opportunity to share how, and why, you currently participate in NRM activities, have your say on the usefulness of the range of existing NRM products and services, and suggest improvements.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON PLANNED CHANGES TO WEED MANAGEMENT

Land managers in the SA Arid Lands have until 14 December to comment on planned changes to managing 49 weeds, amongst them Athel Pine, Prickly Acacia, Coolatai Grass and Noogoora Burr.

The consultation process is part of the first comprehensive review of South Australia's 'declared' weeds in 20 years.

The review is important for effective weed management support and to support regional weed management programs in the SA Arid Lands.

As new weeds pose new risks to primary production, natural assets and public health and safety, it's important that plant declarations take account of these developments, and policies under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* support future coordinated efforts to combat weeds across South Australia.

Declarations for weeds differ in each region, depending on the risks assessed for the land uses in that region, and South Australia's NRM Boards use strategic regional management plans to prioritise and enforce different plant declarations.

Information about the review and proposed changes to declaration for 49 plants can be found at: www.environment.sa.gov.au/haveyoursay/declared-plant-review

The website includes a feedback form, summaries of the proposed changes, draft policies for each weed, frequently asked questions, and contact information. People without access to a computer can obtain an information pack by contacting Biosecurity SA 8303 9620.

Further information
Contact Greg Patrick, Biosecurity Team Leader, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300

Coolatai Grass found on the Barrier Highway

New animal welfare regulations for transport of livestock

Trent Scholz, PIRSA Animal Health Officer

The *Animal Welfare Regulations 2012* came into force in South Australia in August with the main change the introduction of new regulations for land transport of livestock.

These regulations mandate a number of new details that must be adhered to when transporting livestock including general and species specific requirements.

Developed in consultation with the RSPCA and industry stakeholders, these national standards will ensure high welfare standards for all livestock travelling by road and rail.

They affect everyone who transports livestock with the legislation designed to protect a wide range of animals, from cattle and sheep, to alpacas and pigeons.

The general requirements regarding the land transport of livestock in the new legislation can be summarised as follows:

» Ensure livestock are fit for transport – check the 'Fit to load' guide
» Before transporting livestock, provide advice on the expected arrival time of the stock
» Take reasonable steps to minimise the risk of harm to stock during transport due to adverse weather conditions
» Ensure livestock handling facilities are appropriate
» Ensure livestock transport vehicles are appropriate
» Ensure appropriate loading densities of stock are maintained during transport.

The legislation also specifies:

» driver responsibilities, including checking of vehicles and unloading facilities, providing advice on changes in expected arrival times, and inspecting the health and well-being of livestock during transport
» requirements for handling livestock
» the appropriate use of dogs in the control and movement of livestock and transporting dogs with livestock
» requirements around record keeping where the expected journey time for livestock is more than 24 hours
» requirements around the maximum journey times/maximum time of water and minimum spelling times for various classes of livestock.

Further information
Download the
Animal Welfare Regulations 2012
www.legislation.sa.gov.au
or contact PIRSA Port Augusta
8648 5166 or the RSPCA

Government of South Australia

Across the Outback is prepared and edited by Jenny Barker (SAAL NRM Board). It is currently jointly funded by the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources; the Pastoral Board; and the Biosecurity SA (a division of Primary Industries and Regions SA).

Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

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

Vale Adam Plate

Adam Plate, outback legend and owner of the Pink Roadhouse at Oodnadatta, was tragically killed on 24 August while competing in the Targa Adelaide car rally.

Across the Outback has received a number of tributes from friends and acquaintances of Adam who have been keen to share their memories of his colourful character. There is much more to many of these tributes than can be published here. Visit the Natural Resources SA Arid Lands website www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au to read the full recollections. ■

Adam didn't always play by the 'rules' but his heart was always in the right place as he tried to get things done for the benefit of the community and his business. He will long be remembered for his passion for low tyre pressures and advice on outback driving. Adam will be sadly missed by his family, colleagues, the community, tourists and Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks.

Alan Hancox (President, Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks)

Regardless of whether I was on Dept business or after retirement in a volunteer capacity – Adam was always hospitable and took an optimistic and constructive approach to the challenges which he no doubt faced nearly every day running a business in Oodnadatta. He was unique and special and really has helped keep Oodnadatta on the map since the closure of the old Ghan line.

Brendan Lay (formerly Pastoral Unit)

[Adam] *fought hard to get all the settings required for an effective regional tourism industry into place – the communications, roads and other infrastructure and the marketing. Only weeks before he died he was an active member of the Outback Tourism Working Party which put together a three-year Outback Destination Action Plan.*

Peter Cahalan (SA Tourism Commission)

Our deepest sympathy is extended to the Plate family.

Dylan Koerner (DEWNR), Stacey & Tae

From 1987-1992, Adam was a valued member of the Far North Consultative Committee which later became the Outback Consultative Committee. He will always be remembered because of his sharp wit, and his refusal to accept 'no' as an answer for anything in which he passionately believed.

Peter Hornsby (Chair, Outback Consultative Committee)

Adam promoted Outback tourism and filled a massive void in tourist information before National Parks started being dedicated. He continued to provide complementary or additional information and services to ensure visitors traversed the area safely. The area owes a lot to Adam's vision, and he will be sorely missed.

Tony Magor (DEWNR)

Adam was a good friend, and will be profoundly missed. Some people go through life barely making a ripple. Adam didn't. He moved through it with a laconic ease and left a legacy that will last in the region for many lifetimes. I will always remember Adam for the friendship, assistance and down the line, no bullshit advice he provided me when I needed it.

Travis Gotch (DEWNR)

I am remembering Far North Consultative Committee meetings, our crossing of the Simpson as a committee and our first night at Oodnadatta as we all sat around the Plate's pool, drinking bubbly cooled with hailstones that had come down in a sudden storm.

Lorraine Edmunds (formerly DEWNR)

We have lost another of the great characters of our region… In what we can now describe as visionary, Adam and Lynnie created the Pink Roadhouse from virtually nothing and it's fair to say that their initiative and hard work has been a huge factor in keeping Oodnadatta on the map.

Trevor Naismith (DEWNR)

[Adam's] *workshop was attached to the roadhouse where he and Adolf turned out semi-trailers and made the most magnificent creations. I stayed with Adam and Lynnie a few times. I was a young ranger well out of my depth and they looked after me a bit. He's a great loss.*

Erik Dahl (DEWNR)

As a young architectural professional starting out in the heritage field, I had my first encounters with Adam 'the heritage crusader' in the mid 2000s.The experience of his oral history, the rawness of his criticism of 'the establishment' and the gentleness of his words to the local shoeless children made him a mirage. Adam was an inspiration...

Andreea Jeleascu (nee Sankey) (DEWNR)

When I think of Adam I immediately picture him in the workshop fixing the unfixable, often with hand made parts, or substitutes that were adapted to fit. A truly amazing man that revelled in controversy and lived life in the fast lane.

Tim Fraser (DEWNR)

…I never met Adam again, never even knew him really, but have thought of him and his signs often and shared stories with a host of others who, like us, were touched by the man and his creations. I often hoped to get back to Oodnadatta and can't go past the turn off at Marla without thinking of Adam and the Pink Hotel. I would have loved to have a beer at the Pink Hotel and say g'day to Adam again and now I never will and life seems a little emptier for that.

Bruce Macpherson (DEWNR)

My wife and I moved to Leigh Creek about the same time Adam and Lynnie were establishing themselves at Oodnadatta. ...We got to know each other pretty well through mutual…interests. Eventually our kids went to school together… I will miss Adam he was one of life's great rascals.

Andrew Beal (DEWNR)

I first met Adam and Lyn in about 1974, while I was living at Indulkana and they had just moved to Oodnadatta. I have considered him a mate since that time and always enjoyed catching up and having a chat as we passed through Oodnadatta. He will be greatly missed.

Malcolm (Mal) Hansen (formerly DEWNR)

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