

ACROSS THE OUTBACK

A new year, a new look

Welcome to the first edition of *Across The Outback* for 2013.

It's 23 years since this publication first rolled off the press as *Outback*, published by the then Department of Lands on behalf of the Pastoral Board for the South Australian pastoral industry.

The then Minister of Lands Susan Lenehan introduced the first issue of *Outback* describing it as a tool 'for good communication between all the groups which have an interest in the arid zone' including pastoralists, mining, conservation, recreation and tourist groups.

While the publication has outlasted changing governments and departments and seen changing covers and faces, its commitment to report to the SA Arid Lands community on government activities which affect them has remained the same.

Across The Outback is the only publication that covers and centres on the SA Arid Lands region, and its mailing list, now with 1500 subscribers, continues to grow – fairly impressive given only some 10,000 people live in the region.

Continued on Page 05

WHY THE NEW LOOK?

The new look for *Across The Outback* brings the publication into line with other regional South Australian newsletters produced under the Natural Resources banner.

Natural Resources SA Arid Lands delivers natural resource management services in the region – including on behalf of the SAAL NRM Board, the Pastoral Board, and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources – and is currently responsible for the production of *Across The Outback*.

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North Flinders

2013 pastoral rent notices

Annual rent notices were sent out to South Australia's pastoral leaseholders in February for the rental period 1 November 2011 through to 31 October 2012 – and lessees have 90 days to make the payment.

Under Section 23 of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989*, the Valuer-General determines the rental amount and rent notices are sent out by the Pastoral Board.

The annual rental for a pastoral lease is set as a percentage of the unimproved value of the land.

The percentage represents the rate of return for the land taking into account the purpose for which the land is being used.

The unimproved value of a pastoral lease is the capital amount that the land might reasonably be expected to realise upon sale assuming that any improvements on the land had not been made.

A range of factors are taken into account in the determination of the unimproved value of a pastoral lease, including:

- the purposes for which the land is used and the inherent capacity of the land to be used for those purposes
- any prevailing climatic conditions currently affecting the productivity of the land
- the proximity and accessibility of markets and other facilities to the extent that they affect the profitability of the lessee's enterprise
- the most recent land type classifications and associated information
- livestock carrying capacities and land potential
- property location
- property sales and price movements within the pastoral industry.

Following a review of available evidence the Valuer-General has determined that the annual rate of return on pastoral leases will remain unchanged for the 2012 rental period. The rates of return are:

- 2.7 per cent for leases used for pastoral purposes
- 2 per cent for leases used for conservation purposes
- 0 per cent for leases subject to a Heritage Agreement
- 5 per cent for leases used for tourism purposes
- 2.7 per cent for leases used for mining purposes.

For the vast majority of leases, the unimproved values have not changed from 2011 levels.

Further information
For more information on how unimproved values for leases and rentals are determined contact Mark Kay, State Valuation Office, 0427 112 844 or the State Valuation Office Call Centre 8226 3972

SAVE THE DATE!

PASTORAL BOARD OPEN FORUM

10 April 2013, Coober Pedy

Pastoral lessees are invited to attend the Pastoral Board's Open Forum on 10 April in Coober Pedy, an annual event held throughout the pastoral districts to ensure all pastoralists have an opportunity to talk with Board members.

In April 2012 the Pastoral Board had an open forum in Hawker and approximately 20 pastoralists attended and discussed topical issues such as rents, alternative breeds of sheep, abundant native species, total grazing pressure and kangaroo culling permits.

The Coober Pedy meeting is an opportunity for pastoralists to raise any issues of concern. For example, issues of interest might include the assessment and inspection program run by the Pastoral Unit on behalf of the Pastoral Board, Indigenous Land Use Agreements, the Board's strategic priorities, or water point planning guidelines.

The Pastoral Board will be writing direct to pastoral lessees in the district with further information about the forum.

Don't forget to RSVP!

If you are planning to attend the forum contact David Hanna, Executive Officer, 8226 2127

CARBON FARMING INITIATIVE WORKSHOP

A Carbon Farming Initiative workshop hosted by the Marla-Oodnadatta NRM Group will also be held in Coober Pedy on 10 April 2013 and pastoralists are encouraged to attend; see p. 8 for further details.

GOAT AND RABBIT IMPACTS

After 10 years of below average rainfall, vegetation in the Eastern Districts has been regenerating after good rains in 2010 and 2011 – but feral goat numbers have increased dramatically since 2004.

Feral goats and rabbits compete with livestock for feed and water and contribute to total grazing pressure. The impacts of this are particularly felt in dry times when there is less feed available. Even in low numbers, rabbits are a pastoral production pest.

Unmanaged populations of feral goats and rabbits have detrimental impacts on native flora and fauna, including limiting regeneration of vegetation, changing vegetation structure and composition, increasing soil erosion, and competing for food and water.

For these reasons, feral goats and rabbits are declared priority pest species under the *NRM Act 2004* and listed as key threats under federal conservation legislation.



Integrated goat and rabbit control

Mustered feral goats

PASTORAL BOARD 2013

Meeting 135

Wednesday 10 April
Coober Pedy TAFE
(open forum to follow at a venue to be determined)

Meeting 136

Wednesday 5 June
(joint meeting with SAAL NRM Board) &
Thursday 6 June, Marree

Meeting 137

Wednesday 7 August, Waite

Meeting 138

Wednesday 9 October, Waite

Meeting 139

Wednesday 11 December, Waite

Land managers in the conservation reserves of the Riverland Biosphere and on neighbouring pastoral properties in the Eastern Districts of the SA Murray-Darling Basin region are encouraged to get involved in an integrated feral goat and rabbit control program so that the benefits of the recent good seasons are not lost.

Land managers will be supported to participate in feral goat control through fencing, mustering and trapping, closing certain watering points, and aerial and/or ground shooting, and in rabbit control through baiting, and mapping, ripping and fumigation of rabbit warrens.

There are also positions for land managers on the Steering Committee which has been formed to oversee the program.

The program will assess feral goat and rabbit abundance and densities; work with

landholders to plan on-ground works; provide funding for, assist and coordinate control activities; liaise with landholders and provide information and feedback; monitor vegetation condition in response to control activities; and deploy satellite collars on feral goats to track movements and home range.

It will work in conjunction with a feral goat and rabbit control program in the North East Pastoral district of the SA Arid Lands region with the intention to eventually link the two programs to achieve effective control of feral goats and rabbits at a wider landscape scale.

The program is being run by Natural Resources SA Murray-Darling Basin in partnership with the Rangelands NRM Group, BirdLife Australia, the Australian Landscape Trust, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, and staff supporting the Pastoral Board.

Further information

Contact Dave Setchell, Program Coordinator 0428 873 090 or Chris Reed, Steering Committee Chair 0427 992 207

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 8303 9751
Fax 8303 9320
Freecall 1800 678 447

Presiding Member
Geoff Mills

Pastoral Board matters
David Hanna 8226 2127

Public access to pastoral lands
David Oag 8648 5174

Lease assessments
Craig Baulderstone 8303 9752

Lease inspections and tenure
Chris Turner 8303 9755



Coal seam gas impacts – fieldwork continues

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources staff are continuing to gather information about water resources in areas of the SA Arid Lands region that may be affected by potential coal seam gas or large coal mining developments.

Since it was first reported in *Across The Outback* in October 2012, field surveys have been undertaken across the Arkaringa and Pedirka Basins to gain a better understanding of groundwater processes, including how and why groundwater moves from one location within a basin to another. The Pedirka Team will be heading back out into the field in March.

There is also a Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Team investigating surface water resources in the LEB with a focus on the potential impacts of coal seam gas (CSG) and large coal mining developments; they expect to start making field trips in May. This is a collaborative project that also involves input from the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board.

The information gathered by these projects 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 coal seam gas or large coal mining developments in the region.

An existing Australian Government database, which will provide a consistent and robust approach to assessing these impacts is also being updated by DEWNR and the SA NRM Boards, including the SAAL NRM Board.

In South Australia, the work is being conducted by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources as part of the Australian Government Initiative on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development.

Thanks to the land managers who are providing access to their properties for this work.

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?

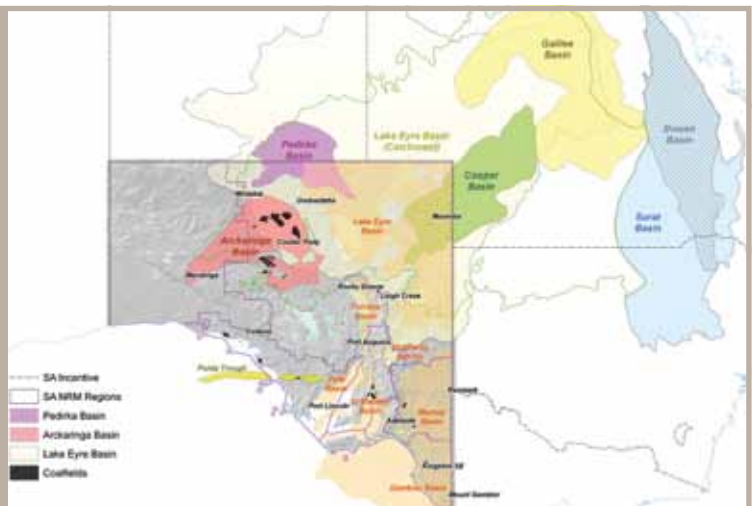
This fieldwork does not signal the beginning of CSG mining or large coal mines. It is about establishing, through scientific research, the actual and potential impacts of CSG and large coal mining activities on water resources in areas with a high potential for mining.

ARCKARINGA BASIN

The Arkaringa Basin straddles the SA Arid Lands and Alinytjara Wilurara regions in South Australia with Coober Pedy located near its centre. It is approximately 400 km south of Alice Springs and covers an area of approximately 100,000 square kilometres.

PEDIRKA BASIN

The Pedirka Basin centres on the South Australian/Northern Territory border with its northern boundary about 160 km south-east of Alice Springs. It covers an area of approximately 60,000 square kilometres.





WORKSHOP ALERT

Innamincka

Late April-May 2013

A workshop to discuss and present the findings of the SAAL NRM Board's 'Cooper Creek project' will be held at Innamincka in late April-May 2013.

The project has been investigating the natural features and human influences on key waterholes and wetlands along the iconic Cooper Creek in the Marree-Innamincka district, gathering information on grazing, mining, tourism and pest impacts to determine their influence on the catchment.

The workshop will be of interest to Aboriginal groups, members of the mining, pastoral and tourism industries and people generally interested in the management of the Cooper Creek.

Register your interest!

Contact Henry Mancini, Senior Water Projects Officer, 8648 5300, for confirmation of the workshop date.



Report a feral

Feral pig

Land managers in the SA Arid Lands are encouraged to report sightings to Natural Resources SA Arid Lands of any increase in numbers or changing distribution of pest animals or weeds.

With the SA Arid Lands comprising over 50 per cent of South Australia, effective management of feral pests requires input from land managers who are best placed to know what's happening on their properties.

For example, the State Feral Camel Project recently removed congregations of camels and donkeys in the Simpson Desert region, the Nullarbor and some areas along the Dog Fence in response to information provided by land managers (see p. 15).

While pest plant and animal numbers and distribution may fluctuate depending on the seasonal conditions, information from land managers will assist in identifying trends and determining an appropriate response.

Some programs can respond rapidly depending on the information and numbers of pests and it is important that land managers report their sightings early.

For large feral herbivores, where sufficient numbers are identified, cost effective control actions might include aerial removal.

And where numbers are small, but it's something not usually seen in the area (eg feral pigs), reporting this activity will help to identify potential problems and develop management plans and control strategies.

Reports are confidential and Natural Resources SA Arid Lands staff will contact other properties in the region to assess the extent of a problem before implementing a control program.

**To report a sighting contact
Emily Pedler, Sustainable Landscapes
Officer, 8648 5300**

Find out how landholder sightings led to the recent removal of 3000 feral camels – see p. 15

From Page 01

A new year, a new look

A recent survey carried out by Natural Resources SA Arid Lands staff on behalf of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board has revealed 85 per cent of pastoralists subscribe to *Across The Outback*.

Of these, nearly 80 per cent have used the information it contains to help them make decisions about managing their property.

On behalf of the agencies that currently fund the production of *Across The Outback* – SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board, Pastoral Board, Primary Industries and Regions SA and Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources – we thank you for your support and welcome your feedback.

Jenny Barker, Editor.



FEBRUARY 2013 • ISSUE 19

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.

News from North of the Fence

The SAAL NRM Board's Dingo Research Project has been running on properties north of the Dog Fence for four years, attempting to better understand the role the dingo plays in the ecosystem and the relationship between dingoes, 1080 baiting, calf predation and biodiversity.

The results so far are proving a challenge for the team to interpret as the project deals with extremes in rainfall and other unforeseen circumstances. This article reveals some of those challenges and preliminary results.

Calf loss interpretation

The Dingo Research Project has been monitoring pregnancy-tested cows in baited and unbaited paddocks to determine 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.

While calf loss can be attributed to a number of factors, the project is looking to see if baiting for dingoes is having a measurable impact on calf loss.

Unfortunately the project suffered unforeseen upsets which meant calf loss could no longer be measured on two of the four monitored properties (see box Participating Properties).

Information collected from the two remaining properties (Cordillo Downs and Todmorden) has shown variable pregnancy failure/calf losses in each property's baited and unbaited paddocks.

These ranged from 6-21 per cent higher in a baited paddock to 9-16 per cent higher in an unbaited paddock suggesting no clear relationship between calf loss and baiting for dingoes.

This may be attributable to the extremes in environmental conditions that have been experienced during the project to-date (see box Seasonal Context) or other complicating factors (see box Limitations). Adding another property (Innamincka) to the project should help this situation.



Dingoes

Dingo activity, diet and wildlife activity

The Dingo Research Project monitors the activity (presence and movement) of dingoes and other prey and predators by counting their tracks on raked plots set up in the baited and unbaited paddocks and through opportunistic field observation of larger prey species. Dingo diet is also assessed by identifying undigested hair, toe nails and scales in scats (poo) collected from within the baited and unbaited paddocks.

This information is collected to help establish the role of dingoes in the regulation of other predator and prey species (eg foxes, cats, kangaroos and rabbits) and therefore the relative influence of baiting on production and biodiversity.

Preliminary results of these combined methods indicate that:

- dingo baiting has not been responsible for fluctuations in dingo activity. Results indicate that this may be more related to climatic influences – which in turn influence prey availability – and the annual activity cycles around mating, whelping and young dog dispersal
- prey switching for the dingo (eg from kangaroos and rabbits to rodents) is related to prey availability which varies markedly according to seasonal conditions
- dingo baiting has not affected wildlife activity or significantly reduced dingo activity
- during the drier season of 2008-09 there were higher proportions of cattle/kangaroo/rabbit in the dingo diet
- during the 2010-12 period when seasonal conditions created an explosion in the rodent/small mammal population, there was an obvious switch in dingo diet to rodents/small mammals.

Raked plots are used to count the tracks of dingoes and other wildlife species





THE LIMITATIONS

The project was set up to compare baited and unbaited paddocks in four participating properties. However, these are operating cattle stations and some differences between paddocks may influence the results.

During the life of the project to-date, baited and unbaited paddocks on some properties:

- have had greater than a nine month interval between pregnancy testing and assessing pregnancy outcomes which can introduce doubt about whether self-weaning has occurred
- have been exposed to localised disease outbreaks in cattle spread by plaguing Long-haired Rats during the 2010-11 good season
- have been exposed to different environmental and seasonal conditions (eg wildfires and variable rainfall)
- have supported changing herd sizes and breeder ages
- have subtle differences in landscape systems between the baited and unbaited paddocks which may affect breeder nutrition or wildlife distribution.

THE PARTICIPATING PROPERTIES

Four operating cattle stations contribute to the Dingo Research Project.

Quinyambie

Quinyambie was destocked due to drought in 2009 but continues to maintain baited and unbaited paddocks for monitoring of wildlife activity and scat collection.

Cordillo Downs

Baited and unbaited paddocks were maintained on Cordillo until May 2012 when 1080 was banned for reasons of organic accreditation and baiting ceased. Monitoring of wildlife activity, calf loss and scat collection has continued.

Todmorden

Baited and unbaited paddocks have been maintained on Todmorden throughout the project for the monitoring of wildlife activity, calf loss, and scat collection.

Innamincka

Innamincka joined the project in June 2012. Baited and unbaited paddocks have been maintained for monitoring of wildlife activity and calf loss.

Why are we doing this research?

According to the *South Australian Dingo Policy*, north of the Dog Fence dingoes are neither specifically protected nor declared, but are regarded as a legitimate wildlife species.

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.

In order to develop best practice dingo management strategies it is crucial to understand the role that dingoes play in the ecosystem in the region.

On completion of this project in 2014, the team will have gathered six years of data at which time the project is expected to contribute to refining a dingo management plan for improved cattle production and biodiversity outcomes. This is expected to occur in consultation with landholders.

The project is delivering on *SAAL Regional NRM Plan* targets that support sustainable industries.

THE SEASONAL CONTEXT

Above-average rainfall occurred at all properties over the two years beginning early 2010, although the preceding period in 2009 was well below average.

Cattle condition improved markedly with the good seasonal conditions, as did the abundance of small birds and lizards, with a dramatic increase in rodents and small mammals.

Since late 2011, little rainfall occurred although isolated pockets have received sporadic thunderstorms.

The variation in seasonal conditions shows the importance of committing to long-term projects which allow for trends to be tracked. The SAAL NRM Board extends its thanks to Santos for committing funds to allow the project extension to 2014.



Angus Waddell

Pregnancy testing cattle



NRM Groups are the on-ground contact for the SA 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	Keith Slade
Gawler Ranges	Sandy Morris
Marla-Oodnadatta	Mark Fennell
Marree-Innamincka	Maree Morton
Kingoonya	Julie Mould

FURTHER INFORMATION

For a full list of members for each NRM Group, to find out which district you belong to, or for NRM Group meetings, agendas and minutes, visit the Natural Resources SA Arids Lands website www.saalnm.sa.gov.au

GET INVOLVED!

Do you live or have an interest in the SA Arid Lands region? Are you interested in providing a local perspective to the SAAL NRM Board on key natural resource management issues in your district? Then perhaps you'd like to be a Group member. Expressions of interest are taken throughout the year for membership on your local NRM Group.

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

CARBON FARMING INITIATIVE WORKSHOPS

Residents of the Marla-Oodnadatta and North East Pastoral districts are encouraged to register their interest in Carbon Farming Initiative workshops planned for Coober Pedy and Yunta for April and May.

The Australian Government's Carbon Farming Initiative is a voluntary carbon offsets scheme which provides opportunities for landholders to participate in carbon markets.

Examples of the activities which are being considered across the rangelands are carbon storage in plants through the management of grazing pressure and decreasing emissions through the management of fire regimens and destruction of feral ruminants.

Register your interest today!

Contact Janet Walton, NRM Officer (Marla-Oodnadatta) or Louise Gavin, NRM Officer (North East Pastoral) 8648 5300

Gawler Ranges

Sandy Morris (Chair) and Lisa Taylor (NRM Officer)

A wrap up of news from the Gawler Ranges NRM Group and a report on how the district is responding to the current season...

Record dry summer

A lack of runoff combined with last year's dry season means most dams are now empty. Since the last drought, properties in the district have rebuilt their stock numbers and will now be looking to offload stock. Most properties still have a reasonable amount of feed and stock are generally in fairly good order but they may not do as well as they are moved from dam to bore water.

This drying out period has provided the best conditions in years for trapping and mustering goats with many thousands now taken out of the Gawler Ranges.

Camel sightings have increased, as they come in search of water, while wild dogs are also on the move, their tracks often seen in the bulldust of the water-run roads. Although seemingly low in number, they are often bait and trap shy and rarely show themselves. Some properties have experienced significant sheep losses in the last six months and all land managers are encouraged to get involved with the Biteback program for dingo control. Contact Lisa Stevens, Biteback Coordinator 8648 5300.

Carbon Farming workshop

In November 2012, Leonard Cohen (Canopy Pty Ltd) met with the Gawler Ranges NRM Group to discuss the Carbon Farming Initiative, an offset scheme established by the Australian Government to create economic opportunities for farmers and reduce carbon pollution.

Seeing the potential for landholders to participate in the scheme in the future for alternative income, the Group intends to improve its knowledge on this subject and assist Leonard in his work to create a framework for such a scheme to exist.

Cultana expansion

The Group received an update on the proposed expansion of the Cultana defence training base from the Australian Government's Department of Defence in February.

The proposed expansion area will extend significantly to the east and will encompass up to six pastoral properties.

David Hackett, the Department's representative, presented the planned environmental management strategy for the development and fielded questions on land damage and management, and on the expansion plans. David will be maintaining contact with the group to keep them informed of developments.

To find out more about the environmental impacts of the expansion, contact David 7389 4765.

Further information Contact Lisa Taylor, NRM Officer 8648 5300

STOP PRESS

As Across The Outback went to press, the Gawler Ranges was receiving some welcome rain. It remains to be seen if this will run-off into dams.



HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

Our goals as Aboriginal Engagement Officers are to help the SAAL NRM Board better engage with Aboriginal communities in the Arid Lands and to provide an opportunity for Aboriginal communities to successfully achieve their project outcomes. Does your community have a project in mind? Call 8648 5300.



Left to right: Peter Willis, Adrian Findlow, Tim Raison, Kym O'Toole, Peter Butler, George Cooley, William Lennon Jr, Rob Kakoschke (trainer)

Community up-skill in weed control

Mark Walsh, Aboriginal Engagement Officer

Seven community members from Umoona and Mount Willoughby Station completed a Chemical Accreditation course held at the Umoona Conference Room in November.

The training means that the Umoona community and Mount Willoughby Station have improved capacity to carry out weed control using scheduled chemicals not usually available to the public.

The two-day course combined theoretical training with practical demonstrations as well as opportunities for the participants to practice activities including measuring quantities of chemicals and spraying techniques.

Initially, the training will be used to tackle Buffel Grass around the community and a demonstration of correct spray application procedures for controlling this weed was enthusiastically received by the participants.

An injection gun was purchased for cactus control and provided to the participants who also received training in its use with glyphosate.

The course paid particular attention to training participants in ensuring their personal safety through safely handling, mixing and storing chemicals, and reading and understanding labels.

Thanks to George Cooley for helping to coordinate attendance from the local Umoona community and to the registered providers Smith and Georg. The project was facilitated by Natural Resources SA Arid Lands staff on behalf of the SAAL NRM Board with funding from the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program.

Further information

If your community is interested in receiving similar training, register your interest with Mark Walsh, Aboriginal Engagement Officer 8648 5300

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 have wood fires within the park.

This is the final step in a staged process after the December 2011 decision by the Witjira Co-management Board to ban wood collection and wood fires in order to protect the Park's precious and fragile arid biodiversity.

To help visitors adjust to the ban, wood fires had been allowed at the designated camping areas of Dalhousie Springs, 3 O'clock Creek and Purni Bore but, from April 2013, the collection of wood and the use of wood fires at these camping areas are no longer permitted.

The decision by the Witjira Co-management Board followed stakeholder consultation in 2011 and brings Witjira National Park in line with Lake Eyre National Park, Wabma Kadarbu Conservation Park, and Coongie Lakes National Park where wood fires are also not permitted.

Use of wood fires at Mt Dare, a leased section of Witjira National Park, is still permitted.

Wood may also be carried through Witjira National Park to be used in the adjacent Simpson Desert Regional Reserve and Conservation Park but must not be used in Witjira.

The Witjira Co-management Board acknowledges that the wood campfire is an iconic experience. However, years of firewood collection by visitors – including some irresponsible collection and use – prompted its decision to prohibit collection. Recruitment of wood bearing shrubs and trees can take a long time, which can leave areas near visitor sites denuded of wood.

Trees may look dead during drought but can be dormant and still green and that wood provides shade, shelter and homes for a variety of birds, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates.

Rotting wood also provides organic matter and nutrients for another generation of trees and shrubs.

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

Further information

Contact Tony Magor, District Ranger (Desert Parks) 8648 5300



The participants visited this recently burned Buffel Grass infestation outside Coober Pedy



GOVERNMENT AUCTIONS SA NOW AT SALISBURY

Government Auctions relocated from its Netley location to Salisbury Plains in October.

Government vehicles will continue to be auctioned every Wednesday at 10am in an undercover purpose built auction facility.

A huge range of vehicles will be on offer with more inspection days available.



Stripe-faced Dunnart

Arid Recovery Annual Trapping results

Numbers may have been down on last year, but the 16th consecutive annual trapping program at Arid Recovery Reserve still caught a wide variety of species, evidence of the positive effect that the Reserve has on the abundance of small mammals and reptiles.

A variety of animals were captured, including five different species of mammals and 13 species of reptiles.

Hopping mice (*Notomys alexis*) and the nationally vulnerable Plains Rat (*Pseudomys australis*) were the most abundant mammal captures, while the skinks (*Ctenotus* sp.) made up half of the reptile captures.

One of the longest running programs of its kind in Australia, the collected data highlights the impact that feral predators such as cats and foxes may have on the native small mammals and reptiles within the arid zone.

Further information
www.aridrecovery.org.au

Sunday church service at Beltana



Centenary celebrations at Beltana

Glenys Aird

The North Flinders town of Beltana welcomed more than 300 visitors from interstate and overseas in October to celebrate the founding of the Australian Inland Mission.

The event recognised the life and work of Reverend John Flynn who founded the mission over a century ago.

Official events included a church service and plaque unveiling at the Smith of Dunesk church, tree planting at the cemetery, a formal dinner at the old railway station, book launches, a dance, a photography competition, historic displays, a silent auction, stalls, displays, and a historic walk.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service brought its flight simulator – a full scale model of an air ambulance used for training (complete with a ‘patient’!) while the Leigh Creek Health Service took advantage of the occasion to run a community health stall.

The Outback Communities Authority supported the event with funding to build a new cemetery shelter and to help cover some of the infrastructure costs of the weekend.

The AIM no longer exists but its work is carried on today by the Presbyterian Inland Mission, Frontier Services and the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Representatives from all of these organisations joined the Beltana community to acknowledge the lives and work of the many people who helped to make Flynn’s vision for a ‘mantle of safety’ over the people of the outback a reality.

2013 YUNTA PICNIC RACES & GYMKHANA

Saturday 4 May at the Yunta Racecourse, 10am start

- Over \$10,000 in prize money, trophies and ribbons
- 27 events including THE YUNTA CUP
- BARREL RACES – OPEN FLYING – FLAG & BARREL
- Gymkhana events run in four age group

FULL CATERING – BAR – TRADE DISPLAYS – SPECTATOR EVENTS – CHILDREN’S AMUSEMENTS – ROAST TEA

Raceday RoundUp around the campfire with Danny Hooper

Enquiries to
The Secretary 8650 5005



SAVE THE DATE!

Soil Rehabilitation and Conservation Workshop

Land managers in the SA Arid Lands are invited to attend a Soil Rehabilitation and Conservation Workshop on Wintinna Station from 8-12 April.

Organised by the Centralian Land Management Association (CLMA), participants will learn techniques for soil conservation, roadwork rehabilitation, bank construction, and road realignment.

They can also gain accreditation for operating front-end loaders, graders, dozers and skid steers.

All land managers are welcome to attend and it is not necessary to be a member of CLMA.

Cost: \$200 per machine per person

Further information
Camilla Osborn, Centralian Land Management Association,
8953 4230 or clma@clma.com.au

PESTSMART RESOURCES

Some new PestSmart resources have been finalised including the glovebox guide for managing rabbits, the working plan to manage wild dogs, guidelines for preparing a working plan to manage wild dogs and guidelines for planning carp fishing competitions.

Further information
www.feral.org.au/pestsmart

WHO ARE THE CLMA?

The Centralian Land Management Association is the pastoral industry's landcare group in Central Australia. Formed in 1988 by a group of local pastoralists, the CLMA is a non-government organisation which promotes land management practices to ensure the sustainable and productive use of pastoral lands.

It extends south from Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory to south of the Northern Territory/South Australian border.

The CLMA is based in Alice Springs.

Visit www.clma.com.au for further information





ACROSS THE OUTBACK

Across the Outback is prepared and edited by Jenny Barker, Senior Communications Officer, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands.

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 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

ARE YOU ON THE ACROSS THE OUTBACK MAILING LIST?

Across the Outback is a free publication that is issued to 1500 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 April 2013 edition

Content due by COB 12 April 2013

Contact jenny.barker@sa.gov.au or 8463 3354 for further information.

Rabbit control in the Witjira National Park

Alan Hancox, FOS Grants Officer

The Friends of Simpson Desert (FOS) will be undertaking a rabbit control program in Witjira National Park in May as part of their annual working bee – and they hope to end up with a couple in the pot!

The rabbit control project will consist of both cage-trapping and poisoning at the Dalhousie Ruins and Ambutchera Creek areas.

Other planned activities during the 11-day annual working bee are:

- Training in building restoration at the Dalhousie Homestead ruins
- Surveying and controlling invasive weeds including Buffel Grass and Prickly Mimosa
- Maintaining and developing walking trails near the Dalhousie pool
- Revisiting sites to survey for the presence of small marsupials
- Clearing overhanging vegetation along park tracks
- Extending and maintaining irrigated revegetation at various sites
- Surveying and maintaining boundary fencing.

The work is being funded by the SAAL NRM Board's Pest Management and Rangelands Rehabilitation program with assistance from Natural Resources SA Arid Lands staff.

Further information

www.friendsofthesimpsondesert.com.au

THIS SPACE COULD BE YOURS!

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

Further information

Contact the editor
jenny.barker@sa.gov.au
or 8463 3354

A fee per article may apply



Major Mitchells at Tarcoola



Flinders Ranges National Park



Flinders Ranges National Park

Have your say!

Flinders Ranges National Park Management Plan

Interested people have until 12 April to submit their feedback on four discussion papers which will be used to draft a management plan for the Flinders Ranges National Park.

Developed to guide initial community input into the development of the plan, the discussion papers centre on four key themes – biodiversity; tourism and recreation; geology; and European and pastoral heritage.

Feedback is welcome on any of the issues raised in the papers, or any other point related to the management or future direction of the park.

The Flinders Ranges National Park Management Plan will be developed by the Co-management Board in accordance with the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

The plan will recognise the park's significant place in the landscape, its natural and cultural values in one of South Australia's premier outback destinations, and reflect the spirit of co-management in a landscape rich in Aboriginal culture.

Once drafted, the plan will also be released for a three-month period of consultation.

Further information

The discussion papers are available for download at www.environment.sa.gov.au/haveyoursay/flindersranges-mgtplan

Contact Chris Halstead, Senior Policy and Planning Officer, 8124 4802 or email DEWNR.FlindersPlan@sa.gov.au

Written submissions can be submitted via the above email or website or mailed to Flinders Ranges National Park Management Plan, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001



Managing lousy sheep

Trent Scholz, PIRSA Animal Health Officer

With sheep lice estimated to cost the Australian wool industry \$165-350 million per year, South Australia's Sheep Lice Program aims to minimise their spread through saleyards and straying sheep by providing advice and support to land managers.

There are a number of challenges to effectively manage sheep lice and land managers are encouraged to consider the following advice when designing an appropriate sheep lice program.

1. Remember, sheep are the predominant source of lice

Lice may occur in your own flock, in stray sheep or in purchased sheep but shearers clothes, shoes and equipment should also be considered as a potential source.

2. Monitor your flock regularly for lice

Look for signs of lice in your sheep (eg rubbing, wool in teeth or on posts and fences). Catch at least 10 suspect sheep and inspect them closely and carefully (10 fleece partings per side) to determine what is causing the sheep to rub (eg grass seed, burrs, break in wool, lice etc.)

3. Plan a 100% successful treatment to avoid reinfestation

- Use the right chemical treatment
- Ensure sheep are cleanly shorn
- Manage chemical resistance – don't use SP or IGR group chemicals to eradicate lice
- Plunge dip to eradicate lice (correct chemical, rotate groups)
- Avoid shower dipping – history shows it is very difficult to do it right
- If back-lining, know the correct procedures – do it properly, get it right!
- Avoid split shearing
- Complete muster is essential
- Remember, long wool treatment is only a control measure
- Treat all sheep together
- Understand that breeds that shed wool do harbour lice and need to be treated.

4. Secure your property

Biosecurity is essential and land managers should ensure they have secure fencing to prevent straying sheep, make wise sheep purchases, and undertake on-farm quarantine of new sheep brought onto the property.

5. Communicate with neighbours

Talk to your neighbours, find out their lice status, and consider working together as a local group to eradicate lice (see Lice Action Group).

6. Plan your flock protection/eradication

Know the risks of introducing new livestock and develop a flock protection plan.

7. Start a Lice Action Group

If you and your neighbours are interested in managing lice on a district level consider forming a Lice Action Group. The Group can meet for one or a series of meetings to develop a district-wide strategy for managing lice. Rural Solutions SA can provide a facilitator to run these groups.



Lousy sheep

Lice and legalities

Under the *Livestock Act 1997*, it is an offence to send lousy sheep into a market or to allow lousy sheep to stray from your property. Inspection of sheep sales by Biosecurity SA Animal Health staff is a continuing part of the South Australian sheep lice program.

Your sheep sale levies at work

The Sheep Lice Program is run by PIRSA (through Biosecurity SA-Animal Health and Rural Solutions) on behalf of the SA Sheep Advisory Group and with funding from the Sheep Industry Fund.

Further information

For assistance with assessing sheep before they are sent off for sale, or advice on the Lice Control Program, contact Trent Scholz, PIRSA Animal Health Officer, 8648 5166 or 0427 970 453

SA BUFFEL GRASS STRATEGY LAUNCHED

The South Australian Buffel Grass Strategy was launched by Paul Caica, then Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation in October 2012.

Buffel Grass in the SA Arid Lands region presents a significant threat to its unique cultural and environmental assets, valuable native pastures, and communities by significantly increasing the risk of fire.

The SA Buffel Grass Strategy outlines a State-wide approach for managing this ongoing and serious issue.

Further information

To download a copy visit

www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa/nrm_biosecurity/weeds



FERAL CAMEL REMOVAL

Aerial removal of feral camels recently occurred in the SA Arid Lands and the Alinytjara Wilurara regions in order to protect diminishing water supplies and fencing infrastructure on pastoral land while also reducing impacts on the SA Dog Fence and natural resources.

Over 2200 feral camels were removed from the Simpson Desert region over a two-week period in January in response to landholder reports of feral camels congregating on diminishing water on the Warburton and Kalakooah Creeks.

Sharon Oldfield from Cowarie Station who had over 1400 camels removed from her property said that the aerial removal was organised in quick time.

‘This is an example of the system working well,’ she said. ‘Landholders reported an unexpected congregation of camels and the State Feral Camel Project was able to check with the neighbours to gather a general idea of what was going on and then respond straight away.’

‘As it turned out there were a lot more animals there than we expected.’

‘It was fantastic to take the chance to respond while we could – I’d hate to think what sort of impact we would have seen if that number of camels had been left there for much longer.’

A week-long aerial removal of around 800 feral camels was also completed in the Far West, Nullarbor and northwards along the Dog Fence towards Coober Pedy in response to local reports of emaciated feral camels gathering along the Dog Fence.

The removal of the camels has reduced a major traffic risk to road users travelling the Eyre Highway; reduced the risk of damage and breaches to the Dog Fence; and taken pressure off some diminishing fresh water supplies along the Nullarbor Coast where large mobs had congregated.

From an animal welfare point of view the removal of the weak and starving mobs has also been beneficial.

The removal programs were joint initiatives by PIRSA and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, with support from the Caring for our Country funded Australian Feral Camel Management Project.

Aerial wild dog baiting flies again

Peter Bird, Biosecurity Officer

After last year’s successful trial, the stage is set for aerial wild dog baiting to resume in late April.

Aerial baiting will again target properties south of the Dog Fence where wild dogs continue to cause problems for sheep producers, and will focus on inaccessible areas such as ranges, breakaways and lake margins.

This year, the aim is to target 80 properties with 40,000 baits and this will occur in consultation with Local Wild Dog Groups.

Increasingly dry conditions and diminishing prey warn of a heightened risk of livestock losses from wild dogs. On the positive side these conditions should also ensure good bait up-take by wild dogs.

It is anticipated that the aerial baiting flight path will re-fly much of the route chosen by landholders last year where 32,000 baits were laid along a 6000 kilometre flight path taking in nearly 70 properties.

All participating landholders will be consulted before the flight path is finalised and no baiting will be done over any property without prior formal approval from the landholder.

Early planning is in progress by a steering committee made up of landholders representing each of the local NRM Groups.

Dried meat baits will again be prepared at the Oraparinna Bounceback facility with the help of volunteer landholders. The baiting will be overseen by Biosecurity SA with the help of a coordinator.

Further information

Peter Bird, Biosecurity SA, 8303 9519

DON'T FORGET TO GROUND-BAIT!

It is critical that all land managers participating in the aerial baiting program also participate in the Biteback ground baiting program to ensure that wild dogs are targeted throughout the pastoral sheep zone. Landholders should prepare large numbers of baits to ensure there are plenty of baits to go around.

Further information

Contact Lisa Stevens, Biteback Coordinator, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, 8648 5300

If you are experiencing problems with pests on your property, see 'Report a feral', p. 5.



Feral camels



Chris Wenham and Alan Hancox



Baton change for Friends of Simpson Desert

Alan Hancox bade farewell to the position of President of the Friends of the Simpson Desert (FOS) in February ending a 10-year stint in that office. He now takes on the role of Grants Officer continuing a 15 year involvement with the group. *Across The Outback* asked him about some of the challenges and achievements.

Keen to travel the Simpson in the company of like-minded people while contributing to the protection of our environment, Alan and Lorraine Hancox joined FOS in 1997.

As President, Alan has been responsible for the general running and promotion of the group and twice he and Lorraine represented FOS as guests during Simpson Desert crossings with DEWNR's Northern Consultative Committee.

He also led nine working bees in the Simpson Desert parks and took part in five others.

'I was particularly keen on getting the group involved in fauna surveys and getting members access to areas of the parks that are 'off-limit' to the public to carry out our working bees,' said Alan.

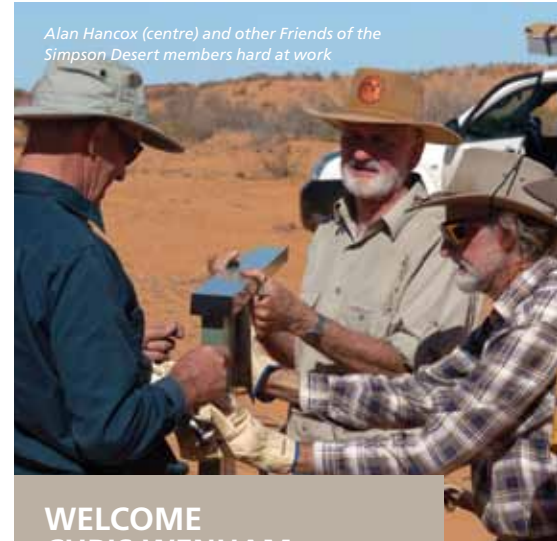
'Initially we were trained in the method of searching for evidence of Marsupial Moles by trenching, observing and recording animal tracks and scats on the surface and setting Elliot and pitfall traps.'

'Everyone enjoyed the experience and we were able to continue on our own, later covering most of the desert tracks in the park.'

'Since then we have periodically added bird, plant and invertebrate surveys with the results recorded in our working bee reports and shared with the department.'

Alan and Lorraine's insight into the Park and its management challenges were bolstered in 2005 when Alan took on a temporary three-month position as Park Ranger at Witjira National Park and Lorraine provided voluntary assistance.

'We experienced firsthand the foolishness of some travellers, and not just the overseas ones, who put themselves and potential rescuers at risk while travelling in mid-summer,' he said. 'Since then summer park closures have been implemented.'



Alan Hancox (centre) and other Friends of the Simpson Desert members hard at work

WELCOME CHRIS WENHAM

Chris Wenham, the new president of FOS, joined the group in 1987 only six months after it had formed. Chris has previous experience on the committee and previously served as President from 1999 to 2002. He is a Life Member of FOS and holds several Premier's Appreciation Awards.

Further information www.friendsofthesimpsondesert.com.au

We also became mindful that FOS, however well meaning, needed to be aware that our projects should not add to the management burden of rangers.'

'Maintenance of facilities and equipment in this harsh and unforgiving environment require diligent and committed staff.'

During his presidency, both Lorraine and Alan were awarded Life Membership of FOS and won the Rotary Volunteer of the Parks Award in 2011.

There have been some challenges and, amongst them, Alan cites the difficulty of working in an environment where government funds are constantly being reduced, the struggle to attract younger members, and the burden of paperwork and departmental change.

But he also adds:

'The current 'hands-on' management team is about the best I have had the pleasure of working with and this team, with the assistance of groups like FOS, should continue to make the Simpson Desert experience one to remember.'

'We're already seeing improvements in tourist attitudes and much less litter.'