

ACROSS THE OUTBACK

SA Arid Lands: 'It's your place – tell us what matters to you!'

The SA Arid Lands community is being asked to share their treasured spots and their childhood memories — and it's all about taking a new approach to planning for the future of the region.

The SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board has taken its first step in working with the community to develop the new *Regional NRM Plan*, launching 'It's your place', a campaign that encourages community to come together to talk about what makes the SA Arid Lands region such a special place.

'The role of the NRM Board is to champion sustainable use of our natural resources — to find a way to provide for the needs of our industries without compromising our community values,' said Ms Janet Brook, Presiding Member of the SAAL NRM Board.

'The region's natural resources are finite, and with so many diverse and competing interests, it is not easy to strike a balance to support production, environmental and community values.

This is why we have a *Regional NRM Plan*, to articulate our goals and to set the direction of natural resource management for the region.'

While there is an existing Plan in place, it needs updating to account for climate change as well as legislative, policy and organisational changes, so the SAAL NRM Board is using the opportunity to improve community input and ownership.

'This first step in our planning process is to find out what it is that our community values in the region,' said Ms Brook.

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NRM Board members Leonard Nutt, Janet Brook, Daryl Bell, Catherine Hollingsworth and Pauline McKenzie



Help is on the way for drought affected properties in South Australia

Over half a million dollars has been committed by the Australian and South Australian Governments to support drought-affected pastoral properties in the Far North of the state.

These funds will be directed towards improving water infrastructure to support pastoralists to manage water resources during extended dry periods, and to contribute to managing the ongoing impacts of wild dogs.

In late June, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Leon Bignell toured the SA Arid Lands region to meet and discuss these conditions with land managers and key stakeholders including the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board and the Pastoral Board.

The Minister acknowledged the hardship prolonged dry conditions generated for pastoral properties and announced that the State Government would allocate \$275,000 for a drought package.

The Australian Government responded a short time later by committing to match those funds.

Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) has provided a grant to Livestock SA to deliver the \$550,000 package to those pastoral businesses in the Far North which have experienced hardship as a result of the drought.

This package includes up to \$300,000 allocated for water infrastructure projects and \$225,000 to support wild dog management in the region. The remaining \$25,000 is allocated to support Livestock SA with the costs associated with managing the program.

Water infrastructure projects to be funded by the package will support the repair, upgrade and maintenance of existing water infrastructure including bores, pumps, dams, pipes and troughs. The funding for wild dog control will be available to land managers that have demonstrated a commitment to the strategic management of wild dog impacts.

This new drought assistance package is in addition to the Australian Government's \$10 million in drought concessional loans for drought-affected landholders, including South Australian pastoralists.

It also adds to the State Government's package announced in February which included special road access for large livestock transport vehicles (subject to road conditions), one-on-one drought management advice from PIRSA, and stock condition assessments by Biosecurity SA Animal Health Officers.

Support is also available from Rural Financial Counsellors through Rural Business Support.

Australian Government, PIRSA, Livestock SA, SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board

Livestock SA will soon announce how land managers can apply for access to the drought package and the SAAL NRM Board will keep you updated in future editions of *Across the Outback* and through the NRM Groups.

In the meantime, contact Deane Crabb (Livestock SA) 8297 2299 or 0419 799 166 dcrabb@livestocksa.org.au



NRM Board tours region

Rick Barratt, SA Arid Lands NRM Board

Members of the SA Arid Lands NRM Board undertook their annual regional tour for two days in June, this time meeting with community and stakeholders along the Stuart Highway between Port Augusta and Coober Pedy.

On the first morning, a tour of the Cultana Training Area was followed by a presentation about the expansion project by David Hackett from the Australian Government's Department of Defence.

David pointed out Aboriginal cultural sites and explained the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) that applies in the area.

Since the acquired pastoral leases have been de-stocked, David explained how land management issues, such as goats, weeds, and retention of stock waters are being addressed, in addition to vegetation management and soil erosion risks resulting from defence exercises.

The SAAL NRM Board joined the Pastoral Board's evening forum in Glendambo (see below) where both Boards were able to meet and discuss a number of issues with the participating community including wild dog management and stocking maximums.

A joint Board meeting was undertaken the following morning where wild dogs and drying conditions were again on the agenda, with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries joining the meeting (see p. 02).

The Boards were also addressed by Caroline Schaeffer, Chair of the Native Vegetation Council regarding proposed changes to Significant Environmental Benefit (SEB) policies and how these may affect projects in the region.

At the close of the Glendambo meetings, the Board attended *Biteback's* Kingoonya injection service where land managers from Mount Vivian, Kokatha and Arcoona took the opportunity to have their meat injected and offered their insights on the wild dog issue.

The NRM Board's tour culminated in Coober Pedy where the Board was updated on the exploration programs in the Arckaringa Basin by a representative of Linc Energy and on the operation of the Petroleum and Mining Acts by a Department for Manufacturing, Innovation, Trade, Resources and Energy (DMITRE) representative.

The Board met with members of the District Council of Coober Pedy to review activities and discuss opportunities to grow its partnership in natural resources matters.



SAAL NRM Board members tour an opal mine in Coober Pedy

The Board tour was an excellent opportunity to hear from the regional stakeholders and community and share our collective knowledge in regards to managing our finite natural resources in the region.

SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board

Pastoral Board hosts open forum in Glendambo

Jeff Stringer, Acting Executive Officer, Pastoral Board

Representatives from Kokatha, Coondambo, Bon Bon, Billa Kalina and Mount Vivian pastoral stations attended the Pastoral Board's forum held in Glendambo on 24 June.

The forum discussions centered on two main topics; wild dogs and their impact on livestock enterprises and the Pastoral Lease Assessment process.

Many pastoralists are reporting large numbers of wild dogs being shot, baited or trapped on their properties, in many cases 10 times what the 'normal' level has been for many years.

Concern was expressed at the meeting at the apparent lack of cooperation by some pastoral lessees when district wild dog control programs are proposed and

conducted. It was acknowledged that landscape scale wild dog control programs are disadvantaged and not as effective when some properties do not participate.

These properties may include those that have 'organic' status and are unable to use 1080 baits as a result and also pastoral properties that have an alternate land use and are not grazing stock.

The current pastoral lease assessment process, how it follows on from the first round assessment and the pastoral inspection process were discussed by the

Pastoral Unit Leader, Chris Turner. Concern was raised by some of the pastoralists present that if the assessment process results in a reduction of the lease stock maximum then that may have a negative effect on the equity of a pastoral lease.

The Pastoral Board values the insights, information and feedback that the open forum brings and sincerely thanks the lessees that attended this event.

Pastoral Board



...continued from page 01

It might be the economic opportunities the region provides through pastoralism, tourism and mining, its Aboriginal heritage, or perhaps it's our unique four wheel driving, bushwalking and camping spots, our native plants and animals, our iconic landscapes and outback characters, or simply our vast open spaces and fresh air.'

'We want to really get to the heart of what's important to you about the region,' said Ms Brook. 'Think about what you want your children to inherit, what it is that tells you you're coming home, if you had friends visiting, where would you take them, or what are your most vivid childhood memories?'

The collection of community values is part of a new landscape approach to NRM planning that the Board is taking which recognises how our biodiversity, soils, water and pests interact in the landscape and considers each system's unique, environmental, economic, social and cultural values.

'Pastoralists, tourists, transport workers, townspeople, government agencies, Aboriginal communities, mining companies – anyone who lives, works or invests in the region can contribute and we would like to hear from them,' said Ms Brook.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, the Board is busy collecting data to understand how our landscapes function.

'We're starting with what our community values, but in the next phase, we want to show what the science is telling us about the threats and pressures to those areas.

At that point we want to again work with our community to find out what we should be prioritising and where we should be making management interventions.'

The Board has provided the community with a variety of ways to respond to their call.

'Look out for us at community events and meetings, connect with us online, call us or write in – we are ready to listen however people want to communicate.'

SAAL NRM Board

SO TELL US WHAT MATTERS TO YOU!

- visit www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/aridlands where you can use our special mapping tool to share what you love and value most about the region
- like us on Facebook [Natural Resources SA Arid Lands] and upload a photo or video of your favourite place and tell us why it's important to you
- email us SAAridlands@sa.gov.au – tell us what matters to you or share a photo of something you value
- write to us at Natural Resources Centre, PO Box 78, Port Augusta SA 5700, or Fax us 8648 5301
- call and tell us what matters to you on 8648 5300
- look out for us at upcoming community meetings and events, or contact us to request a meeting with you or your organisation.



EXPLORE MORE OF YOUR PLACE ON US. \$3000* WORTH OF FUEL VOUCHERS IS UP FOR GRABS. BE ONE OF THE FIRST TO TELL US WHAT MATTERS TO YOU AND YOU'LL RECEIVE A \$50 VOUCHER.

* CONDITIONS APPLY



NEW FACEBOOK PAGE LAUNCHED

Want to know where you can find out more on pest plant and animal control? On property management like EMU™?

Want to report a sighting of a strange animal or unfamiliar plant that you've seen? Or find out more about our region's national parks? The SA Arid Lands community now have another way of staying connected with natural resource management activities in the region with the launch of a new Facebook page dedicated to NRM activities in the region.

The Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Facebook page will be celebrating your achievements in natural resource management in the region and we'll be sharing news from the SA Arid Lands NRM Board, our six district-based NRM Groups and the six Co-management Boards and Advisory Committees that are taking care of our national parks.

But most of all we want to hear from you...

So join the conversation and like us on Facebook! Our page is here www.facebook.com/naturalresourcesaaridlands or search for Natural Resources SA Arid Lands on Facebook.



PASTORAL BOARD 2014

MEETING 143

Wednesday 20 August, Adelaide

MEETING 144

Wednesday 15 October, Waite

MEETING 145

Wednesday 10 December, Keswick

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 8124 4837

Fax 8463 4828

Freecall 1800 678 447

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

FIELD WORK ASSISTANTS IN THE NORTH FLINDERS

Do you have an interest in plants or ecology?

Interested in improving your skills in plant identification, or seeing parts of the central and northern Flinders Ranges that many will never see?

Opportunities are currently available for volunteers to assist Natural Resources SA Arid Lands scientific officers' to assess vegetation condition on pastoral leases in the North Flinders district of the SA Arid Lands region.

Pastoral leases are of great economic value but also have important cultural and ecological significance and are home to many rare and endangered plants and animals. Pastoralists have access to pastoral lease land for the main purpose of raising livestock and, where possible, to improve the condition of the land. Our program assesses and reports on land condition and compliance with lease conditions.

WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING?

The lease assessments you will be involved in are carried out every 14 years, collecting information on land condition, erosion, land management issues and grazing impacts associated with stock, goats, rabbits and kangaroos.

Field work assistants will provide a range of support including collecting and recording data; revisiting and setting-up photopoint monitoring sites; measuring the density and frequency of perennial plant species; assisting the calculation of a Land Condition Index; using GPS equipment, taking photographs, identifying and collecting plants, and navigating and driving 4WD vehicles.

SOME ESSENTIAL CRITERIA*...

You will need to have:

- a current Senior First Aid Certificate
- a Driver's Licence, (the ability to drive a manual vehicle is essential)
- accredited 4WD training

**Support may be available for suitable applicants to obtain compulsory requirements.*

You will also need to be willing to camp for consecutive days in this remote area and a reasonable level of fitness is essential.

To apply...

For further information please contact the Pastoral Unit, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 08 8124 4837 or email Gavin Baird gavin.baird@sa.gov.au by 31 August 2014.

We will want to know why you are interested in assisting our program, about any relevant skills you may have and whether you meet the essential criteria (including evidence of certificates).

These positions would ideally suit university students but the offer is extended to all interested people. Successful applicants will be inducted with field work procedures and be authorised to drive government vehicles.



Attendees at LambEx 2014

LambEx 2014 motivates and informs land managers

Lisa Stevens, Regional Landcare Facilitator

The third Australian Lamb Expo – Lambex – held in Adelaide from 9-11 July was completely sold out with over 900 attendees, including land managers from the SA Arid Lands region.

A total of eight land managers from Mundowna, Beltana, Millers Creek, Wirrealpa and Mount Vivian Stations attended the conference with support from the Landcare Program.

Regional attendees agreed that one of the standout presentations was Allan Parker's *Peak Performance* about succession planning and demonstrating the powers of negative thought when managing your business. Adam Litchfield (Mundowna Station) said Allan's presentation 'dealt with some of the bigger issues of communication' and Barbara Fargher (Wirrealpa Station) found the process undertaken to reach the ultimate outcome in succession planning, 'amazing'.

Another presentation, Nigel Kerin's *Drought-proofing the farm business, not the farm*, discussed strategies Nigel had implemented to address climate variability and stressed the need for proactive (rather than reactive) land management: 'if stock are too expensive to buy, they are too expensive to own'. Warren and Barbara Fargher thought Nigel's strategies 'very applicable to our business and to properties in the Arid Lands'.

And finally, Trent Loos, guest speaker from Nebraska USA, encouraged landholders to get vocal about the 'good things' they do, to share their knowledge, showcase their good practices and tell their stories. Laura and Graham Ragless (Beltana Station) said they 'really enjoyed' Trent's presentation and 'how social media could help us to promote the good that we all do.'

Emerging technologies such as electronic identification tags are fast becoming a reality and the potential they unlock for individual stock record keeping and traceability was enlightening. Land imaging for technical analysis (using satellite images to improve pastures and overall performance for running stock) was another of the technologies discussed at the conference.

Graham and Laura Ragless thought it was 'great to learn about emerging technology so we can choose what may work better for us on our property.'

Land managers from the SA Arid Lands region agreed that LambEx was educational and they would attend again in 2016. Congratulations must also be extended to Graham and Laura who won a signed guitar by Lee Kernigan in the Rural Co. raffle – that item will definitely go straight to the pool room!

The Landcare Program will continue to support land managers to attend events, workshops or training that will increase their knowledge, develop new and different skills and also to share their knowledge within the community.

Further information

Download the full proceedings of LambEx 2014 www.lambex.com.au or contact Lisa Stevens, Regional Landcare Facilitator, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300

Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, Landcare Australia



MISSED OUT ON THE FIELD DAY?

Check out the Willow Springs and Wirrealpa videos...

Warren Fargher and Michelle Reynolds are the subjects of two new videos that showcase EMU™ in the SA Arid Lands region.

Visit www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au to hear Warren and Michelle share their views on EMU™ and how it's changing the way they look at how they manage their properties.

Wirrealpa and Willow Springs host EMU™ Field Day

Wirrealpa and Willow Springs Stations hosted a field day in late May where the Farghers and Reynolds shared their experiences with the Ecosystem Management Understanding (EMU)™ program.

WHAT IS EMU™?

Ecosystem Management Understanding (EMU)™ is a holistic approach to land management which incorporates land manager knowledge and experience with scientific expertise.

Developed by landscape ecologists Ken Tinley and Hugh Pringle, EMU™ has been adopted by pastoralists in Namibia (southern Africa), the Gascoyne-Murchison catchments of Western Australia, the southern parts of the Northern Territory and more recently in the SA Arid Lands region.

Experts involved in the delivery of EMU™ work closely with the land managers, utilising their knowledge of their land, its processes, conditions and trends, and also what needs attention. Collaboratively a specific plan for the property is developed with the information summarised in maps with further detail added by ground and aerial surveying.

All of the information collected and developed is confidential and remains the property of the participating land manager.

Attracting 34 attendees to the North Flinders district stations, including 26 pastoralists, the field day was a valuable opportunity for land managers to share their successes and challenges in sustainably managing their rangelands properties.

The day started at Wirrealpa with Warren Fargher providing a background on Wirrealpa and their efforts to sustainably manage and care for their land over the last 50 years.

Warren and Barb then discussed and fielded questions on their experience with EMU™, its benefits, and their priority project, the Little Balcoracana Creek catchment ecosystem.

Participants then visited the 'Dead Rams' site to gain a full understanding of how a series of soil banks was being used to stabilise the Little Balcoracana Creek catchment ecosystem.

At this site, two gullies threatened to link and create a far more aggressive gully system. Without the intervention works, they would cut back into the Little Balcoracana Creek, taking water away from the floodplains into the main, large Balcoracana Creek and on towards Lake Frome. This would have left a large area of productive country 'high and dry'.

This site is an excellent example of how the intervention has restored peaceful flows across the floodplains, spreading water across the ground and rehydrating the soil. Many active discussions were held between participants and the hosts with many discussing their own patch in relation to the insights shared by the Farghers.

This conversation continued as the group drove in convoy to Willow Springs Station where the afternoon rain saw site visits swapped for a presentation and slide show in the shearing quarters from Brendan Reynolds.

Participants were led through the background of Willow Springs' land management activities, their experience with the EMU™ program and the details of the Red Plain Restoration project, an area of the property that had become increasingly gullied and unproductive as water was discharging at high energy through culverts in the main road. The area was a target for soil intervention works as it experiences high rainfall and has highly productive soils but was increasingly leaking rainfall and dollars.

The field day was devised and hosted by Wirrealpa and Willow Springs Stations. Its success follows the inaugural EMU™ field day hosted by Douglas Lillecrapp (Todmorden Station) in the Marla-Oodnadatta district in 2011 (see *Across The Outback*, February 2012 edition).

Further information

To find out more about EMU™ contact Ken Wright, EMU™ Project Officer, or Janet Walton, NRM Officer 8648 5300

Warren & Barbara Fargher (Wirrealpa Station), Brendan & Carmel Reynolds (Willow Springs Station), Hugh Pringle, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, SAAL NRM Board, Australian Government



The Great Tracks Clean Up Crew and 'Junior' Crew join forces in the north Flinders



153 tyres were collected in the north Flinders clean up trek

The Great Tracks Clean Up Crew get off the beaten track

Brendan Godfrey, Community Engagement Officer

The Great Tracks Clean Up Crew has been volunteering in the region since 2007 making an annual pilgrimage up and down the Birdsville and Strzelecki tracks collecting all manner of rubbish.

This year marks the first time the crew has taken a different path by covering the roadways and tracks between Leigh Creek and Stirling North as part of their North Flinders clean up trek.

Over two weekends in March the Great Tracks Clean Up Crew tackled a new stretch of tracks in and around the northern Flinders Ranges region removing around 19 tonnes of rubbish and contributing 638 hours of volunteer labour.

The work was split over two weekends with a newly formed junior clean-up crew heading out on the first weekend in March and a larger group over the May long weekend.

The junior trip was mainly aimed at getting the next generation involved in volunteering by participating in a mini version of the following weekend's activities. The seven volunteers comprised three generations of the one family and ranged in age from five to 82 years old.

Over the weekend the junior crew contributed 56 hours of volunteer labour and collected approximately four tonnes of rubbish from the roadways which mainly consisted of tyres and tyre debris. The trip was a hit with the kids, who enjoyed their time so much they wanted to come along for the second instalment.

The May trip saw two groups of 10 members head out from Leigh Creek and Port Augusta respectively, picking up whatever they could find on the way.

While the northern team travelled at a reasonable pace encountering mainly tyres, the southern team found it a little slower going with a large amount of the rubbish

they encountered being smaller general waste such as fast food wrappers. In total the southern group collected over 45 wheat bags of general waste on the first day.

The groups met up at Parachilna that night for a barbeque and a rest before the next day's work. From here the group covered all the tracks to and from Blinman, Wilpena Pound, and Hawker.

Over the course of the weekend the crew amassed 582 volunteer hours and collected an astounding 15 tonnes of rubbish including 153 tyres and four wool bales of bottles and cans.

Together, the two trips contributed the equivalent of over 17 weeks' worth of work from a single full time worker. This work contributes significantly to keeping the SA Arid Lands clean and inviting.

The Great Tracks Clean Up Crew will be at it again heading out on their yearly trip from Leigh Creek to Birdsville and back in July.



Kalamunkinna waterhole

Managing South Australia's Diamantina River catchment

MYSTERIES OF THE COOLIBAH

Coolibahs (*Eucalyptus coolabah*) are a key part of the Diamantina catchment, providing habitat and soil stability around river systems and one of the largest stores for carbon in the channel country.

Yet not much is known about the life cycle of this iconic desert tree and how it grows, reproduces, and survives in an area where flooding events are so sporadic and salinity can be extremely high. Indeed, despite the flooding events and local rain of 2010-12, there were less coolibah seedlings encountered during the May field trip than expected which needs further investigation.

The Diamantina project is seeking to better understand the ecology of this important canopy species, including its threats and impacts, to ensure that coolibah health in the Diamantina catchment is maintained.

Some key monitoring activities over the next few years include estimating how much water mature coolibahs require for ongoing health through the use of sap flow metres, investigating how seedling recruitment occurs, and monitoring when the tree flowers and seed viability.

A new project is underway to better understand the Diamantina River catchment, an important but relatively poorly understood wetland system which supports unique and important aquatic biodiversity.

The four-year project will focus on the natural features of key refuge waterholes and wetlands along the Diamantina River, Warburton and Kallakoopah Creeks in the Marree-Innaminka district of the SA Arid Lands region as well as the human influences on these systems.

Several key wetland sites will be studied, including Goyder Lagoon – a vast channel country wetland system that supports large numbers of waterbirds – and Andrewilla and Yammakira Waterholes, two of the system's deepest waterholes and important refuges for various animals, including waterbirds and fish.

The project is gathering data to understand how the ecosystems function in the area, including flow paths and flooding extent, bird and fish species presence, vegetation responses to flooding, and the extent of coolibah recruitment.

The key influences on these systems – including total grazing pressure and tourism impacts – as well as the threats from pest plant and animal species (eg *Acacia farnesiana*, camels, rabbits, and mosquito fish) will also be investigated.

The project is working with land managers, the pastoral, mining, and tourism industries, and the Wangkangurru/Yarluyandi Native Title group with the intention of developing management strategies to maintain the catchment's natural processes and cultural heritage.

With similar work already completed for both the Neales-Peake and Cooper Creek catchments (see previous editions of *Across The Outback*), this project is increasing our understanding of South Australia's arid rivers systems.

Field trip

A team of 10 scientists took its first field trip to the area in May assessing a total of 15 aquatic sites, including Koonchera, Andrewilla and Yammakira waterholes, and Goyder Lagoon.

Waterhole depth studies revealed that Andrewilla waterhole had the largest maximum depth at 7.3 metres while Yammakira waterhole was 5.8 metres, and Koonchera 1.7 metres.

The team also carried out vegetation condition assessments, soil sampling, fish counts, plant and bird identification and assessed flow paths and flooding extent, as well as starting the investigation of water use by mature coolibahs (see box).

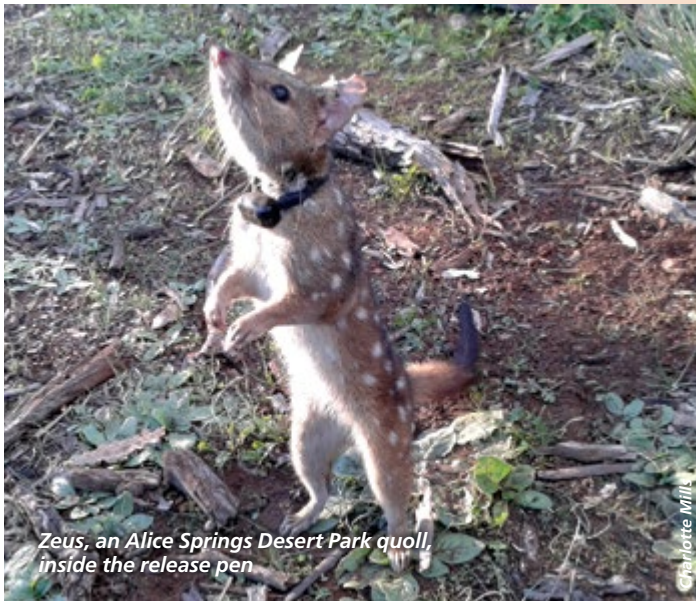
Many thanks to the land managers for providing access to the five pastoral leases and for their valuable input.

Further information

Contact Henry Mancini, Senior Water Projects Officer, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300.

Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, SAAL NRM Board, Australian Government

Koonchera waterhole



Zeus, an Alice Springs Desert Park quoll, inside the release pen

Charlotte Mills



PhD student Mel Jensen carrying cage traps for quoll trapping

Mel Jensen

Trial Western Quoll release – an update

Katherine Moseby, Ecological Horizons

There have been some interesting developments since 37 Western Quolls were released to the Flinders Ranges National Park in April with the team starting to learn about the quolls habitat, their breeding habits, food preferences, and their biggest threat, the feral cat.

Since we last reported, the weather has turned cold and wet in the Flinders Ranges and the quolls have gone underground, sheltering in rabbit warrens, rock crevices and holes under tree stumps.

The 37 quolls have been joined by four more quolls – three males and one female – from Alice Springs Desert Park bringing the total to 20 males and 21 females.

The quolls’ survival rates and well-being continue to be actively monitored by daily radio tracking a proportion of individuals and regular trapping to assess their condition and breeding status. A plane with wing mounted fixed antennas is used to track quolls from the air once a week.

Range

Although some quolls moved up to 10 kilometres after release, the majority stayed within a few kilometres of their release site and settled quickly into home ranges.

Females are ranging over a few square kilometres whereas males will travel much further in search of females. Males were released a month after females to encourage them to remain within the release area.

Pregnancies

During trapping in June and July the team was excited to record its first pouch young with six females now averaging six pouch young each. The pouch young were 17mm long and only a week or so old.

These young will remain in the pouch for around two months and then be deposited in nests where they will be weaned at around 170 days.

Diet

All captured quolls had maintained or increased in weight since release suggesting food resources are plentiful in the release area, and more than sufficient to support breeding.

Initial diet studies using scats (or poos!) suggest they are feeding on a wide range of food items including house mice, rabbits, carrion, lizards, centipedes, moths and spiders.

More will be learnt about the quolls’ food preferences when their scats are collected and analysed under a microscope for animal remains.

Mortalities

While some mortalities have been recorded – 10 at the time of writing, six females and four males – some deaths were expected as the animals adapt to their new habitat.

Each quoll death provides important feedback to the team on where attention may need to be focussed in the event of a full reintroduction and the extent to which existing land management can support self-sustaining populations.

Bounceback’s broadscale fox control has taken foxes out of the picture but, despite targeted control of cats before and during the release, they are proving the biggest threat to the quolls with all but two deaths so far attributed to cat predation (see p.11).

One male quoll fell off a cliff and died due to misadventure while another male died from an injury that may have also been predator-related.

Interestingly, all cat predation deaths have occurred in or near Wilpena Pound while the quolls released several kilometres away on the Wilcolo Track have so far yielded no mortalities; the flat, open ground in the pound may support more rabbits and enable cats to hunt more effectively.

The team remain cautiously optimistic about the project and any decision to proceed with further reintroductions will follow careful evaluation of the trial’s success.

STAY INFORMED

To receive a more detailed email update on the quolls’ progress send an email to SAAridlands@sa.gov.au with the subject ‘Quoll update’.



First idnya pouch young recorded

Mel Jensen

Cats and quolls

Predation by feral cats has been the main cause of mortality since quolls were released into the Flinders Ranges – however some deaths were to be expected and the reintroduction team continues to learn more about interaction between quolls and feral cats.

THE PARTNERS...

The trial release of 41 quolls to the Flinders Ranges is made possible through South Australia's first public/private environmental partnership. The Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME) is leading the drive to raise approximately \$1.7 million over a five year period to support the recovery of the species.

Through the 21-year *Bounceback* program, South Australia's Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources and collaborators have been controlling foxes and goats protecting the habitat in the Flinders Ranges that is needed for the quolls' long term survival.

Thanks to the many volunteers, contractors, donors, land managers and partners of *Bounceback* and FAME for their support for this project.

In Western Australia, quolls co-exist in fox-free habitats with feral cats, and their natural survival instincts are expected to give the quolls translocated to the Flinders Ranges a fighting chance if and when they encounter cats in the wild.

Prior to the quoll release, intensive trapping and shooting removed 50 feral cats from the release area to give the quolls an opportunity to establish shelters and territories unimpeded from the threat of feral cats.

But, cameras set up around the release site have recorded cats in the vicinity of kill sites suggesting that, as anticipated, new cats have moved into the area.

To date, three cats that are thought to have been responsible for up to six quoll deaths have been trapped or shot, with an additional 10 cats trapped in a monthly trapping program in the Wilpena precinct.

Quoll remains have been found in their stomachs or they have been captured as fresh carcasses and autopsy results and DNA swabs have confirmed cat predation is the cause of death.

So far four different individual cats have been identified as killing quolls; three of these were large male cats over four kilograms in weight and the fourth is yet to be caught.

At present there is no effective broadscale cat control method in Australia and, in contrast to foxes, which readily take poison baits, feral cats are extremely hard to control.

Controlling cats through cage trapping and shooting is very labour intensive and costly; using these control options is only feasible in small areas and will not always be successful.

The team is also trialling the use of Eradecat poison baits but must ensure that these do not impact on the resident quolls.

FAME – the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species – is the only organisation working exclusively to save Australian wildlife from extinction. The reintroduction of the Western Quoll or Idnya to the Flinders Ranges is our largest and most ambitious project to date. It's rare to bring back a species that has been locally extinct for over 100 years. It's even rarer for a wildlife project to happen in the wild, under the protection of one of the most successful feral control programs in the country – *Bounceback*.

We want to prove it's possible, with community support and government cooperation, to bring back wildlife and turn the tide on Australia's dreadful record of mammal extinctions. The return of the Western Quoll can be the first step in the journey to a healthier future for our unique



wildlife, and demonstrate that Australia's environment can be improved.

FAME needs your help to continue this vitally important project and make it the success it deserves to be. If you have already contributed we thank you sincerely. If you are still considering your support please don't wait! These quolls are pioneers and will battle to survive without our help.

PLEASE SEND YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION TO FAME'S WESTERN QUOLL PROJECT AS SOON AS YOU CAN.

Visit fame.org.au/projects/western-quoll or contact fame@fame.org.au for more information about how you can help.



Draft wild dog plan released through Arid Lands workshops

People with a stake in wild dog management in the SA Arid Lands region are encouraged to attend one of seven workshops to be held from July to September to offer their feedback on a draft *Wild Dog Management Plan*.

The SA Arid Lands Wild Dog Management Plan is being developed on behalf of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board with significant input from community, and these latest workshops – hosted by the district-based NRM Groups – provide the first opportunity to comment on a draft.

Once complete, the Plan will be an important document for the Board and for the region, providing a guide to land managers and government staff to conduct wild dog management in the region to 2018.

It will contribute to improved cattle and biodiversity outcomes outside (north of) the Dog Fence – where the wild dog/dingo is not declared – and control programs inside (south of) the Dog Fence where the wild dog is a declared pest.

The interactive workshops will offer the SA Arid Lands community and other stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the draft Plan and will discuss and make amendments to the Plan in real time.

To date, the Plan’s development has been heavily informed by canvassing stakeholders – including surveying land managers inside and outside the Dog Fence – and by information gathered from the six year Dingo Research project.

About 120 stakeholders have contributed their views already, including on the difference between a ‘wild dog’ and a ‘dingo’, the effectiveness of current management strategies, monitoring and data collection, the value the dingo has in the environment and in Aboriginal culture, baiting, cultural issues around dingo/wild dog management and the best way to develop a management plan.

The consultation process has been inclusive of the wide variety of stakeholders with an interest in wild dog management including pastoralists, conservation groups, Aboriginal communities, industry bodies, animal welfare organisations, government agencies, and district-based NRM Groups.

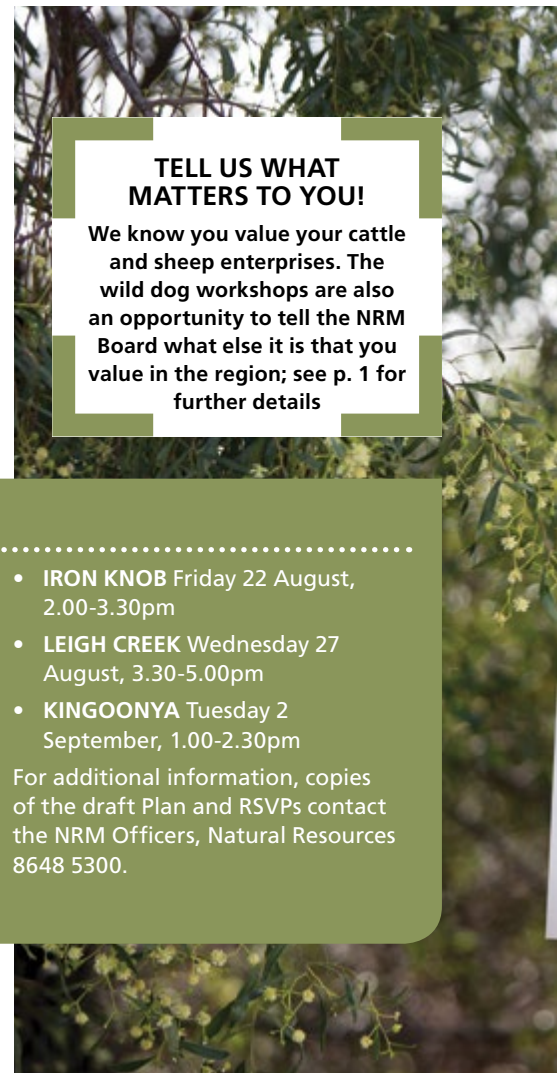
The draft Plan looks at the goals and control measures for three zones – inside the Dog Fence (Zone 1), a 35 kilometre buffer immediately outside the Dog Fence (Zone 2), and outside the Dog Fence (Zone 3).

It addresses control measures including ground baiting, aerial baiting, trapping and shooting, as well as issues of compliance, communication, monitoring and evaluation of control measures and public safety.

The draft Plan also takes into account existing state and national policy including the National Wild Dog Action Plan and Biosecurity SA’s draft State 5-year strategic plan developed by the SA Wild Dog Advisory Group.

Attendees to the workshops are asked to read the draft plan and note their comments and questions beforehand.

SAAL NRM Board, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, district NRM Groups



TELL US WHAT MATTERS TO YOU!

We know you value your cattle and sheep enterprises. The wild dog workshops are also an opportunity to tell the NRM Board what else it is that you value in the region; see p. 1 for further details

GET YOUR BAITS INJECTED

The new Biteback Project Officer, Chris Havelburg, will be offering a bait injection service at the Marree, Yunta, Iron Knob, Leigh Creek and Kingoonya workshops. This top-up service is in addition to the bi-annual injection service. Manufactured baits will also be available for purchase.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The workshops will include refreshments and are being held at the following locations:

- **MARREE** Wednesday 30 July, 11am-12.30pm and 2.15-3.45pm
- **CAMERON CORNER** Friday 1 August, 2.00-3.30pm
- **YUNTA** Thursday 14 August, 2.15-3.15pm
- **COOPER PEDY** Thursday 21 August, 1.00-3.30pm

- **IRON KNOB** Friday 22 August, 2.00-3.30pm
- **LEIGH CREEK** Wednesday 27 August, 3.30-5.00pm
- **KINGOONYA** Tuesday 2 September, 1.00-2.30pm

For additional information, copies of the draft Plan and RSVPs contact the NRM Officers, Natural Resources 8648 5300.



Aerial Coordinator Bill McIntosh and Keith Treloar, Wiawera Station, help Wrightsair pilots Tay Sheppard and Lindsay Matthews load baits.



Aerial baiting dodges rain

Peter Bird, Biosecurity Officer

Unseasonal rains slowed but failed to dampen the third year of aerial wild dog baiting inside the Dog Fence in April with 50,000 dried baits dropped onto 97 properties.

The week-long delay in the north-west turned out to be a blessing as it enabled additional aerial baits to be laid inside the flood-damaged Dog Fence in the Coober Pedy district targeting potentially invading wild dogs.

Otherwise the nine-day operation went smoothly with baits dropped out along a 10,000 km flight path.

The program complemented the *Biteback* ground baiting program by targeting hard to get at places to achieve uniform control across the landscape.

Accuracy of placement was assured by landholder selection of flight paths and the use of GPS technology.

The operation involved a ground crew of Coordinator Bill McIntosh together with Biosecurity SA staff covering plenty of kilometres to keep baits and fuel up to the aircraft.

Prior to the operation, 25 volunteer landholders – including from the Hawker and Orroroo districts – together with Natural Resources SA Arid Lands staff, prepared the 50,000 meat baits over two long days.

These were later dried and frozen for transport to one of 11 airstrips used between Coober Pedy and the New South Wales border.

SA Sheep Industry Fund, Biosecurity SA, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about the region's wild dog management programs, contact the Wild Dog Management team, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300



MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

Hawker will be hosting five workshops over the remainder of the year to help outback communities take action on anxiety and depression.

Head along to find out more about how emotions, thinking, and stress impact on your wellbeing, and strategies to help you cope.

Even if you don't need help, someone close to you might.

All sessions will be held at the Hawker memorial hospital from 9 am -12 noon.

- August 16 – The many faces of anxiety
- September 13 – More than the blues
- October 11 – Stressed out
- November 22 – All about emotions
- December 20 – Conversations with women about men

To register your attendance or for more information contact the Hawker memorial hospital on 8648 4007

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 SA 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
August 2014 edition

Content due by COB
Friday 29 August 2014

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



Stripe-face dunnart

Annette Ruzicka

Bush Heritage Australia and Arid Recovery form new alliance

Annette Ruzicka, Bush Heritage Australia

Bush Heritage Australia and Arid Recovery have formed a new partnership to share and develop their conservation management resources and knowledge to better protect ecosystems and threatened species in South Australia's vast rangelands.

The 'South Australian Rangelands Alliance' will see Bush Heritage and Arid Recovery cooperate on research, feral animal and weed control methods, and land conservation approaches for improving biodiversity outcomes in the region.

Bush Heritage protects seven ecosystems from salt lakes, freshwater wetlands, shrublands, bluebush plains, and arid zone woodlands on Bon Bon Station Reserve, located between the Great Victoria Desert and Lake Eyre.

The reserve is home to vulnerable and threatened species such as the Major Mitchell Cockatoo, Chestnut-breasted Whiteface and Western Myall woodlands.

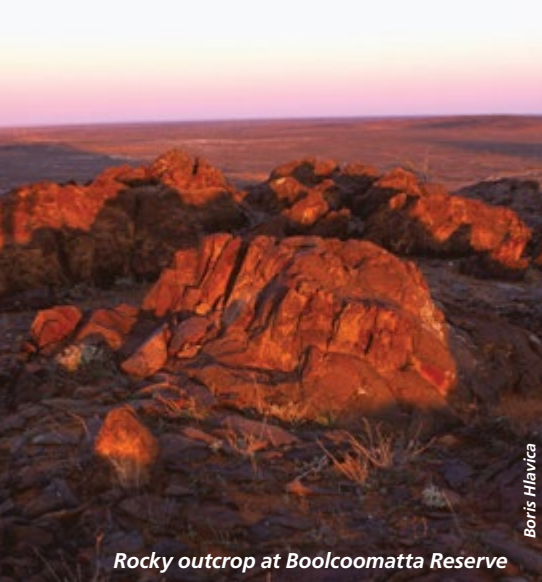
In the North East Pastoral district eight years of conservation on Boolcoomatta Reserve has seen a 300 per cent increase in ground-foraging and shrub-dependent birds, such as the White-winged Fairy-wren and Redthroat.

Bush Heritage.Arid Recovery brings to the Alliance 16 years of conservation and research work on their reserve, in the Roxby Downs region.

It has successfully reintroduced four threatened mammals – the Greater Stick Nest Rat, Burrowing Bettong, Greater Bilby and Western Barred Bandicoot – on the 123 square kilometre fenced reserve.

The South Australian Rangelands Alliance also aims to build cooperation and participation from other universities, Indigenous land managers, industry, pastoralists and other conservation organisations, starting with applied research projects with the University of Adelaide.

Bush Heritage, Arid Recovery



Rocky outcrop at Boolcoomatta Reserve

Boris Hlavica



Landholders in pastoral South Australia are encouraged to contact Trent Scholz (Animal Health Officer) to assist with their animal health needs.

If you are experiencing animal health issues or observe something unusual in livestock, birds or wildlife, notify Trent. If appropriate, a visit will be arranged and an investigation undertaken.

Trent can also provide advice on lice management and inspect your sheep for lice to give you some assurance before they are sent to market; Livestock Health certificates for interstate stock movements; and the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) including tag orders, animal/mob movement questions, and database transfer enquiries.

Further information

Contact Trent Scholz,
Trent.Scholz@sa.gov.au
8648 5160 or 0427 970 453

Keeping the markets open

South Australia's livestock producers enjoy market access worth billions of dollars annually. Without these markets – and this is no understatement – our livestock industry would collapse. Here, Roger Paskin, Chief Veterinary Officer talks about the role of Biosecurity SA and the role of land managers in ensuring market access.

Market access is not automatic. It is not a right, but a privilege. It is a privilege that needs to be earned, and it is earned on the basis of healthy livestock.

We need to be able to prove, on an ongoing basis, that our herds and flocks are free of a number of trade-impacting diseases.

This is Biosecurity SA's most important, most fundamental, and unfortunately most invisible function.

During the course of a year, Biosecurity staff carry out thousands of disease investigations around South Australia and administer a number of national programs aimed at providing assurances to our various markets in Australia and overseas.

The data gained from this work flows into a database held in Canberra, which is used by the Department of Agriculture in certifying animals and products from South Australia for trade purposes.

Our surveillance work underpins our claims to disease freedom which allow us to access a variety of markets.

In addition, we are often involved in certifying individual properties as worthy of export, particularly when it comes to live animals leaving our State.

This certification, involving hundreds of transactions every year is based on data showing that the properties in question, and often those in a buffer area around them, are free of key diseases.

All of this work happens 'behind the scenes', but without it, we wouldn't enjoy the relatively unfettered market access that we do.

We are in the enviable position of being able to service numerous markets within Australia, in Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Europe and the USA because of the hard work of Biosecurity SA staff.



Walking in my father's footprints

Katheryn Litherland, has returned home to live and work on country in her roles as a Park Ranger on the Innamincka Regional Reserve, a Yandruwandha woman and the daughter of the late Jack Guttie. Here, she shares her insights 12 months into her journey.



I am the first in my family to live on my father's country, the Cooper Creek area in the far north-east of South Australia and for me, what's meaningful, is being able to be a part of contributing to looking after and learning about country.

What hits home for me living on country is that we need more understanding of what's there that we need to preserve and protect from our cultural sites to other cultural aspects like the hunting and the knowledge shared over the campfires yarns. Also, we need to educate and share some of this with non-Aboriginal people.

I'd like to see more opportunities for our people to come back to country, to experience connecting with country, and to enhance and strengthen a sense of belonging and definitely to take on the role of ownership with country.

Having the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee (YYPAC), Yandruwandha people, Yawarrawarrka people and my own family come out on country in the past year has been a really big thing for me. It brings healing to my soul when my mob are on country and we are one, happy mob.

I think it's important to ask ourselves, 'How do we as Aboriginal people come up with ideas for creating employment on country for our mob?' and 'what do we want to see out on country?' Going back to our communities and asking these questions I think will help determine how to bring more of our people back to country.

In my role as a Ranger, I contribute to managing the campgrounds, looking after the AIM (Australian Inland Mission) building, sharing some of my knowledge with visitors to the area as well as working on country with fencing, Buffel Grass control and installing interpretive signs. Education and training for Aboriginal people is one of the ways I think that we can bring skills back to country and contribute to its preservation. Training in Buffel Grass control as well as all the policies and procedures that go with it are an example of this.

We, as Aboriginal people have to adapt to training, come into the mainstream and work with them white fellas so that we can be educated and then we can take that back to the community. What's important for us as Aboriginal people, is that we are a voice, we are a voice in our community; we can speak up but we need to be able to work in with different departments and other people around us, people within the township, mining companies and other stakeholders. We need to be able to come to the table and work together as one mob. It's everyone's business when looking after country to preserve and to protect for future generation. And this is my vision.

We don't own country, country owns us and I am blessed to be able to walk in my father's footprints.

Across the Outback thanks Katheryn for allowing us to reproduce her words recorded from a presentation given to Natural Resources SA Arid Lands staff.

ACROSS THE OUTBACK

Across the Outback is prepared and edited by the Communications team, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, a division of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

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Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

This edition edited by Meg Barker, Jenny Barker and Brendan Godfrey.

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



Government of South Australia

YANDRUWANDHA YAWARRAWARRKA PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee (YYPAC) was formed in 2009 and advises the Director of National Parks and Wildlife about many aspects of the management of Coongie Lakes National Park and has an additional consultative role over the Innamincka Regional Reserve.

The YYPAC is made up of eight members – two members from the Yandruwandha community and two members from Yawarrawarrka community, three members from the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) and one other member nominated by the Director of National Parks and Wildlife.

If you would like to receive the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee bi-annual newsletter contact the Natural Resources Centre on (08) 8648 5300.