

ACROSS THE

Edition 97

OUTBACK

OCTOBER 2022



We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to country and commit to working with the First Nations People of the SA Arid Lands as we undertake our business on this shared and sacred country.

Contents

- 3 GREENING COOBER PEDY
- 4 NEW PARTNERSHIP A BOOST FOR IDNYA
- 5 BUILDING SOILS FROM THE GROUND UP
- 5 PARTNERING IN CARING FOR COUNTRY
- 6 ADAPTATION KEY TO GRANT PROJECT SUCCESS
- 7 PROPERTY MAPPING UNDERWAY
- 8 SOPHIE THOMSON VISITS PORT AUGUSTA
- 9 SAAL BOARD MEETS IN MARREE
- 10 DOB IN A DEER
- 10 WORKING TOWARDS GOAT MANAGEMENT
- 11 NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DETECTED IN FERAL PIGS
- 12 LANDSCAPE GROUP NEWS
- 14 SAAL WOMEN THRIVE WITH CONNECTION
- 15 ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT 2021-2022
- 19 PROTECTING AN ENDANGERED DAISY
- 20 CONCERN FOR VULNERABLE GRASSWREN
- 21 BASIN PROGRAM SAVING WATER
- 22 VOLUNTEERS TO CONTROL PEPPER TREES
- 23 VOLUNTEERS BUILD EXCLOSURES ON HOLOWILIENA
- 23 VOLUNTEERS PULL POSTS AT BUCKLEBOO
- 24 OUTBACK KIDS LEARN ABOUT SHOREBIRDS
- 24 EDUCATORS TAKE THEIR LEARNING OUTDOORS
- 25 KIDS CONTINUE REDGUM MONITORING ON COUNTRY
- 26 INNAMINCKA HOSTS SUCCESSFUL PASTORAL BOOTCAMP
- 27 PLAINS WANDERERS
- 28 BITEBACK NEWS
- 30 QUANDONG FESTIVAL DRAWS BIG CROWDS
- 31 NEW PROJECT TO PROVIDE SPRINGS PROTECTION
- 32 FRIENDS OF MOUND SPRINGS SURVEYS



Presiding Member Update

Thank you for engaging so keenly with the work of the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board.

I'm proud to present our latest news to you, along with a report of our achievements over the past year and since the development of our five-year strategic plan.

This edition showcases some of the people in our region, from local heroes to volunteers whom we value greatly as partners in landscape management, protection and stewardship.

We continue to work with our First Nations partners to formulate a more collaborative way forward in managing our regional landscapes. I look forward to some of the shared projects and outcomes we can deliver together.

Across our priorities of water management, soils and sustainable agriculture, conservation and biodiversity protection, we have greater biosecurity threats to prioritise. With disease an area of heightened concern, our board and staff remain on high alert and at the ready to support landholders in their practices to reduce risks and respond to occurrences such as those outlined in this edition.

I am proud to present new projects funded through the Future Drought Fund, to enhance our offerings within the Building Pastoral Sustainability project and extend learning and best practice to landholders. From the Ground Up, is our latest initiative to look out for.

This edition of the *Across the Outback* will be my last as the Presiding Member. With the new board to be appointed early in 2023, I hope to hand the reins to a new Chair of a board made up of new and current members taking the business forward. I commend the board and staff to you as we reach this important milestone and as I retire from the board after a fruitful and productive term in setting up the new Landscape Board for the SA Arid Lands.

Thank you for supporting the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board and staff for this period and into the future.

Ross Sawers



General Manager Update

Welcome to the next exciting edition of *Across the Outback*. I don't recall a more action-packed and diverse range of stories and information in a single publication, nor a busier time as we navigate new political contexts and opportunities. This edition also shares some of the outcomes and results of our hard work across the many areas of our board's responsibility.

The board continues to leverage additional funding to support initiatives associated with the Great Artesian and Lake Eyre Basins, each critical to the health and prosperity of our region.

With the rains across much of our region, our focus has turned to increased support for landholders in their management of pest weeds and feral animals that bring additional disease threats, grazing impact and degradation impacts.

As you will read, we celebrate many outcomes across our environmental and conservation priorities, supporting protection and monitoring of species unique and critical to our rangelands home. I know you will find this edition interesting and recognise the amazing work of our team in investing your levy for the benefit of all South Australians, visitors and our regional communities.

Jodie Gregg-Smith

We have a new phone number
8429 9666

COVER IMAGE:
Western Quoll, Kristian Bell

Right: SAAL Community Landscape Officer Hamish Longbottom explains the planting technique that provide the best chance of success

Below: Community Landscape Officer Hamish Longbottom with Coober Pedy Area School's Veronika Witham and Scott O'Donnell and Tina Law from Oz Minerals



Community members get busy with planting

Greening Coober Pedy

A community tree planting day in Coober Pedy has seen hundreds of plants added to the town.

A \$10,000 Grassroot Grant awarded to the 'Coober Pedy Together' program supported a community event which saw 300 native shade trees and shrubs planted around the main street, skate park and playground area. It is part of a larger initiative looking to bring members of the community together to find a new way forward for the town.

More than 150 community members came together to plant the trees as part of the town's National Tree Day event in August. Volunteers worked with staff from the District Council of Coober Pedy to install a new irrigation system to wet the ground prior to planting. Marla-Oodnadatta Community Landscape Officer Hamish Longbottom was on hand to provide tips on how to plant tube stock to ensure the best chance of success.

Coober Pedy Together facilitator member Jacqui Boland said it was wonderful to see everyone's smiling faces and people connecting with nature and giving back to the community.

"Greening Coober Pedy is on everyone's to-do list. The shade created by the trees will benefit all of Coober Pedy and make the area cooler and greener," she said.

"I can't wait to see what the trees will look like in years to come."

GRASSROOTS GRANTS FUND ALMOST \$200,000 IN PROJECTS

Noogoora Burr control across 12 properties in the North East Pastoral, a program to create qualifications to recognise Traditional skills, the planting of 300 shade trees in Coober Pedy and the development of an Educational Native Bush Garden at Mount Ive in the Gawler Ranges are among 19 projects funded by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board in its 2022 Grassroots Grants program.

In its biggest Grassroots Grants funding to date, \$200,000 was offered by the board, boosted in response to damage caused by heavy rainfall events early in 2022. Rain-related projects received \$91,146 while the remaining projects received \$96,117.

Successful applicants came from across the seven districts of the SA Arid Lands, and were selected from 37 applications valued at almost \$290,000.

Other funded projects include:

- Soil conservation works at Arid Recovery
- Enhanced rabbit control at Kalamurina
- Exclusion fencing for Desert Limes at Pernatty
- Erosion restoration works at Secret Rocks Nature Reserve
- Erosion control on the Lake Torrens Tank Pipeline
- Iron Knob walking trails
- A Kids on Country experience with Nature Foundation
- Buffel grass control in the Gawler Ranges
- Exclosures to reduce grazing pressure on Holowiliena Station
- Birdlife of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park brochures
- Guest speakers at Port Augusta Garden Club
- Soil rehabilitation works on four properties near Hawker, and
- Boxthorn removal at Bullyaninnie Station.



New partnership a boost for Idnya

The newly released Idnya (western quoll) populations in the northern Flinders Ranges will be boosted with a further 20 animals to be flown in from Western Australia in October.

This will bolster the new population translocated to the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park in April this year.

Twenty-five Idnya – 18 female and seven male – were sourced from the existing population in Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park for the original translocation. With different genetics, the Western Australian quolls will ensure the growing population is a healthy one.

The northern Flinders Ranges were home to the Idnya but they hadn't been seen there for more than a century. Now listed as endangered and conservation dependent, the translocated Idnya are thriving in their new environment on the lands of the Adnyamathanha people.

As part of the translocation, the Idnya were fitted with radio collars that were attached with a thread and designed to drop off. Wet weather resulted in some collars coming off after just 17 days. In the first month, six of the collared animals moved out of detection range from the monitoring aircraft or had their radio-transmitters fail. Since then, most of the collars have dropped off.

Evidence of mating occurred between May and July, with males visiting female shelter sites. Females were recorded with between two and six pouch young in

late July. These remain in the pouch for 60 days and were denned from August this year. Young Idnya are fully weaned by four to five months and are expected to disperse from late November to early December.

Department for Environment and Water reintroduction ecologist Tali Moyle said no predation on any of the collared quolls had been recorded in the first five months.

"While we cannot say that all Idnya have survived due to collar drop-offs, many have since been re-trapped," she said.



Promising signs: Pouch young in Idnya in the newly released population

TARONGA BREEDING PROGRAM

Sydney's Taronga Park Zoo has successfully started a breeding program using two Western Australian and two Flinders Ranges Idnya, offering mixed genetics.

Plans are to supplement the new Vulkathunha population with more than 50 animals prior to next year's breeding season, with captive bred animals from Taronga Park Zoo and wild-caught animals from Western Australia and Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park.

Monitoring prior to the planned take of 25 animals from the reintroduced Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park population will determine how many are sourced from this population.

"Certainly the quolls have been at high densities since 2020 and are dispersing into new areas," SAAL Senior Conservation Ecologist Rob Brandle said.

"Monitoring cameras are capturing the quolls on privately managed lands to the north and south of Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park.

"The Idnya are doing well and we're really happy with the way the new population is progressing. It is a testament to feral animal control undertaken as part of the Bounceback Program.

"We hope the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges reintroduction follows the same trajectory and doubles the number of wild populations in South Australia. The long term aim is to connect these two populations through the privately managed lands between the two parks, as almost half of these properties are already long-term collaborators with coordinated fox control."

The reintroduction in the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park was undertaken as part of the Bounceback and Beyond Project, which is supported by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, National Parks and Wildlife Service SA, the Department for Environment and Water and the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered (FAME).

Building soils from the ground up

A new SA Arid Lands Landscape Board program designed to demonstrate practices to make agricultural land more resilient to future droughts has been funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.

From the Ground Up builds on the success of the board's successful agricultural program *Building Pastoral Sustainability* and will support regenerative grazing practices in the SA Arid Lands to build drought resilience. The new project received a Drought Resilient Soils and Landscape Grant valued at almost \$567,000 and is one of 26 projects nationally designed to help Australia's farmers prepare for, and recover more quickly from, drought. Five demonstration sites will be established across the SA Arid Lands region, with a focus on soil health and grazing land management practices.

Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator Andrea Tschirner said the project was a welcome addition to the region's Building Pastoral Sustainability program.

"There's growing interest from industry leaders for information on soils in the rangelands," she said.

"This project will engage pastoral managers to develop knowledge and skills in drought resilient grazing management practices. This includes peer-to-peer learning and the development and delivery of Grazing Land Management courses to be held across the region."

A key component of the project will be learning from, and sharing information with, pastoral land managers across the country. A bus tour with interested pastoral industry participants will travel interstate to visit regenerative projects across other regions.

From the Ground Up is supported by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.



At the Aboriginal Engagement workshop held during NAIDOC Week were, from left, Di Makotter, Brett Devitt, Matt Westover, Chris Fulton, Sharon Platt, Jason Bilney, Harry Dare, Sam Stuart, Linda Dare, Aamish Warren, Keegan Solomon, Alwyn McKenzie, Gregory Warren, Frank Warren, Rob Singleton, Kimberley Steele, Josh Haynes, Julette Johnson, Lyeishah Coulthard and Cherie Gerlach

Partnering in caring for country

Working with traditional owners in managing the land is key to the work of the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board. It brought together a second gathering of Aboriginal people working in, and interested in environmental management, during NAIDOC week in July.

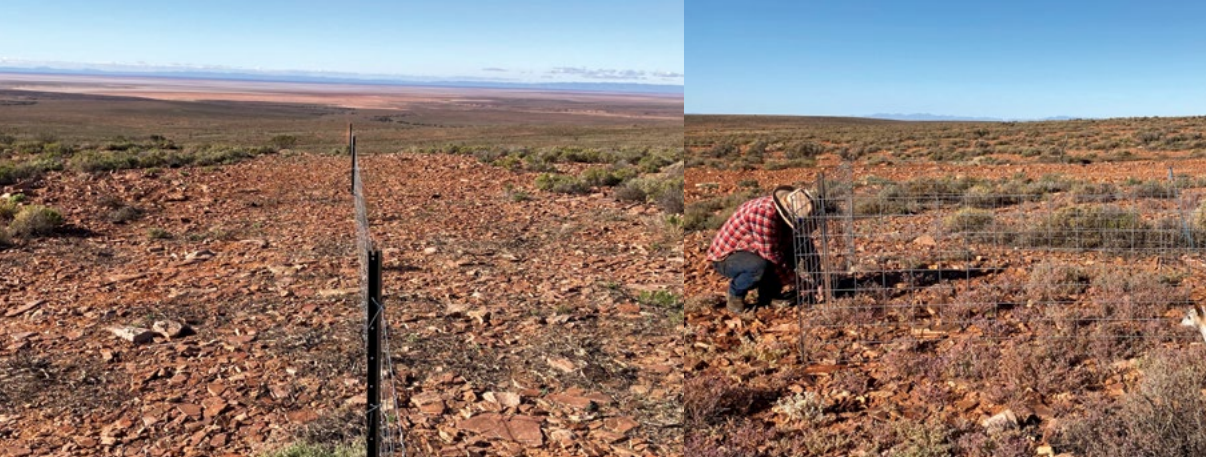
As part of the board's Statement of Commitment to better partner with Aboriginal groups in caring for country, the Aboriginal Engagement Group includes representatives from local ranger programs, the board's seven Landscape Groups, and local organisations.

Key topics the group has outlined in relation to caring for country are:

- The next generation is the focus
- The importance of language
- Face-to-face conversations are valued
- There are shared feelings for the land and future directions for management between the SAAL Landscape Board and Traditional Owners.

The group sees value in meeting with board staff twice a year to share knowledge and learn from one another, as well as consider future opportunities. The next meeting will be held in November.

If you are interested in being involved, please contact Cherie Gerlach on 0427 413 345 or email cherie.gerlach@sa.gov.au



Far left: Upgrading fences will allow a judgement to be made on grazing pressure inside and outside of the fenceline

Left: Seed bank monitoring sites were constructed on South Gap as part of the property's BPS grant

Adaptation key to grant project success

When Paul and Kate Greenfield from South Gap Station were awarded \$29,444 for their Sustainable Grazing Adaptation Project in the 2021 Building Pastoral Sustainability (BPS) Grants, little did they know the adaptation would first involve them.

The Greenfield's project focussed on being climate adaptive and included native vegetation monitoring, trialling online grazing management software, time controlled grazing and development of a seed bank system to improve landscape function and profitability. A transition from merinos to dorpers early in the grant period required a rethink of the delivery of the grant while maintaining the same ecological outcomes.

While the time period for the grant has now come to an end, Kate said the project would be better measurable in years rather than over a 12-month period.

"It will certainly be more obvious when there is rain," Kate said.

"We know that we've got regeneration and recruitment of young plants, however the best results will come when we're able to manage the total grazing pressure. We expect to see better results with improved kangaroo management," she said.

Seed banks have been established, and the use of VegMachine is providing data that shows response to rain across both grazed and conservation areas.

Kate said sustainable grazing practices would be incorporated across the property to best respond to water availability and rest to ensure plant recovery and animal productivity.

Erosion control has also been a project follow up and work is underway to slow water runoff to assist with landscape rehydration in order to improve landscape function, extend plant growing season and food on offer.

This has been undertaken by deep ripping scalded areas with minimal runoff potential, employing small banks to pond water, whoa boys on tracks and the use of branching to increase water flow friction to create a favourable microclimate for the establishment of new plants, while also minimising grazing pressure as opportunities present.

FIVE PASTORAL PROJECTS AWARDED GRANTS

In the third and final round of the board's Building Pastoral Sustainability grants, five projects have been awarded grants totalling \$130,000

Grant opportunities allow pastoral businesses to trial management practices and technologies to better adapt to varying climates and markets and improve the sustainability of their businesses.

The new funded projects are:

- Putting Environmentally Sustainable Rangelands Management (ESRM) into practice on Holowiliena Station (North Flinders)
- Moolooloo Station Controlled Grazing Project (North Flinders);
- Arid Range Rehabilitation, Stabilisation and Revegetation Trial – Merna Mora Station (North Flinders);
- Livestock tracking using Wi-Fi technology – Millers Creek (Kingoonya);

- Sustainable and Productive Land Management using EiD technology – Gum Downs (North Flinders).

Work on each of the projects will be completed by May 2023.

The Building Pastoral Sustainability project is designed to build on the capacity and resilience of pastoral businesses in the SA Arid Lands. Throughout the three-year project, the pastoral industry is being supported to develop and promote sustainable businesses and a regionally strong and competitive industry through field days, stickybeak days and training in addition to the grants and Property Management Planning program.

Further information about the successful grant projects can be found at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/projects-and-partners/projects/building-pastoral-sustainability-program

The BPS grants are offered as part of the Building Pastoral Sustainability project, which is supported by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.



Byron Crawford of Weekeroo, and Richard Marver of Contour Consulting discuss landscape restoration works as part of the round three Property Management Planning program

Property mapping underway

The development of comprehensive property maps for participants in the third Property Management Planning (PMP) program has begun.

Six pastoral properties were selected for the four-stage PMP, which offers a ‘whole of property’ approach to get a balance between conserving the natural rangelands and achieving their business goals.

The program combines all aspects of landscape management in a single holistic plan, to map and document a land manager’s own ideas and goals for the management of an area and develop strategies and activities to help achieve those goals.

Myola Station (Gawler Ranges), Quondong Station (North East Pastoral), Kondoolka Station (Gawler Ranges), Weekeroo Station (North East Pastoral), Netley Gap (North East Pastoral) and Umberatana Station (North Flinders) were the properties selected for the third round of the program.

Owners and managers of these pastoral businesses are currently working with Richard Marver and Greg O’Reilly from Contour Consulting to develop a comprehensive property map that will

include a plan for rehabilitation works and improvements. A workshop to consider their personal motivation towards their businesses will be held in November.

The third round of the PMP program is funded by the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program and Future Drought Fund and the SA Drought Resilience, Adoption and Innovation Hub.

CERES TAGS PROVIDE UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

Satellite-monitored ear tags designed to determine cattle grazing patterns, landscape use, reproduction, predation and to monitor animal distress at Crown Point Station proved to have more benefits than originally hoped for.

Crown Point, in the Marla Oodnadatta district, received \$30,100 in the second round of Building Pastoral Sustainability Grants to trial Ceres ear tags on the property’s reproductive females and young steers.

It was found that the tags also helped with mustering efficiencies and in reducing theft and mortality rates.

Owner Colleen Costello said while the data recorded read as expected – with most groups of cattle staying close to water systems – it also alerted them to issues they would not have previously known about.

“The geolocator tag sent off an alert when an animal went off the property. This enables a timely response to return the animal to the property or allows us to watch its progress back onto the station,”

Colleen said.

“The technology clearly shows where the animals are grazing and, in conjunction with Cibo Labs, shows where feed may be running out and alerts us to the need to move them on.

“This capacity from the Ceres tags and working with the data from Cibo Labs is very valuable for timely decision making.”

One challenge Crown Point encountered during the trial was the retention rate of tags. Initially recording a 10 per cent loss rate, a conversation with the Ceres Tag manufacturers resulted in a change in the product and investigations into the applicator, which needed additional hands-on help to activate.

“The exciting part of this project is the ongoing capacity to know where your animals are and in conjunction with the

Cibo Labs data, be able to manage your landscape health in a timely, efficient and data-driven manner,” Colleen said.

“The tags are a great concept and this is a project we will look to expand once we resolve the retention issues. I think the data from the tags will have financial, environmental and production benefits.”



A Ceres ear tag fitted to a young steer on Crown Point Station



Left: Friends and community members enjoyed a garden walk with Sophie Thomson. Pictured were, from left, Chris Nayda, Pauline Parker, Paula Mullan, Anne Murrie, Marg Mullan, Robyn Place, Anne Collins, Viti Smith, Anne Campbell, Brett Devitt, Noreen Langdon, Peter Langdon and Sophie Thomson

Below: Christine Nayda, Sophie Thomson and Robyn Place

Sophie provides gardening tips in Port Augusta

Well known South Australian gardening personality Sophie Thomson delivered four workshops at Port Augusta's Arid Lands Botanic Garden in September.

Gardening for Health and Wellbeing, Summer-proofing Gardens and Gardening Woes provided a range of tips for successful gardening in Port Augusta's arid climatic conditions. A Walk and Talk with Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden was also offered.

During the workshops, Sophie discussed how life problems can be lessened by gardening and listed the benefits of gardening as exercise, relaxation, health and nutrition.

She said gardening provided a sense of achievement, a place to be creative and an opportunity to express ourselves.

Sophie was invited by the Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden and her visit was sponsored by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board.

Friends president John Zwar said the friends wanted Sophie to visit to bring like-

minded gardeners and environmentally conscious people together.

"We are looking for new members who may want to volunteer in the garden," he said.

"Volunteers can help with propagation, pruning, general nursery work and garden maintenance."

Sophie has previously filmed in the gardens for ABC television's *Gardening Australia* program and has been a regular visitor of late, stopping in on her trips to the Eyre Peninsula.

She has a regular appearance on *Gardening Australia*, writes for the *Sunday Mail* and is heard on the *Talkback Gardening* program on ABC Radio each Sunday morning.



WATER PERMITS MOVING ONLINE

All applications for Water Affecting Activity permits will soon be made online through a new management system.

Mywater is a new online water management system and customer portal due to be introduced across South Australia later this year.

It has been developed to assist with water management authorisations, including licences and permits, and had input from across the state with growers, irrigators, water traders, brokers, bore drillers and those in the dam construction

sector informing the system.

Through mywater, you will be able to manage your South Australian water allocation, licence and permit information in one place.

You will be able to use the system to apply for a water licence, view your water allocation, apply for a well permit or water affecting activity permit and pay your account.

The online licensing portal will provide up-to-date and easily accessible State Water Register information, as well as easier and streamlined water licensing and permit applications.

For more information please contact the board's water staff on 8429 9666.

SAAL Board meets in Marree

Members of the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board held their most recent meeting in Marree in August.

The board is committed to holding a meeting in the region once a year. In 2021 the meeting was held in Hawker.

Livestock SA coordinated a meeting at the same time which provided an opportunity for a community meeting with representatives of the board, Livestock SA, Primary Producers SA, the Pastoral Board and Member for Stuart Geoff Brock.

While in Marree, members were able to inspect wicking beds at the Marree Aboriginal School, established during a gardening workshop held in April. They also visited Mundowdna Station to see how technology is applied on the property, heard from Adam and Kate Litchfield on their involvement in the board's Property Management Planning program and saw the progress of EMU works funded by the board almost a decade ago.

Members also travelled to Witchelina Nature Reserve to meet with Nature Foundation staff, who updated them on a number of projects they have co-funded, including a thick-billed grasswren survey and a current survey using new technology in thermal detection of wildlife that has received funding support through the board's Grassroot Grants program.

The board's next meeting will be held in Port Augusta on 26-27 October.



Above: At the visit to Mundowdna Station were, from left, Peter Litchfield, Jodie Gregg-Smith, Charlie Eager, Geoff Brock, Douglas Lillecrapp, Sanchia Treloar, Gordon Litchfield, Ross Sawers, Lyn Litchfield, Scott Michael, Ellen Litchfield holding Winston Ward, Tim Flowers and Kurt Tschirner

Right: Board members Kurt Tschirner, Tim Flowers, Scott Michael and Sanchia Treloar with Nature Foundation Chair Jan Ferguson OAM and chief executive officer Alex Nankivell



LANDSCAPE LEVY FUNDS REGIONAL WORK

With a region that covers more than half of South Australia, management of the landscape is a big undertaking.

The collection of an annual land-based levy and a water levy, provides critical funds for the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board to undertake on-ground works to meet its responsibilities under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. It also provides an opportunity to leverage further funding from government and industry.

The combined investment allows for the management of pest plant and animals, precious water resources

and support for sustainable industries dependent on natural resources. The board works to preserve the region's natural biodiversity through community participation in the planning and delivery of its regional and district level programs.

All landowners in the SA Arid Lands region pay the regional land-based levy. The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board collects the regional land-based levy from landholders located outside

a council area and these levy notices were sent in September. Local councils collect the levy from ratepayers on behalf of the board.

Activities undertaken through the board's combined funding in the past financial year are summarised on pages 15-18.

More information about the landscape and water levies is available on the board's website at landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/about-us

Feral goats are a declared animal under the Landscape South Australia Act 2019



Working towards goat management

Key stakeholders are being consulted by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board in the development of a Goat Policy to guide options for future management of the pest animal.

Unmanaged goats are a major contributor to total grazing pressure with populations able to double in size every 1.6 years in the absence of control. To prevent populations from increasing, at least 35 per cent of the population must be removed each year.

Feral goats heavily impact native vegetation and compete with livestock for pasture and water. Goats have been estimated to cost at least \$17 million in losses to the Australian sheep industry through competition for pasture between feral goats and domestic sheep.

Under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* goats are a declared animal and the act's regulations provide direction on the level of control required. These include that a landholder takes reasonable steps to ensure goats on their property are captured and, within six weeks of capture, are either removed from the land or destroyed. Domestic and re-domesticated feral goats must be properly contained behind fences and tagged.

The high biodiversity value of the Flinders Ranges and the hilly terrain that makes confining goats difficult means the keeping of domestic goats is prohibited in the area. Exceptions can apply with a permit subject to compliance with identification and fencing requirements. Pastoral lease properties will also require approval from the Pastoral Board.

If you have any questions in relation to goats on your property, please contact the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board on 8429 9666.

DOB IN A DEER

Feral deer are rarely seen in the SA Arid Lands and the board is working with landowners to maintain a feral deer-free region.

A small number of red deer were eradicated in an aerial control program in the Gawler Ranges earlier this year, jointly delivered with the Eyre Peninsula and Limestone Coast Landscape Boards. Thermal scopes were used to detect the deer in thick vegetation.

The deer were originally detected on cameras in place to monitor Malleefowl. A landholder also controlled a small number of deer on their property when notified of their presence.

Feral deer compete with native wildlife and livestock for pasture, carry disease and contribute to erosion in creek and river systems. They can also be a hazard on roads, causing an increasing number of vehicle collisions in other regions. An agricultural, environmental and social pest, they eat native plants and trample saplings.

Landscape Operations and Projects Team Leader Greg Patrick said while it was hoped the deer had been eradicated through the operation, monitoring for the pest would continue for the next 12 months to ensure no deer remain.

Members of the public are encouraged to 'Dob in a Deer' if they see the pest during their travel in the region.

The FeralScan App is a useful tool for recording sightings or you can call the SAAL Landscape Board office on 8429 9666.

Under the *Landscape Act 2019*, feral deer are a declared pest animal and there is a requirement that feral deer are destroyed. Additional prohibitions relate to the release, movement, possession and sale of feral deer in South Australia.



Queensland Government

ONLINE RECORDING OF FERAL ANIMALS

FeralScan is an app and website that provides a central location for reporting sightings of a wide variety of pest animal species for anyone sighting them across the region.

Sightings of rabbits, goats, deer, donkeys, camels, pigs, cats, dogs and foxes can all be reported using the program, on your phone or on the website.

Interested landholders joined a webinar about the app in August and learned that it can be used for far more than wild dogs.

FeralScan Coordinator Peter West provided an overview of the app, how to get the most from it and benefits to landholders.

Offered through MS Teams, the webinar was recorded and a copy added to our website at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/news-resources/podcasts-and-videos

The value of the app is that it is designed to be used by anyone sighting pest animals including property staff members, travelling workers, transport operators and visitors to the region. The information is valuable in guiding decisions about targeted control work for pest species.



Notifiable diseases detected in feral pigs

The South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board has been working with the community to tackle the growing feral pig numbers in the State's far north east.

Across the Outback reported a record number of pigs culled in the Far North Channel Country in April this year. Routine feral pig disease surveillance occurred through the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) following the event. Antibodies to the bacterial disease Brucellosis (*Brucella suis*) were detected in one sample, with samples collected from eight feral pigs. Further testing in February 2022 also detected exposure to Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) in seven of the feral pigs.

The positive *B.suis* sample was recorded from the Diamantina/Warburton system, and JEV positive samples were detected in both the Diamantina/Warburton and Cooper Creek systems. Both *B.suis* and JEV are nationally notifiable diseases.

Widespread in Queensland's feral pig population, *B.suis* has also been detected in the feral pig population in northern New South Wales. Animals may have been infected in these states as feral pigs often travel down the river systems into South Australia.

Since February 2022, JEV has been detected in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia in domestic pigs. It was also detected in feral pigs from the Northern Territory.

While *B.suis* usually affects pigs, it can cause serious illness and long-lasting health problems in people, and is potentially fatal. Feral pig hunters and trappers, and pig hunting dogs are at highest risk of infection and can pass infection on to other dogs and humans.

B.suis is transmitted to humans and animals through direct contact with tissues or body fluids of an infected animal. The infection risk is greatest when cuts or grazes come into contact with infected tissues and bodily fluids such as blood, urine and saliva. Infection may also occur after eating undercooked meat from an infected animal.

Pregnant women and their babies are at greater risk of severe disease and should avoid any activity involving feral pigs.

B.suis has been detected interstate in dogs that have been pig-hunting or that have been fed raw feral pig meat. Do not feed dogs any raw meat or tissues from feral pigs. If your dog shows signs of the disease, seek veterinary advice.

It is recommended to thoroughly wash hands, arms, and all surfaces, including equipment and vehicles, with soapy water before and after butchering.

Given the heightened focus on disease threats to humans, livestock and domestic animals, with pigs as carriers – coupled with the significant water flows from this year's heavy rainfalls – the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board has scheduled follow-up aerial culls and sample testing later this year.

Landholders are encouraged to report sightings of feral pigs using FeralScan or contacting the SAAL Landscape Board office to seek support or advice about management options.

Further information about biosecurity issues and pigs is available on our website at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/plants-and-animals

LANDSCAPE GROUP NEWS

KINGOONYA

Members of the Kingoonya Landscape Group met with staff from Kokatha Pastoral and Kokatha Enterprises at Roxby Downs Station in June.

Ecologist John Read led a tour of the property with Kokatha Pastoral Operations Manager Tony Freshwater highlighting the land management work undertaken since the land was returned to Kokatha. Saltbush Ag Northern Operations Manager Adam Willis and General Manager Jack Handbury provided an overview of the partnership with Kokatha on Roxby Downs, Purple Downs and Andamooka stations.

Kingoonya Landscape Group members Leila and Conan attended the Arid Recovery Open Day and spoke to visitors about projects in the Kingoonya district,

cochineal and cactus, growing native gardens, water conservation and feral cat trapping. The event is an important one in the Kingoonya district calendar and provides a sneak peek into the research and work done to protect some of Australia's most threatened species.

The group recently welcomed two new members, Dylan Maidment from Millers Creek Station and Nathan Manders from Arid Recovery.

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PHOTO: Kokatha Pastoral's Tony Freshwater speaks to group members at a fenced off dam on Roxby Downs Station



KINGOONYA



MARREE-INNAMINCKA



MARLA OODNADATTA

GAWLER RANGES

Gawler Ranges Landscape Group members are looking forward to hosting a community Stickybeak Day at Secret Rocks in October.

The event is an opportunity to learn about the property's new Mallee Refuge area, reintroduction of native species including numbats and Shark Bay bandicoots, feral animal control and vegetation response following a fire in 2021.

At its June meeting, the group received an update from Department of Infrastructure and Transport Representative Mark Elms, who discussed the potential for landholders to undertake roadworks on their own property and be paid for it.

Jeffrey Grace-Jones spoke about Rural Aid and the services the organisation provides to community members affected by natural disasters. SAAL's Regional Agriculture Landscape Facilitator Andrea Tschirner spoke about the board's new *From the Ground Up* program and its Regenerative Grazing Group.

The Gawler Ranges Landscape Group has successfully completed the Gawler Ranges District Action Planning process, which will help guide group activities for the remainder of 2022 and into 2023.

Past events in the district were well supported. The Buckleboo Stickybeak Day held in May attracted more than 80 attendees who learned about carbon project works in the rangelands, monitoring water in the landscape, rest-based grazing systems and how they increase productivity.

A Neville Bonney Bush Foods Workshop held at Iron Knob, also in May, was very well received by around 30 attendees.

The group's next meeting will be held at Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden on 9 December.

Chris Fulton 0477 307 038
Christopher.fulton@sa.gov.au

PHOTO: Chris Fulton, left and members of the Gawler Ranges Landscape Group: Lesley Koch, Kate Greenfield, Denise Sharp and Brenton French with Amanda Michael on screen

MARREE-INNAMINCKA

The Marree-Innamincka Landscape Group has supported a number of events in the region over the past six months.

A hands-on, arid-focussed gardening workshop hosted by David de Vries in Marree in April demonstrated a low-cost wicking garden bed technique and provided advice on managing soil and water for productive plants in sometimes harsh environments. Marree Aboriginal School students and staff not only participated in the workshop, but have also done a fantastic job of looking after the wicking beds made on the day. Neville Bonney also delighted participants with his knowledge of local bush foods, native plant selection and samples of his home prepared native bush foods.

Group members provided input into the development and delivery of a Pastoral Bootcamp at Innamincka in August.

They also supported a cross-region development workshop in May. Community members from across the arid lands spent two days with acclaimed personal facilitator Jill Rigney, where they were guided

through an intensive framework and strategies on fostering improved communication, behavioural leadership and developing their ideal cultural workplace.

The group held its most recent meeting at Innamincka in August, where members discussed the development of a new tourism guide App for the Birdsville and Strzelecki tracks and heard an update on the new Lake Eyre Basin Strategic Plan. All stakeholders are encouraged to read and provide feedback on the plan.

Matt Westover will act as a point of contact for the Marree-Innamincka district area until January 2023, as Charlie has headed off on an ambitious paddling trip down the entire 2500km stretch of the Murray River.

Matt Westover 0438 816 210
Matthew.westover@sa.gov.au

PHOTO: Group members Lynn Litchfield, Jayne-Marie Barns, Frank Warren and board representative Douglas Lillecrapp joined community members at the Innamincka Pastoral Bootcamp in August

NORTH EAST PASTORAL

Events in the North East Pastoral district have been well supported by landholders recently.

Almost 30 participants learned about native plants and Australian bush foods with Neville Bonney earlier in the year. A ChemCERT course at Mannahill Racecourse in July was booked out and due to being oversubscribed, the group is planning to support another ChemCERT course in the district in 2023.

Wild Dog bait injection services will be held in the district in October. With rain over the past 12 months possible feral pig incursions continue to be monitored, with eradication considered possible in the district. If you have any sightings or evidence of feral pigs on your property please contact Di.

The region was well represented in the awarding of Grassroots Grants

projects for 22/23, with 14 grants awarded to landholders in the North East Pastoral with most of the grants supporting landholders in the landscape scale control of noogoora burr. A further three properties were successful in their applications to be included in the Property Management Planning program with the property mapping component occurring in September.

The group's next meeting will be held at the Olary Hotel on Thursday 3 November.

Di Makotter 0408 944 751
Dianna.makotter@sa.gov.au

PHOTO: Members of the North East Pastoral Landscape Group, from left, Nick Rasheed, Mark Duncan-Tiver, Richard Williams and Tim Taplin

NORTH FLINDERS

North Flinders Landscape Group members were among the first to tour the new visitor centre and fossil fields at Nilpena Ediacara National Park as part of their July meeting.

Members were guided through the new visitor precinct and were very fortunate to tour the fields with palaeontologist Mary Droser. The park is not yet open to the public and the group were privileged to get a sneak peek.

At the meeting in May, the group also heard from Anthony Edgecumbe from SA Road Services on the management of outback roads, while SAAL Regional Agriculture Landcare facilitator Andrea Tschirner spoke to the group about learnings from

the pastoral field day, the regen grazing group and the board's new From the Ground Up project.

The group will next meet at Blinman on 28 October, where they will join celebrations to mark 30 years of the Bounceback program, which has been strongly supported by the board's programs, most recently its Bounceback and Beyond project.

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PHOTO: North Flinders Landscape Group members take a look at fossil markings at the Nilpena Ediacara National Park



MARLA OODNADATTA

The Marla Oodnadatta Landscape Group funded a composting and wicking bed workshop with David de Vries, which was held in Coober Pedy in September. Well supported, the workshop focussed on how to grow your own food, recycle green waste and reduce water use – all at the same time. The knowledge and skills learned will help community members successfully grow their own fruit and vegetables in an arid climate and in the face of rising fresh food prices and at times supply chain disruption in remote areas due to extreme weather.

Planning by the group earlier this year marked promotion of the app FeralScan as a priority for the district. A webinar run in August introduced new users to the FeralScan App and website. FeralScan Coordinator Peter West gave an overview of how FeralScan can benefit landholders wanting to reduce pest animals on their properties. FeralScan resources have been shared in the district and will continue to be promoted at future events.

Plans for the Cricket & Conversations event in March 2023 are being developed and group members are gathering ideas for presenters and topics of discussion. Please contact Hamish if there is anything you would like to see at this event, which will be held in Coober Pedy.

The group has also welcomed new members Donnagh Clarke from Allandale Station and Hollie Williams from Nilpinna Station.

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PHOTO: Community members plant out a wicking bed as part of a workshop in Coober Pedy in September

PORT AUGUSTA/QUORN

The Port Augusta – Quorn Landscape Group met for its seventh meeting at Port Augusta Yacht Club on 9 August.

In its first year, the group has completed its discussions and development of the priorities for landscape management in the district. This District Action Plan has created a list of programs and opportunities to work with community and industry for sustainable environmental outcomes.

The group is continuing its support of Port Augusta Coastcare, which is working towards a community event in March next year.

Group members enjoyed holding a stall in conjunction with Quorn Community Landcare Group at the Quorn Agricultural Show last month and held October school holiday activities with Quorn Walking Tours at the Pithi Kawi Bush Food Garden.

Members were excited to support events such as the very successful

Quandong Festival in Quorn, and workshops with Sophie Thomson with the Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden in Port Augusta. Both events were sponsored by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board.

Group members are chair Renata Hackett, Steve Marafiotte, Melissa Clifton, Kym Thomas, Francene O'Connor and Richie Paynter.

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PHOTO: At the fifth meeting of the Port Augusta Quorn Landscape Group at Sundrop Farm were, from left, Francene O'Connor, National Parks SA representative Danny Doyle, Richie Paynter, Steve Marafiotte, chair Renata Hackett and SAAL board representative Kurt Tschirner



At the Thriving Women's Conference, from left, Ros Breeding, Di Makotter, Andrea Tschirner, Cherie Gerlach, Lisa Edwards, Alice Smith and Fiona Warwick

SAAL women thrive with connection

The contribution of regional women to agriculture, agri-business and land management was celebrated at the Thriving Women's Conference held at Hahndorf in August.

The theme 'The Impact of Us' was evident in a range of diverse and insightful presentations. Keynote speaker and well known political journalist Annabel Crabbe opened the conference, delivering a powerful message about stepping into leadership and continuing to provide a strong voice for rural and regional areas.

Participants were treated to presentations on business security, connectivity in regional areas and communication skills.

The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board sponsored four women to attend the bi-annual event. They were Lisa Edwards of Muloorina Station, Ros Breeding of Teetulpa Station, Fiona Warwick of Holowiliena South and Port Augusta-Quorn Landscape Group chair Renata Hackett.

They joined with SAAL Field Officer Alice Smith, Community Landscape Officer Di Makotter, Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator Andrea Tschirner and Communications and Community Engagement Team Leader Cherie Gerlach.

The group enjoyed the opportunity to network with women from many other rural areas and following the conference dinner were able to meet with Minister for Primary Industries Claire Scriven.

Ros Breeding said the meeting with 200 women involved in agricultural and agribusiness was inspirational.

"I found the workshop speakers engaging, insightful and thought-provoking – as were the guest speakers Annabel Crabb and Jung Nietschke," she said.

Fiona Warwick said the chance to visit another region, speak with strangers about their lives and goals and immersing herself in the bigger picture really put things into perspective.

"The two main guest speakers were the highlight for me and I think they set the bar fairly high for the talks on both days," she said.

Fiona said Danielle England's focus on HR management of Gen Zs will be helpful as she finds herself managing more and more young staff.

"I love being able to get young people into the industry and want to build that environment so we can retain them as they've loved the experience and culture they've found while they are here.

"It was also fascinating to see how Emily Riggs is developing her brand. It was a feel-good moment to be connected through our Merino wool connection."

The bi-annual Thriving Women's Conference is run by the Women of the Land (WoTL) Board. The conference and other outreach events support the agricultural industry by recognising and empowering the contribution of women in rural and regional areas.



ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT 2021-2022

CARING FOR LAND, WATER AND NATURE

The SA Arid Lands Landscape region is vast and home to some of Australia's iconic Outback landscapes, and water systems including the Great Artesian Basin aquifer and the Lake Eyre Basin.

The 500,000 square kilometre region covers almost half of South Australia and has less than two percent of the State's population. Despite this, it contributes significantly to the State's resources in pastoral production, mining, tourism and other industries.

The South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board works across this region and partners with community, industry, traditional owners and government agencies to ensure there is a sustainable approach to the management, protection and restoration of soils, water, native plants and animals.

The board's five-year Regional Landscape Plan outlines the board's priorities. Together with its annual Business Plan, these plans ensure there is a balance between the needs of regional communities and the sustainable management of the environment.

The board has five key priorities:



CLIMATE RESILIENT REGION



WATER MANAGEMENT



SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT



PROTECTING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY



PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Other key functions include development of water allocation plans for prescribed water resources which in this region is the Far North Prescribed Wells. It also operates as the relevant authority for a range of water, land protection and animal and plant control activities.

The board's work is funded through the collection of a land-based levy and a water levy, some of which allows the board to leverage additional funding for the provision of landscape management work in the region.



Average annual rainfall of
100-250mm



TRADITIONAL OWNER GROUPS

Adnyamathanha, Antakirinja Matu – Yankunytjatjara, Arabana, Barngarla, Dieri, Eringa, Gawler Ranges, Irrwanyere, Kokatha, Malyankapa, Ngadjuri, Nukunu, Tjariwara Ummuru, Wangkangurru/ Yarluyandi, Walka Wani, Wilyakali, Yandruwandha/ Yawarrawarrka

MAIN INDUSTRIES



Mining
Pastoralism
Tourism



MAJOR CENTRES

Port Augusta
Quorn
Hawker
Woomera
Roxby Downs

Andamooka
Coober Pedy
Marree
Leigh Creek

OUR REGION

The SA Arid Lands region covers

**525,000 km² or
52,500,000 ha**

26,000 people live here





CLIMATE RESILIENT REGION

Resilient landscapes, communities, and enterprises are mitigating and adapting to climate change

- 6 pastoral businesses supported to develop Property Management Plans to improve their capacity to adapt to climate variability
- 4 training workshops – Personal business drivers; Financial management for businesses; Action planning; Carbon in rangelands grazing systems
- 1 major field day, and 2 'stickybeak' demonstration days at Buckleboo & Wintinna
- 5 Building Pastoral Sustainability landholder grants supporting on-ground works or trials valued at \$114,300



WATER MANAGEMENT

The region's water resources are managed judiciously

- Unbundled water authorisations sent to licence holders
- 294 GAB wells inspected across 40 properties
- 1790ML of water saved for the Great Atresian Basin annually
- 47 water affecting activities, 8 applications granted, 4 WAA permits enquiries addressed
- Support for development of the first draft Strategic Plan for the Lake Eyre Basin



SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT

Land management practices protect soil, vegetation and biodiversity

- 52 ground baiting injection services delivered across 7 districts
 - 107,310 baits distributed to 141 participating properties
- Aerial baiting across 6788km of bait lines involving 65 properties
- 6 new releases of Cochineal biological control agent and continued support of past releases
- 6 volunteer groups supported
- 58 volunteers, 2,200 volunteer hours
- 28 property visits by the Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator





PROTECTING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

Intrinsic biodiversity values are protected and enhanced

- Aerial control of pigs and large feral herbivores across 89,000 ha
- Weed control across 4,400 ha
- Surveys of large feral herbivores and pig impacts in Coongie Ramsar area
- 3 threatened native animal species surveyed (Crest-tailed Mulgara, Dusky Hopping-mouse, Night Parrot)
- Successful re-introduction of Western Quoll to the Gammon Ranges
- Cat control across 54,000 ha
- Fox control across 863,000 ha and 25 properties)
- Goat control covering 363,000ha, across 10 properties
- Surveys of pest activity (foxes, cats, goats, rabbits in the Flinders and Gammon Ranges, and goats in the Olary Ranges)
- 6 surveys of threatened native animals (including the Flinders Ranges Purple-spotted Gudgeon, Malleefowl, Western Quoll and Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby
- 2 surveys of threatened native plants (Slender bell-fruit and Xerothamnella)



PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS

People and community are central to looking after our landscapes

- 38 Landscape Group meetings across 7 Landscape Districts
- Delivered 48 land holder capacity building and community education events
- Support of 3 volunteer groups who contributed almost 3,500 hours
- 14 Grassroots Grants valued at almost \$100,000
- 2 workshops to build relationships with traditional owner groups
- 4 editions of *Across the Outback* delivered to 1,200 subscribers

Key Projects in 2021-22

Biteback

The board runs a comprehensive Wild Dog Management Program in partnership with PIRSA, landholders, Livestock SA and other investors such as the Australian Government and Sheep Industry Fund. The board supports the 21 wild dog local area groups in the region to implement strategies in the 'Wild Dog Management Best Practice Guidelines'.

Optimising kangaroo management

Kangaroo over-abundance is a threat to the environmental and economic sustainability of rangelands areas. This two-year project brings together key stakeholders from across the region and state to find and test new approaches to kangaroo management that can reduce the impacts of kangaroo over-abundance on ecosystem health, livestock production and animal welfare.

NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAM PROJECTS

Building Pastoral Sustainability

This project aims to build pastoralists' capacity to respond to the region's highly variable climate through adaptation, innovation and diversification. The project delivers property management planning support, customised trials, on-ground works, and learning opportunities focused on practices and technologies that can improve land condition, sustainability of production and the resilience of pastoral enterprises. Diversification pathways, and improving understanding of weather and climate information are a focus for 2022/23.

Coongie Wetland Wonders

The Coongie Lakes Ramsar Wetland is internationally recognised for its ecological values and the site provides habitat for native fish and a number of endangered animals such as the Dusky Hopping Mouse, and Crest-tailed Mulgara. This Regional Land Partnership project focuses on protecting Ramsar values by controlling pest animals – particularly feral pigs and large feral herbivores that cause damage to waterholes and vegetation, and invasive weeds, including Buffel Grass and Mimosa Bush. Populations of key native species are being monitored, and acoustic surveillance is being used to determine the presence of the Night Parrot.

Bounceback and Beyond

This project partners with the Department for Environment and Water's long-running Bounceback Program, delivering conservation gains for a number of threatened animal species. This is achieved through coordinated, landscape-scale threat management across the Flinders, Gawler, Olary and Gammon Ranges. Bounceback and Beyond focuses on protection of Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby, Western Quoll, Malleefowl, Flinders Ranges Purple-spotted Gudgeon, Slender Bell-fruit, and Xerothamnella but also benefits many native plants and animals. Control of foxes, feral cats and feral goats is a key focus of the project. Threatened plant species assessments are undertaken to track long-term trends for the Slender Bell-fruit, Menzell's Wattle, Purple-wood Wattle, Xerothamnella parvifolia, Spidery Wattle, Ooldea Guinea-flower and West Coast Mintbush. These assessments will compare the threat posed by introduced herbivores in areas where control is undertaken compared with unmanaged areas.



Building Pastoral Sustainability

- 3 field days
- \$114,300 grants awarded
- 4 training workshops
- 6 properties supported through Property Management Planning

Coongie Wetland Wonders

- 89,000 ha of feral animal aerial control
- 3 threatened species surveyed
- 4,400 ha of weed control works

Bounceback and Beyond

- 22 participating properties
- 54,000 ha cat control
- 863,000 ha fox control
- 86,000 baits deployed
- 2 threatened species translocated



Protecting an endangered daisy

Forty exclusion cages and 18 monitoring cameras have been placed on land near Coober Pedy as part of a project to monitor and protect the endangered Arckaringa Daisy (*Olearia arckaringensis*).

The project *Implementing Short and Long-term Safeguards for Arckaringa Daisy* in SA will protect existing populations of the daisy, which exist on a tiny section of land north of Coober Pedy.

The rare daisy is found on Antakarintja land and the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board (SAAL) is partnering with Antakarintja traditional owners, pastoralists and scientific contractors to undertake the work.

The exclusion cages will guard part of the population from livestock and large feral herbivore threats and monitoring cameras are being placed to enable assessment of the risks to the daisy.

SAAL Community Ecologist Ben McCallum said soil sampling had also been undertaken in the first stage of the project.

The collection of DNA from almost 100 sites and soil samples taken from 50 sites with an equal number of plants with cages and those exposed to herbivores,

will undergo chemical analysis to find matching soil qualities to help with the selection of sites to search for further populations that may see an increase in the daisy's current known range, he said.

Staff are working with the owners and managers of Evelyn Downs and Arckaringa Stations to determine potential new locations and to discuss options to control pest plants found in the area.

A survey team will visit the area in October armed with the geology report and the soil results to earmark suitable sites for translocation. They will also collect seed for a national seed bank. The survey will establish current distribution, population size, genetic diversity and habitat preference.

Implementing Short and Long-term Safeguards for Arckaringa Daisy in SA, is funded by the Australian Government's Environment Restoration Fund.



KANGAROO PARTNERSHIP PROJECT GRANTS WELL SUBSCRIBED

Projects addressing challenges to kangaroo management are being assessed for grant funding through the Kangaroo Partnership Project.

The Kangaroo Partnership Project's grant funding program was open for applications from mid August to early September for trials and demonstrations, research and development, education and awareness raising, and innovative ideas. Project ideas could apply to sectors such as farming, conservation and landscape management, animal welfare, and industry operations, or a collaboration between sector partners.

Up to \$15,000 per project was available with a good number of applications received. Announcements of successful grantees is expected to occur in mid-October. A total funding pool of \$90,000 was available for the 2022-23 financial year.

Funding will be awarded on merit to projects that demonstrate the best value for money and delivery of benefits in-line with the Kangaroo Partnership Project priorities of:

- Animal welfare
- Economic development and livelihoods
- Environmental conservation, landscape management and sustainability
- Improving social licence (community understanding and acceptance)
- Moving forward together, engagement and alignment

Successful projects will share their learnings with the Kangaroo Partnership Project network and broader community through on-ground stickybeak days, online webinars, newsletters and more.

You can find more information about the Kangaroo Partnership Project at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/projects-and-partners/projects/kangaroo-partnership-project.

To seek further information contact Project Coordinator Emily Gregg via coordinator@sakangaroopartnership.com



Concern for vulnerable Grasswren

The first Short-tailed Grasswren (*Amytornis merrotsyi merrotsyi*) survey in Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park (VGRNP) and adjoining ranges in almost 20 years has recorded a worrying low number of the birds.

Following growing anecdotal evidence pointing to a decline in the species, the survey occurred over patches of land across a 30km area both in the national park and on adjoining Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary. Five sites were surveyed in walking transects through historically good spinifex country in early June.

The Short-tailed Grasswren surveys took place on Adnyamathanha country.

The species is listed as Vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act of 1999.

While Short-tailed Grasswrens (STGW) were only detected at one site in VGRNP, many more were encountered on Arkaroola.

SAAL Landscape Board Senior Community Ecologist Kristian Bell said the differences in detection were largely attributed to the location of patches of healthy and abundant spinifex grasses.

“The grasswren appears to be doing well in areas where spinifex is abundant. However, the prolonged drought preceding the recent rains resulted in a large dieback of spinifex. This has, in turn, had an impact on the grasswren,” he said.

On a positive note, small numbers still seem able to persist in select areas of dead spinifex adjacent to drainage lines.

“Hopefully we will see strong spinifex recruitment following recent above-average rainfall and we will then start to see improvement in grasswren numbers.”

Arkaroola’s Doug Sprigg said he had often seen the STGW performing its courting ritual in the middle of the road to the ridgetop on Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary. However, during the drought of the past three years he hadn’t seen any on the track.

“Anecdotally the numbers have previously been higher than they are now, but to suggest there’s reasonable numbers in the area is encouraging,” he said.

“I’m hopeful the Grasswrens will bounce back nicely.”

In addition to the Grasswrens, the survey team recorded 50 other bird species, including painted finches and hooded robins.

The survey was undertaken by contractors Ashwin Rudder and Sam Gordon, who completed the work on behalf of SAAL.

The full survey report is available on our website at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/plants-and-animals/native-plants-and-animals/native-animals

Bounceback and Beyond is supported by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program.



HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF THE LAKE EYRE BASIN

A new draft Lake Eyre Basin Strategic Plan has been developed to guide the basin's long term management and is open for feedback.

The draft plan focuses on water-related environmental, social, cultural and economic values and applies a proactive and adaptive management approach to manage risks of harm and long-term damage to the resource.

Developed by partner government departments and agencies following consultation with community and scientific advisory committees, the draft plan has been released for consultation.

Residents of the basin communities and other interested parties are invited to have their say on the draft strategic plan. The developers want to hear if there are any gaps, if the balance between protecting and managing the basin is correct and if the plan will help to protect, enhance and sustain the Lake Eyre Basin for the future.

This is your chance to have your say.

More information about the Lake Eyre Basin is available at www.dceew.gov.au/water/policy/national/lake-eyre-basin. From there you can follow links to the Have Your Say platform, read the draft plan and have your voice heard by providing feedback before 3 November 2022.

To seek further information, please email lebsecretariat@agriculture.gov.au

Rich in Aboriginal culture and identity, the Lake Eyre Basin is also home to about 60,000 people living and working in diverse and remote communities and occupations across four Australian states.

It covers about 1.2 million square kilometres – about one-sixth of Australia and includes Australia's lowest point, 15 metres below sea level, which is found on the bed of Lake Eyre.

Basin program saves pools of water

Significant investment in bore rehabilitation and installation of piped reticulation systems over recent decades is reducing waste of the precious Great Artesian Basin water.

The Australian Government's Improving Great Artesian Basin Drought Resilience (IGABDR) program and earlier Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative (GABSI) has collectively saved an estimated 50,000 ML of water each year in South Australia.

The amount of water saved to date augers well for increased protection of a vital resource for the environment, industry and Outback communities that will secure a reliable water supply.

The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board is partnering with the Department for Environment and Water to deliver the IGABDR program in South Australia.

More than 30 different projects in the SA Arid Lands received \$3.5m funding in the current IGABDR program. These projects have saved the equivalent of two Olympic sized swimming pools of water every day and there is still work to be done

The \$27.6m program is a five year program that began in July 2019. It incorporates GAB projects in South Australian, New South Wales, Queensland and Northern Territory.

Limited funding is still available to help landholders accessing water from

the Great Artesian Basin co-fund the installation and maintenance of wells and associated distribution networks.

Water supply infrastructure projects that contribute to water security and drought resilience in the Great Artesian Basin may be eligible for funding. This includes the replacement of ageing wells, decommissioning of wells, installation of water-tight distribution infrastructure and replacement of ageing water distribution infrastructure.

SAAL senior water resource officer Aaron Smith said expressions of interest for the program must be received by 28 February 2023 and projects must be completed by February 2024.

"Well repairs take considerable time in our region. It is important that works are planned and funds are secured now," he said.

He said any underspent funds would be handed back to the Australian Government and may impact justification for future programs in the region.

For more information, contact Aaron Smith on aaron.smith3@sa.gov.au

Volunteers to control pepper trees

Volunteers from Four Wheel Drive South Australia Inc. will soon carry out control work on re-emerging and yet untreated Pepper Trees along a stretch of Depot Creek on Wilkatana Station.

Control of about 250 trees was supported in the 2020/21 Grassroots Grants project *Pepper Tree Eradication along Depot Creek*.

While the project was considered successful, some trees have regenerated and volunteers will undertake further control works.

An invasive species, the False Pepper Tree (Schinus molle) outcompetes other native species and affects natural water flows.

It flowers from September to December and its seeds are dispersed by vertebrates, birds and water flowing through the system. It is not a declared weed but is seen as a priority target weed for the Gawler Ranges Landscape District.

The eradication will be revisited by additional volunteers in early November.

While on the property, the volunteers will also undertake control of some cactus species using cochineal that has been bred in the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board's cochineal nursery in Port Augusta.



Members Wal and Jeremy, of Four Wheel Drive SA Inc trial the use of the Drill and Fill machine for Pepper Tree control



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

3-12 OCT

Buffel Grass Control, Innamincka Regional Reserve

5-6 OCT

School holiday activities at Quorn's Bush food garden

10-13 OCT

Bait Injection Services, Kingoonya and Gawler Ranges

10-15 OCT

Nature Festival events with Port Augusta Garden Club

17-20 OCT

Bait Injection Services, North East Pastoral

18 OCT

Port Augusta Quorn Landscape Group Meeting, Quorn

21 OCT

Secret Rocks Stickybeak Day

26-27 OCT

SAAL Landscape Board Meeting

27 OCT

North Flinders Landscape Group Meeting, Blinman

31 OCT-4 NOV

Bait Injection Services, Marla Oodnadatta

3 NOV

North East Pastoral Landscape Group Meeting, Olary

4 NOV

Gawler Ranges Wicking Bed Workshop

7-11 NOV

Aerial shoot of feral herbivores, northern SA

11 NOV

Marla Oodnadatta Landscape Group Meeting, Coober Pedy

14-18 NOV

Bait Injection Services, Marree Innamincka

30 NOV

Biteback Webinar

5-9 DEC

Quoll monitoring, Vulkathanna-Gammon Ranges National Park

6 DEC

Port Augusta Quorn Landscape Group Meeting, Port Augusta

9 DEC

Gawler Ranges Landscape Group Meeting

14-15 DEC

SAAL Landscape Board Meeting

VOLUNTEERS BUILD EXCLOSURES ON HOLOWILIENA

Twelve volunteers from Adelaide are helping to build exclosures for tree regrowth and to monitor total grazing pressure on a North Flinders property as part of a Grassroots Grant.

Ten exclosures measuring 50m x 50m will protect Holowiliena Station's existing bullock bush populations. It was one project identified in the property's ESRM plan, developed as part of its involvement in the Property Management Planning program.

Having undertaken extensive warren ripping in the past, rabbit numbers are currently very low on the property. Because of this, the exclosures have been designed to exclude livestock, goats and kangaroos.

The work was undertaken during September.

Frances Frahn, from Holowiliena, said the exclosure sites would be monitored for many years to track an ongoing response for the bullock bush.

You can see a video of the work on our Facebook page or website at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/news-resources



Building exclosures at Holowiliena Station in September were, not in order, Richard Warwick, Luke Frahn, Matthew Hughes, Dianne Hughes, Katherine Cole, Tia Peters, Fiona Lukac, Kelly Cole, Andrew Cole, Scott Peters and Ivan Lukac

Volunteers pull posts at Buckleboo

Volunteers returned to Buckleboo Station in August to continue works that were started a year ago.

Ian Maynard, Glyn Plumb and Chris Saunders pulled 900 posts, about one kilometre of wire and loaded a further 1800 posts to 24 stillages during their week-long stay on the property.

The work is being undertaken as follow up to a Building Pastoral Sustainability Grant that allowed property owner Paroo Pastoral to move from a set stocking management process to a rest-based grazing operation.

Grant funding was used to establish six distinct grazing areas across Buckleboo, to allow three months of grazing to be followed by up to 15 months complete rest. The volunteers are removing old, degraded fences currently dividing the new grazing areas.

The men, who also visited in May this year, removed and pulled most of the wire from the old fence prior to the August visit.

While the main efforts were spent pulling and rolling wire, extracting posts and stacking posts onto stillages for sale, the time on the property involved other small jobs too.

This visit also involved upgrading the existing dog accommodation to what Ian referred to as "Hilton-class homes".

They helped manager James Kerr refuel and start the house dam pump, delivered pulled wire to the property dump and enjoyed an afternoon exploring parts of the station with James explaining features including volcano history, windfarm, carbon farming, trap yards, dams and lakes, viewpoints and possible future ventures relating to mining and tourism.



Glyn Plumb loads posts watched by James Kerr



Milly Formby joined School of the Air teachers Mel, Tennessee, Emma and Sara for their assembly in September



Port Augusta West Primary School teacher Emily Howard demonstrates a cubby house design at the workshop

Outback kids learn about shorebirds

School of the Air students wouldn't see too many shorebirds in their day to day life, but when Milly Formby dropped into their assembly to talk about them, they had some great questions for her.

Three months into a trip around Australia in a microlight Aircraft, Milly is raising awareness of migratory shorebirds.

A zoologist, pilot and illustrator of children's book *A Shorebird's Flying Adventure*, Milly talked to students about some of the 50 different species of resident and migratory shorebirds, and shared some fun facts about the East Asian Australasian Flyway that passes over 23 countries on three continents, in the 25,000km round trip.

With an expected life of about 30 years, these birds will travel more than 384,000km in their lifetime. Some of these birds are among the world's most endangered, caused predominantly by habitat loss.

Before arriving in Port Augusta she had flown along the southern coast of Western Australia, crossed the Nullabor cliffs and travelled the Eyre Peninsula coastline.

"My favourite flight so far is the one over the Bunda Cliffs in the Great Australian Bight," Milly told the students.

She spoke to them about the coldness of an open aircraft, explaining that every 1000-feet higher, the temperature drops a further two degrees.

To cope with the cool temperatures, she wears a heated vest, a puffer jacket, flying jacket, gloves, multiple layers of socks and extra clothes layers.

"My highest flight, from Port Lowly to Port Germein I travelled at 9500-feet which was very, very cold," she said.

Milly's 20,000km trip, which started from York in Western Australia, is expected to take up to 12 months.

"My dream is that shorebirds will be as well-known as pandas, so they will be protected." You can follow Milly's adventure at wingthreads.com

Educators take their learning outdoors

Primary teachers and early learning educators were treated to Nature Play SA workshops in Port Augusta in June.

Designed to take primary school curriculum outdoors, the two after-school professional development sessions were sponsored by the Port Augusta-Quorn Landscape Group.

The first session gave educators tips and tricks to ensure learning outcomes can be delivered while outside, either in the playground or further out in nature. The second session focussed on nature play and techniques on engaging children to explore outdoors. This included starting sessions outside with the setting of boundaries and behaviours.

Port Augusta-Quorn Landscape Group prioritised supporting Nature and Cultural Education opportunities as part of its 2022 District Action Plan. With 12 schools in the district, the sessions helped bring professional development in nature play to local teachers without the need to travel to Adelaide.

Port Augusta West Primary School teacher Emily Howard was one of the workshop attendees.

"The sessions presented many inspirational new ideas that could be extended into whole lessons and units of work, or simply be used as ten minute relaxation, mindful activities," she said.

"They (Nature Play SA) suggested opportunities to utilise the free resources nature provides in ways we had not previously considered."

Nature Play SA provides a number of free resources and workshop participants were given suggestions on their use in ways that had not previously been considered by the group.

The workshop sessions were held at Caritas College in Port Augusta West, which allowed participants to explore and use the school's new nature play and outdoor learning area.

For more information on Nature Play SA, go to natureplaysa.org.au



Return student visit allows for ongoing monitoring

Golden Grove High School students have a better understanding of vegetation monitoring and the effects of total grazing pressure following a Kids on Country camp at Witchelina in August.

It was the fourth time the school had visited Witchelina for the program and for some students, this was their second or third visit.

As part of their program, the students removed about 1.5km of old paddock fencing that prevented wildlife movement, were involved in camera trap monitoring, learned about water sustainability in the outback and undertook native vegetation monitoring of River Red gums. Students also joined some night walks as part of the camp.

Marree Innamincka Community Landscape Officer Charlie Eager ran the vegetation monitoring component of the camp. Students collected a variety of data on mature River Red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), which will be added to data recorded from previous Kids on Country camps as an ongoing project.

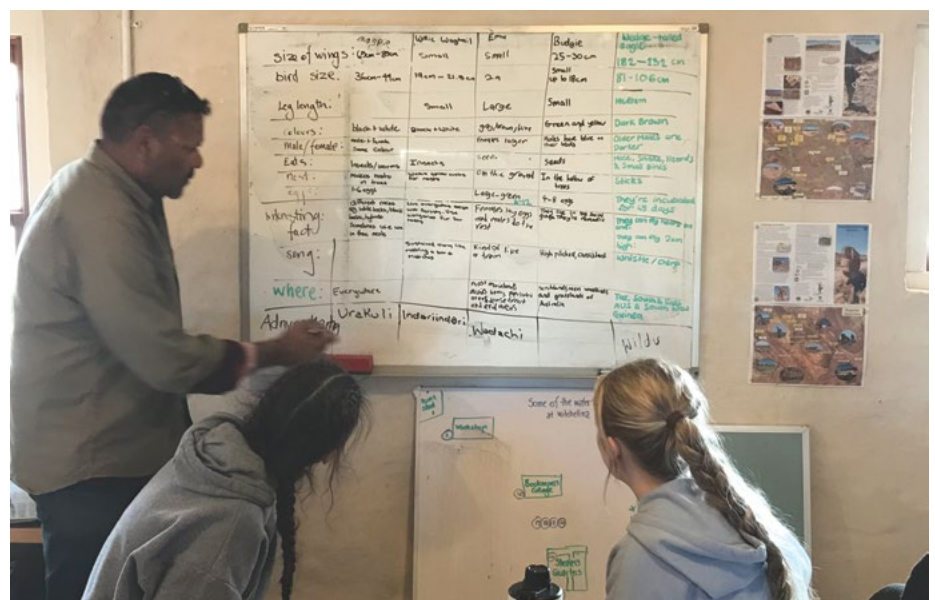
“The ongoing monitoring records provide an opportunity to see the impact of destocking in a riparian river environment,” Charlie said.

Students also looked at a vegetation enclosure that has been established on the property.

“We talked about total grazing pressure and the effect it has on the property’s vegetation,” Charlie said.

“While there was an obvious difference to the students’ last visit, when the property was coming off a long drought period, the most recognisable difference inside the fence is the superior condition and growth of the perennial bluebush species.”

Below: Warren Milera teaches students local indigenous names for birds



Corey Richards from Eromanga Natural History Museum provided a popular presentation on fossils in the Cooper Basin



Innamincka hosts successful pastoral bootcamp

The Innamincka Pastoral Bootcamp event, 'Managing Cows From Space', examined emerging technologies and techniques in remote monitoring of water and pastoral feed.

Twenty-five land managers heard about dry weight equivalents, assessment of vegetation cover, keeping their business and personal information secure and soil monitoring information.

Range IQ's Dionne Walsh walked attendees through feed weighing and assessment, and working out minimum daily dry weight equivalents based on local pastures. She also discussed her experience and thoughts on newly-available satellite assessments of vegetation cover, and how it can help with every day stock management.

Dan Hayes from In2IT shared information on keeping your business and personal information safe in the online world. His business partner Mike Hayes discussed the variety of telemetry systems available and shared what people should ask before deciding on a system to establish or improve connectivity across pastoral stations based on their connectivity needs now and into the future.

Landscape board's Soil Scientist Geoff Kew demonstrated how land managers could start to make assessment judgements on water holding capacity of soil across properties using items available from most hardware stores. He also introduced soil pH and salinity levels and provided information to consider if landholders were looking to install soil monitoring stations.

Corey Richards from Eromanga Natural History Museum explained that the soil Geoff was working with showed 65 million years of development. With the Bootcamp event falling in National Science week, participants and members of the public enjoyed a popular presentation from Corey on the Cooper Basin's rich fossil history and also got a rare look into the diversity of fish species in the Cooper Creek.

SAAL field officer Alice Smith highlighted the diversity of native fish species with the use of nets carried for scientific monitoring purposes, along with some interesting

finds taken from camera monitoring points. These surveys are ongoing as part of the SAAL Landscape Board's Coongie Wetland Wonders project.

A nature-themed quiz night was well attended, with the winning team on a high after taking home the main prize by just one point.

The Innamincka Pastoral Bootcamp was offered through the Building Pastoral Sustainability Project and was supported by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, The SA Drought Resilience, Adoption and Innovation Hub and SANTOS.





Saskia Gerhardy

Wondering about Plains Wanderers?

Many of us are familiar with the boom-and-bust nature of the Australian arid zone characterised by long periods of drought and then back-to-back wet years. Not many of us are familiar with how this natural process influences one of Australia's rarest birds, the Plains Wanderer.

Records of these birds are scattered across South Australia over the past few decades and the species continues to elude even the most enthusiastic birder. Most understanding about this species is the result of long-term monitoring in its 'core range' in Victoria and NSW, so lots of what is known about the species is reflected in what has been reported from these long-term studies. But how relevant is this to where these birds are found in South Australia?

Research currently underway on Boolcoomatta Station Reserve, on the lands of the Adnyamathanha and Wilyakali people, is looking to answer questions such as what is the current status and distribution of the species in SA, what is the home range and habitat preferences of the species on Boolcoomatta and what is the genetic make-up of the population?

The research is a collaboration between Bush Heritage Australia and the University of Adelaide and is being led by PhD candidate Saskia Gerhardy.

Throughout the past few months, Saskia has been spending late nights surveying the plains of Boolcoomatta to try and understand more about Plains Wanderers and make the most of favourable conditions that are on show throughout the region. Her research will focus on improving techniques to detect the species in SA landscapes, exploring the use of thermal cameras, song meters and assessing key aspects of the habitat in which the birds are detected in the North East Pastoral region.

So why should we care about this rarely seen bird?

Plains Wanderers are currently listed as critically endangered, with population estimates as low as 1000 birds left in the wild. They are a unique species, the only member of the family Pedionomidae, and most-closely related to South American seedsnipes – despite most people relating them to quails that also occupy similar habitats.

Their distribution includes the patho-plains in Victoria, NSW Riverina, but also western NSW, throughout SA and into Qld. Unlike most bird species, the female is the prettier of the sexes and like emus, the male is the responsible parent, incubating eggs and rearing young.

Their decline has been attributed to the loss of grasslands to cropping and overgrazing, and predation from foxes and feral cats. A major challenge when working on this species is their camouflage that makes them difficult to detect in the wild. However, with the recent favourable conditions across most of the rangelands, an increase in numbers has been detected at Boolcoomatta. It is hoped through this research a lot more will be understood about these unique birds to assist with their conservation.

If you have recorded any sightings please contact Graeme Finlayson at Bush Heritage on 0459 686 430 or the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board on 8429 9666.



BITEBACK NEWS

INSIDE FENCE GROUND BAITING ANNUAL SUMMARY

Graph 1 below shows the total number of baits placed by landholders inside the dog fence in the SA Arid Lands region in the past six seasons. It also shows the total number of baits landholders (with the exception of the Port Augusta-Quorn district) should place in Autumn and Spring to meet the mandatory baiting requirements of one bait per 1km of vehicle track.

The data shows that the total number of baits distributed inside the dog fence in autumn 2022 increased by 5480 baits from the previous baiting round in spring 2021 and is 22,853 baits short of the required mandatory baiting level.

Working towards the mandatory baiting required for your property will help to ensure wild dog activity and stock impacts remain low. Broad scale wild dog baiting also has the benefit of reducing fox numbers..

MONITORING OF WILD DOG ACTIVITY AND IMPACTS

Graph 2 shows the number of wild dogs shot, trapped and seen live by landholders and professional trappers inside the Dog Fence over the past six years. It also includes recorded numbers of stock killed or mauled over the same time.

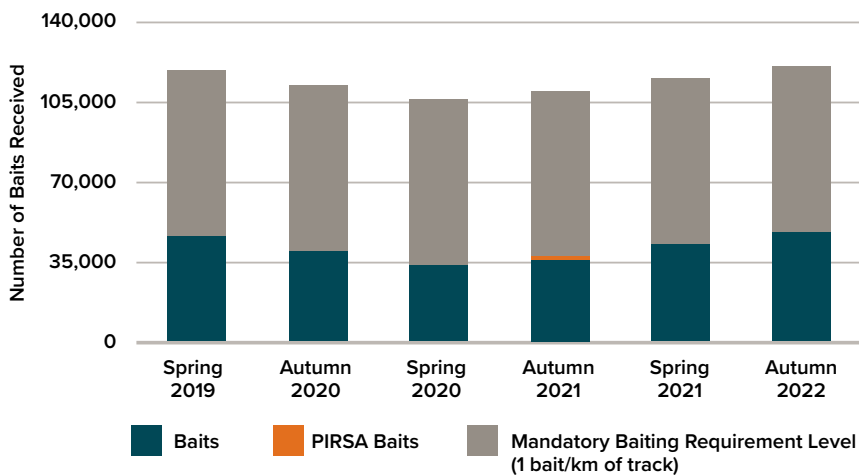
The spike in dogs trapped in 2019 is a result of work by professional trappers. The collective control efforts, combined with drought are attributed to the reduction in dog numbers in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Improved rainfall across large sections of the region is expected to result in an increased number of wild dogs. This increase will also improve the dogs chance to survive to adulthood and breed. Continued control will enable low numbers to be maintained for a longer period.

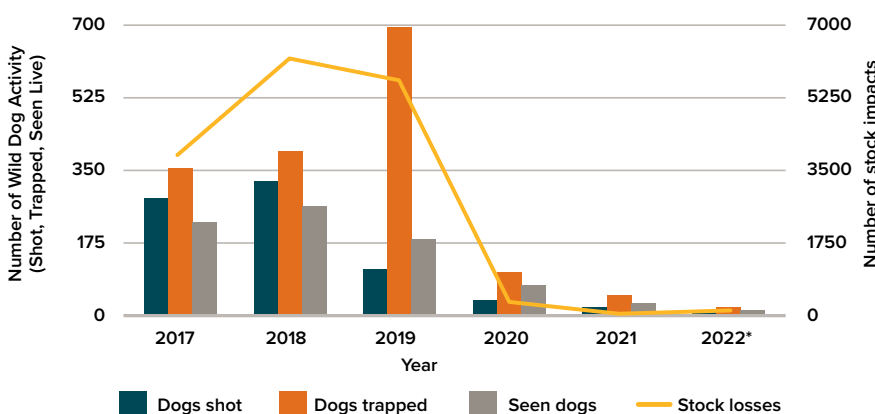
These results rely on reporting from landholders via maps or wild dog scan, so please continue to report.

The new spring 2022 paper maps have been sent. A blank map or a report of no dog activity for the season is still good data and older maps can also still be returned. For information about how to report no activity in the Wild Dog Scan app, please contact your Biteback officer on 8429 9666.

GRAPH 1: SAAL REGION – Inside Fence Baiting Effort



GRAPH 2: Wild Dog Activity vs Stock Impacts



AERIAL BAITING

Two baiting programs were conducted in the 2021/22 period.

The most recent was conducted in June 2022 and focussed around lake edges in inaccessible areas to build a barrier along an area used by dogs to travel large distances.

An earlier program run by PIRSA with Biteback support in March was conducted in response to flood damage to the dog fence. The baiting effort, immediately inside the fence, was aimed at building a buffer to prevent dogs moving south while the fence was repaired.

* The data displayed for the 2022 Calendar year, only includes data received for and is not a true representation of the full years information.

OUTSIDE FENCE GROUND BAITING

Graph 3 outlines the number of baits put out by landholders outside the dog fence in the previous six financial years. Properties outside the dog fence are not required to do any dog control, unless in the 35km buffer zone. These properties are also restricted to one bait per 2km². Injection services for these properties are offered in spring, and only for landholders experiencing high stock impacts. Only three properties showed interest in having baits injected in spring 2022/23.

BITEBACK WEBINAR

The next Biteback Webinar will be offered on 30 November. It is planned presenters will report on a Wild Dog tracking project run in western NSW and 1080 bait breakdown rates. Landholders will be provided with all the details, via email.

If you missed past Biteback Webinars, you can watch the recordings at www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal/news-resources/podcasts-and-videos.

SPRING INJECTION SERVICE DATES

Coordinated spring injection services have been planned and services in the North Flinders and Marree districts were held in September and the Gawler Ranges services in early October. If you haven't received an invite to your local service, please contact Biteback officer Chris Havelberg.

Other planned services will be:

- Kingoonya/Gawler Ranges: 10-13 October
- North East Pastoral: 17-20 October
- Marla/Oodnadatta: 31 October-4 November
- Marree/Innaminka: 14-18 November



Rangers group gets update on dog control

National park rangers and natural resource managers have a better understanding of wild dog impacts and the Biteback program following a presentation given to the South Australian Rangers Association (SARA) at Orparinna in September.

SA Arid Lands Landscape Board (SAAL) Wild Dog Project Officer Chris Havelberg presented to the annual SARA Migration, which was attended by about 70 people from National Parks and Wildlife SA, Forestry SA and SA Water.

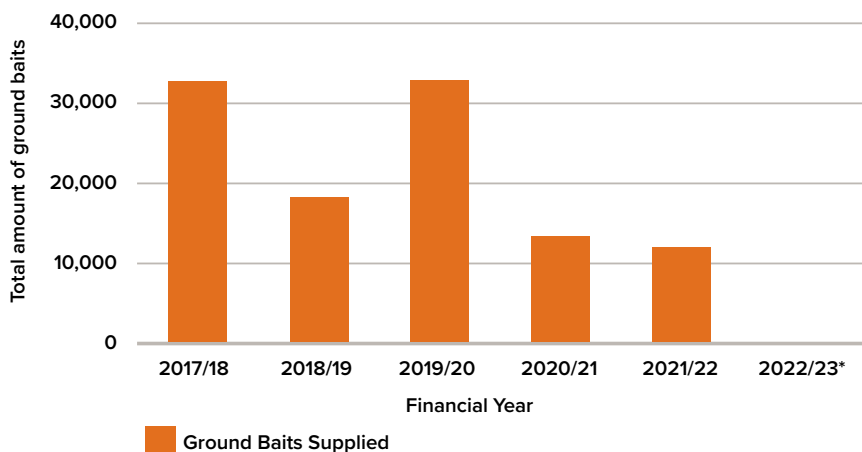
Chris' presentation included an overview of the SA Arid Lands region, how wild dog control is coordinated and what the Biteback program offers to land managers and property owners. He also provided an overview of the new legislation and requirements associated with mandatory reporting and baiting requirements.

"Presenting to the group was a great opportunity to share the role of the Biteback program with such a diverse group of people," Chris said.

"Many of the attendees were from other parts of South Australia and knew very little about wild dog impacts and the program."



GRAPH 3: SAAL REGION – Outside Fence Ground Baiting





Volunteers planting along the Pithi Kawi walking trail in Quorn



Andrea Tschirner with Costa

Quandong festival draws big crowds

The inaugural Quandong festival saw more than 2200 people converge on Quorn in August with growing native foods commercially a key theme of the event.

Designed to build on drought resilience in the region, the event aimed to foster higher rates of innovation in the regional economy and agriculture sector, improve regional branding and recognition of local food-agriculture systems.

*The Quandong Festival was held on Nukunu country and the festival was named after the endangered fruit Quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*), which is known in Nukunu language as Kurti.*

Guest speakers at the event brought a collective wealth of knowledge in native plant food production, marketing and cooking with bush foods. They included high profile chef Paul West, celebrity gardener Costa Georgiadis from ABC Gardening Australia, and highly respected authors Neville Bonney and Bruce Pascoe.

The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board sponsored the event and hosted a discussion tent, in which a series of information sessions were followed by question and answer opportunities with native food plant experts.

Damien Coulthard spoke with landscape artists about Country, art and culture; Peter Cunningham and Angus Jones presented ‘Why should I grow Wattleseed?’ and discussed the business opportunities

available with the product. The Future of Bush Food production in marginal farming country and the potential for market growth was discussed by SAAL Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator Andrea Tschirner with a panel of speakers from various parts of the industry including Tucker Bush’s Mark Tucek, wattleseed grower and farmer Ella McHenery and author Neville Bonney. An audience Q&A during this discussion session revealed great interest in reviving bush food industry networks in the mid and upper north of the state.

A grove of Quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*) trees were planted by visitors and locals along the Pithi Kawi

walking trail. At Quorn’s Bush Food Garden they learned about the importance of biodiversity in the Flinders region. Bruce Pascoe led a lively discussion about valuing and managing perennial grasses, while Costa ran a composting workshop using food scraps collected at the festival. The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board will support a workshop on commercially growing Acacia seed in SA in early 2023. Keep an eye on the board’s Facebook page and website for more information.

ABC celebrity gardener Costa Georgiadis leading a workshop on composting at the Quandong Festival





New project will provide Springs protection

Great Artesian Basin Springs and riparian vegetation in the Lake Eyre Basin will be given a helping hand in a new project designed to protect them.

The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board's *Lake Eyre Basin Priority Riparian Vegetation and Great Artesian Basin Springs* Project received \$325,000 funding from the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

The project will work with community, land managers and Arabana and Dieri traditional owner groups. It will include a range of onground actions to reduce the impacts from pest plants and feral animals, maintain riparian habitats and manage erosion within selected sites, improving the condition of spring wetland dependent communities, species and habitats.

It will focus on Indigenous Protected Areas and pastoral leases in northern South Australia within the the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park area, in particular springs dependent on water from the Great Artesian Basin and protecting critical waterhole riparian areas in the Neales Catchment.

Senior Water Resource Officer Aaron Smith said the project would build capacity within local communities to enable the continued local management of environmental and cultural assets.

"It will develop new partnerships to share information, with a focus on establishing enduring co-operation for future environmental management and knowledge exchange," he said.

"This is an important project demonstrating environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits, with strong alignment to regional, state and national plans and addressing all priorities identified in the Regional Landscape Plan of the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board."

The project will involve spring projects on Arabana and Dieri Country.

HAVE YOUR SAY IN INFORMING THE STATE OF ENVIRONMENT REPORT FOR 2023

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA), as South Australia's independent environmental regulator, will be developing the State of Environment Report for 2023 (SOER 2023) over the next 12 months and is seeking input to help shape its content.

This report collates information from multiple sources to assess and report on the condition of the environment in South Australia. The EPA is seeking to understand the pressures that are placed on the environment, what impacts these may be having on the land, sea, air and inland waters, and what is being done to help protect, restore and enhance the environment for current and future generations.

The SOER is produced every five years under the Environment Protection Act 1993.

For more information and to take part in the consultation go to oursay.sa.gov.au/soer

ACROSS THE OUTBACK

Across the Outback is prepared and edited by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board. Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

PLEASE CONTACT

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National
Landscape
Program



Government of South Australia

South Australian Arid Lands
Landscape Board



Left: A mound spring being monitored by the Friends

Below: Isopods (crustaceans) living in mound springs



Supporting Friends of Mound Springs surveys

Mound springs are incredibly important features of the Outback landscape.

To First Nations people, many are significant cultural sites. They also provide critical habitat for many flora and fauna species that are endemic to the area and found nowhere else in the world. This includes the Salt Pipewort (*Eriocavlon carsonii*) – an endangered plant only found at a few mound springs.

The volunteer group Friends of Mound Springs visit springs across the SA Arid Lands to monitor their condition and record changes over time.

SAAL Community Landscape Officer Hamish Longbottom and Water Project Officer Glenn Del Fierro joined the Friends of Mounds Springs in August on surveys on Anna Creek and Billa Kalina Stations.

The group revisited a number of springs, some of which hadn't been monitored for several years due to inaccessibility. In the past some of these springs had only been accessible by helicopter and through aerial monitoring by Government organisations and the Nature Conservation Society.

The surveys included recording vegetation growth and documenting flora species as well as maintenance of monitoring cameras at some sites.

Mound spring vegetation included sedges *Cyperus laevigatus*, *C. gymnocaulos*, *Schoenoplectus litoralis* and *Juncus kraussii*. Another sedge, *Baumea juncea*, has also been recorded but was not noted during the recent inspections.

The introduced species *Spergularia* and *Cotula* were found at several springs. Most of the springs were in highly saline environments with large areas of samphire. Bulrush, *Typha*, was found at some of the larger springs with longer tails – or areas where water flows over the surface.

Interestingly, a large number of generally small spring mounds with little or no surface water had a presence of cutting grass, *Gahnia trifida*. The nearest clumps of cutting grass outside of these spring complexes are hundreds of kilometres away to the south.

Observations like this highlight the uniqueness of mound springs and how important they are to protect so they continue to provide habitat and food for the wildlife that depend on them and exist as culturally significant features in the landscape.

For more information on mound springs visit www.friendsofmoundsprings.org.au

