Buffel Grass

A Western Australian Perspective

Dr Stephen van Leeuwen
Science Division
Department of Environment & Conservation

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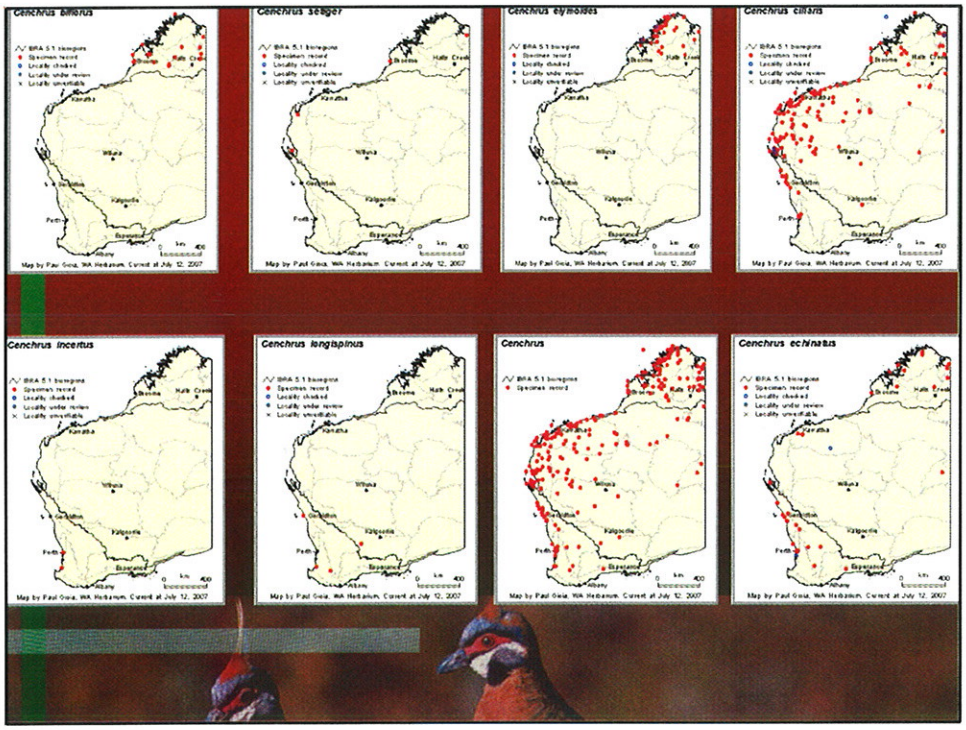
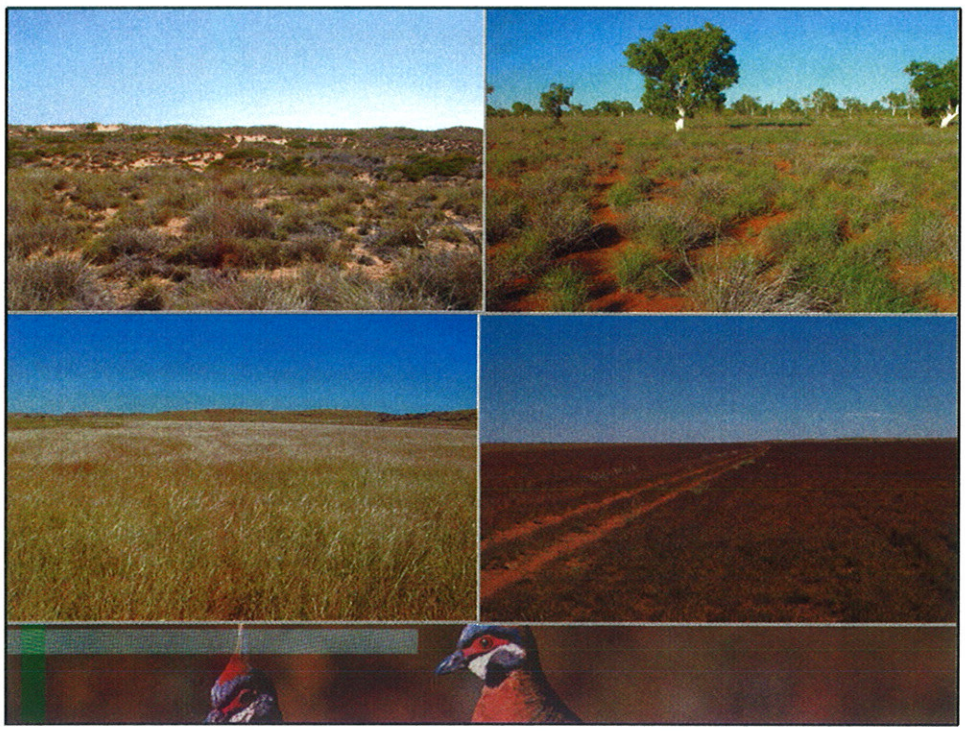


In the Pilbara....

- 2.8% of bioregion dominated by Buffel.
- DAF recorded Buffel from 217 of 763 inventory sites. At another 28 Birdwood or perennial Buffel was present.
- In Pilbara Biological Survey *Cenchrus* recorded from 143 of 412 sites– 140 sites with Buffel and 28 sites with Birdwood.
- Buffel is replacing tussock grasses such as *Chryspogon*, *Eragrostis* and saltbush (*Atriplex* spp.) particularly on alluvial flats. The process of replacement is promoted by overgrazing – sheep!
- Buffel also replacing soft spinifex (*Triodia pungens/epactia*) on alluvial and particularly calcareous soils/pediments. This replacement is greatly enhanced by burning.

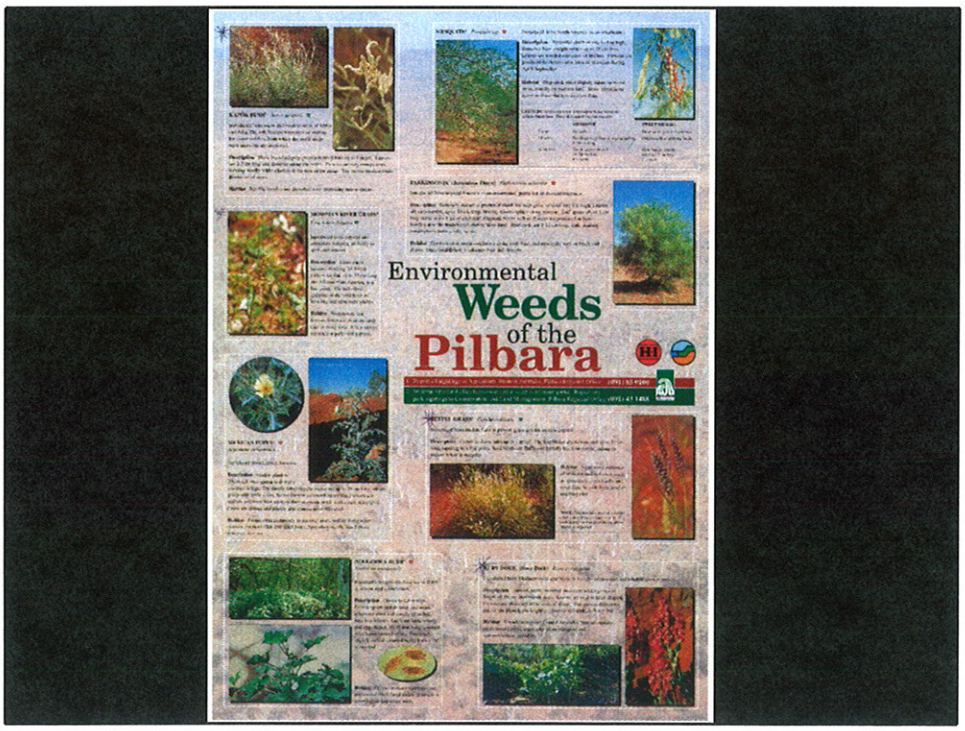
Threatened habitats include....

- Alluvial floodplains and flats associated with any drainage systems.
- Coastal plain where historical overgrazing, principally by sheep, has promoted significant soil deflation and removed most native grasses.
- Calcareous soils and pediments especially those associated with coastal landforms, calcretes and paleodrainage channels.
- Sandplains, swales and dunes, especially in the desert bioregions.
- Mulga and *Acacia* woodlands on light soils especially where spinifex is the understorey and fires are too frequent.



What is being done….

- DAF and pastoralists still actively encouraging and spreading.
  "Buffel is the savour of the Pilbara"
- Limited action by DEC, significant resistance from LCDC, PGA, MLA & within government, even through NRM process.
- DEC attempts control on Island protected area estate with limited success. Not attempt at control on mainland.
- No requirement to control through EIA process & consequently regulatory framework poor to limit spread.
- Limited research into impacts on biodiversity, methods on control/eradication and vectors of spread.



The Future....

- Some growing discontent amongst pastoralists with Buffel because of poor forage quality and resilience to drought in comparison to soft spinifex.
- DEC concerned with introduction of new 'cultivars' capable of growing in heavy soils or on rocky substrates (drought resistance?).
- Continued spread through sandy deserts – traditional lands.
- Impact of spread of Buffel through South West Botanical Province – an International Biodiversity Hotspot.

The Future….

- **Increase opportunity for spread as a consequence of climate change – reinforcing feedback loop.**

warmer wet season with more rainfall

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increased Buffel growth, reproduction & biomass

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greater potential & more frequency fires

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significant increase in opportunity for Buffel spread