

Cane toads

A heartfelt cry from the Kununurra Community to the Nation.

We will Stop the Cane Toads getting into WA!



The aim of this website is to document the Kimberley Toad Busters fight to stop the cane toad crossing into Western Australia and to provide the Western Australian Community some understanding of the enormous efforts (and contributions) that can be made by unpaid volunteers!

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KIMBERLEY SPECIALISTS
Caring for the Kimberley



Tom Young
We need to stop burning the Kimberley
We must stop the Cane Toad

2003 winner of the
Bird-Captain
Regional
Achievement Award.

2003 recipient of
the Bronwyn Gold
Blyth
award.

2004 finalist in the
category of
the WA State
Toad Busters Awards.

KIMBERLEY TOAD BUSTERS NEWSLETTER No.19

27/07/2007

By Sandy Boulter (Volunteer Cane Toad Educator and Coordinator of the Perth based Friends of the Kimberley Toad Busters) and Lee Scott-Virtue (President and Volunteer Field Coordinator for the Kimberley Toad Busters)



WWW.CANE TOADS.COM.AU

The Cane Toad is a *Key Threatening Process* to the Australian Nation

Declared by the Federal Government 12 April 2005

This Newsletter is produced by Kimberley Specialists In Research Inc in conjunction with Kimberley Toad Buster Inc. Kimberley Specialists, a founding member of the Kimberley Toad Busters, continues to support the campaign against the cane toad by raising funds. KSR and KTB are tax deductible entities.

**IF EVERYONE WAS A TOADBUSTER
THE TOADS WOULD BE BUSTED!**

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Newsflashes!

- KTBs celebrate 2 year anniversary of weekly toadusting
- KTBs have recently been receiving \$12,000 a month from the State government through an interim grant from the Minister for the Environment the Hon David Templeman. Thank you Minister Templeman! You are supporting more toadbusters at the front...

- KTBS licence to bring in dead cane toads has been adjusted to fit the KTB requirements with the assistance of the Minister for Agriculture the Hon Kim Chance. Thank you Minister Chance!
- Total number of mature toads caught to date by the KTBS is 140,642
- 500 toads (frozen) now ready for shipment to the scientists in QLD and four abnormal toads (dead and soaked in formalin) to travel to Dr Mike Tyler in SA
- Two post graduate students from the Eastern States and the Netherlands to join the KTBS for their fieldwork component
- The first Workbase/KTB partnership program was launched this week
- The Sydney Morning Herald, Lonely Planet and Australian Geo have toadbusted with the KTBS in the field over the last two weekends

KTB Funding

KTBS major funding sources now amount as follows:

- Kimberley Specialists in Research \$160,000 (and countless hours of in-kind contributions)
- Triple J \$55,000 (and in-kind contributions)
- Individual and business donations
- Federal Government: \$373,011
- State Government: \$60,000
- Biodiversity Protection WA: \$125,000.



For the KTB campaign to continue to grow we are getting to the point that we need a paid field coordinator and certain recurrent funding for our field costs and more vehicles to transport our volunteers to the front and smaller vehicles to support our volunteers in the field. It is like keeping and supporting a small army in the field EVERY WEEK!! Especially all those junior toadbusters who are such great toadbusters!!!

More Vietnam Veterans Become Toadbusters Extraordinaire

Colin Elton and his wife Margaret arrived in Kununurra to spend several weeks in the field toad busting. Malcolm and Rosemary Hay from Perth have stationed their caravan in Timber Creek and will bust a number of designated areas for the next fortnight. Several other couples have also spent periods of up to a week 'busting' the same areas. The numbers of volunteers arriving from other parts of the state are growing and it has been a real boost to our local KTBS.

Kimberley Land Holiday Park Donor Support

Kimberley Toad Busters would like to thank Kimberley Land Holiday Park for the sponsorship of a powered site for two volunteers that have come up to Kununurra for the specific purpose of assisting Kimberley Toad Busters in their fight to keep the toad out of the Kimberley. Colin (ex Vietnam vet) and Margaret Elton are assisting the KTBS with the construction of a shed for equipment, and in undertaking a re-organisation and maintenance of equipment. Margaret is also assisting KTBS with organising the office and filing system. Without this kind of volunteer assistance and the support of local business in helping to facilitate this it would not be possible to run a community volunteer organisation as large as the KTBS are today.

Toadbusters Take to the Boats



Does anyone have a tinnie that the toadbusters can use?

On 8th and 9th September weekend, 16 adults and 9 children, Aboriginal and non Aboriginal participants hit Cedar Lagoon on Auvergne Station. Cedar Lagoon is situated on Whirlwind Plain and has been identified by KTBS as a major cane toad breeding area. Although situated around 35 kilometres from the present 'closest' colonising cane toad front line threatening WA, it is imperative that regular busting 12 months of the year is maintained to keep the breeding to a minimum. Regular weekly toad busting 12 months of the year helps to 'ease' the pressure on native biodiversity (food supply; habitat systems etc).

The use of a boat in the Turkey nest was the only way KTBS could get to toads (on sighting KTB predators, cane toads literally 'leap' back into the water). The boat proved to be just the transport to deliver the KTBS to the cane toad and literally 'wipe' out all the otherwise

inaccessible toads. KTB volunteers removed 1,234 toads from Cedar during that night. Literally tens of thousands of tadpoles and metamorphs were scooped up by the intrepid sailors from the bow of the boat.

The crew in the boat also managed to 'scoop' the metamorphs back onto the shore, thus enabling the 'shore' crew to mop up the little devils with Dettol spray. David and Barbara Kentish from Geraldton (up to 'bust' for a week with the KTBs) were the owners of the boat and provided KTBs with a new tool to fight the cane toad and thus make a further adaptation of our constantly evolving adaptive field strategy. Picture: KTB volunteers on Cedar Lagoon, Whirlwind Plains on Auvergne Station



Man made turkey nests water bodies and dams are some of the most difficult areas to toad bust because of the extensive thick mud perimeters. It is not an infrequent situation to find a KTB volunteer up to the hips in mud. In fact we had to pull out a volunteer with a quad bike one night because she was so stuck! The boat is a good 'tool' for overcoming this problem.

Toad Busting Kits



Cane Toad Tadpole Busting

The increased number of volunteers is beginning to put a lot of pressure on the KTB toad busting kits we have available. If anyone has a kit that is not being used on a weekend basis can you please return your kits so we can put them into better use. Kits will always be available for anyone who decides to 'travel' out to a toad infested area on a 'last minute decision basis!

Toad Busting Reports

Over 100 volunteers have made it to the cane toad front for the month of August 2007. September numbers have already doubled this number before the month is up, with many hardy volunteers opting to stay in the field for up to a week at a time.

1. KTB volunteer Dave Woods and DEC Craig Mills have undertaken aerial reconnaissance along the Humbert and Wickham River systems as well as some follow-up field work at night on quad bikes. We are now organising field teams to begin 'wiping' out new breeding areas at this front. Maryanne Winton has already started work around the Lingarra Aboriginal Community on the Humbert as this is the closest 'front-line' movement to our WA border. We need to put lots of small groups into this area over the next couple of months. The trip is too far for just an overnight so if anyone can spare a couple of days at a time we need people urgently.
2. KTB volunteers, Barbara and David Kentish undertook some major reconnaissance fieldwork south along Peartree Creek, and marked all areas containing water and evidence of toad activity. They were thrilled to report that they were able to remove major tadpole incursions in a number of waterholes. However, this is another area that needs continuous 'busting' and observation. Two traps have been placed in this area.
3. KTB volunteers, Anthony Scott-Virtue and Nathan Hammer have just undertaken a reconnaissance of Auvergne, Ring and Cedar Lagoons on Whirlwind Plains. All indicate major breeding with all lagoons and associated dams and Turkey Nests needing consistent 'busting' to deal with the tadpoles and metamorphs as well as 'busting' the adults at night. Two mop-up teams of twenty or so volunteers have now removed large numbers of toads from several of these systems. KTBs will continue to work these areas on Whirlwind Plains, so if you are interested in joining our 'mop-up' teams for a weekend give us a call. Traps have been placed at Auvergne and Cedar Lagoons.
4. KTB volunteers, Luke Parker, Ju Ju Wilson and Arlene Foley have 'busted' Skeahans Billabong to deal with a resurgence of toad activity as well as netting tadpoles and metamorphs that are still being found in large numbers around the lagoon. Their report has been followed with two weekends of major toadbusting here and at Peartree Tank. A number of traps have now been placed in both areas.
5. KTB volunteer and aboriginal toadbusting leader, Maryanne Winton through KTB reconnaissance has identified that the Yarrilyn and Lingarra Aboriginal Communities sadly now have toads. Her team of volunteers have continued to work with community groups along the Duncan and Buchanan Highways, and the Humbert River and other areas to facilitate toad busting activity. Nathan Hammer, a KTB volunteer from Headland has been staying at Bulla Community helping Maryanne get the children in the community busting toads. Nathan will also spend two weeks with the Lingarra community to help Maryanne encourage the children to bust toads in and around the community. Two traps have been placed at the Bulla Community Lagoon.
6. KTB volunteer, Trevor DuToit's reconnaissance has established that breeding potential has now been established at all culverts holding water, scapes, creeks and dams between the East Baines and the West Baines Rivers, which have tadpoles and metamorphs. In just a few hours Trevor pulled 202 mature breeding toads from culverts and scrapes from Peartree Creek to the West Baines. If anyone just wants a day trip, checking for and catching tadpoles and metamorphs in these areas is important. We will supply the dettol and nets.

Critical To Get As Many People As We Can To The Toad Front To 'Net' Cane Toad Tadpoles and 'Metamorphs'

It is now absolutely critical that we get as many people into the field as we can, to both 'bust' large breeding toads and to 'mop' up tadpoles and juveniles from earlier



breeding periods. If any KTB volunteers can spare even a day to travel to a waterhole to 'net' tadpoles and 'bust' metamorphs for a couple of hours (just a day out of your week), your every effort will make a difference to how many toads actually make it across our border.

Areas That Require 'Reconnaissance' and 'Busting' For Cane Toad Eggs/Tadpoles/Metamorphs: Just A DAY TRIP FROM KUNUNURRA!

- From the West Baines to the East Baines: all water systems (gravel scrapes/dams/creeks/culverts with water) north and south (within walking distance) of the Victoria highway need to be checked and busted for tadpoles and metamorphs
- The Bullo River Station road **to the jump-up**: also has shown evidence of the odd toad and some breeding in some of the creek systems
- Peartree Tank: Essentially to net tadpoles and euthanase metamorphs and check traps
- Peartree Creek South: Essentially to net tadpoles and euthanase metamorphs and to check traps.

Areas That Require Urgent 'Reconnaissance' and 'Busting' For Cane Toad Eggs/Tadpoles/Metamorphs: OVERNIGHT OR MORE!

- From the West Baines to the East Baines:- all water systems. Basically an overnight camp at any of the dams, turkey nests and creek crossings running north and south of the Victoria Highway
- The Bullo River Station road to the jump-up: All creek crossings and water holes east and west of the road
- Whirlwind Plain: Virtually every turkey nest, dam creeks and billabongs
- Bullita area

Victoria River/Wickham and Humbert River areas. The next four weeks will also see KTB volunteer reconnaissance and 'mop-up' teams hitting the Rooster Creek systems west of Bulla River Station, several billabong systems located north of the Victoria River Highway between the West Baines and the Pinkerton range and the Saddle Creek systems west of the West Baines.

Maryanne Winton will continue to use her teams to bust the south Western movement of toads in the Humbert and Wickam River systems.

We still require NT Parks and Wildlife and NT station approval (and for everyone to sign off on station protocol) before busting various areas so please let me know if you are able to put in some time (and the location you would like to work in). You will also need to pick up a KTB identity card and a toad busting kit, data forms, fuel and food voucher.

Feral Pig Whisperer

The Kimberley Toad Busters often face extreme dangers in the field including saltwater crocodiles, King Brown snakes, big black buffalo and pigs. Wild feral pigs are unpredictable and dangerous. THIS pig (photo) was bearing down fast on our team of junior toadbusters. It was hell bent on mayhem. Our KTB team leader, Juju stopped it in its tracks by calling gently to it and just plain hypnotising it – we know not how! Once Juju had weaved her spell it just tamely went on its way. Everyone who was privileged to witness this most remarkable event is non-plussed and richer for just being there to witness this inexplicable and spiritual interaction.



Juju and her team went onto safely catch the KTBs' 134,292th cane toad.

Teenagers and children thrive on toadbusting. The aboriginal achievements within the KTBs through their indigenous junior toadbusting program has been recognised by the recent nomination for a WUNAN AWARD, recognising East Kimberley Aboriginal achievement in the category of "Outstanding Community Group or Organisation Contributing to Community": www.wunan.org.au

KTB Partnerships

It is important to note that the continually growing KTB campaign has seen an extraordinary number of partnerships fostered with the KTBs. These multiple partnership alliances have improved the KTB toadbusting capacity, and facilitated funding and promotional opportunities, and the establishment of base line data requirements useful for researchers looking for solutions to the cane toad threat to Australia's ecosystems and biodiversity. These partnerships include:

Educational and scientific

- National Universities throughout Australia: collection, collation of biological and behavioural observations in the field as well as supporting and sponsoring post graduate students working on cane toads and native biodiversity research projects
- International contribution: Support and sponsorship of a postgraduate student from the University In Holland in Delft, looking at pheromones and a biological solution to the cane toad problem - to join KTBS in February 2008
- Bob Cooper Survival and Bush Skills KTB initiative: Safety training for all Toad Buster leaders in survival and bushcraft skills necessary for safety in the field; and survival and safety skills training. Over 100 Aboriginal and non Aboriginal junior Toad Busters, Aboriginal children at Risk from Wyndham and the Wyndham Prison Camp Aboriginal inmates have so far undertaken the course, which was organised by the KTBS
- East Kimberley College of TAFE KTB initiative: Undertaking training a ranger instruction course and certificate including the identification, trapping and disposal of cane toads; cane toad education and trap making programmes. Over 40 Aboriginal students have now been through the course
- CDEP job program KTB initiative: cane toad training of CDEP employed workers including the identification, trapping and disposal of cane toads. There are now 10 Aboriginal Communities now involved in this program.
- Perth Based Friends of the Kimberley Toad Busters for education and cane toad awareness in schools, corporate business and other volunteer organisations and associations in Perth and the south west of WA
- Workbase Kununurra KTB initiative: Native Biodiversity Survey Program instigated in partnership with KTBS as part of the Indigenous training requirement 'Work for the Dole'.

Indigenous and Community



- Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation KTB initiative: CDEP job program
- Department of Corrective Services KTB initiative: prison inmates involved in trap making and biodiversity surveys.
- Workbase KTB initiative: toad busting as part of self esteem and confidence building.
- Numerous aboriginal community participation with the KTBS both within Western Australia and the Northern Territory including Miniata, Bell Springs and Darlu Darlu communities.

Government Organisations/ Departments

- Department of Environment and Conservation (formerly CALM): Close field partnership with close liaison and information sharing; volunteer insurance for toadbusters; sharing in skills training, public forums and education, and sponsorship
- Shire of Wyndham – East Kimberley – sponsorship - public forums and education, In-Kind contributions especially vehicle loan for transport to the colonising front.

Businesses and Community



Biodiversity Protection WA: commercial fundraising organisation based in Perth, provision of funding and equipment for safety of volunteers in the field

- Argyle Diamonds
- JJJ Tours Kununurra: provision of vehicles and fuel for transportation of volunteers and equipment in carrying out Toad Busting Activities
- Kimberley Veterinary Clinic: provision of euthanasia for disposal of cane toads; and instructional education of the public and volunteers
- Kimberley Specialists in Research
- Wilderness Society
- Kimberley Wildlife Rescue
- Kununurra Lions Club: sponsorship and insurance coverage
- Volunteers Australia
- Coles, Kununurra
- Bushcamp Supplies
- Several other Community Business (see website for list).

KTBS Celebrate TWO YEARS of Toadbusting Every Week!!

The first week of this last September saw our two year toadbusting anniversary!!!

It is important to pat on the back all our volunteers who have made the most remarkable of achievements over our two years of KTB toadbusting.

Amazing outcomes from the Kimberley Toad Busters' campaign include:

- 27 major toad busting educational and training exercises with 200 leaders now trained to lead volunteers to the cane toad front (including training exercises given to support groups such as the Vietnam Veterans June/July 2007 toadbusting group and to Aboriginal Communities)
- The appointment of 3 contract Aboriginal coordinators to assist in the organisation and involvement of Aboriginal people in the toad busting educational training exercises when they are held
- The recognition of cane toad busting as a CDEP paid activity in 21 local Aboriginal Communities
- 103 successful toad busting weekends, and 18 weekly toadbusting excursions, some for up to 4 weeks at a time
- A local TAFE trap making program involving CDEP participants and local prison residents
- The establishment of a volunteer trapping program in Aboriginal Communities and on NT Pastoral Stations and in NT National Parks
- The implementation of educational training and toad busting exercises in Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory (already impacted by cane toads)
- A good working relationship between the Kimberley Toad Busters and the Kununurra Department of Environment & Conservation toad busting team
- The collation of valuable field data and a greater understanding of cane toad behaviour at the colonising front line
- Unique combination of aboriginal and non-aboriginal Kununurra community working together to catch toads
- Regular newsletters and cane toad community volunteer website maintained
- Unique community volunteer program established, continuing and growing – learning as we go
- 119,396 adult cane toads caught (primarily by hand) and humanely disposed of
- Hundreds of thousands of eggs, tadpoles, metamorphs and juveniles removed from the system
- A working relationship being established with scientists from several Universities in QLD, Sydney, NT, WA and SA
- Field and Trapping Strategy in place
- Barrier fencing materials being tested
- A Safety Field Training manual implemented with a field and trapping strategy
- The incorporation of a Bob Cooper Bush Survival Training Course in all Kimberley Toad Busters Field training exercises
- Raising community awareness and educating the community about cane toads
- The establishment of a Perth based 'Friends of the Kimberley Toad Busters' to raise awareness and education
- The publication of a toad Busters educational brochure which has been distributed widely throughout WA and the NT
- Cane Toad Busting now registered as a Lions activity providing insurance for all registered Kimberley Toad Busters
- Over 200 Trained Kimberley Toad Buster leaders registered under the DEC volunteer program
- The established of a partnership with Workbase 'work for the dole' program involving Aboriginal groups in biodiversity research programs
- Good and cooperative working relationship between Department of Environment and Conservation and Kimberley Toad Busters
- Access to Bradshaw Military Base approved by Defence Department
- Good working relationship with NT Gov. and landholders (pastoralists and Aboriginal Communities)
- Permission to work in NT National Parks.
- The establishment of a WA quarantine permit to bring toads for scientific research into WA

It became evident, from the very beginnings of the establishment of the Kimberley Toad Busters, that it had triggered a response within our community not witnessed in Kununurra for a very long time, if ever. It was also evident that cultural boundaries had been "traversed" in a way not witnessed by the community before. The campaign has become a true "Community Campaign", with enormous and unanticipated positive social dividends as well as the positive economic and environmental outcomes.

The key work of our Kimberley Toad Busting volunteer organisation has been and will continue to:

- catch and destroy cane toads
- run toad busting educational and field training leadership exercises for Aboriginal and non Aboriginal volunteers at the cane toad front line currently in the NT
- be actively involved in Community cane toad education and awareness
- coordinate and involve Aboriginal participation in cane toad education programs and field activity
- send toad busting teams into the field every weekend to 'toad-bust', and collect and collate scientific information
- coordinate the volunteer field and trapping strategy
- coordinate and train Aboriginal volunteer groups located between Timber Creek and Katherine to begin a volunteer program to actively control cane toad numbers behind the cane toad front
- co-ordinate the volunteer toad busting program to complement the department of Environment and Conservation toad busting program also in place at the cane toad front line
- collect and collate field data on cane toad behaviour, native frogs and other native aquatic and terrestrial animals recorded while in the field
- identify and understand cane toad frontline behaviour, colonising population movement, cane toad incursion and corridor movement, monitor and record general cane toad behaviour to inform field strategy and team placements as well as providing valuable data for scientists
- publish our field results on our website and newsletters and at appropriate national and state cane toad and environmental Forums.



Junior Toadbusters at the colonising front, learning about cane toad autopsies

SO VERY WELL DONE TO ALL OUR HARDY TOADBUSTERS!!!!

Contact: Lee Scott Virtue on 08 9168 2576, or

Sandy Boulter on 0427 508 582

If everyone was a toad buster, the toads would be busted!

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE



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