

Kimberley Toad Buster's News Letters



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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Prepared by Lee Scott-Virtue, President & Founder of KTB Kimberley Toad Busters.



KIMBERLEY TOAD BUSTERS NEWSLETTER No. 36

September 2nd 2010

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

Declared by the Federal Government 12 April 2005

KTB Newsletter 36

This 35th Kimberley Toad Busters' Newsletter is produced by Kimberley Specialists In Research Inc in conjunction with Kimberley Toad Busters Inc. Kimberley Specialists, a founding member of the Kimberley Toad Busters, continues to support the campaign against the cane toad by supporting www.canetoads.com.au, raising funds and supporting cane toad scientific research. KTBs are a tax deductible entity. Please see our website for our direct donation facility or how to sponsor one of our research projects.

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

kimberleytoadbusters@canetoads.com.au
www.kimberleyspecialists.com.au
kimberleyspecialists@westnet.com.au

"The Kimberley community group KTB is highly engaged in biodiversity conservation and have provided an unprecedented response to the threat of cane toads. This has included more than 1 million volunteer hours from 5,000 volunteers to dispose of more than 500,000 adult cane toads and countless juveniles, over the last five years in the Northern Territory". Ruth Duncan. KTB Environmental Scientist.

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1: DEC CO2 trials and results: Bureaucracy at its worst!

DEC with the assistance of Kimberley Toad Busters has finally (after many aborted starts and to the cost of the KTB and the tax-payer) completed their trials on the use of CO2 on how to 'humanely' euthanase cane toads in the Kimberley. Please go to our KTB website (www.canetoads.com.au for the history of this LONG battle with DEC's scientist Dr Peter Mawson on whether CO2 was a humane method of killing cane toads). Without the interim intervention of our State Minister for Environment Donna Faragher and if this particular scientist had had his way (on the basis of a one off laboratory experiment) our children would have been using a 'blunt' instrument or 'pithing' our toads when caught. The field trials run by KTB were replicated by DEC's Dr Mawson (he was not prepared to accept KTB's five years experience in the field or the fact that our own field trials had been run by Sister Del Colin's and other nursing and hospital doctors or that our trials had been accepted by ANSCAAT and the NEC (see KTB website), only his own initial trials based on 2 toads).

Now that Dr Peter Mawson, DEC scientist has established that CO2 is an acceptable method of euthanasia. Dr Mawson will almost certainly publish his findings in a Scientific Journal of repute and go down in history as the PERSON (scientist) who determined that CO2 was the best method for the disposal of toads (and of course no reference to KTB's own scientific trials).

This is yet another example of government organisations that do not listen to ordinary people, work hard at de-energising community efforts and continue to make things as difficult as they can for ordinary people trying to do their best for the environment.

KTB now wait with bated breath for the debate on the use of Dettol to spray cane toad metamorphs. Once again DEC have not asked for results of KTB trials or the results of some 65 years of people/governments including DEC while toads were only in the NT, before stating that Dettol is banned. KTB fully understand the results on our native biodiversity if cane toad breeding is not dealt with. Whatever the concerns of Dr Peter Mawson (DEC) on the use of Dettol as a method of controlling cane toads these cannot possibly stand up against the KNOWN impact of un-controlled toad breeding. To put the use of Dettol on hold while scientists such as Dr Peter Mawson spend the next decade (or so) on finding out what impact Dettol has on the environment) is ridiculous. Other than another chance at a 'paper' for some scientific journal this approach can only sign off on further extinctions of known native species to cane toads, and god knows how many we have yet not recognised.

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2: Cane Toads; permits; de-energising community and bureaucratic madness!

Cane toads arrived in WA in February 2009. Kimberley Toad Busters have been diligently removing toads from WA since this date and more recently (in the past 10 months) from within Kununurra itself.

Toads are now recorded and established by Kimberley Toad Busters as now in Kununurra with explorer toads now being found west of the Ord River. Extrapolated on the evidence so far KTB expect toads to reach areas such as El Questro by the end of this wet season (see map).

Despite the fact that toads are not around 45 km west of the border in WA DEC have continued to establish the front line as being established at the WA/NT border.

KTB have recently been informed they now have to acquire a permit that allows them to 'move' or pickup toads in WA, something they have now been undertaking within WA for the past almost two years! This permit process (dozens of pages of paperwork every time someone handles a single toad) will absolutely de-energise all community effort and if the law was taken literally would mean most Kununurra residents would be jailed for picking up and moving toads (either to the KTB Depot, or to the three disposal points established by DEC). A ridiculous situation and only possible when it is engineered from DAFWA in Perth. KTB have resolved to fight this permit issue and to try and establish some commonsense into the cane toad fight.

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3: KTB "What's in your Backyard?" and Iconic Species monitoring program.



**ICONIC SPECIES MONITORING
PROGRAM REPORT 2010
Derby District High School**



Establishing Monitoring in the West Kimberley

Throughout the 2010 school year staff and students at Derby District High School have been assisting Danielle Taylor and Barbara Sing with the trailing of suitable sites for an ongoing Iconic Species Monitoring Program. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is some time before cane toads reach as far south as Derby it is hoped, that by conducting regular

monitoring of species known to be under threat from cane toads in the East Kimberley, a useful longitudinal database can be established and maintained by KTB for the West Kimberley region.

In preparation for the launch of the Derby Bush Rangers Cadet Unit being offered to DDHS students as an option from Term 1, 2011 five potential monitoring sites were flagged and trailed in Term 2 and 3 of 2010. (Term 4 monitoring pending)

Monitoring Site Locations

Sites were selected on the basis of diversity of ecosystems, proximity to the school and accessibility throughout the seasons.

Site 1 - Munkayarra Wetland

The Munkayarra Wetland (Duck Swamp) is located 20km south of Derby on the Derby-Broome Road. The site has rich biodiversity of flora and fauna, especially bird species, supported by a permanent fresh water body that varies in size throughout the seasons. Macro-invertebrate and water quality data is also being collected at this site as well as observation regarding the impact of heavy hoofed animals (horse and cattle). Easy access makes this site ideal for the program and the trials at this site have already produced some promising data in relation to iconic species.

Site 2 – Aristida Grass Savanah

The Aristida Grassland, located 1km south of Derby town centre on Rowan Street, borders the marsh of King Sound. This site has dense gravel sediment with a combination of Aristida contorta, short grasses and some natural woody coverage. Proximity to the school campus, easy access throughout seasons and data evidencing medium to small invertebrates and high insect biodiversity have made this site suitable despite some salinity and soil erosion issues.

Site 3 – Joon Joo Botanical Trail

The Joon Joo Botanical Trail is located 10 kms from the centre of Derby at the junction of the Derby-Broome and Worsley Roads. This site is part of a three kilometer walking trail that has interpretive signage providing information about the plants and animals of the Wanganut Land System, how they were used by the Nyikina people and the interactions of plants, animals and insects throughout the cycles of the seasons.

Known species at the site include butterflies and dragonflies, fifty species of birds, Agile wallabies (*Macropus agilis*), reptiles including the Olive Python, King Brown snakes and Gould's Monitor or goanna.

The site also has over seventy species of endemic plants and

while the Joon Joo Trail is inclined to be sandy in the dry season and a bit boggy in places in the wet season it is easily accessible throughout both. Its closeness to town makes it a site that can be monitored with regularity.

Site 4 – DDHS Campus

Although mostly fenced, the grounds of Derby's District High School are reasonably large and frequented by a myriad of native fauna. The trials have shown that by incorporating the DDHS Campus in the chosen monitoring sites students across year groups 2 – 10, including those with special needs, will be able to learn the skills needed for correctly tracking and monitoring species as well as the importance of accurate data collection. Several sites around the school grounds have been chosen for this purpose although final data from DDHS Campus will be collated as one site.

Site 5 – The Gully

The site known as The Gully lays approximately 2.5km out onto the King Sound marsh, south of Derby town centre. Initial monitoring trials at this site produced some promising data however with seasonal changes and large tidal variances the site has been deemed too difficult to access with regularity and will therefore not be used in the Iconic Species Monitoring Program for 2011.

Derby Bush Ranger Unit

To help ensure the quality and accuracy of data collected in the Iconic Species Monitoring Program community partnerships with species specialists have been established. These community members will play an integral role within the Derby Bush Ranger Unit by providing ongoing training for Cadets in species identification and mentoring in the field.

The benefits of incorporating the Iconic Species Monitoring Program into the required outcomes for the Derby Bush Ranger Unit is three-fold;

1. It provides the monitoring program with an ongoing base of Cadets to conduct the collection of longitudinal data.
2. It ensures that tracking and monitoring field trips are timetabled into the school program and supervised by Unit Leaders.
3. It assists well-trained graduate Bush Ranger Cadets with career pathway opportunities within the field of NRM.

Monitoring Techniques and Frequency

Given the diversity of the ecosystems chosen appropriate efforts have been made over the course of the trial to establish the most suitable tracking and monitoring techniques at each of the sites.

It is envisaged that monitoring of the 4 selected sites, conducted by Bush Ranger Cadets along with their Unit Leaders, should occur once each school term throughout 2011 and beyond and that data collected will be forwarded through to KTB to be collated by the end of each term.

Data Collection and Collation

The iconic species monitored in the trials have been drawn from the 'What's In Your Backyard?' program and formatted into DDHS Iconic Species Monitoring data collection sheets to be taken into the field along with the species ID cards.

Final formatting of these field documents is yet to be decided upon and it would be useful to know how this information is to be used in the short term by KTB. Once this has been established draft copies can be sent through to KTB to confirm ease of data collation is ensured.

On behalf of Derby District High School Danielle and Barbara would like to acknowledge and thank the following people in the development of this program;

- Ben Scott-Virtue and the Kimberley Toad Busters for all the ongoing guidance support and cane toad education provided.
- (KTB) for the use of the 'What's In Your Backyard?' Program.
- Community members Mark Golding, Wally and Beryl Achee and Peter Kneebone for their contributions of both knowledge and time.
- Rhiannon Hill of DEC Kununurra for her expertise with the Bush Ranger WA program
- Staff and students of DDHS who have participated in the program trials

THANK YOU

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Students undertaking recording biodiversity!

4: KTB and Kununurra residents 'mobilised' to keep toad numbers under control!

The key to the highly successful Kimberley Toad Busters field strategy in Kununurra and the Kimberley in general has been the commitment by residents in general, landowners, Aboriginal Communities and individuals to take 'ownership' of 'their bit of country'. This has been the key to the huge volunteer success in keeping cane toad numbers reduced. Native biodiversity loss recorded by KTB in the general Kununurra area has been significantly reduced with significant accounts of reptiles such as the Gould's, Merton's, Bobtail and various snake species continuing to survive despite the presence of toads. KTB can confirm that reduced numbers of toads diminish the contest for food and reduce the amount of invertebrate species that toads normally consume confirming the KTB adage "If everyone became a toad buster. The toads would be busted!"

Del Collins, long time honoured and revered KTB volunteer is currently putting together a map of all our Kununurra residents and KTB volunteers who have "adopted" their street, backyard

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5: How far west have toads moved in WA?

Cane Toads first crossed into WA on the Kimberley border in February 2009. Ironically enough this first invasion of toads into the Kimberley was a single male toad crossed the border near the Department of Agriculture Quarantine Station and was identified by one of the Quarantine Officers. Since this date Kimberley Toad Busters reconnaissance field work has identified that toads have only managed to move a further 47 kilometres in the Kununurra-Lake Argyle area. It has only been through the consistent year round efforts of KTB volunteers that so few toads have got through and have been slowed down so significantly. Efforts by KTB volunteers have meant that toads have been slowed down to around 20 km per year in this central corridor rather than the 60 to 80 km per year that they had been moving for the past five years. And this despite the most un-seasonal 'wet' dry season experienced by the Kimberley since KTB began the fight in September 2005.

This slowing down of the front line movement

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6: Overview of KTB Achievements for 2010

Kimberley Toad Busters, as a community driven volunteer group has continued to grow and achieve the goals set for each year. The outcomes for 2009/2010 are as follows.

- KTB won the 2010 International United Nations award for their community work.
- KTB won the 2010 Banksia award for their work in the area of native biodiversity
- KTB were the only Australian volunteer organisation to make the United Nations International year of Biodiversity Calendar
- KTB organised and hosted a 3 day cane toad environmental forum in March 2010. 59 speakers presented papers on issues to do with the cane toad, fire and other environmental issues in the Kimberley and the north of Australia. A DVD of the three days is available on request and various papers presented at the Forum can be read on the web site.
- Membership has grown well over 6,000 members.
- Toad busting volunteer days moved to an average of 5 nights per week with up to two teams heading into the field
- Over 1.3 million large mature cane toads have now been removed and countless eggs, tadpoles and metamorphs

- Over two million hours of volunteer labour has now gone into the fight to slow down and mitigate the impact of the cane toad as well as recording and monitoring wildlife before and after cane toads arrive.
- The KTB educational biodiversity program “What’s in your Backyard?” and their “Iconic” species recording and monitoring program is now being used by Schools throughout the Kimberley, Indigenous communities, mining companies, families and individuals. This program has empowered ordinary people to begin recording and monitoring native wildlife prior to and after cane toads arrive enabling a comprehensive record of information.
- Indigenous partnerships have been formed with groups from all over the Kimberley with toad busting and the “What’s in your backyard?” program empowering communities to become involved in looking after their environment
- KTB have continued to sponsor and facilitate research projects looking at biological and mechanical methods of cane toad control as well as research projects that help to understand the full impact of the cane toad.
- KTB has now published 36 Newsletters and 44 Media Releases
- KTB undertook field tests, produced a DCD and wrote a research paper on the use of CO2 as a method for cane toad euthanasia
- The KTB website www.canetoads.com.au continues to receive over 4,000 hits per day.

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7: Wyndham finds its first cane toad. Hitch-hiker or Explorer Toad?

KTB received a call from Dr Bob Edge of Wyndham on Saturday 24 September reporting that he had picked up a large gravid female toad ‘hydrating’ under his dripping tap. While the report was unexpected (it was predicted by KTB that toads would not hit the town of Wyndham until towards the end of this coming wet season) it was confirmed that a large number of trucks bringing material in from Katherine might very well have been the mode of transport this particular toad used to get to Wyndham. KTB will now mobilise volunteers to undertake reconnaissance in the Wyndham area and will increase the educational component of their management strategy to ensure that town is ready when toads do arrive in full force. This recent toad discovery adds to the warning KTB issued earlier this year that now toads have made it across the border hitch-hiking toads to other parts of WA from Kununurra through the transport of farm produce has now increased.

KTB are happy to report that the towns of Halls Creek, Fitzroy and Derby are on full alert and have a number of trained KTB volunteers to ‘step in’ and take up the fight when the toads arrive. KTB continue to run the “What’s in your Backyard?” biodiversity recording and monitoring programs with schools and interested community groups throughout the Kimberley.

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8: KTB and Kununurra residents ‘mobilised’ to keep toad numbers under control!

The key to the highly successful Kimberley Toad Busters field strategy in Kununurra and the Kimberley in general has been the commitment by residents in general, landowners, Aboriginal Communities and individuals to take ‘ownership’ of ‘their bit of country’. This has been the key to the huge volunteer success in keeping cane toad numbers reduced. Native biodiversity loss recorded by KTB in the general Kununurra area has been significantly reduced with significant accounts of reptiles such as the Gould’s, Merton’s, Bobtail and various snake species continuing to survive despite the presence of toads. KTB can confirm that reduced numbers of toads diminish the contest for food and reduce the amount of invertebrate species that toads normally consume confirming the KTB adage “If everyone became a toad buster. The toads would be busted!”

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9: KTB Royal Perth Show Cane Toad Educational.

Ben Scott-Virtue (KTB Field Coordinator) and John Cugley (Administration Coordinator) headed to Perth to run Kimberley Toad Busters 3rd annual Royal Show Cane Toad Educational. This year they joined FOTE in the Environment Pavilion.



Ben Scott-Virtue and John Cugley at the KTB stand at the Royal Perth Show.

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For more information on any of the articles contact:

Lee Scott-Virtue: KTB Founder & President 08 9168 7080 kimberleytoadbusters@canetoads.com.au

Ben Scott-Virtue: KTB Field Co-ordinator 08 9168 2576 fieldcoordinator@canetoads.com.au

John Cugley: KTB Administration Co-ordinator 08 9168 2576 admin@canetoads.com.au

www.canetoads.com.au

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