

# 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!



### KIMBERLEY TOAD BUSTERS NEWSLETTER 54:

06/04/2014

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

Declared by the Federal Government 12 April 2005

This 54th 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](http://www.canetoads.com.au) raising funds and supporting cane toad scientific research.

2013 United Nations Finalist as well as finalist in 7 other state, national and international awards since 2006.

Prepared by Jordy Groffen—Researcher at Kimberley Toad Busters.

KTBs are a tax deductible charitable entity. Please see our website for our direct donation facility, or ways in which you can sponsor community toad busting efforts or one of our research or educational projects.

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

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After four months monitoring and trapping the biodiversity in Marella gorge on Nicholson station, pre cane toads and pre wet season rains, the area experienced a dramatic change. After more than 330 mm of rain in three days towards the end of January and close to another 300 mm of rain in February, the Marella gorge system changed from a tranquil still water gorge, primarily shallow but with some deeper waterholes, to an exciting fast flooding river with multiple pumping waterfalls.



Two pictures taken at the same location before (left) and after (right) the heavy rainfall. Fortunately the canoe was taken out of the gorge before the rain.

When KTB started the focussed 6 month research project at Marella Gorge, the toads were 10 km away from the study area. Jordy Groffen Animal Scientist of KTB stated; “In normal circumstances toads travel an average of 50-55 km per year and with the latest weather changes the cane toads hit the study area on the 22nd of February”. Jordy continues “While we only heard 3 toads during the last survey, we are sure there are more. We were unable to reach all the areas because of the flooding and during the next 3 day concentrated survey we should be able to get a clearer idea of the toad numbers. The toads most likely are in the small waterholes close to the fast flooding river”.

Zigourney Nielsen, Bachelor of Biological Sciences and research assistant at KTB for the last two months witnessed the arrival of the toads. “It is hard to think that so many of the animals we have been recording will now be impacted, with many not surviving. During focussed and concentrated biodiversity surveys like the one KTB is undertaking under Jordy’s direction, you begin to identify with these animals. Now that toads have hit Marella and they start to increase in numbers so much of the great biodiversity that we have been monitoring for the last few months will be gone”. Zigourney continues “I definitely will be following the Marella research closely, and I am excited to see the end results”.



Zigourney crossing one of the flooded areas at night time to go to the trapping site

## Cane Toads use novel way to invade remote areas of the North Kimberley!

Photographs taken by KTB volunteer Biodiversity Coordinator has revealed cane toads are 'rafting' their way into the north Kimberley using river debris and the fast moving tides of the Cambridge Gulf to move onto remote north coastal areas of the Kimberley. Gary also spotted cane toads swimming in the middle of the Cambridge Gulf twenty kilometres north of Wyndham, indicating that even if the toads 'fell' off the 'rafts' they were able to cope with the saline conditions of the water.

Lee Scott-Virtue, KTB President & Founder commented. “By ‘rafting’ we are referring to nature built flotsams of debris such as vegetation and root bound soil, twigs, grass, small tree’s and general native flora that gets pulled of the river banks when rivers become flooded. Toads sitting and hiding in some of this debris get pulled into the river and then sail merrily down-stream until the rivers reside or the ‘raft’ gets swept into the mouth of the river and into whatever system the rivers are feeding into. This is the case of the ‘rafts’ holding toads that have made their way into the Cambridge Gulf”.



The Cambridge Gulf is fed by 5 major river systems around the Wyndham area, and the 4 cane toads, male and female, photographed on the rafts of ‘flotsam’ could have come down any one of these river systems. Once the flotsam enters the Cambridge Gulf the tides take over swiftly.

Jordy Groffen, KTB Animal scientist and researcher commented. “Cane toads are capable of surviving for weeks on these ‘rafts’ and with up to 9 metre tide changes and swift currents these rafts can carry toads a long way in a very short time. If they are ‘lucky’ enough to land along the coast near fresh water, two females and two males are capable of producing up to 70,000 eggs very quickly”.

KTB have witnessed this ‘rafting’ ability of toads in the Victoria River system where toads were able to use these flotsams of debris to colonise areas such as Legune Station, well ahead of the main colonising frontline being monitored and followed by KTB volunteers. KTB also witnessed toads using flotsam on Lake Argyle and on the Ord River so this is not a random phenomena.





One of the problems is that major rivers such as the Prince Regent, Roe and Hunter rivers, and all the tributaries and rivers that flow into these three systems will have the same scenario (this actually includes all Kimberley river systems that flow into the sea) and once toads hit their catchment areas, wet season floods are then likely to take toads (on flotsams of debris during the wet season) across to islands located out from the mouth of these river systems.

Dean Goodgame, KTB Board member commented. "It is a concern that the state government's mantra, as presented by Environment Minister Albert Jacobs in regards to the creation of conservation reserves on 30 Kimberley islands, as toad free zones is more than a little optimistic. With the majority of these islands located along a coastal area that is fed by several large Kimberley river systems, these islands are unlikely to remain toad free, at least in the long term. Sacrificing the rest of the Kimberley for the island program does not make good sense".

Dean went on to say "Using community to keep on working at reducing cane toad numbers and at least minimising toad impact on native biodiversity across the Kimberley, and utilising their man-power to help with the Island project in the future makes much more sense. The government should be supporting and working with the community and the rafting toads are a classic example of the government not being advised on the cane toad issue appropriately".



The last word goes to Jordy Groffen, KTB Animal Scientist and Researcher. "I am not sure what the State Environment Minister does not understand about the aims of the KTB? The work of the Kimberley Community group Kimberley Toad Busters has clearly shown that by controlling cane toad population numbers in a given area you minimise the chance of native predators attacking and consuming a toad, which in turn reduces the number of native animals dying from the direct impact of the cane toad. Keeping toad numbers under control also helps the smaller insect eating native predators such as frogs, smaller skinks and lizards by reducing food competition".

Photo by Jordy Groffen.

## Dutch Animal Scientist returns to KTB

Animal Scientist Leonie Jacobs from the Netherlands has returned to Australia to assist KTB in the Marella gorge research project. Leonie volunteered with KTB for 9 months in 2012 and assisted KTB with research projects such as Jordy Groffen's lungworm research. With Leonie's research background she was able to also undertake an independent research project with KTB, looking at the coping style of cane toads when they are put under pressure. During Leonie's time with KTB she also assisted KTB with biodiversity surveys and gave educational talks.



Leonie checking chicken carcasses for injuries and quality for her PhD project

Leonie started her PhD on "Welfare of broiler chickens during transport" in Belgium at the beginning of 2013. Leonie is happy to be back in the Kimberley, and KTB are happy that Leonie has decided to take her 4 week break from her PhD research, the cold and wet weather of Belgium to spend this time helping KTB and Jordy with the Marella Gorge project.



Leonie with the catch of the evening, 32 kilo of toads

Leonie stated "I loved the 9 months that I worked with KTB and the work they are doing in trying to reduce toad impacts on the native wildlife. I am really excited to be back in the Kimberley and to work with them again".

Animal Scientist Jordy Groffen of KTB stated "It is great Leonie is back to help, and that she is prepared to fly at her own expense and to volunteer her time. She is an excellent researcher and scientist and good in the field". "We can definitely use her help and expertise now the cane toads are the Marella gorge study area" Jordy continued.

### The last word goes to Lee Scott-Virtue founder and President of KTB.

"Without research scientists such as Leonie Jacobs, Jordy Groffen, Gary Rethus and Zigourney Nielsen willing to volunteer their time to assist KTB with their biodiversity and other research projects it would be difficult to continue this work. Many of our biodiversity and biological research programs were initiated several years ago, and made possible by the financial support of our state government. The withdrawal of this support has made it very difficult for KTB to continue some of these programs".

**Don't forget to "Like" us on Facebook and Follow us on Twitter!**

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If everyone became a toad buster.  
The toads would be busted!



**Kimberley Toad Busters awards!**

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