



# WA cane toad update



Department of Environment and Conservation



September 2010

## Community gears up for fifth toad muster

Community members will be out in force in Kununurra until 11 October for the 2010 Great Toad Muster.

The annual event is organised by Stop the Toad Foundation (STTF) and relies heavily on volunteers from all over the country to toad bust in remote areas of northern WA to collect and remove thousands of cane toads.

The community response to the threat posed by cane toads in WA has been unprecedented, with well-organised and committed community groups and volunteers working to slow the spread of toads in the State.

STTF organiser Kim Hands said 120 volunteers had signed up for this year's muster.

"To date we have caught 10,000 cane toads from three main areas – Point Springs Nature Reserve, Keep River National Park and Lake Argyle," she said.



*Professor Beazley on a toad busting expedition.*

## Symposium explores hot topics of the Kimberley

The State's Chief Scientist Professor Lyn Beazley AO was among a group of people who recently attended the EcoEducation Symposium in Kununurra.

Senior project officer Elaine Horne said teachers from Perth and the west Kimberley attended the event, which was hosted by DEC.

She said the professional learning and development symposium covered a number of significant issues affecting the Kimberley region.

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## Cane toads are toxic...

Cane toads are poisonous at almost all stages of their life cycle, including as eggs and tadpoles. Cane toad toxin is secreted when the animal is handled roughly or feels threatened and if the poison comes into contact with humans it can cause severe symptoms such as twitching, vomiting and temporary visual disturbances.

To prevent coming into contact with the toxin, protect the eyes where possible and wear gloves. Children should also be supervised in areas where cane toads are present.

If the toxin is squirted onto the skin or into the eyes, first aid treatment should be performed immediately. This includes flushing the affected area such as the eyes and nose with water. Seek medical assistance if symptoms persist.

If toxin is squirted directly into the mouth, immediately flush the mouth with water and transport the patient to the emergency department of the nearest hospital for treatment.

Poisoning advice is available on 13 11 26 anywhere in Australia 24 hours a day.



# Reminder to check your load for rogue cane toads

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is again reminding the community to remain vigilant and check their vehicles and camping equipment after travelling through cane toad infested areas.

The call comes after a live cane toad was discovered inside a shed in Broome's light industrial area in July.

The cane toad was handed in by a member of the public who captured the toad and alerted DEC officers in Broome.

District Nature Conservation Coordinator Sharon Ferguson believed the cane toad was inadvertently transported to the area.

"It's possible that the toad may have hitched a ride by hiding in road freight, a caravan or another vehicle," she said.

"Toads are not always easily found as they are very good at hiding in small spaces and that's why it's important for people to do thorough checks of their vehicle and camping equipment if they are coming from areas where cane toads are present.

Sharon commended the person who handed the cane toad into DEC and urged people to be on the lookout for toads hiding in freight and the underbody of vehicles.

"Freight companies should also continue to be vigilant if receiving freight that has been in contact with the ground in infested areas, as toads are known to have sought shelter in freight containers, pallets, crates and other items," she said.

"As cane toads continue to advance further into WA, the chances of the invasive pest hitching lifts on vehicles or freight are likely to increase.

"Explorer cane toads were recently sighted in the northern end of the Ord River Irrigation area and five kilometres to the east of Kununurra.

"Breeding populations are established around the WA-NT border, with significant numbers of toads found on the north-eastern shore of Lake Argyle."

DEC continues to work with the Department of Agriculture and Food, community groups and local residents to monitor the movement of cane toads in WA and to slow their advance.

Anyone who finds a suspected cane toad should isolate the animal and report the sighting to the DEC regional cane toad team immediately on 9168 4200 or 1800 084 881 (freecall).



## Symposium explores hot topics of the Kimberley

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"We held a full-day seminar to explore a range of topics such as the importance of fire in the region and the potential impacts of cane toads, in which Prof. Beazley gave her perspective," Elaine said.

"In addition to this, participants also visited the Ningbing Range and explored the Great Fossil Devonian Reef where they enthusiastically took part in a number of activities such as toad hunting at Lake Argyle and snake, spider and insect observations.

"We also discussed agricultural practice with a pastoralist and a prominent seed producer."

Elaine said a critical outcome of the EcoEducation Symposium was to increase the awareness of these issues in the classroom.

"We suggested ideas and activities for inclusion in a key resource for students, which is being written on fire and cane toads. These topics and materials will form the heart of a new EcoEducation Kimberley resource manual," she said.



EcoEducation Symposium participants.



# Kimberley Bush Rangers get close to nature

Bush Rangers in the Kimberley have been working hard to deliver various projects to the community to assist with cane toad research.

The Clontarf Academy for Life Skills (CALs) Bush Ranger Cadet group has been investigating mini beasts and bugs in the Kimberley to track what insects may be impacted by the invasive pest.

Regional Bush Ranger Coordinator Rhiannon Hill said the group had been searching the area to find interesting examples of local creatures.

“A recently completed unit of study saw students examining insects under the microscope, as well as sketching and recording information about the life cycle of many different insects,” she said.

“This information will also be used to help us monitor the impact of cane toads on various insect species in the region.”

In the meantime, the Work Readiness and Preparation Bush Ranger Cadet



*Rhiannon hands Darren a gecko.*

group is working with DEC to help revamp the arboretum as their project for 2010.

Once completed, the arboretum will be open to the public for short walks.

Rhiannon said the group had been working hard to ensure the project was delivered.

“They have already cleared a path area and will put their maths skills to good use to buy the right amount of gravel that is needed,” she said.

“They are also learning how to identify native plants in the area. This knowledge will assist them with developing special signs showing these plants. These signs will then be placed on the walk trail.”

DEC Kimberley Regional Manager Daryl Moncrieff said the Bush Ranger programs had been well received by the community.

“These programs have made a measurable difference to the attendance of at risk kids at the high school, while assisting the department with further research on cane toads as well as native flora and fauna,” he said.



*Bush Rangers hard at work to prepare the arboretum.*



*Looking hard for bugs at the piggery.*

For more information contact the DEC cane toad team on 9168 4200 or email [corrin.everitt@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:corrin.everitt@dec.wa.gov.au).

[www.dec.wa.gov.au/canetoads](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/canetoads)