



WA Cane Toad Update

May 2013

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Lecile Firth, Dave Woods, Bill Stewart and Lauren Brown look at an echidna caught in Barrbem Conservation Park.

2013 biodiversity surveys begin

With the wet season over, biodiversity surveys are now underway near Fitzroy Crossing in the central Kimberley.

The survey work is being led by DEC officers with the assistance of the Bunuba Rangers.

Biodiversity surveys are being conducted at specific sites over a two-year period to provide scientists with an inventory of the native plants and animals that are present.

For more information about becoming a volunteer biodiversity surveyor please contact Corrin Everitt on 9168 4200.



Left: *Cyclorana australis*, commonly known as a giant frog. Right: An adult cane toad.

Frogs cause a kerfuffle in Broome

Giant frogs have had Broome residents on the hop.

Sightings of the native frog *Cyclorana australis*, which can appear similar to an adult cane toad, caused a flurry of concerned phone calls to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Broome office in February.

Acting DEC West Kimberley nature conservation coordinator Andre Bobojcov reassured locals that cane toads had not yet arrived in the Broome area.

"The giant frogs emerged after rainfall and were being mistaken for cane toads," Andre said.

"Based on the current cane toad distribution, any sightings in Broome will be hitchhiker toads for at least the next few years.

"We have been spreading the message that any suspected cane toad must be positively identified before being killed."



The new magnet design.

Cane toad brochures and magnets

Need reliable, easily accessible information about cane toads? Look out for DEC's cane toad brochures available for download from the DEC website at www.dec.wa.gov.au/canetoads.

Special packs including the brochures and DEC's new magnets with the slogan 'Check your load for a cane toad' can be posted out to schools and other groups on request. Contact DEC Kununurra on 9168 4200.





WA Cane Toad Update

Cane toad app now available

DEC is celebrating the launch of Western Australia's first cane toad identification app for mobile devices.

The unique *Cane toad* app has been developed by The University of Western Australia (UWA), in collaboration with DEC, as a tool to help people distinguish between cane toads and native frogs of the Kimberley region.

Positive identification will help minimise the number of native frogs that are mistaken for toads and killed.

DEC State Cane Toad Initiative program coordinator Corrin Everitt said the app would be an excellent resource for students, northern WA travellers, truck drivers and the community.

"People can download the smart phone and tablet app from the iTunes store and use the visual, audio and written information to help differentiate between cane toads and native frogs of the Kimberley region," Ms Everitt said.

UWA postgraduate student Cassandra Rowles came up with the idea for a cane toad identification app as part of a Science Communication Learning Technologies assignment.

The project was further developed by UWA's SPICE enrichment program for secondary science teachers, in collaboration with DEC.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob congratulated UWA and DEC on the app initiative.

"There is a lot of community support for limiting the spread of cane toads and their impact on native species, and this kind of easily accessible tool should prove very useful," Mr Jacob said.



Screen shot of an adult toad from the app.

The app contains three main areas:

- Frogs and toads – seven native Kimberley frogs and toads in three stages of the life cycle (juvenile, metamorph and adult) are profiled. The information includes size, colour, distinguishing features, breeding and location, plus high resolution images and an audio file.
- Frog log – enables the user to document frog sightings, establish a GPS location and utilise the mobile device's camera and recording functions.
- Cane toad – provides more information about toad handling, reporting toad sightings, and URL links for more information.



Environment Minister Albert Jacob.

The *Cane toad* app is now available to download from the iTunes store.



WA Cane Toad Update



Toad tadpoles retrieved from the funnel trap.
Photo courtesy Prof. Rick Shine

Trapping toad tadpoles

A chemical found in a cane toad's own poison is being used by scientists as 'bait' in funnel traps to attract and trap toad tadpoles.

Professor Rick Shine from the University of Sydney and fellow researchers have found that the chemical lures toad tadpoles, but not native frog tadpoles, insects or fish.

"In one natural pond, we collected more than 40,000 toad tadpoles in less than a week," Prof. Shine said.

"One of the biggest obstacles to getting rid of cane toads is that a single clutch can contain more than 30,000 eggs.

"So even if you catch and kill 99 per cent of the adult toads in an area, the

few remaining can quickly reproduce and we're back to square one.

"This discovery gives us a weapon that could help us make inroads into reducing toad numbers."

Scientists are now working to develop a stronger, safer, and easier-to-use bait for the toad tadpoles.

"To do this, we will isolate the active agent in the toads' poison secretion and produce it in tablet form," Prof. Shine said.

"It should then be easy for toad-busting community groups and members of the general public who want to stop toads breeding in their local ponds to use them in simple funnel traps."

For more information go to canetoadsinoz.com.au.

More Kimberley drop-off points

There are now 23 secure cane toad drop-off points located throughout the Kimberley region.

Five more cane toad disposal boxes have recently been rolled out by DEC at the Kimberley Metals Group mine near Doon Doon, Parry Creek Farm Caravan Park near Wyndham, Purnululu National Park tourist operator camp, El Questro station and Home Valley station.

DEC State Cane Toad officer Jasper Kruse said the drop-off points allowed community members and visitors to safely dispose of live toads.

"Toads can easily be confused with native frogs so we want people to continue using the drop-off sites," Mr Kruse said.

"When the animal is dropped into the box down the chute it leads to a secure holding cage which is covered with shade cloth and contains water.

"The sites are checked regularly and toads are killed, while frogs are released back into the wild."

More than 11,000 suspected cane toads have been left at the drop-off points since the project was established in 2009 as part of the Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia.



Cane toad officer Jasper Kruse and Kimberley Metals Group's Naomi Vickers with the new drop-off point.

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Bree Heidenreich and Sally Murkin from the Broome Bush Rangers.

Bush Rangers update

A new Kimberley-specific supplement has recently been added to the Bush Rangers manual, providing locally relevant training modules for cadets based in northern WA.

The supplement was launched in March at the Kimberley Regional Bush Rangers conference.

DEC's successful Bush Rangers program continues to provide opportunities for students to support biodiversity and conservation activities such as those targeting cane toads.

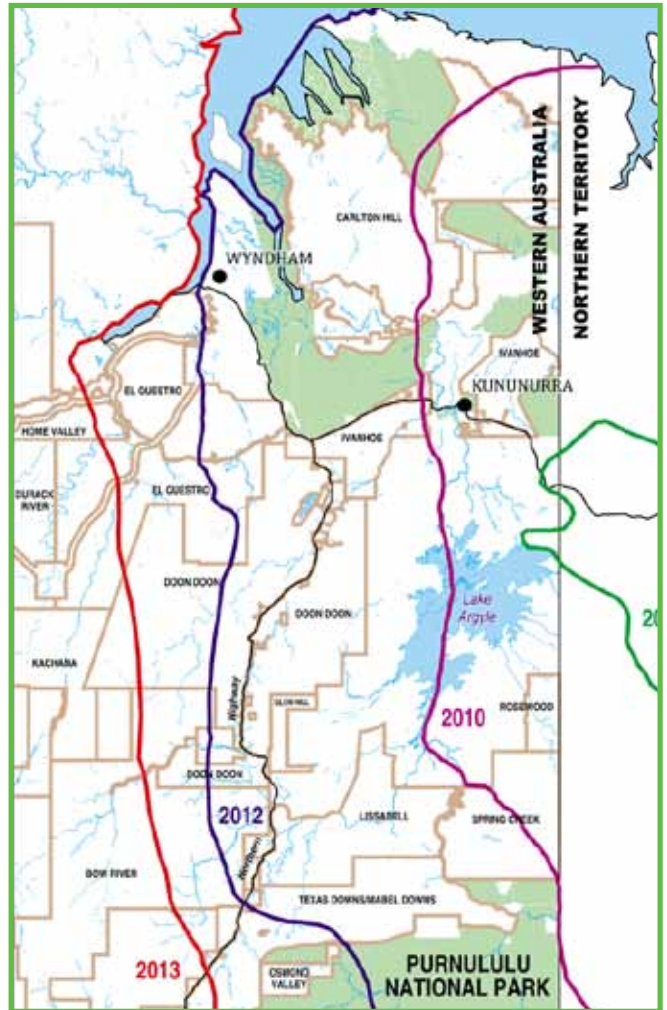
There are Kimberley-based units at One Arm Point, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Wyndham, Broome Senior High School and Yiyili. DEC provides support to these units through regular visits and regional events.

At the WA Bush Rangers conference in Perth last month, DEC's Corrin Everitt discussed her role as State Cane Toad Initiative program leader, the benefits of the program and opportunities for community involvement.

Ms Everitt is also looking to introduce several new projects for Bush Rangers in the Perth metropolitan area and south-west.

One of these is a competition for south-west students to design a brochure about the region's frogs, which could be used for identification purposes when 'hitchhiker' toads are found.

Opportunities exist for Bush Ranger Units from across WA to get involved in the Cane Toad Initiative. For more information contact Sally Johnson on 08 9168 4200.



Cane toad movement.

WA cane toad front line – update

Cane toads continue to move west through the Kimberley region at a rate of approximately 50 kilometres a year, as they have done since crossing the WA/Northern Territory border in February 2009.

The cane toad front line is now as far west as Home Valley station. Toads have also reached the western border of Purnululu National Park.

Travellers are being asked to 'check your load for a cane toad' so they do not inadvertently advance the toads to the west and south.

This publication is available in alternative formats on request.



The cane toad e-newsletter is now being released on a biannual basis to coincide with the end of the dry season and the start of the wet season. The next e-newsletter will be released in November 2013. If you wish to subscribe click [here](#).

For more information contact the DEC cane toad team on 9168 4200 or email corrin.everitt@dec.wa.gov.au.

