



# WA Cane Toad Update

November 2013

## In this issue

- 🦎 Environment Minister visits Kimberley
- 🦎 Jackie Ellis, cane toad education officer
- 🦎 Online identification resources
- 🦎 Halls Creek students learn about toads
- 🦎 Biodiversity surveys at Marunbabidi
- 🦎 Bush Rangers out and about
- 🦎 Turning toads' weapons against themselves
- 🦎 Cane toad front line map



"Canopy", by Jackie Ellis

## Jackie Ellis – Cane Toad Education Officer

Cartoons and cane toads seem an unlikely combination, but Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) cane toad education officer Jackie Ellis is using her drawing talent to teach children about the invasive pest.

As part of her role developing a cane toad manual for use by school teachers, Ms Ellis is creating original cartoons and pictures that will be used to illustrate the text.

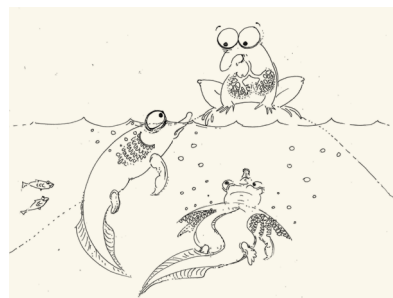
"The aim is to make the information in the manual fun and interesting for kids," Ms Ellis said.

"Using cartoons helps get the message across in a way that engages children and adults."

A professional artist, Ms Ellis works are based on environmental themes. Her most recent exhibition focused on fire in the Kimberley and included the painting "Canopy", depicting the loss of tree canopy in major fire events.

Ms Ellis has lived in the Kimberley for the last six years and been part of the DPaW Kununurra team for three months.

She enjoys working out in the field participating in biodiversity surveys and also hits the road to conduct a "toad run", emptying the cane toad disposal boxes located in and around Kununurra.



"Get some lungs dude!" – Illustration from the cane toad manual.



Environment Minister Albert Jacob with snake and Corrin Everitt at Kununurra

## Environment Minister visits the Kimberley

A trip to the east Kimberley wouldn't be complete without meeting the locals.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob, visited the region in June and participated in a biodiversity survey at Darram Conservation Reserve, which is jointly managed by DPaW and the Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council.

During the survey the Minister was happy to hold a snake with the assistance of DPaW's State Cane Toad Initiative program leader Corrin Everitt.

Miriuwung Gajerrong rangers and Indigenous ranger cadets helped set up the survey and check traps.







# WA Cane Toad Update

## Marunbabidi community participates in survey

Community members from Marunbabidi, located on the Kalumburu Road near Doongan Station, recently participated in their first biodiversity survey with DPaW officers.

Part of the State Government's Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy is to work with the Marunbabidi traditional owners to establish a part time ranger group.

The first survey of the area has enabled new rangers to investigate what flora and fauna species were present, helped set and check traps, identify and measure animals, and record data.

Animals trapped and observed during the survey include: Gilbert's dragon, spotted tree goanna, chestnut-breasted mouse, red-cheeked dunnart, delicate mouse, fire tail skink, frill-necked lizard, crimson finch, brown kite, blue-faced honey eater and red collard lorikeet.

Surveys will be carried out for the next three years in co-operation with the rangers at Marunbabidi to establish baseline data of the area, record impacts on biodiversity and opportunities for future management strategies.



Left: Observed at Marunbabidi, a western chestnut mouse. Right: Checking trap contents



Bush Ranger cadets enjoying themselves at Middle Lagoon Beach.

## Kimberley Bush Rangers out and about

More than 70 Bush Ranger cadets and 20 instructors from five Kimberley schools recently camped at Middle Lagoon, near Broome, for three days of activities based on the core objectives of the Bush Rangers program - teamwork, initiative, leadership and environmental conservation.

Cadets learnt about local marine life, tested their navigation skills in an orienteering challenge and were taken on a cultural tour by local Nyul Nyul rangers. The camp provided students with the opportunity to experience the real-life application of many of the skills they have been learning.

Kimberley-based Bush Rangers have also been volunteering in environmental conservation activities. The Derby and Fitzroy Valley Bush Rangers helped park rangers at Windjana Gorge with weeding and maintenance tasks, while students from Kalumburu School assisted DPaW researchers with a biodiversity survey at Carson River last month.







# WA Cane Toad Update

## Websites and app assist with cane toad identification

Confusing a cane toad with a harmless native frog is easy to do, so DPaW is encouraging people to use their mobile device or computer to check the difference.

The department's website [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/canetoads](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/canetoads) has a section devoted to cane toads, native frog identification pictures and handy contacts.

The cane toad app in the iTunes store allows those with mobile devices to easily examine the features of seven native Kimberley frogs, along with cane toads in three stages of their life cycle.

Another good resource is the Western Australian Museum's Alcoa Frogwatch website <http://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/frogwatch>.

All cane toad sightings should be reported to the Cane Toad Hotline on 1800 44 WILD (1800 44 9453), or text a photo to 0400 693807, or email [canetoads@dpaw.wa.gov.au](mailto:canetoads@dpaw.wa.gov.au).



Screen shot of an adult cane toad from the app.



Dissecting a cane toad.

## Halls Creek kids investigate cane toads and biodiversity

Dissecting a cane toad to find out what it eats proved no problem for Year 5 and 6 students from Halls Creek.

More than 40 children attended a camp in Purnululu National Park where DPaW officers Corrin Everitt and Sally Johnston conducted a range of activities about cane toads and biodiversity in the area.

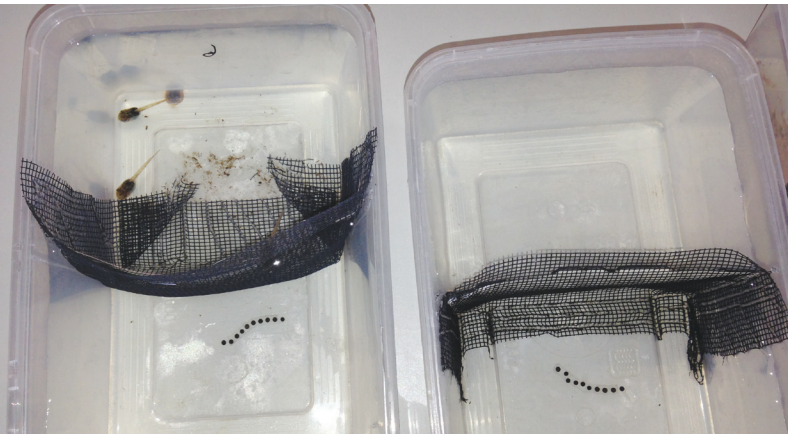
As well as a cane toad dissection, the students learned about cane toad identification, what to do if they saw a cane toad and the impacts of cane toads on native reptile species.

The children enjoyed a "night stalk" looking for nocturnal animals, spotlighting at Cathedral Gorge, toad busting in Purnululu National Park, identifying animal tracks and the opportunity to hold snakes and blue tongue lizards.

Educating the community about cane toads and their impacts on biodiversity is a key objective of the Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia.



# WA Cane Toad Update



A chemical produced by cane toad tadpoles massively reduces the viability of nearby cane toad eggs in a laboratory trial. Photo – Greg Clarke.

## Turning toads' weapons against themselves

Researchers from the University of Sydney have discovered that a chemical produced by cane toad tadpoles can kill other toad tadpoles.

According to Professor Rick Shine, it may be possible to use this suppression chemical in the future as a highly targeted weapon for controlling cane toads.

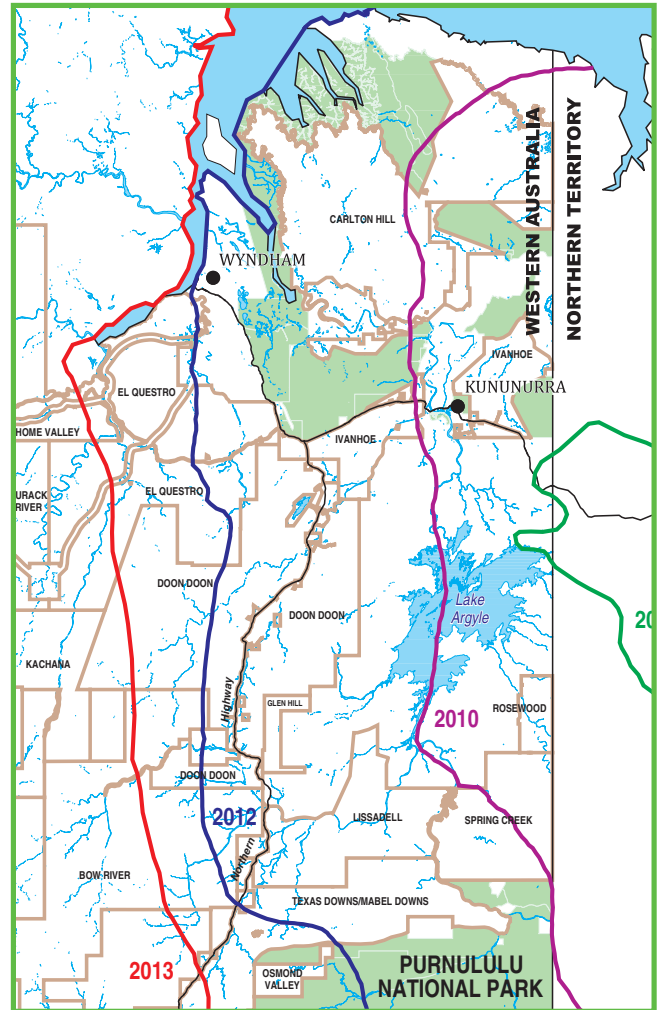
"I think this is the most exciting development so far in our work on toad control," Professor Shine said.

"Team members Greg Clarke and Dr Michael Crossland are running laboratory trials using the suppression chemical from cane toad tadpoles on newly-laid toad eggs.

"Even a small amount of this chemical kills a lot of the eggs – and the tadpoles that hatch from these eggs are tiny, grow slowly, and are likely to die before they are completely developed.

"If you want to control cane toads, you need a way to stop them from breeding and it looks like this chemical may go a long way towards achieving this aim."

Professor Shine has recently been awarded a Laureate Fellowship from the Australian Research Council to pursue his studies on cane toads.



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 urged to 'check your load for a cane toad' so they do not inadvertently bring toads to the west and south of the state.

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 May 2014. If you wish to subscribe click [here](#).

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

