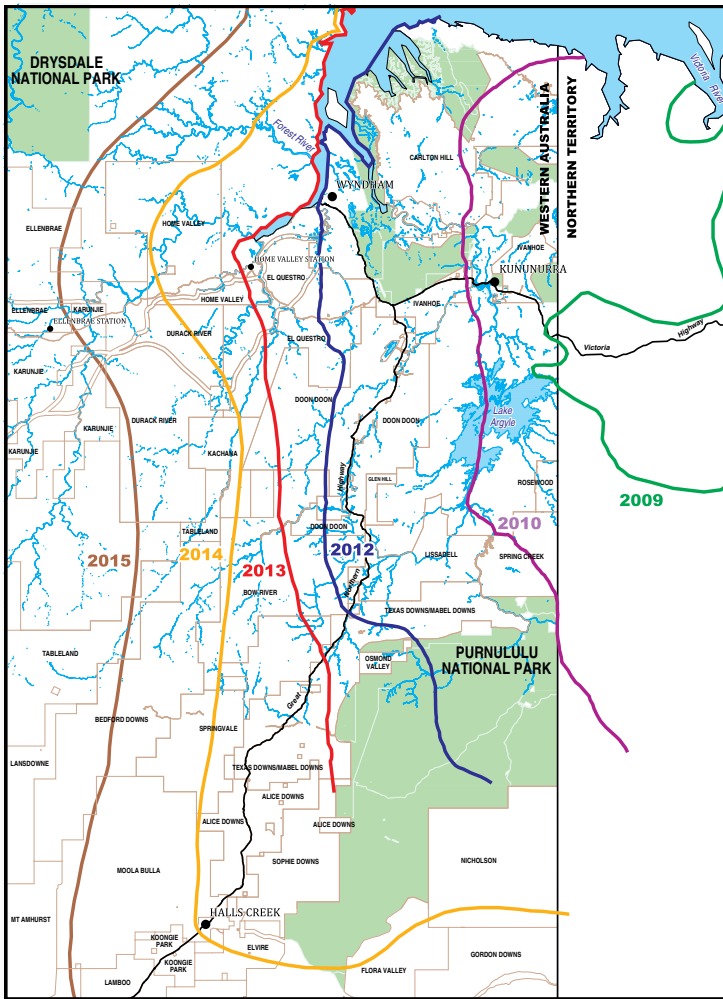




WA Cane Toad Update

May 2015

Cane toad frontline



Cane toads have continued to move west through the northern wet season.

The frontline is now 100km west of Halls Creek, with toads in the Chamberlain River west of Kununurra, in the Forrest River on the western side of the Cambridge Gulf, and on Ellenbrae Station on the Gibb River Road. If you find a cane toad outside of this area please call the cane toad hotline on 1800 44 WILD (9453) or text or email images to 0400 693 807 or canetoads@dpaw.wa.gov.au

To view the frontline map online, visit www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/plants-and-animals/animals/cane-toads

Sir Graham Moore Island









Parks and Wildlife continues its monitoring work on key islands as part of the State Government's \$81.5 million *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy* and the *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia 2014-19*. This program aims to detect cane toad incursions and to ensure island biodiversity is protected.

The department and Balangarra rangers recently surveyed Sir Graham Moore Island off the north Kimberley coast to map the location and distribution of fresh water and weed species. This will allow future management to be developed to tackle weed species present and apply strategies to mitigate cane toad impacts should they reach the island.

While no northern quolls have been spotted on the island, it does support a significant number of goannas, which are likely to be impacted by cane toads.

The distribution of weeds on the island was also mapped to see whether active control was feasible. Fortunately the number of weeds on the island was significantly lower than expected around previous World War II operational sites and temporary camps located on the island. Species recorded from the island include *Hyptis suaveolens* (Mintweed) and *Passiflora foetida* (stinking passion vine), both of which are distributed in discrete patches.

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Cockburn Range

For the third consecutive year biodiversity surveys have been carried out by Parks and Wildlife staff and the Balangarra rangers at Cockburn Range.



Pic 1: Cockburn Range. **Pic 2:** Skink *C. inornatus*. **Pic 3:** Australian Native tarantula. **Pic 4:** Dave Chemello and Jasper Kruse. **Pic 5:** Dave Chemello with fish caught in an Elliott trap. **Pic 6:** Python scat. **Pic 7:** Field rations for the survey team.
Photos – Parks and Wildlife

Although the number of animals caught was slightly lower than previous years, there was a large diversity of species caught, particularly reptiles.

There were a number of interesting finds, including a male native tarantula the size of a man's palm which was caught in a funnel trap, a second recording of an intermediate bandy bandy snake and a blind snake.

The survey team were fascinated by the giant python scat they found (the length of a 1.5 litre water bottle!) and a fish caught in an Elliott trap.

Logistically, eating well while on biodiversity surveys in remote locations can be a challenge. Happily, modern vacuum packaging, dried rations and canned food meant the team could still enjoy a fine spaghetti Bolognese at the end of a long day.





Adolphus Island

Parks and Wildlife staff and Balangarra rangers have just completed another visit to Adolphus Island, which is located in the Ord River less than 2km from the riverbank. The team conducted trapping and checked on the 20 remote cameras installed on the island.

Earlier this year the Adolphus Island crew were excited to discover camera evidence of the Eurasian Hoopoe bird (*Upupa epops*) visiting the island. It is only the third Australian sighting of this species, whose normal range is Eurasia and north-west Africa.

The cameras have also recorded large numbers of native bird species including Brahminy kites, collared sparrow hawks and wedge-tailed eagles.

The aim of the recent trip was to further establish the distribution and population size of the northern quoll on the island. At this stage they are persisting in three locations on the island, with most trap success on rocky scree slopes. The team were happy to successfully trap four individuals in the recent survey and are now analysing camera trap images for further evidence of quoll activity. The Balangarra rangers were also pleased to trap numerous planigales in the Elliott traps, along with a black-headed python, which were new records for the island.

Parks and Wildlife also recorded a large variety of additional species of reptiles, some of which are considered vulnerable to cane toads.



Top left Adolphus Island.
Top right Agile walaby captured by remote camera.
Above Checking camera traps on Adolphus Island.
Photos – Parks and Wildlife

More cane toad hitchhikers

Live cane toads have recently been discovered in a sandalwood consignment at a Perth freight depot and at mine site accommodation in the Pilbara.

In March, three live toads and one dead toad were retrieved by Parks and Wildlife officers from a truck which had travelled to Perth from Kununurra.

Senior wildlife officer Rick Dawson expressed concern that a healthy adult male and female had been in the sandalwood, raising the potential for breeding, under the right conditions.

"The department encourages all producers in cane toad-infested areas to take all necessary precautions to stop the spread of cane toads, including raising pre-transport handling processes off the ground, to reduce the risk of toad stowaways," Mr Dawson said.

In February a juvenile toad was found in poor condition on



a concrete pathway at the Roy Hill facility. The animal died overnight and was transported to the Department of Parks and Wildlife for formal identification.

Travellers are reminded to check their vehicles, luggage, pallets, camping gear and caravans when travelling out of known cane toad breeding areas such as the east Kimberley, as toxic toads can hide in very small spaces.

If you find a suspected cane toad, Parks and Wildlife recommends not killing it in case it is a harmless native frog. The animal should be isolated and the sighting immediately reported to the Parks and Wildlife cane toad hotline on 1800 44 WILD (9453).





School-based trainee Colen joins the team

Along with maths and English, Colen Nulgit is now learning the ropes as a trainee technical officer with the Department of Parks and Wildlife's cane toad team.

The Kununurra District High School student spends two days a week in the classroom, two days at Parks and Wildlife and a day completing a Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management.

So far Colen (right) has impressed his new colleagues with his enthusiasm and initiative, and is keen to have a go at any task.

Mentored by newly-graduated former trainee Andrew Rethus, Colen has been learning basic care and maintenance of the department's cane toad detector dog, Reggie, and working with the district wildlife officer to check crocodile traps in Lake Kununurra and carry out inspections on the boat.

Back at the office, Colen has also been developing his graphic design skills on community education resources.



Kids learn about biodiversity

Above Sean McGee and Andrew Rethus with St Josephs students in Wyndham. Photo - Parks and Wildlife

Children love all things scaly. When Parks and Wildlife take their reptile display to Kimberley schools and holiday clubs, the snakes and lizards are perennially popular attractions.

The animals are a great way to help teach kids about Western Australia's amazing wildlife and the impact of invasive species such as cane toads.

During the April school holidays the reptile display visited children in Warmun and Wyndham, while Kununurra kids enjoyed a culture day in Mirima National Park with activities including a bushwalk, traditional painting and learning the Miriwung words for some of the local plants and animals.

Over in Broome the Parks and Wildlife Yawuru rangers ran holiday activities at local childcare centres including storytelling and painting. To coincide with Youth Week, older children took part in a bush tucker walk and boomerang workshop in Minyirr Park.

Projects continue

Several important cane toad research projects are set to continue in 2015, including:

- Work on the population structure and ecology of fresh water crocodiles in the Lennard River by the Bunuba rangers and the Parks and Wildlife West Kimberley nature conservation team, who hope to identify possible management actions for this species in areas such as Windjana Gorge.
- A project led by PhD student Georgia Ward-Fear, together with Parks and Wildlife and the Balangarra rangers, teaching goannas not to eat toads.

- A field trial using toad suppression and attractant pheromones to reduce cane toad breeding success and develop strategies for breeding mitigation on Kimberley islands by University of Sydney students, Dr Rick Shine, Parks and Wildlife and indigenous ranger groups.

This work is supported by Rangelands NRM through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and will contribute significantly to the implementation of the *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia 2014-19* and *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*.





Reggie update



Reggie, the department's cane toad detector dog based in Kununurra, continues to hone his detecting skills and has been busy with trainer Andrew Rethus travelling to the Mulan, Bililuna and Balgo communities teaching kids about cane toad identification and how to safely pick them up.

Reggie has also been visiting Kununurra storage facilities, depots and primary producers to check for toads. Parks and Wildlife works with local businesses encouraging them to apply biosecurity measures to keep cane toads out of trucks and other vehicles.

Recently Reggie gave us a rundown of his Parks and Wildlife role:

Tell us about a typical day at work.

I go for a walk first thing in the morning, then it's time for some training. I have to find toads which are hidden for me around the Parks and Wildlife depot or at other locations around town. In the afternoons I visit farms and freight companies to search for 'hitchhiker' toads, we don't want any of them finding their way down to Perth.

What do you like most about your job?

Finding toads and visiting new places to search for toads.

What is most challenging?

Learning not to be distracted by kangaroos or other dogs.

What is your favourite part of working in the Kimberley?

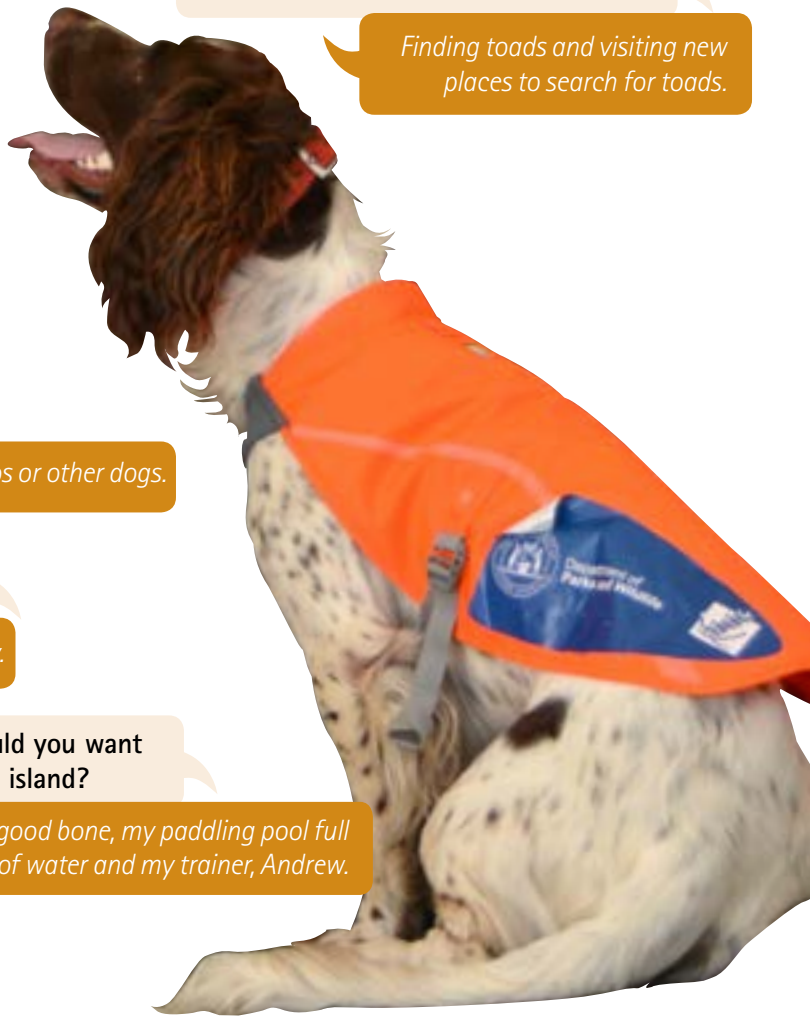
I get to search for toads every day.

What three things would you want if stranded on a desert island?

A good bone, my paddling pool full of water and my trainer, Andrew.

Thanks for your time Reggie.

Woof.



The WA Cane Toad Update is now released on a biannual basis to coincide with the end of the dry season and the start of the wet season. [If you wish to subscribe click here.](#)

For more information contact the Parks and Wildlife cane toad team on (08) 9168 4200 or email corrin.everitt@dpaw.wa.gov.au

