



WA Cane Toad Update

December 2015

New education resource for school children

New cane toad education manuals are being rolled out to Kimberley schools to teach children about the impacts of the invasive species on WA native animals.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife has produced manuals for students in years 1-3 and years 4-6 with curriculum-linked lesson plans, worksheets and background information for teachers.

Launched in June by Environment Minister Albert Jacob, the resources are helping to raise community awareness about toads.

"They aim to engage young children in a fun and informative way about toads, their effects on native animals and what we can do to help," the Minister said.

Cane toads have been present in the Kimberley region since 2009 and the State Government has invested more than \$7.8 million in strategies to minimise their impact on the environment.

Community education is an important part of the *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia 2014-19*.

"Teaching young children about cane toads is a key tool in public awareness of the issue," the Minister said.







Lesson plans included in the education manuals look at topics such as identifying features of cane toads, their life cycle, impacts on native animal food chains and distinguishing toads from native frogs.

The cane toad manuals have been produced by Parks and Wildlife with funding support from Perth Zoo.

Further resources for Kimberley schools are being developed by the department.



In this issue

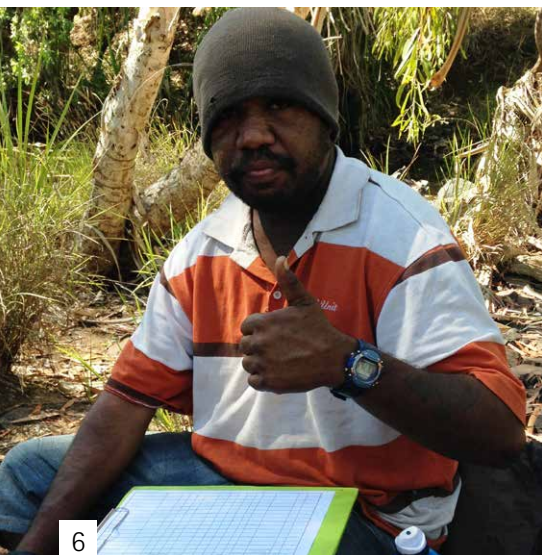
-  New education resource for school children
-  Detector dog training with Steve Austin
-  Blooming biodiversity in remote Kimberley
-  More crocodiles recorded at Windjana survey
-  Reggie working in the community
-  Cane toad program staff out and about



Top: Students from Cable Beach Primary School with Environment Minister Albert Jacob, Reggie the cane toad detector dog and Parks and Wildlife dog trainer Andrew Rethus.

Above: Reggie taking a break.
Photos - Parks and Wildlife





Blooming biodiversity in remote Kimberley

Parks and Wildlife conducted Kimberley region biodiversity surveys at seven locations during the 2015 dry season, including the remote locations of Jilariba at Walcott Inlet and the Drysdale River mouth.

These surveys collect baseline information for sites where there is little known biodiversity data, prior to the arrival of cane toads.

A key action under the State Government's *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy* and the *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australian 2014-19*, biodiversity surveys are carried out with traditional owner groups and assist with planning for future management and monitoring activities.

Parks and Wildlife State cane toad program coordinator Corrin Everitt said more than 1000 animals had been captured, assessed and released during the surveys.

"We recorded 18 species of mammal, 82 species of reptile and nine species of frog," Ms Everitt said.

"Among the highlights of the program this year was the amazing diversity and abundance of species at Jilariba and the spectacular vegetation diversity at the Drysdale River.

"Working with traditional owners is also an important element of these surveys – the surveys facilitate getting people back on their own country and we are working with them to look after it."

This year Parks and Wildlife staff joined traditional owners to revisit the Pantijan community, located on the Sale River 400km north-east of Derby. While the area is not as diverse as some of the other surveyed areas, the team did trap bandicoots, northern quolls, pale field rats and some interesting reptiles including king browns and a western beaked gecko.

Pic 1: Red-cheeked dunnart. Pic 2: Skink. Pic 3: Insect chrysalis. Pic 4: Drysdale River. Pic 5: Corrin Everitt releasing a western chestnut mouse at Pantijan. Pic 6: Cameron Olfin recording data at Pantijan.

Photos – Parks and Wildlife





Detector dog training with Steve Austin

Cane toad detector dog Reggie and handler Andrew Rethus completed a valuable week-long training session with expert dog trainer Steve Austin in August.

Mr Austin flew to Kununurra from NSW as part of Reggie's ongoing training schedule and to help ensure the dog is in top condition for sniffing out hitchhiker toads on freight leaving the Ord Valley.

The trainer put Andrew and Reggie through their paces with basic obedience tasks and simulated detection exercises including finding toads hidden on pallets and among packages and equipment. Other staff involved in Parks and Wildlife's cane toad operations were given an introduction to basic detector dog handling and care.

The week's program included visits to a freight company, Lake Kununurra Discovery Park, Hidden Valley Caravan Park and the Kununurra Out of School Hours Care Centre.

These training exercises are important for the continued development of Reggie's detection skills and for Andrew as the dog's regular handler.



Above right: Steve Austin with Reggie and Andrew Rethus. Right: Andrew Rethus and Reggie inspecting a vehicle. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

Cane toads in the classroom



Above: A cane toad made with modelling clay, next to the real thing. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

Cane toads made with modelling clay are far more fun than real ones – that's the verdict from students at Jungdranung, Dawul, Ngalangangpum, Purnululu and Halls Creek schools.

Parks and Wildlife East Kimberley staff visited the schools to teach the kids how to identify a toad, how to tell the difference between toads and native frogs, and what to do if they find a toad.

Upper primary students made take-home toad bookmarks while younger students made clay model toads showing the toad's three key identifying features; a bony, m-shaped brow ridge, dry, warty skin, and poison glands on their shoulders.





More crocodiles recorded at Windjana survey



Parks and Wildlife, Bunuba rangers, volunteers, visiting Ngarla rangers and NRM staff recently returned to Windjana Gorge National Park for a second survey of freshwater crocodiles.

The project, which is being conducted to look at the populations and health of the crocs prior to the anticipated arrival of cane toads, is part of the *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia 2014-19* and is supported by Rangelands NRM.

This year the team caught, assessed and released 78 crocs, considerably more than last year's 41, despite water levels in pools being very low.

Eight of these were recaptures, with individuals identified from the scute marking system applied to the tails of the crocodiles.

One of the re-caught crocs weighed in at 44kg – 4kg heavier than last year.

Survey leader, Parks and Wildlife West Kimberley nature conservation coordinator Tracy Sonneman, said the research would reveal important information.

"After we have been out there next year we will have a better understanding of the demographics and site fidelity for freshwater crocs in this catchment."



Top: Freshwater croc at Winjana Gorge National Park. Above: Freshwater croc survey Windjana. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

Reggie working in the community

Reggie, the cane toad detector dog, has been busy inspecting freight and visiting caravan parks in Kununurra. With warm weather and rain around, toads are active again and subsequently the risk of hitchhikers finding their way into vehicles is increasing.

Reggie has been working at Tropical Forestry Services inspecting their freight consignments on a weekly basis and, together with handler Andrew Rethus, has been engaging with visitors and community members to reinforce the 'check your load for a cane toad' message.

Right: Andrew Rethus and Reggie with a traveller, spreading the word about hitchhiking toads. Photos – Parks and Wildlife





Cane toad program staff out and about

A recent visit to Wanambi Remote Community School at Mt Barnett to celebrate their 25th anniversary was a highlight for the Parks and Wildlife cane toad team. Reggie the cane toad detector dog and handler Andrew Rethus went along to meet the students and show off their skills in cane toad detection

The team's school-based trainee, Colen Nulgit, whose family is from Mt Barnett, enjoyed teaching the local children about reptiles using TinTin the woma python, Rocky the centralian blue tongue and Mia the black-headed python.

The cane toad team is happy to visit Kimberley schools and communities, so if you would like to arrange a visit, call the Parks and Wildlife Kununurra office on 9168 4200 and ask to speak to Sally, Corrin or Andrew.

Above right: Jasper Kruse teaching students about reptiles at Kununurra library. **Right:** Colen Nulgit teaching kids about snakes at Wanambi anniversary. *Photos - Parks and Wildlife*



WA cane toad information will be available in the *Kimberley Science and Conservation News* from 2016. If you are currently subscribed to *WA Cane Toad Update*, there is no need to do anything – you will automatically receive *Kimberley Science and Conservation News* from 2016. [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

