

FrogWatch (Nth) News

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Co- ORDINATORS CORNER



This is the first FrogWatch newsletter for 2005 and it is going to be a regular feature from now on. It will be our main communication avenue. If you do not wish to receive further copies make sure your details are updated on the website. You can subscribe or unsubscribe to the newsletter and the ToadBuster updates through the website.

The cane toad issue is still the all consuming issue for FrogWatch and at last we have begun to make some serious progress. We now have government funding and a detailed plan to combat toads. The Government, especially Minister Chris Burns, is to be congratulated for their support for community involvement in tackling the cane toad problem. The cane toad issue needs to be tackled at a community level, governments do not have the resources or man power to solve the problem. The community and government working together is the only hope we have. The NT government has recognised this and has made a major contribution in funding but also in getting the federal government and other states to focus on the problem. More details in the newsletter.

It is really important that we get everyone working together to minimise the damage cane toads are doing. We need to get to know more about you and what you can do. Are you in a position to organise a meeting of the people in your area, or perhaps to help at a FrogWatch display. Send an email or give us a call so we know who you are. Also make sure the other people you know register on the database in the website so we have a way to contact them. Filling out the form on the ToadBusters pamphlet and sending it back is also an option.

I would also like to thank all of the volunteers who have been helping with displays. It has been a fantastic effort, we really have put the cane toad issue back on the national agenda!!. Together we can make a difference.

TOAD CONTROL

Based on our research work we believe that we can stop toads from dominating the areas around the Darwin region and that we can also begin to develop workable harm minimisation strategies for other areas such as wetlands, parks and other special places. The fact that the traps can successfully catch toads is a great boost to our confidence.

The basis of our strategy is to encourage people to ToadBust their own back yard and to coordinate resources to attack toads in public areas and major wetlands. Traps such as the SuperTrap, which caught 543 toads in six weeks at Bonrook Station, will form the basis of the wetland strategy.



A FrogWatch Supertrap in the field

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Organisations that have contributed to FrogWatch include the Territory Insurance Office (TIO) which has set up a 'fighting fund' with a \$10000 'kick start', Darwin and Palmerston City Councils, each contributing to trap research and community information programs and the NT Government, through the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and the Environment (DIPE) with a major funding initiative announced on Feb 16th. The funding is \$422,000 over two years and will allow us to continue our work with coordinators, who get paid to do the job properly rather than fit in what they can, and funding for field work, information distribution, travel and other essentials. It is not a lot of money in terms of the total effort needed but is a fantastic initiative from the NT Government. In particular, the government is supporting the community effort at having a go at minimising the damage toads do in our environment. The announcement recognises that Government alone cannot deal with problems on the scale of cane toads without public support. Now it is up to everyone to make it work.

We need to get everyone doing their bit if we are to be successful.

1.1 WHY WILL TOAD CONTROL WORK HERE IN THE NT?

I keep getting asked this question every-where, and the answer lies in three related areas. First, we now have a trapping device that has shown it can catch hundreds of toads without needing lots of people hours. Secondly toad behaviour is to move extensively around an area seeking food and shelter and they are attracted to lights, making them vulnerable to trapping. Thirdly the Territory's weather pattern, especially the Dry Season, means that toads, which need water every four days, will congregate around remnant water in the dry season. The indications are that the toads can be caught in huge numbers in the late dry season and that the traps can remove the toad population from a given area. Trap results show that once the toads are removed from an area any new arrivals are quickly caught in the traps.

Our plan is to get rid of toads from the start and to stop their numbers building up to the point where they completely dominate the ecosystem. By keeping the pressure on the toad population and knocking the numbers out or down to very low levels in the dry season seems possible with traps and people power. in the form of ToadMusters

1.2 PROBLEMS TO BE OVERCOME

The main problem to overcome is 'Queensland syndrome' - the attitude that it is all too hard and there is nothing you can do thus we should roll over and let our local environment get changed forever. This 'disease' stops people from having a go and takes away their motivation. Do not believe those who say it can't be done, even in Queensland there are examples of groups of people keeping cane toad numbers at low levels by going out and regularly collecting toads. Cairns, Gladstone, Brisbane Botanic Gardens are some examples. And there are many individual cases of successful control measures, such as the vigilance of a retired couple, who have kept a wetland in a National Park near Noosa from producing any toads for several years by removing eggs from the lagoon. In the Territory we have the added advantage of traps that will do a lot of the work for us - and work all night every night. If we get enough people ToadBusting we can be successful.

2 TOADBUSTER UPDATE

We have had a great start to ToadBusters with specific \$10,000.00 sponsorship from TIO, advertising support from Channel 9, plus contributions from local councils and the NT Government. This is allowing us to generate material and get information out to people.



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2.1 HOW DO WE DO IT?

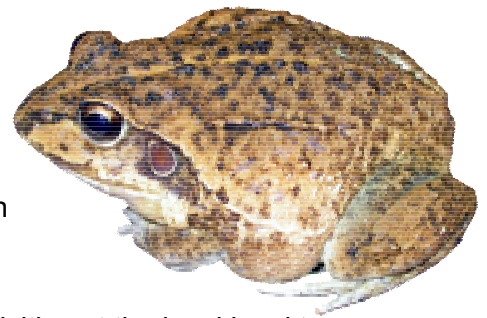
Basically we need people to ToadBust their local areas - setting up traps, collecting toads (ToadMusters), removing eggs and tadpoles from waterways, building toad proof barriers around native frog breeding sites and protecting pets .

Plan for your own backyard but also get involved with the neighbours or the local Landcare or Wetland group so efforts are coordinated. It is best if everyone in an area joins a 'ToadMuster' on a single night.

These can be very successful as seen for the results of one at Yamba in NSW.

"We have done community cane toad roundups since 1999. Our strategy has been to hold one or two community roundups per year plus collections by staff, volunteers, Greencorp teams and contractors. Our initial focus has been to stop the spread into the northern edge of Yuraygir National Park as in 1999 they had only penetrated about 0.5km into the park. Repeated collections in this area and to about 1km north have been successful in reducing numbers in this area with only about 15-25% of the original numbers being collected and no further expansion. We have since expanded collections further north into urban areas and urban/bushland interface of Yamba where big numbers are being collected. (1447 in 1.5hrs by 74 people last February, Yamba Golf Course)."

- Jeff Thomas, Pest Management Officer, North Coast Region
Parks and Wildlife Division, Department of Environment and Conservation



When you add our trap strategy to the 'ToadMuster' process we can make a real difference

3 VOLUNTEERS

It is important that we keep up the volunteer effort and organise activities at the local level to support people and to maintain their energy for removing toads. We need help to run market stalls and displays and enrol people to join with other 'ToadBusters' to run 'ToadMuster' collection nights, working bees to set up and maintain traps, and coordinate local area and street campaigns to collect toads and record data on the numbers eliminated. Please indicate you are willing to help by ringing the toll free number 1800 243564.

You can also log onto the website www.frogwatch.org.au and register.

If you have the energy to act as a coordinator for your area or street please give us a call and introduce yourself. We can organise someone to go out and talk to a group to explain how best to control toads in the area. We can help to organise a get together, a Bar-b-Que or just a meeting, of the people in your neighbourhood to get a plan together.

4 TIO FIGHTING FUND

The 'Fighting Fund' set up by TIO with a kick-start \$10000 enabled the ToadBuster effort to keep going over the past few months, print a Toad Minimisation Strategy flyer and support the field-testing and publicity effort. The Fighting Fund will continue to be a source of funds to combat the toad and private donations to the Fund are needed. FrogWatch will approach other corporate sponsors to pay for trap installations, donate funds and support ToadBuster activities. The (small) profit that comes from gate, trap, T-shirt and other products, go to the fund for future campaigning and toad control measures.

5 WEBSITE UPDATE

The website is a central part of the communication strategy. We need you to log in and update your information and to tell us what you need. The new interface also allows you to get a new password if you cannot remember the old one. On the log in page there is a function that will send you a new password. Simply put in your email address and the system will send you a new password. When you log in change your password to something you will remember.



The cane toad pages on frogwatch.org.au are about to increase with the addition of trapping information, media coverage and a larger FAQ section. Watch for new material as we post it on the site. In the trapping section we want you to record the numbers of cane toads that you catch.

6 ART WORK FOR SALE

A painting, by artist Bob Macrae, pictured left, has been donated as a fundraiser. Bob has been a long time supporter of FrogWatch and has gifted the painting to FrogWatch in the hope that we can find a buyer (\$2,300) with the money to go to support our frog and cane toad work.

The painting is a representation of *Litoria Splendida*, the Magnificent Tree Frog, found in the escarpments in the western NT and in Western Australia. It is our most spectacular northern frog.

It would be an excellent piece for a feature wall at home, the corporate or ministerial boardroom or office.

Prospective buyers can view the 1300 X 1100 mm painting on display at Hang IT, 132 Smith Street, Darwin.

Bob has also done a series of lino cuts of scenes as which can be viewed and purchased online at www.frogwatch.org.au



Thanks Bob!

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FrogWatch developments

New Logo

FrogWatch has a new spot logo which will feature on many publications and items in the future. It features *Cyclorana australis*, the Giant Frog. It is one of the most common frogs across the wet- dry tropics, occurring in the NT, WA and the Queensland gulf country.



SPONSORS

Without these sponsors, FrogWatch would not have been able to do the things we have. Our very special thanks goes to these organisations. Please support them when you can.

The **NT Government** has provided FrogWatch with \$422,000.00 over the next 18 months to implement the Community Cane Toad Control programmes in the areas surrounding Darwin. This is fantastic news and will allow us to employ some people to help organise and implement the control project. If we can get everyone on board and working we should be able to keep cane toads at low numbers right through the urban and rural areas.

TIO has provided major sponsorship of \$10,000.00 for ToadBusters and was able to provide us with the funding at a very strategic time. Without their support we would not have been able to do the work necessary to secure the NT Government funding.

Darwin City Council

The council has provided significant funding, \$16,000.00 for FrogWatch to develop and implement plans to control cane toads in the Darwin City area. The funding includes money to print posters and other resources for the campaign.

Channel 9 Television

Channel nine has provided us with an excellent sponsorship package by giving us some advertising space on television. This has been very valuable in raising the profile of the cane toad fight with the general public.

ABC Radio

ABC continues to give us great coverage on radio and has helped us to raise the profile of the cane toad issue across the community.

Palmerston City Council

The Palmerston Council has contributed to the cane toad project to assist with some publications and the development of control strategies for the Palmerston area.

eNTITY1

eNTITY1 has continued to provide support in terms of hosting the website and providing office space and resources.



Trap Snippets

On going research on the use of traps to control cane toads has shown some interesting results and led to some changes. The traps have continued to catch toads right through the wet season but there have been some new things we have learned.

The smaller traps have been struggling to deal with the huge numbers of insects. The problem is that the cloud of insects attracted to the trap is larger than the trap and so the toads have no need to go into the trap.

One interesting development is the use of lower powered lights. These attract fewer insects and appear to be better in the times when there are lots of insects. The trap pictured used a solar powered garden light with great effect. Interestingly during the dry season the solar garden lights did not work because they attracted no insects.

Wrap your Trap

Another way to help the trap is to cover the sides of the trap where there is no gate to stop toads getting a feed of insects around the trap.

We have also found putting the lights inside the trap rather than on top helps keep the insects inside the trap.

Bigger is better!

Trials have shown that the bigger the traps the better with the superTrap outperforming the field trap by quite a bit. In trials where the two traps were set up near each other the superTrap caught 50% more toads. During the three week trial the supertrap caught 54 toads, the field trap 27



We have made our trap gates 40% wider to make more area where the toads can enter the trap. We have also found it is important to clean the clear fingers to maximise their effectiveness. The fingers get dirty from the toads licking insects off them. Simply wipe them with a wet cloth to make sure you can see through them.