

TOAD NEWS



Tenth Edition
June 2007

A project of



frogwatch.org.au

PO Box 4508 DARWIN NT 0801

1800 243 564

With support from



Northern Territory Government

105.7 ABC
Darwin

NTAP

DARWIN

NTTV



EDITORIAL – WET SEASON REPORT



TOADBUSTS RESULTS



TOADS REDUCING BIODIVERSITY



SPONSOR A CANE TOAD TRAP



BEER FOR A TOAD!

**Yes We
Can Stop
the
impact of
Toads,
and we
must!!**

EDITORIAL

As the 2006 -07 wet season recedes cane toads have managed to get into some suburbs of Darwin, albeit in small numbers, but it is time to reflect on our achievements.

As predicted with the wet season we get a new invasion of toads and collectively have done a good job in repelling this invasion so far. You will not find areas of Darwin with large numbers of cane toads and very few places where cane toads have bred.

This is the second Wet season of toads in Darwin and we can proudly say we have prevented them colonising the place so far. Hopefully we can eradicate the few remaining cane toads in the Darwin area as the Dry season progresses and start the next wet season with no toads in Darwin and Palmerston areas.

This wet season tally of 1550 toads collected during ToadBusts around the Greater Darwin Area indicates the numbers involved.

The detention centres have also been a key part of the strategy removing cane toads with Fred's Pass 5556, Palmerston 477 , Darwin Tip 275 , Berry Springs 241

Traplines have helped to shut down key corridors toads are using to move into the Darwin Area. The tally is Berrimah Trapline 251, Darwin Tip Trapline 70, Leanyer Trapline 44, Hidden Valley Trapline 39, and the new trapline near Casuarina Hospital 9.

The largest numbers of toads are not accounted for as many people are removing toads from their backyards on a regular basis and disposing of them themselves.

In all the impact on cane toads has been massive and they have failed to establish in significant numbers around Darwin and we still have goannas and other reptiles to show for our efforts.

Make no mistake about it there is a lot to lose here. The picture below shows what you might expect in your backyard if we let our guard down.

Not only have we removed lots of toads but we have also removed thousands of metamorph toads, eggs and tadpoles. Leanyer, Casuarina Coastal reserve, Jingili Water Gardens and Lee point have all seen outbreaks, which have mostly been controlled.



Could this be your backyard?



We have lost some wildlife in the process including this small goanna *varanus scalaris* from the Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

We have had a few other reports of dead goannas and snakes as well.

What has been particularly disturbing has been the observations from a few locations where cane toads have bred.

At Knuckeyes Lagoon, where Brandt road joins Vanderlin drive, toads bred in the flood waters on the side of the road and we observed a significant fish kill of grunter species due to them trying to eat cane toad tadpoles. We also saw 16 dead native predatory frogs, which appear to have died from trying to eat metamorph cane toads.



Picture showing dead grunter with cane toad tadpole that was in its stomach.

At Lee Point we counted 367 dead rainbow fish and gudgeons after a massive cane toad egg laying event in May. You could see where the eggs were by the dead fish. We managed to pull over 100,000 eggs from the water but we did not get them all and had to follow up on the tadpoles and metamorphs as well

It is scary to reflect on the way the cane toads are grinding down our biodiversity and replacing native

species in our environment. These processes must be being repeated week in week out right across north Australia!

Scientists are reaching the conclusion that toad control is much more feasible than previously thought. Professor Ross Alford, the scientist who has done more work on cane toads than anyone else in Australia has published a report indicating

“that, far from the situation often suggested in the popular media that “nothing kills cane toads,” they actually experience extremely high mortality rates, which only need to be increased slightly to halt their spread or even reduce their populations.

His analysis indicates that control may be more feasible than previously thought if we can increase the mortality slightly as survival rates are already very low. Our work is showing that it certainly is feasible. So keep up the good work.

ToadBusts will resume again shortly as the Dry season is the time when we can really wipe out cane toads from an area. The challenge is to have no toads in the area around Darwin and Palmerston by the end of the Dry season. We will also be planning to hit the big wetlands across the rural area. If you have a spot near you that needs ToadBusting let us know where it is so we can help develop a plan to clean it up.

Sponsor a Cane Toad Trap

FrogWatch is appealing to the community to help fund part of our strategy to stop cane toads overrunning Darwin and the surrounding region. We are seeking people to sponsor cane toad traps and sections of deflection fences to shut off the major corridors cane toads are using to move into the area.

Darwin is not being overrun by cane toads, as many predicted, with only a

small number of cane toads managing to get through into the Darwin area. Many people in the rural area are reporting fewer toads this year than last year.

Unfortunately even a small number is enough to cause significant damage to our wildlife populations and ecosystems, especially to animals like Quolls and Goannas and, in time, Green tree frogs and other native animals through displacement. Darwin is the only capital city that has animals like goannas. Our wildlife is a part of our lifestyle and a big part of the spirit of the Territory. We do not want to see cane toads destroy it.

We are confident we can reduce the numbers of cane toads even further by using deflection fences and traps and have planned a series of traplines to shut off corridors and clean up wetlands.

Trap Sponsors are recognized with a framed sponsors certificate to hang in the foyer or board room and the name or business name of the sponsor on the FrogWatch website alongside trap details and capture data. The final pages of the newsletter give more details of the plan. Please spread them around and take them to work to see if you can generate enough interest to get a trap in place.

DEFLECTION FENCES

We are also planning to shut off some of the corridors we have identified that cane toads are using to move into the Darwin Area. The first one of these will be the Rapid Creek / Airport corridor. Once the details are in place we will be holding some working bees to get the barriers in place. Watch this space for more details.

Some Grant applications have been submitted.

BEER FOR A TOAD

You may have noticed the Beer for a Toad promotion happened again last month with generous support from Cooper's Brewery. The project gave us valuable promotion of the Detention Centres and we got a great response with record numbers of toads in the three Centres featured, Darwin, Palmerston and Fred's Pass.

SICK TOADS

Over the past 2 months we have had a number of reports of sick toads and we have also found young toads with a strange affliction, which is yet to be identified. If you see anything like this please email us and let us know. If you have a digital camera take a picture and send it to us.

The young toads have what appear to be blister like swellings around the groin area and on the throat and abdomen. See picture following.



Picture of young toads from Leanyer with disease problems. All the young toads in this waterhole appear to have the problem.

Some adult toads in the Adelaide River region appear to have a wasting sickness and are really thin, almost skeletal. Do toads suffer from anorexia? Pathology tests are yet to reveal what it might be but we are keen to find out how widespread it is. If you have seen any really skinny toads please email us with the details. Send emails to info@frogwatch.org.au.

TELL US YOUR TOAD STORY

If you've had a weird, informative, humorous or horrible experience with toads, email your story into toadreport@frogwatch.org.au and we'll include it in our next ToadBuster News. We're constantly on the look out for toad information – one of the odd aspects of toads in Australia is that after 70 years since they were foolishly introduced there is still a lot less information, expert or otherwise, about toads and their effects on the environment, than one would expect.

Your story will add to our pool of knowledge, whether you've been squirted in the eye, observed unique toad behaviour or rescued a potential toad victim, tell us your story.

SPONSOR A CANE TOAD TRAP

FrogWatch is appealing to the community to help fund part of our strategy to stop cane toads overrunning Darwin. We are seeking people and businesses to sponsor cane toad traps and sections of deflection fences to shut off the major corridors cane toads are using to move into areas across the Greater Darwin region.



Darwin is not being overrun by cane toads, as many predicted, with only small numbers of cane toads managing to get through into the Darwin area this year.

Unfortunately even a small number is enough to cause significant damage to our wildlife and ecosystems, especially to animals like Quolls and Goannas and, in time, Green tree frogs and other native animals through displacement. Darwin is the only capital city that has animals like goannas. Our wildlife is a part of our lifestyle and a big part of the spirit of the Territory. We do not want to see cane toads destroy it.

We are confident we can reduce the numbers of cane toads even further by using deflection fences and traps. Our trials, see picture below, have shown the fences and traps combined can block toad's movement and increase the effectiveness of the traps.



Picture - Trial deflection barrier at Riyala Noonamah Jan 2007

Our plan is to get a series of deflection barriers and traplines set up to protect Darwin's wildlife and lifestyle. To do it we need support in terms of funds and help to install and manage the traplines.

In return you get your details on the FrogWatch website as a sponsor on the section of the site that shows the numbers of cane toads caught in your trap.

You can even link this information to your own website. As the traps are checked capture data will be recorded on the website and the tally showing your impact will be there for all to see.

This project is a great way for your business or social club to make a real contribution to keeping Darwin a Zero Toad Zone!.

FrogWatch Nth is a not for profit organization focused on raising environmental awareness, especially issues relating to frogs. FrogWatch has been active in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley region of WA for over 10 years and has developed a very strong public profile across a wide spectrum of the community.

In return for your Sponsorship we will acknowledge you through our website (about 30 000 visits per month) and our newsletter (1200 people). We will also provide a website where the ongoing capture data for your sponsored trap will show and the capture data will be updated regularly. You will be able to link this to your own website if you wish to.



A secure SuperTrap, complete solar system , lights, a controller, batteries, water systems and anchor stake cost 650.00 each You can sponsor a complete trap or join with others to part sponsor a trap.