



Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (Qld) Inc. Conservation and Wildlife Management Division

"Preserving Australia's Heritage"

SSAA (Qld) Inc. Conservation and Wildlife Management Division

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CONSERVATION & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT (Qld) NEWS

June 2014

Message from the Committee Chairman

Thanks to the efforts of a few people, especially Gary Cox in securing grants, we have now purchased 4 more thermal imaging monoculars so that each region has a set on hand. For more details about these incredibly effective bits of kit, please see:

http://www.extravision.com.au/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=104&products_id=1991



Pulsar HD38 thermal monocular

Some of the other equipment that we are in the process of buying and/or evaluating for use on projects are:

- Night vision attachments for rifle scopes (and other options),
- Transportable local area repeaters,
- Satellite phone,
- Wild dog, cat & fox

- traps,
- Additional trail cameras,
- Personal EPIRBS, Generators,
- Chainsaw use accreditations (for fire trail clearing on Govt properties)

One of the reasons that CWM has been very successful over the years as a 'preferred supplier' by many landowners is due to our willingness to work in coordination with and assist in their trapping and baiting programs. On a number of projects we check, clear and reset feral pig traps early each morning as part of our volunteer efforts. One project requires over 20 traps to be checked daily.

We are now looking to increase our skills, for those that are interested, in the use of foot hold traps to catch the 3 species that are arguably most destructive to our native wild life - wild dogs, foxes & cats. This training will commence in the South East where we are lucky enough to have some highly skilled

trappers from Qld Dept. Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry agree to attend our June 21st/22nd training weekend to show our members how to trap wild dogs, foxes and cats.

Finally, the committee cannot stress how important it is to attend the training events in your region. CWM is an organisation of 100% volunteers who have or are developing special skill sets. We need to know what particular skills and experience you have.

If you wish to attend CWM projects, you'll need to make yourself known to the committee members and project team leaders at one of our training events/ range days so that we can match your skills and experience for particular projects and your ability to fit into our teams.

Damien Ferguson
Committee Chairman
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South East Queensland Report

STEWARDALE DECLARED A NATURE REFUGE

The SSAA Stewartdale property has just become a Koala refuge. This is a major initiative of SSAA Qld together with the state government to create the largest state-funded Koala habitat restoration project undertaken in Queensland. This will involve the planting of more than 113,000 trees and management of over 200Ha. Queensland environment Minister Andrew Powell officially opened the new nature reserve at a ceremony earlier this year.



Stewartdale is now a Koala Nature refuge

The Koala nature refuge program adds to an existing wetlands rehabilitation and management program at Stewartdale which has seen the return of a wide range of bird species. Together these programs will create a really significant contribution to conservation in Queensland in an area where urban sprawl is impacting on the natural habitat of birds and animals like Koala's.

CWM has an important part to play in this conservation work.

We conduct a continuous program aimed at removing feral species from Stewartdale. This demonstrates how ground shooting can support conservation projects as part of a coordinated pest management strategy. This regular pest animal control work is also a perfect training opportunity for new CWM members to see how we operate and to meet other members. So come along and join us and make a contribution to this important work. Owen McIntyre

SE Training Weekend

The SE training weekend coming up on the weekend 21st-22nd of June at Stewartdale. Members in the South east are strongly encouraged to come along. We have a great program lined up and you will meet fellow members and find out more about opportunities to get into a field project.

For directions to Stewartdale:
<http://cwm.ssaqld.org.au/component/content/article/41-top-headlines/137-seq-stewartdale-ripley-training-weekends-details.html>

Owen McIntyre -
Southern Qld Coordinator
Stewartdale Project Office
Phone: 0417 615 505

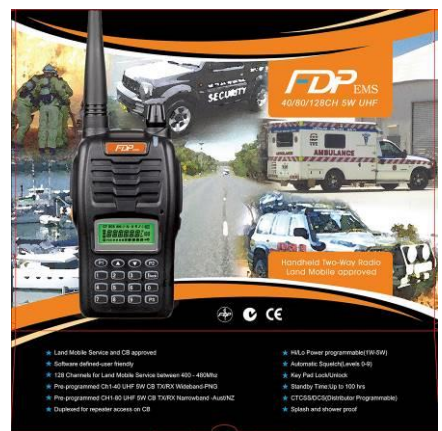
North Queensland

Mackay report

The Collinsville Project is tentatively set to run again this year. Very late August or in September sometime appears to be the most suitable timing for the manager of the property to fit in with mustering etc. Actual dates are yet to be confirmed. Peter Hannah from

the Whitsunday Group will most likely be the Trip leader as I won't be available at that time. Expressions of interest can be sent to either Peter feralann@bigpond.com or myself warrigal.1@bigpond.com

I have purchased one of the FDP EMS 5 Watt handheld UHF radios along with the 38cm extender antenna and speaker microphone as well as a spare battery.
<http://www.fdpdpradios.com.au/>



I intend to road test the unit on the Stanthorpe Border Project in a few weeks' time. It will be a good opportunity to make comparisons with other radios which should either support or debunk the claims made by the supplier.

Talks are continuing locally with our major government project partner about initiating several projects which are on our contract but which haven't got off the ground as yet. We remain hopeful that at least one or two projects closer to home may eventuate before the end of the year.

Graham Blines 0417 762 161

Townsville report

We would like to welcome the Cairns group and the Mt Isa group in to CWM Qld. A lot of enthusiasm from the members in the new groups should see very interesting developments in the North over the next few years.

The Bilby project is in Central Western Queensland and focusses on the removal of feral cats who prey on the Bilby population. Five members put up their hand for this project in April. We had three from Townsville one from Cairns and a new member from Mt Isa. The Bilby project is very special and all the members that attended feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to participate.

The property has had a very intense program of feral pest controls over recent time and the results are evident. Our members observed rare and threaten species in the wild, something that only a hand full of people can claim. We are very pleased to have taken every cat that was observed, there were no escapees. A lot of effort and kms were put into the task. CWM members travelled up to 3000 kms to attend this project and then did another 1600 kms under lights while on the project.

The Burdekin River Wetlands Project had a delayed start to the year due to those pesky cyclones. The first of 5 remaining trips for 2014 kicked off at the end of April.

There are several new projects developing up North that the Mt Isa, Cairns, Whitsunday, Mackay and Townsville groups will all be involved. We are proud to say that The North is developing into a significant CWM resource.

If you are interested in any northern projects and you are a southerner (we understand that you probable can't help that) there are some things we might be able to do to lessen your suffering. We have islands, balmy winter nights and projects that are overloaded with all manner of feral pests. There are some very interesting projects in the pipe line, so stay tuned.

Randle Irvin 0411 040 010



Some of the 3000 cats culled on the Bilby project since May 2012.

Photo: Mark Woods

Moonie Trip Report

How to BEAT the cold!

Seven hours left. 5 hours into night shift at work. 5, 4, 3, 2 bam 7am finish, the time has arrived. Finish time. A quick trip home to load up my swag, gear and food.

Let's go Ron! – my project travelling buddy. GPS says 4 ½ hour drive to Moonie. That was the schedule, but 90km down the road the engine light comes on and the car goes into limp mode, (limp mode is when the engine shuts down to x amount of km/h allowing you to reach your destination) Stop, reset the engine, wait 10 minutes. Car is fixed, we hoped. Too much preparation went into this and it is an absolute nightmare to get annual leave from work.

The entrance to the main property, a quick radio to the boys and we arrive at our campsite. Pure luxury!! The cottage you could call it had a toilet, shower, fridges, kitchen and even a BBQ to cook our dinner on. No rest for the wicked, tents up, hunting gear ready.

Time for the very first walk of an unknown property was "the melon holes." The team



Ron's foxes

walked in a line combing the landscape, hoping for a flush, 9 of us in spacing out to 300m. Nothing! It's getting dark, the firearms are cleared and we make the slow walk back to the vehicles. Then "Murphy's Law" as the first sow of the weekend runs out in front of the group. All of us in yell "PIG, PIG PIGGGG" but all of us have cleared rifles ready to get into the vehicles.

The nights at Moonie were freezing and every night we were there the boys on the back of utes spotlighting would complain how cold they were, not just the temperature but most of all, the wind chill. But that doesn't apply to Ron and me. We have a set up worth

talking about. Thermal vision is an option most CWM members now have some access to, and this weekend we had just that. Our thermal camera is screwed to the top of a 150mm spot light, which is in turn mounted on a swivel bracket to the passenger rear of the vehicle, allowing me to sit in the back seat to control. The out lead goes to 2 video screens, one is mounted on the windscreen for Ron to look at, and the second a roof mounted DVD player screen on the centre backseat roof for me.

The next day we jumped on the back of Micks Ute and drove along the main property boundary. STOOOOOPPPP! 2 Billy Goats ahead. We have long enough to line up the shots. 1 down, the mob is off running and we are off in pursuit and 1 more is dropped. Next we make the slow trek by foot to an isolated dam. Mob of goats ahead, those with safe shots line up. 3 goats down! All Billy's.



Three Billy Goats



The feral cat that didn't get away

Being so far unsuccessful with our thermal vehicle set up we decide to relocate to the adjoining project properties. A shearing shed is our accommodation and there are facilities shower (hot) and a toilet next door.

After a recon of both properties (70km round trip) and an afternoon nap it's time to head out in our very warm and comfortable vehicle. Windows are only down enough to get my arm out of the window to operate the spotty.

RON! STOP! I have an image. Confirmed fox. Ron pulls up, grabs his gun rest and lines up a fox at 100m. BANG, it goes down. That night was successful 1 cat, 2 hares and 2 foxes.

The one thing I have been told about Moonie, is it is well known for its pig population. On this trip the sorghum crop was well advanced and covers a large area. We did a thermal scanning run around the sorghum and we locate a mob of pigs. The cars turned off, the

spotlight is turned on, the ear piece plugged in and the scope mounted, torch goes on and I'm off into the sorghum, directed by Ron via earpiece and 2 way. "Not that row" he whispers, "2 over to your right". At this point I'm only 30m in the crop when I see a pig. I freeze, the big black shape is looking at me and I am looking back at it. I radio Ron a little nervous. He confirms it's a pig. "IT'S A HUGE PIG" the response comes back, "What are you waiting for, shoot the bloody thing." Amazingly, the pig and I are still looking at each other so I line him up. One shot of the .308 and the pig drops. I am elated as Ron joins me with the camera and the GPS to mark the spot.

The 4 days we were servicing the properties, Ron and I, with the help of the thermal gear, took a selection of feral pests (foxes, cats, hares, and 1 big boar).

Would I go back to Moonie? I sure would!

Doug Walker



My boar in the sorghum

Project Description - Project Moonie is located near the town of Moonie which is approx. 5 hours drive west of Brisbane. It comprises 4 properties.

The primary purpose of the project is to help preserve and protect the natural brigalow-belah forest from degradation by feral animals. A secondary purpose of this project is to assist the adjoining private property owners to manage feral pest species that damage their crops and pastures. For more information see:

<http://cwm.ssaqld.org.au/2013/index.php/projects/project-moonie>

Maryvale and Grandchester Projects

These two are emerging as long term CWM projects just a leisurely drive west of Brisbane. Both are owned and operated by the same organisation and good relationships have been developed between CWM members and the resident property managers.

Maryvale is a few minutes drive from Cunningham's Gap. There are two top quality resort locations in the area which is predominantly used for cattle grazing, interesting topography and extensive national parks on the eastern border. After many months of getting to know it, using trail cameras to detect feral activity and updating maps with previously unrecorded detail, the only evidence to date of the prime targets (wild dogs, cats and foxes) has been achieved using cameras and noting pad prints.

Bush camping locations are many and ideal. General approval has also been given to construct a shelter, possibly with a rain water tank and eventually perhaps a long drop toilet once the best central base camp location has been determined. A central base camp seems ideal for this property as up to about three teams could operate from the one location, share details of feral evidence, better arrange for team safety for both day and night and of course provide for enhanced 'telling of lies' with fellow CWMers during rest periods. It is also likely that such a base camp will eventually be suitable for use by member's families.

Activities at Grandchester where the prime target is also



These project properties are picturesque

wild dogs and other feral species, have just begun. Initial reconnaissance have been completed, however

Team Leaders are yet to develop plans for the first activities. The area is crisscrossed by mountain bike trails and is a haven for serious bike riders and bush walkers. Trail maps are well detailed and although a bigger property than Maryvale, the chance of meeting walkers and bike riders in the bush is probably higher.

At Grandchester we also have use of a well-established quality hut, ablutions and Bar B Q complex well away from everyone. It is likely this facility will also be available for CWM use providing comparatively comfortable facilities during occasional training activities.

Despite the real chance of encountering walkers/riders in the field, we have been trusted to be totally professional regarding safety and strictly complying with any local restrictions applicable at the time. Indeed we have been invited to approach 'bush walkers' if encountered during

our work so as to explain what we are about and why. It is expected that these nature lovers would enjoy meeting 'hunters' in the bush, particularly as we have a responsible and interesting story to tell.

Members wishing to participate in activities at either property should watch the CWM website, where details of planned activities will be provided.

Peter Ferguson (Project Coordinator)

Project information: *Project Maryvale is centered on a private property located about halfway between Brisbane and Warwick near Cunningham's Gap. CWM's role is to assist preserve and enhance populations of native ground-dwelling mammal species, particularly the Hastings River Mouse (*Pseudomys oralis*) and native bird species by assisting with feral predator control.*

<http://cwm.ssaqld.org.au/2013/index.php/projects/project-maryvale>

Stanthorpe "Amiens" report - February

A bunch of CWM members departed early from various parts of south east Queensland to meet at McDonalds in Warwick on Friday 8 am. Coffee and breakfast was the order of the day and we three newbies on this Amiens trip were made to feel very welcome.

We have a convoy, just before 9 am Benn, the team leader, called us all together and said: "time to leave, we will be travelling in a convoy". There were 7 vehicles spread over a kilometre travelling to the project property and arriving about 10 am. A blacksmiths building is used as our base camp. Facilities are very good with combustion stove, hot and cold water and 240v solar power.

Using a map, Benn briefed us on the location of the properties participating in the project, features of the landscape and where the feral animals have been seen. CWM rules were also thoroughly explained.

During the briefing, Peter (the overall project leader) informed us that we were going to build a goat trap using materials supplied by the property owners. This was easily accomplished in about an hour the following day. The idea is to catch a Judas goat, which would then have a property owner supplied tracking collar attached, to aid in locating the mobs of goats in their locations.

Friday afternoon saw us divided into groups. Benn led a team that contained two newbies, which he took to an area that



Amiens is in granite belt country

goats had previously frequented. Some goats were seen about 800 metres away which were stalked and 4 of the 6 were shot. The 2 newbies took 3 of the goats.

Friday and Saturday evenings saw 3 members sit on a property where pigs had been working about 70 metres from the house. None showed up on either night. Some rabbits were shot by the others on the Friday night.

Saturday 6 am, after a very blustery night, had everyone join into their respective groups looking for bunnies. However, the weather had all feral's very skittish, taking off at the slightest movements that they detected. The weather we feel contributed to only one rabbit and no goats being taken during the remainder of our time at Amiens.

The property was left clean and tidy on Sunday morning around 10.00 am and waiting for the next eager group of CWM

visitors to help the locals with their feral animal control. On behalf of the newbies I would like to express my thanks to Peter and Benn also who took such an interest in us and to really make us to feel welcome and part of the CWM family.

I'm looking forward to the next project visit.

Tony Harper

Project information:

The Amiens project is comprised of several adjoining private properties in the Amiens region of the Stanthorpe plateau in the New England tablelands. This region is approximately 2.5 to 3 hours' drive South-West of Brisbane. The nucleus of the project is formed by three properties that are all Nature Refuges and are subject to specific requirements set down by Nature Refuges Queensland. For more information see: <http://cwm.ssaqld.org.au/2013/index.php/projects/project-amiens>

Feral Cat Stomach Contents



Recently a CWM member sent this photo into our office with a note:

"...thought you may find this of interest for CWM data bank.

The stomach contents of one SINGLE feral cat caught and dissected by 'Arid Recovery' included:

- 24 painted dragons
- 3 bearded dragons
- 3 striped skinks
- 2 earless dragons (Endangered)

- 1 mouse

- 1 zebra finch

multiply this by number of feral cats constantly on the prowl...."

A similar photograph (below) of a feral cat's stomach contents was taken on our Bilby project last year by Mark Woods



The cat's stomach contents including Curl snake, Simpsons goanna, Grass hoppers and big centipedes with some bilby fur for good measure

Mark said that of the 131 cats taken, over one third had bilby in their stomach contents and just about every cat taken had one or more native animals of some description (birds, mammals or reptiles) in its stomach.

Participants on that Bilby project were required to help with all aspects of the data collection from removing stomach contents to helping identify what is in their diet and recording it on data collection sheets as well as DNA sampling.

The value of mentoring and knowledge sharing

On a recent training weekend we discussed the idea of mentoring new members. A few of our members did not have the skills and knowledge in the area of reloading ammunition.

So we matched them up with people who could give them some practical experience.

Mentoring happens a lot in our field work where experienced people are asked to pair up with others who may not have shot anything but paper targets and would not know how to behave in the bush. By "behave" I mean how to stalk, how to keep quiet and actually see what is around. Tips can be passed on even amongst experienced hunters. I went out with an experienced hunter who kept his extra rounds in his rucksack and I could often hear a "tink, tink" as the rounds bumped against each other. He said he was not even aware it was happening.

Remember back to when you first started. It's likely that someone guided you on how to observe tracks, scat and bed down areas that animal's leave behind. You now have a golden opportunity to pass on some of the skills and knowledge that you have accumulated over the years. A good example for me is my discussions with members who have shot different types of game but due to their lack of experience did not know how to recover the meat and needlessly leave it all behind.

Knowledge sharing can happen with people who are older than you. It's not about age it's about experience. Even if you are on the receiving end of someone else's knowledge that is equal to yours keep an open mind. They may pass on information that you were simply not aware of.

Ken Payne

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Upcoming Activity Dates –2014

Our calendar of activity dates is now published on our web site. Please go to:
<http://cwm.ssaaqld.org.au/2013/index.php/calendar>