

LAND TALK

Newsletter of the 'Centralian Land Management Association Inc.' (CLMA)

Hello everyone! A big thanks to those who got their cheque books out and renewed their memberships. For those that didn't, don't worry – there's still time.

The last couple of months have been interesting - with the weed project starting up, Envirofund applications getting done, Andrea having a 9.5 pound baby girl (Geri May), projects continuing towards successful completion and other things besides.

*I trust the mustering has gone well for everyone and that you get a well deserved chance for a rest sooner rather than later. And some much-needed winter rain for the southern region too!
Cheers, Adrian.*

Game Fishing in Central Australia

Early this April, Adrian James and the new CLMA Weed Project Officer, Peter McDowall went on a trip around the Sandover and Bunday river catchment. It was fantastic to see all the different country and meet the great people along the way. They covered Alcoota, Utopia, Ammaroo, Elkedra, Ooratippra, Argadargada, Derry Downs, Mt Swan and Delmore. There were a range of weeds in the area but it's good to know that most of the country is still weed free. Let's keep it that way!



Early on in the trip the two CLMA guys had lunch near a billabong down by the Bunday. Spotting some weeds, but not having any spray gear, they got out the old tackle and tried their luck. Stewart Weir from Ammaroo kindly lent them a quality Shimano fibreglass-handled shovel. The weeds were biting, as the photos show.

Here's Adrian proudly displaying a young Parkinsonia and two small Rubberbush. Note that the roots are intact – the loose soil of the bank made it easy to get them out. "The best thing about weeds is that there's no bag or size limits – you don't have to throw them back in" he said.



Here's Peter McDowall holding the 4 metre Parky that Adrian finally got after a long battle. "It just wouldn't come out so Adrian ended up using a tomahawk," said Peter. "Handling a Parkinsonia is just like handling a big Flathead – you have to watch out for the prickles."

With hardly any recreational or commercial weeding pressure in the area there are a range of great spots for catching a lot of big weeds. It's easy to get into - you don't even have to take out a loan for a big boat! So everyone can get involved in this great sport. If you'd like to know more, call the CLMA.

A New Peter Joins the Ranks

Peter McDowall, raised in Far North Queensland with a family background of extensive beef production in The Cape York area.

Studies at the University of Queensland (Gatton) were often broken by the need work, mainly on large properties, fencing, mustering, windmill work and even train driving.

Graduation with a degree in Rural Technology with a major in Plant Protection saw the start of a 15 year career with the Agricultural Chemical company Du Pont. In that time he covered the early herbicide work on control methods for Parthenium Weed in central Queensland and worked with new techniques for woody weed control in the western parts of Queensland and NSW. The last 7 years with this company saw him running the experimental farm at Dubbo where new chemistry was assessed on various crops for pest control. On the weekend home meant running wethers for wool and training sheep dogs.

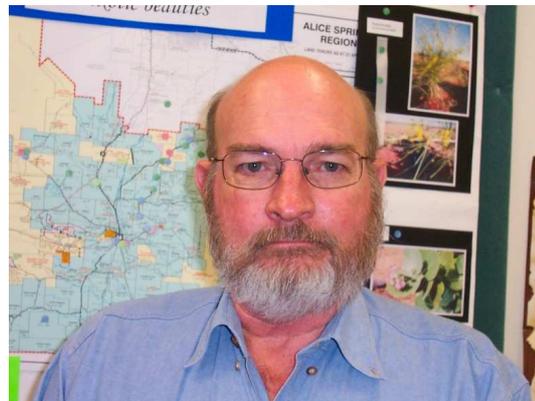
Peter moved to Canberra and started working for the newly formed Environment Protection Agency where he assessed new chemistry for the potential environmental effects their general release might have on Australia's fauna and flora. This was part of the work that resulted in the final approval and release of chemicals by the National registration Authority.

The new century saw a sea change where Peter headed for the North coast of NSW where he became operations manager of a Macadamia Nut processing factory. Farm

size in that industry ranged from 5 ha to 200 ha (a bit of a difference to Central Australia) Peter looks forward to the challenges of being the Project Manager for Sandover Weeds Project and has already met the majority of the pastoralists in the Sandover and Bunday river catchments. He is moving to base himself for a time in the Sandover flood out where he can survey the extent of infestations down towards the junction with the Bunday river. All the previously treated areas on upper Sandover will have to be re-inspected to gauge the level of reinfestation and germination of new weeds. Then he will then turn his attention to the Bunday and follow its course mapping and treating the weeds.

While in CLMA office and in the field Peter is looking forward to meeting pastoralists from other areas and discussing their weed management solutions.

"This is my first time in the Centre and I am captured by the scenery and in awe of the people who husband this land and hold it in trust for our future."



Next Meeting and Wrestling with the Constitution

There will be a CLMA meeting in conjunction with the NTCA meeting in late May. It's been quite a while since the last meeting so there will be plenty of juicy things on the agenda, and a chance for members to meet new staff. One of the more important (but tedious) items will be changes to the constitution. Basically, the government still didn't like the changes we made last year and requires an improved constitution by the end of May. It's a chore, I know, but it should last CLMA many years before the rules change again...



By the time you read this CLMA's Envirofund applications will be in Canberra, waiting for assessment. After a really hectic time rushing about trying to get all the information and permission etc. ready, we now have projects for:

- Murray Downs Station – fencing and ponding a creek area to improve wetland habitat and increase water infiltration in surrounding area.
- De Rose Hill Station – mapping and ripping rabbit warrens followed by vegetation and rabbit population monitoring.

CLMA could have done more than 2 applications but unfortunately interest was low and many members felt too busy, which is understandable. From now on we plan on maintaining files on likely projects we can identify (with your help) throughout the year. Hopefully next year there'll be more chances for our members to get some help from the federal government.

Coordinator Position Up For Grabs

Due to staff leaving and the coordinator position being filled without an official recruitment process, the position has been advertised and applications are being taken. If you know of anyone who may be interested in taking on this challenging and rewarding role, have them contact the office as soon as possible. Applications officially close on the 5th of May.



Don't let your Rubberbush do this...

MEMBER PROFILE

It's time for another quick look at one of CLMA's members. As we started with the President in the last issue, it seems logical that we progress to the Treasurer.

Names: Ben & Nicole Hayes
Station: Undoolya, a short drive east of Alice Springs
Family: 4 girls: Nikita, Mikala, Shanana and Tahnee
 1 boy: Jamie
Station statistics: Total lease area is 1444km
Cattle: 5000 head Poll Hereford

Market to: Anywhere, but mostly Adelaide

Ben and Nicole have been managing the property for 5 years

Station projects of interest to the CLMA: All the weeds that come down the Todd river: Mexican Poppy, Bathurst and Noogoora Burr, Saffron Thistle, Devil's Rope Pear. Luckily no Rubberbush or Parkinsonia yet. Also, the 30,000 ferals living next door.

Favourite cut of Undoolya Beef: Ben isn't fussy, he'll eat anything except kangaroo.

What Ben hates about living so close to town: Trespassers, rubbish dumpers, kids on motorbikes etc.

What Ben likes about living so close to town: Really convenient for parts etc.

Any chance of a rise in membership fees?: "Probably not".

Why Ben makes a good Treasurer for CLMA: Because he's got a really special-looking signature, and he was easily conned into taking the position.

Anything else?: The Hayes family has been in the area for over 100 years. They also grow tasty grapes and melons.



The Hayes kids at Undoolya

Laser Truck Update

Peter Armstrong and the Laser Truck are still under-utilised. They are both keen to get out in the field, and no job is too large or small.

"I will be doing some follow-up work on weeds that have been treated, mostly to the south of Alice Springs, so I'll be contacting some stations in the near future. I'll be going up to the Sandover in early May to help Peter McDowall, but I don't know for how long. If anyone would like a 'quote' discussion about the laser truck or anything else, call the office and the message will be passed up north."

Peter Armstrong

Watersmart Project Grinding Into 1st Gear

The WaterSmart project (run by the Desert Knowledge CRC) is getting back on track now since it has a replacement project officer. The info day in late March was a little disappointing since only a single producer, Roy Chisholm, turned up. Nonetheless, it was a good opportunity to try to make sure that some Federal Government money would result in something useful for the region's pastoralists. As it stands, the project will involve at least 1 field test (hopefully 3 in different parts) in Central Australia. The main part of the project

will be long-term testing of existing water equipment and technology – to provide results on different products' cost-effectiveness, reliability and so forth.

Any station interested in taking part in the project will be invited to put in a bid in the next few months. The bids with the highest level of support, as well as the most value to the project and the pastoral industry, will be chosen to host a test and get new equipment.

EMS Project – 3 Years On

Environmental Management Systems are at the “cutting-edge” when it comes to planning and monitoring environmental management in Australia. The central Australian pastoral industry can take great pride in that it has been the first “cab off the rank” in trialling EMS in the Northern Territory.

Arguably, the 13 stations who took part in the project know more about EMS than any other industry group or community group in the NT. These pastoralists have expanded their knowledge of the environment on their properties and verified that a lot of what they already do is spot-on.

It was a hard-slog for the 13 who were part of the trial group, but as a result of their experience, we now know what works and what doesn't. If you have considered starting an Environmental Management System for your station, now is the time! Give Dee a ring on 8953 4230 if you want to know how you can get started. Some of the benefits include:

- A large set of maps and all environmental information for your station.
- A record of the history of management for the station.
- Finding out whether you're obeying all the relevant environmental laws.
- Improved access to landcare funding.

Feel free to get in touch with some of the project participants to find out if EMS is for you. They are Alcoota, Hamilton Downs, Mt Riddock, Temple Bar, Murray Downs, Lyndavale, Erdunda, Andado, Palmer Valley, Tieyon, Umbearra, Lilla Creek and Mt Ebenezer.

March's Office Mascot

One Sunday in March Adrian went out to Mt Benstead creek with his trusty mattock to finish off some Rubberbush that had been left behind on a previous spraying trip due to being in an area the vehicle hadn't been able to get to. The family, Alexandra and Corwin, came along to enjoy the view and have a picnic. So he walked up and down the river, chopping and digging at roots, trying to get down at least 30cm to maximise the chance of killing these tough weeds. The next time someone goes back to the site to check on any regrowth it should be interesting to check the difference in success between the physical and chemical treatments.

Meanwhile, 4 year old Corwin found a brightly coloured caterpillar munching on a Rubberbush leaf. On the lookout for an opportunity for biological control agents, they took the caterpillar and some leaves back to the office. There it stayed, eating the Rubberbush leaves until it changed into a pupa, and then into a butterfly, when CLMA released it. With the help of CSIRO entomology, it turned out that the species was the

Lesser Wanderer. These are poisonous critters that eat poisonous plants with white sap, like Rubberbush. They are found all over Australia and across to northern Africa. Apparently there's not much value in using these butterflies to control Rubberbush infestations, but if anyone was interested in giving it a go, the butterflies etc. can be purchased in Australia.

On a more recent trip in the Sandover catchment, Adrian found another interesting caterpillar, this one eating Parkinsonia, but it hasn't been identified yet.

With weeds spreading in central Australia, it's nice to know that there are some bugs hard at work, helping to control them. If only we had a cactoblastis for all weeds...



Which plant is that?



This nasty-looking customer is found over much of our area, but is actually a native –
Acacia farnesiana

If you see a plant and you don't know what it is, it's not too hard to find out. Is that spiky thing growing around the bore a weed or a native? The Herbarium located at the Alice Springs Desert Park has experts at identifying the plants of the region.

The best way to get something identified is to send in an actual piece of the plant, hopefully with leaves, stem and flowers or seeds intact. If that's not possible, photos of plants leaves and flowers etc can still be useful.

You can contact with herbarium on 89518792 or just send samples to CLMA and we'll get onto it for you.

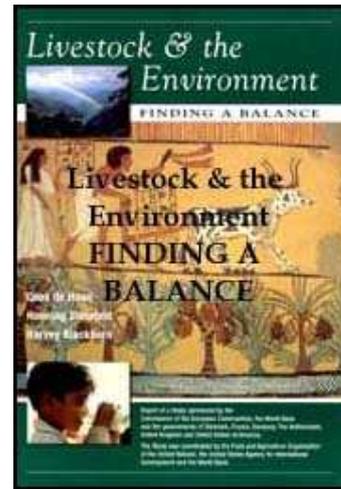
“Grazing can increase biodiversity”: UN

Desperate to find some filler newsletter material at the last minute, and hoping to find something remotely relevant, I came across a UN Food and Agriculture Organisation report titled “Livestock & the Environment: Finding a Balance”. It was compiled in 1999, assisted by the World Bank, the US Government etc. Basically, it’s a study into how the global livestock industry can help produce enough food for the future population without putting too much pressure on the environment. It includes some detail on how well-managed grazing can be beneficial for the local ecology.

So if you’d really like some solid bed-time reading, you can get the whole report on the web from:

http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/x5303e/x5303e00.htm

- Adrian.



Which would you kill first?



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For info about the Central Australian Grazing Strategies Partnership, & to contact Jillian cagsp@clma.com.au

If you know of any new additions or other news – let us know!