

the **basin** **BULLET**

the voice of desert channels queensland

next
page

exit

**April
2007**

a new look at traditional knowledge

will camels replace cattle?

Good oil on bad wood

weeds grenade

behind the golden orb

As I See It....

Getting over the hump sometimes takes some doing.

We're all products of our heritage. And while we adapt to the influences of our times, what we inherit from our forbears forms the foundation on which our lives are built.

Our political and legal systems were built on our Anglo-Saxon foundations, and we are still adapting the English and European food production methods brought to this continent more than 200 years ago.

In a predominantly arid and semi-arid climate we still husband species adapted to more genteel climes.

However, there are some among us who are pushing at the boundaries, testing traditional mindsets, and opening new frontiers.

Can camels be productively farmed in the country with the world's only wild population now numbering around one million?

Can we see past our long-standing and hereditary attachment to our hard-hoofed sheep and cattle to a gawky Middle Eastern immigrant that pads with soft feet on fragile soil?

What's a hump or two between friends?

Shaped by the past and present, we have opportunities to lay the foundation stones for the future. Should this stone be set in place?

In closing, our thoughts are with DCQ's Chair, Peter Douglas and his wife, Myra over the recent sad loss of their son, Luke.

The Editor

IN THIS ISSUE

What's a hump between friends?: will camels replace cattle?	3
Old ways; new ways: traditional knowledge; contemporary method	4
Uncorking the bottle-neck: another skirmish won	5
From the Desk: DCQ's Feral man talks about weeds and more	6
DCQ news: a few more things that are happening	6
Catchment roundup: what's going on around the traps	7
Behind the golden orb: another bush treasure	8
Good oil on bad wood: landholders leading the way!	9
Weeds grenade: thoughts of a two-legged chair	10
Review: a new star rising!	11

camels or cattle



The first of about 12,000 camels were brought into Australia in 1840 to assist in the exploration of the arid interior.

They were used to carry people, supplies and wool, and as draft animals pulling wagons and coaches and whipping water from remote wells. They gave us a tradition in camels that no other western country has.

With the advent of motor vehicles in the early 20th century, redundant animals were cast aside: turned loose to roam the outback. These were the seed-stock of what is now the only wild camel population in the world, currently estimated at around 1,000,000.

Such numbers are not sustainable.

"In high numbers camels can have a severe impact on waterholes and the fragile vegetation around salt lakes," said Dr. Glen Edwards, a

camel expert and researcher with the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and Arts in Alice Springs.

"They are selective browsers and can hit individual species such as the quandong pretty hard, stripping the trees bare."

In the eyes of many the solution is not only culling, but includes commercial harvesting and, dare it be written, the commercial running of domestic herds.

Five years ago there were probably only 600,000 feral camels in Australia when I wrote an article posing the question, 'camels or cattle?' Camel industry insiders were enthusiastic about the prospects of their product: there was great, untapped potential; markets were growing; demand far outstripped supply; and the only thing holding it back was the lack of transport capacity and a Halal accredited export abattoir.

In the interim, it appears nothing much has changed apart from the explosion in feral camel numbers across arid and semi-arid Australia and an increasing frustration of those whose vision for an economic and environmentally sustainable camel industry is constantly thwarted.

Back then, Pete Siedel was the Chief Executive Officer of the Central Australian Camel Industry Association based in Alice Springs. He was confident that the camel industry could be a viable alternative to cattle production in the more marginal parts of the central Australian rangelands.

"Absolutely!" he said at the time.

"We already have producers running camels instead of cattle on their more marginal country and that will only increase."

Pete was overseeing the live export of up to 300 camels per shipment to a client in Malaysia and had a single Saudi importer who wanted thousands per year.

Then...the Cormo Express!

The discovery of a 'high' percentage of scabby mouth in a shipment of live sheep to Saudi Arabia in August 2003, and the Saudi's subsequent freezing of all livestock trade with Australia, put a huge spanner in the works of the camel industry's export plans.

According to Pete Siedel, the industry was on track to export at least 3,000 head before the Cormo Express docked at the Saudi port of Jeddah.

"It's difficult to rebuild," he says.

"It takes a long time to get the quarantine facilities in place and to re-establish protocols

and Memoranda of Understanding."

A further spanner in the works was the withdrawal at the end of June 2006 of financial support for the Central Australian Camel Industry Association. In the meantime, the association is being run on a volunteer basis and continues to explore market opportunities for its members.

On a more positive note, world demand for camel meat far exceeds supply and there is no chance of that changing in the foreseeable future. Even domestic consumption has increased, but the real market is off-shore. To meet that demand, Australia needs investment in an export accredited abattoir that can also kill animals in the traditional Halal method of the Muslim religion. A passionate advocate of this and other camel infrastructure development is South Australian camel expert and ecologist, Phil Gee.

Vastly experienced and knowledgeable about the dromedary camel, Phil is now project officer for a camel management project

(continued overleaf)



camels or cattle



with leading consultancy agency Rural Solutions SA and the regional South Australian Arid Lands and Alinytjara Wilurara natural resource management boards.

Phil Gee has been, and remains, a staunch supporter of a commercial camel industry but says, "The truth is, commercial harvesting alone is never going to solve the feral camel problem.

"We need to control feral camels decisively and sensibly, but whatever we do, we should not cut off at the knees any hope of a camel pastoral industry...it should not be discounted."

While the economic drivers to turn pastoralists from the traditional cattle to camels are not yet there, Phil is also doing work to build the basis of an industry with a lot of economic and environmental opportunities.

"My interest in camel pastoralism is purely ecological," says Phil. "The big question is: how do we make it profitable for landholders?"

"The camel is soft footed and doesn't tend to break up the soil; doesn't graze down groundcover; is extremely drought resistant; you need far fewer watering points which in turn, give less

support to feral cat and fox populations; and overgrazing around watering points is minimised because they spend far less time at the water. But like all livestock, numbers need to be managed"

In conjunction with BHP Billiton's land management team, Phil is also operating a small 'Camels in Pastoralism' trial program on Stuart Creek Station, west of Marree.

Five years ago, they had 50 camels; now there are 350 with about 50% being captured ferals. Phil says the trial has demonstrated the camels' manageability in a domestic environment, their respect for fences when trained, and their capacity to weather the hard times without excessively compromising pasture or browse.

"Our camels were fat when everyone around had trucked their droughted cattle away."

But it's all about economics, and the figures don't stack up for camels, not yet anyway.

There is also significant opposition to the commercialisation of camels, and smart operators like Phil Gee acknowledge that there is a need for wider knowledge of camels.

There will be different rules for camels, and different obligations and responsibilities for management.

The public is constantly calling for better outcomes for biodiversity – for the land in general – and a preservation of those all important wilderness values that seem to be constantly disappearing.

Phil claims that despite the concern that camels can sometimes target species such as quandong, if we leave cattle in the rangelands, the net biodiversity loss will be far greater than with camels in their place.

"We have to get away from viewing the camel as only a pest and see it as a resource too," he says. "If we can do that, we'll get a far more balanced approach to the issue."

old ways new ways

An exciting new project being run by Desert Channels Queensland is set to record and store traditional Aboriginal knowledge using the latest in recording and storage technology.

Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways is a million dollar, cross-regional project involving a number of other natural resource management groups: South-West, Mackay Whitsundays, Far North Queensland, and Cape York. It covers more than half the State and will use whitefella technology to record blackfella culture for future generations.

James Newman, the project support officer, says the primary aim of the project is to record and store traditional knowledge for future generations of Aboriginal people. Most of the recording will be conducted by local community members after an initial training phase.

"We'll be going out and training community people to use the video and audio equipment so they can record their stories, edit them, and put them into a secure database," he says.

"Much of this knowledge is culturally sensitive and it's important that community people work the gear themselves and have confidence in the storage method.

"A lot of the knowledge that will be gathered by this project will be available for use in natural resource management and elsewhere."

James Newman, from the Wiradjuri Aboriginal nation in western NSW, has ten years experience in television, mostly with ABC TV in Sydney. Over the past decade he has also worked with NSW Parks and Wildlife Service in various capacities including trainee ranger and tour guide. James is also nearing the completion of a degree in Environmental Science through Southern Cross University.

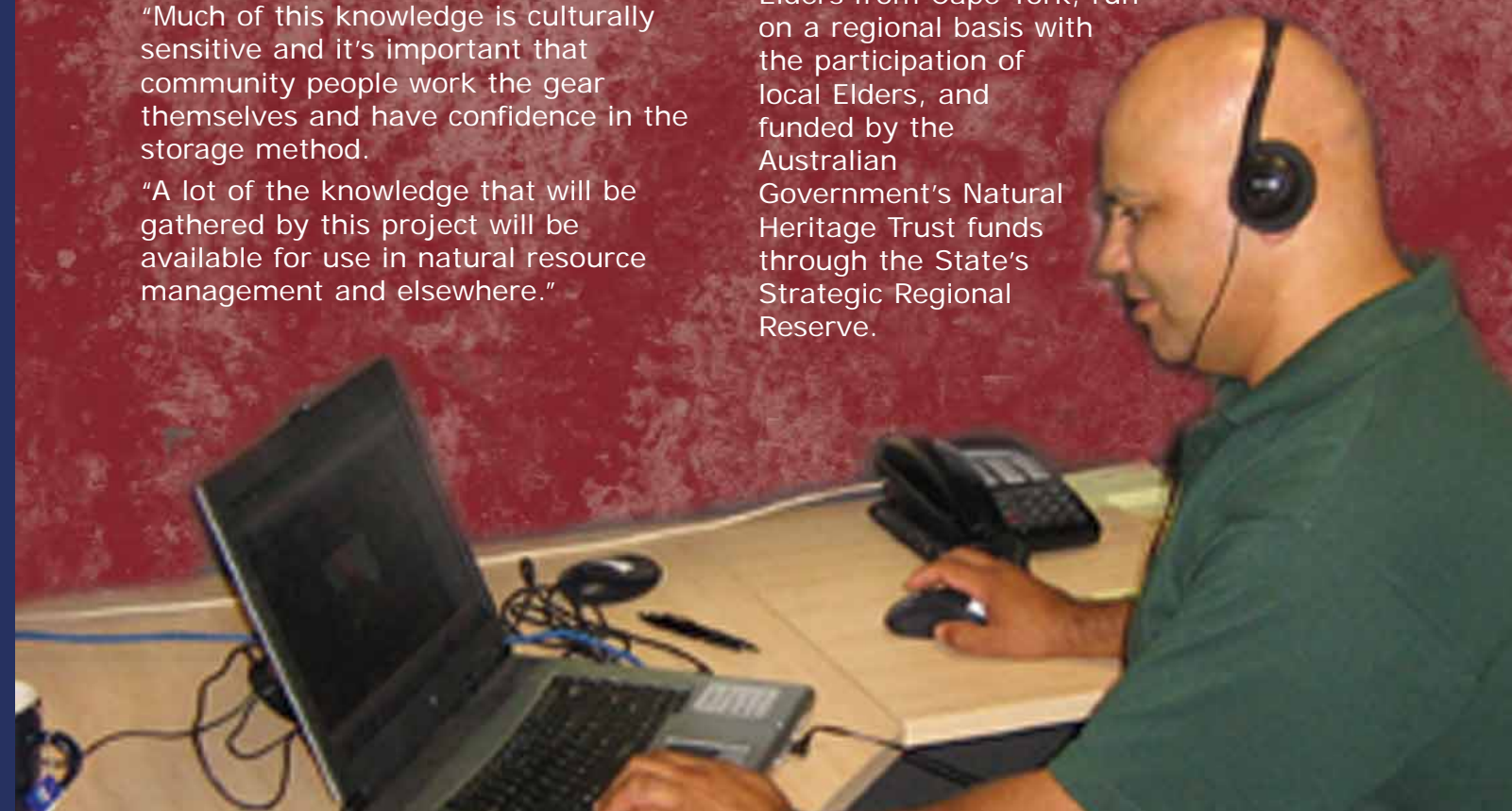
His experience, particularly television production, will be used to assist local Indigenous Elders across the project area to learn all aspects of recording their own Traditional Knowledge.

James says there are currently seven recording initiatives on the books and hopes that more Indigenous groups will get involved.

"Traditional knowledge has been an important part of Australia's history and this knowledge can help improve contemporary management practices," he says.

"Traditional Owners don't mind sharing their knowledge but it's important that it's acknowledged and respected."

Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways is a twelve month project designed by Aboriginal Elders from Cape York, run on a regional basis with the participation of local Elders, and funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust funds through the State's Strategic Regional Reserve.





bottle neck uncorked

Where once drovers had been refused a permit to travel livestock when a stock route infestation of prickly acacia was in pod, the cattle are moving freely again thanks to the efforts of a dedicated band of weed warriors. Peter Klem reports...

Prickly acacia has been removed from 20 kilometres of the main or Primary Stock Route that has, in the past, been responsible for stock route travel permits being denied to travelling stock by Local Governments.

Tackling the prickly acacia was a combined effort by many Winton Shire natural resource managers. The first wave of attack was carried out by members of the Western River Landcare Group which had been funded by Desert Channels Queensland to undertake a woody weed eradication project.

The major focus of this project was putting a stock transition zone through the prickly acacia infestation on the stock route. They held a weed buster day on the main Winton to Longreach stock route from the Longreach Shire boundary back to the Vindex Tank water facility.

While the eradication project was funded by Desert Channels Queensland, other contributors to the weedbuster day were

Winton Shire Council, Longreach Shire Council, Western Outreach Camp correctional facility, and Department of Natural Resources and Water. Representatives of each of these organisations also participated.

Several treatments were used on the day: a Starane and diesel mix to basal bark trees; Grasslans pellets on a strip on the western side of the route; and an end-loader to knock down trees around the dam area.

The Landcare group members provided the catering for the day and a barbeque lunch with a good supply of cold drinks was the highlight of the day for the hungry weed warriors.

Bob Hoogland, Winton Shire's Chief Executive Officer, said this combined effort from such a wide range of people and organizations was the catalyst for the next stage of the project which the shire council funded.

This stage saw a log skidder machine used to knock down mature prickly acacia trees.

This was followed up by Nicky Greenwood with his specially fitted 4 wheel motorbike. The machine was fitted with a purpose-built 70 litre tank with a 12 volt spray unit and had a rack with a place for a hand-held spray bottle to attend to trees that were not assessable to the bike. To take care of Work Place Health and Safety matters, there was also washing water, a soap bottle and a 2 way radio.

A mixture of Starane, water and a wetting agent was used to do a full spray on the seedlings and the supple, smaller prickly acacia that the skidder could not effectively push out.

To build on the good work carried out, the Winton Shire Council has reached an agreement with the holders of the land that the stock route passes through.

This will see prickly acacia eradicated from the full 1.6 kilometre width of this major stock route corridor that has had 16,000 head of cattle pass over it in the last 10 years.

In addition, the shire has made a commitment to follow up control of the seedling germination.

This work, coupled with a major assault by the Winton Shire and the owner of Vindex on the thick infestation of prickly acacia at the Crawford Creek water facility in 2005, has opened up a 20 kilometre corridor (400 to 600 metres wide) through a light to heavy prickly acacia infestation. The project was highlighted in Winton Shire's Local Government Pest Management Plan 2005 - 2009.

Councillor John Paynter, the Chair of the Western River Landcare group said, "This gives mobs of cattle a prickly acacia-free walk from Winton Township to the Longreach Shire boundary."



from



the weeds and feral animals

desk

Pest Management! Ten years ago if you said that weeds and ferals would be the most common topic around the region you would have been given a strange look and maybe a 'What?'

But these days it is the topic that everyone is talking about. I find it very encouraging as a 'pesty' person because I can see the community really becoming aware of the issues that we are faced with when it comes to weeds and pest animals.

At a recent field day in the north-west of the region a good crowd of 35 people turned up to be shown correct spraying techniques and to talk to other landholders about weeds. The day was successful in bringing members of the community together to increase awareness of the issues in the region.

Overall, weeds and pests are keeping me moving, and will continue to keep me moving for some time to come.

The success of the four Blueprint for the Bush – Pest Offensive funded projects will allow DCQ to assist landholders in the control of: 1) parkinsonia in the south of the region; 2) cactus across the whole of the region; 3) and mesquite across the whole of the region.

The fourth successful project was expanding the Weedspotters Network into the DCQ Region. I will take on the role of Regional Co-ordinator of the Weedspotters Network which will mean I will be the local contact for everyone in the community if they find a plant, grass or weed they are not familiar with.

Also, I will be running workshops for people who wish to become 'Weedspotters' and show them how to take samples and document them to be sent to the Queensland Herbarium for positive ID. This project will be a great awareness-raising activity and will allow the community to act on new and emerging threats in a more structured way.

Brett

Weeds and feral animals project officer

With the Cross-Catchments Weeds and Feral Animals Initiative there has also been plenty of action:

In late 2006 an aerial survey was carried out in the Windorah area for parkinsonia to accurately map the extent to assist the Pest Offensive project.

The florestina research project has been started through the staff at Alan Fletcher Research Station in Charters Towers. Seed samples and herbicide trials have begun at 'Kyneton', south of Barcaldine.

Also the Wild Dog Collar research has commenced. The collars have been made and will be deployed on wild dogs in the Blackall area very soon.

A Regional Pest Management Forum will be held in Longreach at the end of the month with representatives from SA, NT, NSW and Qld all attending. The forum aims to improve on cross-border relationships to assist in collaborative projects. This will help to achieve broader, more effective outcomes with control.

All up it's busy times ahead.

DCQ news

basin BULLET

As you can see by the articles in this edition, the DCQ team is full steam ahead with lots of activities, supporting the community in looking after their country.

Further support is coming up in the shape of a series of workshops called 'How to win funds and influence panels'. Experienced funding submission writer, Sam Morris will take participants through the basics of how to give funding bodies the information they need to view your application favourably. Five workshops are set down for: 30th April – Winton; 1st May – Windorah; 2nd May – Blackall; 3rd May – Aramac; and 4th May – Longreach. Each workshop is limited to 20 participants so you need to get in early by giving the office a call on 4658 0600.

We'll be holding a series of 'Garden Diva' workshops in regional centres (4th May – Winton; 5th May – Longreach; 6th May – Jundah; 7th May – Barcaldine) to promote better use of water while still having a great garden. Get the 'how to' from the 'who's who' (local garden divas), design advice from renowned garden planner Lawrie Smith, as well as information on irrigation and plant selection. Lunch and morning tea supplied so please phone to register your interest.

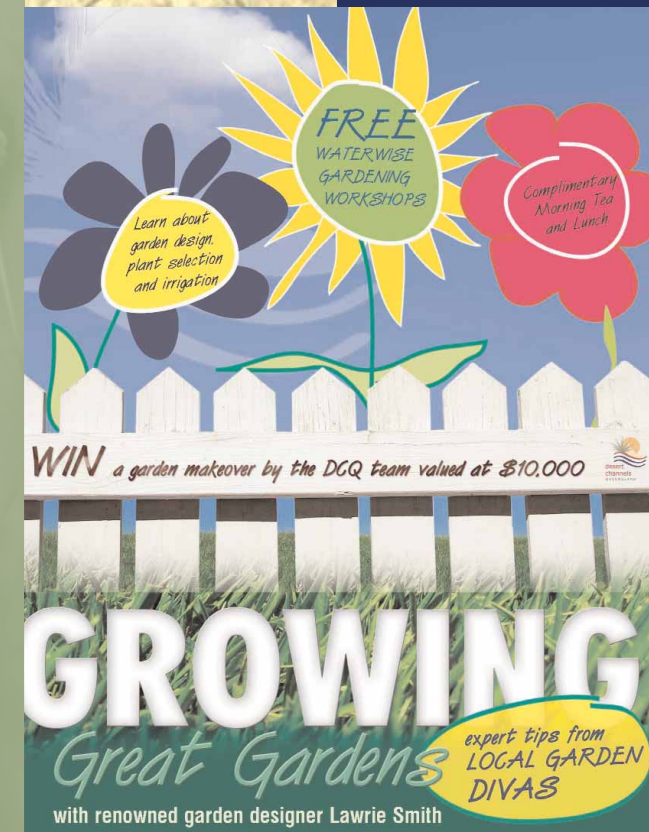
About 20 people attended a community meeting to provide comment on the draft Longreach Town Common management plan. This is the latest activity in the Town Common planning process that DCQ is leading, in partnership with the Longreach Shire Council, to provide leadership in community involvement in the long-term management of common lands.

Interested people are coming together on the 28th of April to clean up around the historic Old Cork Homestead. This joint DCQ and Georgina Diamantina Catchment Committee initiative is aimed at making the site safe for

visitors and providing interpretive signage to increase appreciation.

The next DCQ meeting will be held in the DCQ Conference Room, 92 Galah Street, Longreach, on 11th of April starting at 8.00am.

All the team at DCQ wish you and yours a safe and Happy Easter and look forward to talking to you in the near future.



Old Cork Homestead Clean up Day

You are invited to attend a cleanup day being held at Old Cork Homestead ruins to clear the historic site of rubbish. It is an initiative of the Georgina Diamantina Catchment Committee and Desert Channels Queensland. A fauna and flora study will also be undertaken by Queensland Parks and Wildlife and Desert Channels Queensland.

Saturday 28th April 2007 (starts 10am)

What to Bring

Hat, sunscreen, gloves, waterbottle, swag (if you intend to sleep over), old bags for carrying rubbish.

Transport

Transport to and from the venue can be organised if required.

Catering

Full catering will be supplied by Winton Four Wheel Drive Club. Alcoholic beverages will also be available as a fundraiser for the Four Wheel Drive Club.

To register your interest, please call Steve Wilson or Jeff Poole at Desert Channels Queensland on 4658 0600.

Upcoming catchment committee meetings

Cooper's Creek Catchment Committee – 17th April at the Isisford Interpretative Centre. We will kick off bright and early at 7.30am.

Georgina Diamantina Catchment Committee – 26th & 27th April at the Winton RSL. The meeting begins at lunchtime on the 26th.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT JEFF POOLE AT DESERT CHANNELS QUEENSLAND ON 4658 0600.**



Desert Uplands Committee

The Desert Uplands Committee was successful with a submission to the Blueprint for the Bush Weed Program for \$440,000 to cover the seven shire councils within the Desert Uplands Bioregion. Not as much as we applied for, but enough to get landholders started on, or to continue, weed control.

Our Information Days, funded by Desert Channels Queensland, will be happening shortly starting on the 16th April through to the 21st April, weather permitting. We will be travelling around the Desert Uplands region starting at Hotspur, Jericho and then moving on to Ulcanbar, Hyde Park, Percy Springs, Lyons Park and, finally, Taree. They are going to action packed days and include talks on water quality, soil erosion, Desert Uplands projects, vegetation management and two talks given by Peter Whip. If you would like more information, or would like to attend one of the days, please contact the Desert Uplands office on 1800 007 807.

We finally have a Communication Officer on board in Hannah Whiteaker who has so far been concentrating on getting our newsletter out but I'm sure there will be lots to keep her busy.

Will Green (DUC Project Officer) is in the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries office in Charters Towers doing project work and many other tasks such as Envirofund and is available if you require assistance with that or any other issue.

Through his Property Management Planning (PMP) project he will also be organising a number of workshops that landholders have previously shown interest in, including: Climate Workshops, Grazing Land Management workshops, and GIS and GPS training. So keep a look out for those.

Andrea Lingard (Project Officer) received an overwhelming response to the Landscape Linkages tender with landholders offering to place 164,296 hectares of remnant vegetation under management agreements. As the first phase of her project has been completed she has now been set the big challenge of organising all the details regarding the Information Days.

Seventy-seven projects have been run under the Advancing On-Ground Nature Conservation rounds so far and 25 more applications are to be assessed shortly under a round being funded by Burdekin Dry Tropics Natural Resource Management for the Burdekin Belyando catchments area.

We will hopefully be opening another round of Advancing On-Ground Nature Conservation for the western or Lake Eyre Basin side of the DU in the next few months so keep an eye on your mail box, and contact the helpful staff at the DUC office with your expression of interest.

As you can tell, it's been an extremely busy time around the DUC office but with the new member of staff on board and the Information Days looking like they'll be a huge success, the future is looking bright.

Lesley Marshall, Chair.

behind the Golden Orb

Anyone who's ridden a horse or motorbike through the inland Australian bush will have, at some stage, caught a face-full of spider web. DCO's Regional Coordinator and resident 'nature boy', Steve Wilson, sheds some light on the culprit...

Golden orb weavers (*Nephila edulis*) are one of the largest spiders found in Australia. They belong to the Family, Araneidae, a group of over 2,500 species found around the world.

Their webs can be seen attached between trees and hanging off dead timber and if you look closely, the main support strands of each web have a golden colour, hence the spider's name.

The large spiders you see are the females; they grow up to 45mm with a body length of around 23mm, while the smaller males measure only 6mm.

When you examine a web the larger female is usually seen centrally with her head facing down waiting for prey. The tiny male is normally seen on the edge of the web: he has to watch himself so he doesn't get eaten. Mostly he remains on the edge of the web, stealing prey when the female is not looking.

This species is a day, or diurnal hunter, its large web aims to snare flying insects.

The spider places itself strategically within the web to pick up vibrations when an insect is caught.

The captured victim is quickly despatched then wrapped in silk, and either drained of its

body contents immediately, or held over until the owner's appetite improves.

I have witnessed a young zebra finch (*Taeniopygia guttata*) caught in a web and was only just able to struggle free before the owner arrived, which shows how tough and durable spider silk can be.

This spider is beautifully adapted to the harsh environment in which it lives: to conserve protein, it eats any damaged web and then re-spins it.

Fortunately this species is not aggressive and its venom is not considered very toxic; however, it has caused localised necrosis in some bite victims.

Golden orb weavers live for about 12 months. They mature in summer, mate, lay their eggs and die late in summer to early autumn.

Courtship and mating can be a very competitive process with several males waiting at the edge of the web for an opportunity with the object of their desire.

After mating, the female builds a silky egg sac which is usually found in bushes near the edge of the web. The young emerge as miniature adults and soon move on as they are ready prey for many species including their parents.

Young spiderlings leave the web quickly as they will also cannibalise each other. They disperse by ballooning – floating on the breeze using threads of silk. Once clear of the hatching area the spiderlings will float free, land at a new site, build a small web, and start hunting.

...and so their cycle continues: weaving their gossamer magic throughout much of inland Australia.



on bad wood at Goodwood

Heat and flies are just part of a Boulia summer and neither deterred graziers from attending the Woody Weed Control Demonstration Day held at Goodwood Station on March 16. Rick and Ann Britton invited contractor Grant Telford to give a practical demonstration of best practice weed spraying at a site on their property.

Thirty-six people rolled up for the day and were instructed in the correct and most efficient way to apply chemical to parkinsonia for optimum kill results.

Desert Channels Queensland's Brett Carlsson was on hand to pass on some good news to the participants. Brett, who is DCQ's Weeds and Ferals officer, was able to announce that the DCQ had been successful in a funding application to the State Government's Blueprint for the Bush initiative.

"This particular funding is for a major project to attack parkinsonia," he said. "We'll be working closely with graziers and the Boulia Shire Council to hit everything south of the National Parkinsonia Containment Line."

The containment line, which runs just to the east of Boulia, south to Diamantina National Park before turning to the east, separates the control zone to the north from the eradication zone to the south.

Brett was also able to display a map of weed infestations in the catchment and explained how landholders could apply for assistance with weed control programs on their properties.

"Keep in touch with us and we'll let you know when there's more money available." Brett said that most of DCQ's funds come from the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust but also from a range of other sources like the National Landcare Program.

Attendees were presented with weed deck booklets, free of charge, courtesy of DCQ, Georgina Diamantina Catchment Committee and the Channel Landcare Group.

"It was great to see so many people at the Goodwood day," says Brett Carlsson. "The high level of awareness and commitment to weeds control in the Boulia area is really encouraging."

"I'd also like to congratulate Rick and Ann Britton who took the initiative to organize the day."

He added that the team at Desert Channels Queensland was always happy to assist in any whatever way it could.

To keep the worms at bay for the day, the Boulia State School P&C provided lunch and smoko. The P&C is fund-raising for their grade 5, 6 and 7 students' triennial trip to the snow.

over the fence

"Jim and Terry Lindsay have developed outstanding properties at Landsborough and Kettle Downs," Ms Bridgeford said. "They are able to demonstrate the benefits of working with an open mind and taking up opportunities that have evolved as a result of a self-education journey that was initiated by Resource Consulting Services training many years ago."

Visitors are welcome to stay overnight in the shearing shed so bring a swag (and a chair). Meals are being provided by Cameron Downs P&C to raise funds for the 2007 student camp. Please RSVP by 1 May to RCS on 4939 5255 and visit www.rcs.au.com or ring 1800 356 004 for further information.

Regarded as Australia's pre-eminent agribusiness education and training company, RCS is best known for its Grazing for Profit program which has trained more than 4000 graziers across Australia.

Producers in the pastoral zone have a rare opportunity to look over the fence at what Desert Channels Queensland cattle producers Jim and Terry Lindsay are doing on projects ranging from using camels for woody weed management to maramma dogs for stock protection.

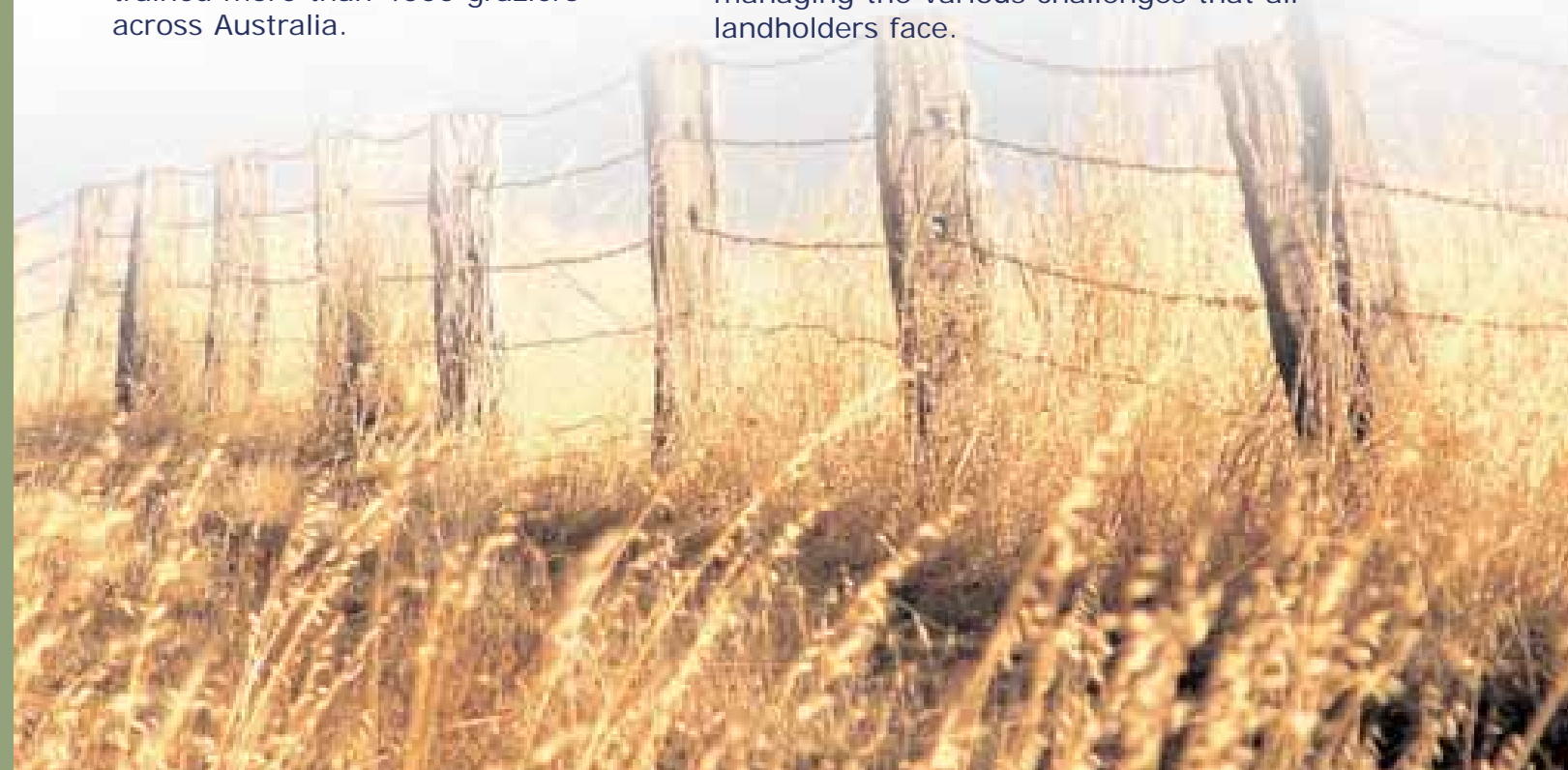
Mr Lindsay is renowned for his low-stress stock handling approach but has also achieved success with soil and pasture health and stock performance on his properties Landsborough Downs and Kettle Downs, in the headwaters of the Thomson River system to the south of Hughenden.

The 'Over the fence forum' on Monday 7 May, will include discussion about rotational land management and cell grazing, carbon trading, and the merits of livestock trading.

The morning session will take in a 'paddock talk and tour' viewing marammas, camel impact, watering and fencing systems, pasture management and cell grazing.

After lunch, the 'in the shed' sessions will cover carbon trading, grazing charts, low stress stock-handling, trading livestock, Resource Consulting Services' Rural Profit System and Grazing for Profit learning opportunities.

Resource Consulting Services chief executive officer Margaret Bridgeford said all producers are welcome to attend the 'Over the fence forum' and learn how one of the region's most progressive producers is managing the various challenges that all landholders face.



weeds grenade

Thoughts
of a
two-legged
chair

Recently we celebrated the 50th anniversary of prickly acacia being declared a pest plant.

In the last few years Federal and State governments, via Desert Channels Queensland and the region's inhabitants, have invested millions of dollars in time, money and equipment to control and eventually eradicate woody weeds and feral animals.

Many people are doing the job on their own without outside assistance. And the momentum is still picking up.

Ilfracombe Shire Council has offered assistance to plan and partner coordinated control of pest plants throughout their shire. Winton, Boulia and Barcoo shires are also to the fore in cooperative measures; other councils are showing increasing interest and action in a problem that requires a combined approach.

In addition, Winton Shire has a program where they swap one pest, or potential pest, plant in a town garden for a native plant.

However, enthusiasm, responsibility and love of country are not enough when it comes to the inaction of neighbours. Efforts are hampered when, particularly upstream, properties do not take action. Funding and assistance is available to the tune of 50% (up to 80% for cactus) to educate, isolate, plot and plan staged weed destruction.

While on the subject of cactus, it is to be hoped that governments will resist the call to allow more dry-land plants into Australia.

We're achieving some very good, coordinated results but the opportunity to promote strategic weed and feral destruction by including realistic pest planning as one of the pre-requisites for lease extension beyond the basic 30 year term is there for the State to take up.

Dare the State go further? Should the transfer of land be contingent on that property having a binding pest plan?

Premiums are being paid for weed-free country by those who recognise the problem; however, some people don't know what they're looking at or what they're letting themselves in for.

Weed destruction is becoming part and parcel of pastoral operations: undeniable proof is that landholders, contrary to some conservation groups' dearly held and much publicised belief, are looking after country.

Over the next three years, DCQ will be investing \$300,000 of Cross-Catchments Weeds and Feral Animals Initiative, and Blue Print for the Bush funding for cactus control – a problem which started with discarded pot plants.

We are achieving but I'm seeking ways to further improve the return to investors in sustainable resource management.

These, as usual, are my thoughts and my thoughts only; intended to stimulate debate. By any standard the region has done well. Should we be happy with what we've achieved to date?

I would appreciate feedback.

Peter Douglas



hump research

There may be as many as one million feral camels in Australia and the population is doubling every eight years. Camels already have significant impacts on production, environmental and cultural values across much of their range.

Because camels occur across a large portion of arid Australia and they are very mobile animals, a national approach is needed if the species is to be managed effectively. With this in mind, the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) developed a project entitled 'Cross-jurisdictional Management of Feral Camels to Protect Natural Resource Management and Cultural Values' and sought funding for this initiative under the Natural Heritage Trust.

This 3 year project has four major components:
1) survey of people's perspectives on feral camels and their management;
2) evaluation of camel impact;

3) feasibility study of commercial use of feral camels (including pet meat) to determine the role this approach might play in managing feral camels; and

4) assessment of non-consumptive approaches to managing camels including culling, fencing of key assets etc.

The overall goal of the project is to produce a practical management plan with a package of acceptable control options and a business case to justify investment in camel management.

The DKCRC is working with 13 partners through a nationwide network to deliver this project. A Steering Committee meeting has been set up to guide the project. The Steering Committee includes representatives of government, natural resource management boards, the camel industry, the pastoral industry and Aboriginal land owners. This group met recently in Perth to discuss progress of the project and to exchange information about camel issues with key camel interest groups in Western Australia.

For more information,
please contact the project leader:

Glenn Edwards
Principal Scientist, Biodiversity Conservation
Dept Natural Resources, Environment & Arts
PO Box 1120 Alice Springs, NT 0871
Ph 08 89518239 Fax 08 8955 5190
E-mail: glen.edwards@nt.gov.au





Harmony James has a tailwind and is she going to travel!

Every once in a while, you hear a song that grabs your hand – whether you want it to or not – locks its tune into your memory bank on repeat, and takes you on a journey to somewhere new but at the same time, strangely familiar. Harmony James' 'Tailwind' does exactly that.

Tailwind gives you an inside view of a young woman's self-discovery and has captured others' imagination as well. Esteemed talents in world music, Rosanne Cash, Mark Chesnutt, Jerry Lee Lewis and Tom Waits were among the judges who recently selected 'Tailwind' as the 2006 International Songwriting Contest, Country Song of the Year.

Harmony is a child of the Barkly Tablelands' sweeping horizons. She has captured the soul of the country in her lyrics while her vocal style has undertones of Shania Twain and Mary Chapin-Carpenter, married to a balmy Barkly breeze.

She is a graduate of the CMAA Australian College of Country Music and was a finalist in the Toyota Starmaker competition in 1998.

This woman is a rare talent and is going to go a long way with her great lyrics and distinctive vocal style.

For a copy of her four song EP that includes Tailwind, send a cheque or money order (\$10.00 plus \$3.00 P/H for Australian orders) with your details to: H James Merchandising, PO Box 159, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory 0861

Get in touch with Harmony at contact@harmonyjames.com.au for International shipping costs or find out more about Harmony at www.harmonyjames.com

Tailwind

All I remember is a whole lot of nothing
Where did my 20s just go
Same thing each morning, same sleepless evenings
Finally I learn to say no

Ch 1

I shouldn't be driving but I'm in 3rd gear
Saw the welcome sign in the rear view mirror
God I hope I get out of here
Make the tailwind strong and the highway clear

I stop for fuel as the sun goes down
With 15 dollars or so
The attendant asks me how much I want
I say 'more than you'll ever know'

Ch2

I shouldn't be driving but I'm in 4th gear
Saw the welcome sign in the rear view mirror
God I hope I get out of here
Make the tailwind strong and the highway clear

The wipers are waving they're waving goodbye
As I'm heading into the rest of my life
I'm learning to do a whole lot more than drive
Goodbye, goodbye

Let me remember always the good
And not be bitter with time
Cause I could sure use a happy ending
As I approach the state line

Ch 3

I shouldn't be driving but I'm in 5th gear
Saw the welcome sign in the rear view mirror
God I hope I get out of here
Make the tailwind strong and the highway clear

Ch 4

I shouldn't be driving but I'm in top gear
Saw the welcome sign in the rear view mirror
God I hope I get out of here
Make the tailwind strong and the highway clear
©2006 Harmony James

Desert Channels Queensland is funded by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust

