Welcome to our first edition! Twice each year the Gawler Ranges NRM Group plans to update you on its activities, as well as the SA Arid Lands NRM Board’s news and work in the Gawler Ranges district.

Cleaning up cactus

A voracious microscopic insect is proving successful in sucking dry problematic cactus across the Gawler Ranges and other areas of the SA Arid Lands.

Cochineal (Dactylopius spp.), a scale insect native to the Americas is proving effective in tackling cactus species including prickly pear, devil’s rope and wheel cactus.

While the insect has been used across the North Flinders, it has been introduced more recently to the Gawler’s and Kingoonya areas. It is having successful results on coral and wheel cactus and showing promising signs on the potentially devastating Hudson pear.

Through the SAAL NRM Board, the Gawler Ranges NRM Group is exploring the option of having a cochineal holding facility in Port Augusta, which would grow and maintain populations of cochineal for different cactus species present in the region. This would then be used to disperse onto the varied species of cactus.

While cochineal is having success in controlling these Weeds of National Significance, it is not a silver bullet for Opuntia control, with herbicide still recommended as part of an integrated cactus management plan.

SAAL NRM staff placed cochineal at the coral cactus infestation in the north west Gawler Ranges in November 2017. They returned to the site in January this year and again in August and observed that the cochineal is decimating the population. The mature cactus is turning black and crumbling and the young plants are blanketed by cochineal.

If you have cactus on your property and would like some assistance contact Paul Hodges on 8648 5194 or Chris Fulton on 8648 5376 or 0477 307 038
The survival of a number of threatened animals and plants in the Gawler Ranges district will be improved through the Bounceback and Beyond (B&B) project.

The project is supported by the SA Arid Lands NRM Board through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program.

B&B will reduce the impacts of foxes and goats across Pinkawillinie, Gawler Ranges and Hiltaba conservation managed lands and in numerous parks and pastoral leases across the Flinders and Olary regions.

Ongoing State and Federal investment has enabled recovery of the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby, with other species to benefit in the district including the nationally threatened Malleefowl, Short-tailed Grass-wren, Sandhill Dunnart, as well as regionally endemic plant species.

The project will expand management and monitoring activities beyond the original Bounceback footprint, initially to include conservation and pastoral lands east of Kimba, a stronghold for Sandhill Dunnarts and Malleefowl. Controlling threats such as foxes has also demonstrated benefits for sheep producers through increased lamb survival rates.

By re-engaging with private landholders previously involved in Bounceback, and targeting new areas supporting habitat for threatened species, the aim is to expand activities by more than 4600km² across the Gawler, Flinders and Olary ranges.

Staff will work with landholders on pest management to ensure complementary ground baiting is undertaken at optimal times between aerial baiting as well as goat mustering and ground shooting.

As part of the project, complementary monitoring is set up on properties to compare intensively fox and goat managed areas against current standards. The monitoring will include the use of motion cameras and on-ground assessments of the impact of goats and other herbivores on vegetation. Monitoring of threatened species will also be undertaken.

Motion-activated infrared cameras will be set up to provide comparative information on euros, western grey and red kangaroos, goats, wild dogs, foxes, cats, rabbits, emus, echidnas and any other animal larger than a rat.

Properties involved can access information from the cameras on the animals found on their properties, including foxes and wild dogs.

Herbivore impacts will be assessed along transects in areas inaccessible to livestock – usually steeper ranges or areas away from water points, with a focus on shrubs and trees, particularly those palatable to goats.

The proportion of individuals of a heavily browsed species versus lightly browsed will be recorded, providing a baseline for comparison with areas where goats are effectively managed and be a reference for future monitoring. At a regional scale it will inform which vegetation species may be threatened if goats are not managed to low levels.

An activity specific to the Gawler Ranges district is the contribution to a national Malleefowl fox-control experiment to determine its effectiveness across the country. This involved mapping Malleefowl Mounds detected using an aerial Lidar survey on fox baited and non-baited properties with mallee on sand dune country. The next step will be to determine how many nests are used, which can only be done by visiting each nest during late spring and summer.

If you are interested in taking part in surveys, contact Chris Fulton on 8648 5376 or 0477 307 038.

For information about Bounceback and Beyond contact Rob Brandle, Cat Lynch or Ben McCallum on 8648 5300.
The Bark Sheoak Adder (BSA) Project is SIMEC Mining’s (GFG Alliance) newest iron ore project in the Middleback Ranges (MBR) west of Whyalla. If approved, mining activities are expected (at this stage) to take up to five years, starting in 2020 and concluding in 2025.

The Project is located wholly on Cooyerdoo Station. It comprises five mining areas extending about 14km along a north-south line of low hills to the northwest of the current Iron Baron Mining Area (IBMA). The tenement covers an area of about 1900 hectares that are identified by the pink outline on location map (right).

Mining at the Project will be a simple dig and cart operation, with all crushing at the existing IBMA mining operation.

SIMEC prepared a Mining Lease Proposal (MLP) and submitted it to Department for Energy and Mining in April. It considered items such as flora and fauna, heritage (First People and European), surface and groundwater, and potential noise, dust and visual amenity impacts on residents of Cooyerdoo Homestead.

Landholder concerns were incorporated in the design of the planned mining operations at Adder Hills, the northernmost mining area. This included limiting the maximum height of waste rock dumps and siting them behind the hills to remove them from the sightline at the homestead.

The statutory period for public comment on the MLP recently closed, with no public comments received. SIMEC is now awaiting government responses to the MLP. Once the Mineral Lease is granted, SIMEC must submit a Program for Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation (PEPR) for approval prior to mining starting on the project. In this case, the BSA project will be incorporated into the Iron Baron PEPR.

If you would like further information on this project please contact SIMEC’s Community and Stakeholder Engagement Advisor Denise Sharp on mobile 0447 039 358 or via email at denise.sharp@gfgalliance.com
Six students from Port Lincoln High School now have a better understanding of how to read and interpret the landscape after a SA Arid Lands-NRM-lead workshop at the Kids on Country Camp at Hiltaba earlier this month.

The success of the workshop has resulted in SAAL staff planning to continue their involvement in the program into the future.

Gawler Ranges Community Landscape Officer Chris Fulton and SA Arid Lands Community Ecologist Ben McCallum shared information about plants and animals that are both native and non-native to the area.

They took the students on an interactive walking tour which started at the Shearer’s Quarters and ended on the rocky outcrops of the hills, where they were lucky to see the rare Gawler Ranges Mintbush.

The students observed the changes in the landscape as they climbed the hill and the effects of herbivore grazing on plant species.

Nature Foundation SA has run the Kids on Country program since 2016. In 2019 it is looking to hold six Kids on Country camps, with three planned at Hiltaba Nature Reserve and a further three at Witchelina Nature Reserve in the Marree-Innamincka district.

Kids on Country is a collaboration between Aboriginal community leaders, secondary schools, industry partners and Nature Foundation SA staff and volunteers, who share a passion and expertise for increasing the capacity of young people to build on their skills by embedding knowledge of Traditional Owners, Aboriginal connection to country and STEM education.
Carrapateena Project

Carrapateena is a copper-gold project located in the Gawler Craton, about 160km north of Port Augusta.

The project, which will be a 4.25 Mega tonnes per annum underground sub level cave operation, is on track for first concentrate in the fourth quarter of this year, after which it will ramp up over the following 18 months to steady state production.

A significant milestone was achieved in April when first ore was reached, which has allowed detailed orebody knowledge to be gathered from multiple development headings.

The minerals processing plant and non-processing infrastructure construction is continuing on schedule. The 550-bed accommodation village was completed last year.

OZ Minerals is focused on opportunities for South Australians with particular attention on the Upper Spencer Gulf and Outback Communities, and where possible are prioritising sustainable local procurement and local employment.

Carrapateena Expansion Project

In March 2019, OZ Minerals completed a scoping study on the Carrapateena Block Cave Expansion.

The study determined that replacing the lower half of the sub level cave currently in construction with a block cave has the potential to create significantly more value than a sub level cave development alone.

The potential for the Carrapateena Block Cave Expansion to progressively unlock the Carrapateena Life of Province more broadly via a methodical and incremental approach is particularly attractive as it manages risk and capital expenditure whilst enhancing value for shareholders and other stakeholders.

The pre-feasibility study is expected to be completed by mid-2020.
South Australian sheep and cattle producers have been strongly encouraged to register for the free One Biosecurity program designed to protect and strengthen the animal biosecurity regime across the livestock industry.

The program, also known as 1B, provides best practice biosecurity assessment, management, advice and guidelines for multiple livestock diseases, including the latest advice and requirements based on the recent changes to the Ovine Johne’s disease and footrot programs.

The program has been developed by Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) through Biosecurity SA in collaboration with the livestock industry and Livestock SA. It assists livestock producers to make safe, more informed livestock purchasing decisions to better protect their livestock. To read more about the benefits of the program visit www.pir.sa.gov.au/onebiosecurity.

Producers can register on the One Biosecurity website (onebiosecurity.pir.sa.gov.au), which provides an intuitive self-guided process through the program’s two main components: the Biosecurity Practices, and Disease Risk Rating modules, for specific endemic diseases that occur in South Australia.

On completion of the application producers will receive a government and industry endorsed biosecurity rating for their enterprise, which will be verified through several audit processes and can be shared with other producers and potential buyers or kept private.

The program is designed to complement other accreditation programs and meets the requirements for a biosecurity plan under the Livestock Production Assurance Program.

South Australia’s livestock systems, particularly those in extensive grazing systems, face some specific biosecurity challenges and it is important for producers to focus on the things within their control to manage. The One Biosecurity Program can help determine where producers should focus their attention.

The integrity of South Australia’s biosecurity is everyone’s responsibility and relies heavily on active participation from the livestock industry.

Are you 1B ready? Visit onebiosecurity.pir.sa.gov.au to complete the biosecurity questionnaire and better understand the risks to biosecurity on your property.

For more information call Trent Scholz on 8648 5166 or 0427 970 453, or email trent.scholz@sa.gov.au
1080 baits laid on surrounding properties

Dog owners on properties surrounding the park are advised that 1080 fox baits were laid along reserve boundaries recently.

This includes Pinkawillinie Conservation Park, Gawler Ranges National Park, Hiltaba Nature Foundation Reserve and Lake Gilles Conservation Park.

Australian Wildlife Photography Club

The Australian Wildlife Photography Club were back in the park over the June long weekend to further develop the parks image library as well as preparing photographs for interpretive projects happening in the park.

Central Hills 4WD Club

The Central Hills 4WD Club assisted park staff with tree and shrub planting around our carparks and campgrounds in June.

All the plants are local, with seed collected from within the park. Plants have been propagated and maintained in the Paney plant nursery over the summer months.

Growing local plants around our recreation areas has ideal landscape appeal.

This is the second year of the program and has been encouraged by some good successes last year despite the hot dry summer.

Stickybeak at Secret Rocks

Five members of the Friends of the Gawler Ranges NP group attended a Stickybeak day at Secret Rocks, a conservation property owned by John Read and Katherine Moseby.

It was well attended by community members, pastoralists and representatives from the mining sector.

John conducted a guided tour of his feral proof fence and highlighted the vegetation differences between burnt and unburnt areas in and out of the fence, and the severe effects caused by grazing from feral animals and kangaroos outside the fence.

He also demonstrated his ‘Felixer’ cat trap which is a fully computerised box, that is designed to recognise a cat from all other moving animals. When a cat is detected it will fire 1080 poison onto the cat which will later lick it off and so ingest the poison.

A photograph is taken at the time of firing.

Trials are currently being done to include foxes, with 54 of these traps being successfully trialled throughout Australia.

Staff Departure

Recently Xavier Scott resigned his position as a Working on Country Ranger in the Gawler Ranges National Park after working in the park for two-and-a-half years.

Xavier has taken on a job with a remote area road maintenance crew in the APY Lands. We farewelled Xavier with a staff BBQ and we wish him and his family all the best for the future and thank him for his contribution to the Park.

Lindsay Brown
Ranger in Charge
Gawler Ranges National Park
Starclub

In 2019 the OCA is partnering with the South Australian Office for Recreation and Sport on a new initiative, the STARCLUB Development Program.

STARCLUB is a program aiming to support sporting clubs and entities with governance and successful management strategies. STARCLUB provides benefits to clubs including improved opportunities for grants, sponsorship and governance plus covering off on your legislative requirements. Please register with this innovative support program and go through the 25 point checklist.

Sporting clubs must be registered with Starclub to be eligible for sponsorship funding and grants from the OCA in 2019/20.

Contact Community Development Officer Mark Shirley on 0428 888 076 or mark.shirley@sa.gov.au for more information.

Drought Relief Funding

The OCA region recently became eligible for Drought Relief Funding with an announcement by Rowan Ramsay.

Progress Associations and sporting groups are currently looking at possible projects and obtaining quotes to put forward for consideration for funding. The OCA will apply for funding on their behalf with an anticipated short timeframe for completion and the preference for local labour to be used.

Ideas for possible projects and funding should go to your local Progress Association and Sporting club initially. Contact Mark Shirley for more details on 0428 888 076.

War Memorial Upgrade

Grants totalling $15,000 were provided to the OCA to complete war memorials in seven locations across the Outback. The memorials comprising a flagpole, seat and signs were installed before the ANZAC Day Commemoration and ceremonies were held in Iron Knob (image above) and at Nonning (image at top).

The signs include names of those who served and were born or enlisted from that District.

Memorials were also created for each of the towns of Blinman, Parachilna, Marree, Kingoonya, Tarcoola, Lyndhurst and Pimba.

Names were researched from the book From the Outback to the Battlefront written by John Mannion.

These books are available for sale from the OCA Office in Port Augusta.
Biteback Program Update—June 2019

Gawler Ranges Ground Baiting (1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019)

- A total of 23,665 baits were distributed to land managers in the Gawler Ranges District during the 2018/19 financial year (17,315 more baits compared to the previous year).
- 22 land managers (45.8%) from the Gawler Rangers District attended coordinated injection services, which was 12 more than the previous financial year.

Properties Meeting the Best Practice Level of baiting (1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019)

- 17 land managers (35.4%) from the Gawler Ranges District are currently meeting the best practice level of baiting.
- This level is around 30% lower than other districts located south of the dog fence which corresponds with a reported lower level of wild dog activity.

Aerial Baiting

- 59,836 baits were distributed aerially over 47 properties in the SA Arid Lands Region during May 2019.

Monitoring (Calendar year 2018)

- 22 land managers (44.9%) returned maps for their properties in the Gawler Ranges District for the 2018 calendar year. This was four less than the previous calendar year.

Maps for 2019

- New maps for the next six month reporting period (July 1 – Dec 31 2019) will be mailed to all properties in early July 2019.
- Please return your previous map (Jan 1 – June 31 2019) in the self-addressed envelope supplied with the new map.
- This information is used to guide wild dog control efforts in your area. If we do not receive information about wild dog activity on your property, we can only assume you are not experiencing any impacts.

Spring Injection Service Dates

Proposed dates have been developed for the 2019 Spring Injection Services. Official invites will be sent by email around six weeks before each service.

Kingoonya/Gawler Ranges Districts: 21-29 October 2019

Some extra days have been added for the district to accommodate for an expected increase in participation by land managers meeting the baiting levels outlined in the Best Practice Guidelines for Wild Dog Control.

Data collected during 2018 (South of the dog fence)

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More new drying racks for coordinated injection service sites

- Each of the Coordinated Injection Service sites will be receiving another new bait drying rack similar to the one shown in the photo below.
- This project, funded by the Commonwealth Government will further develop the bait injection sites to accommodate more baits and will encourage better bait preparation techniques by land managers.
- Each unit is completely portable and can be used as a standalone drying rack, or can be grouped with others for larger amounts of baits.
TAFE SA training boosts skills in the pastoral sector

Shearing, welding and vehicle servicing are all part of a TAFE SA course designed to equip people with the skills needed to pursue a successful career in the agriculture sector.

Launched earlier this year, the Certificate III in Rural Operations has been developed in consultation with Livestock SA and local employers.

The course is being delivered in intensive blocks of three to five days over 12-15 months at Regency Park, Roxby Downs, Port Augusta or on a station, depending on the skills being offered.

In February, 10 students from regional SA took part in the first week of training, learning motorbike maintenance and butchery at TAFE SA’s Regency Park campus.

Chainsaw operation and Chemcard requirements have since been covered at Port Augusta, while the third block of training – a three-day workshop on fencing – was held at Pernatty Station, north of Port Augusta in July.

TAFE SA’s Manager of Regions, Robin O’Dea said the course was created in consultation with industry and targeted those wanting to work on large station properties.

“Our station owners and managers are finding it hard to get suitable long-term workers, so we met with them to talk about the kinds of skills they needed,” he said.

“It’s basic things like knowing how to mend a puncture on a motorbike and how to apply first aid through to putting up a fence properly and using new techniques such as low-stress stock handling. Our aim is to build a base of workers with a suitable skillset available for employment. We hope to entice new workers and upskill existing ones.”

The training is being conducted by experienced TAFE SA lecturers in conjunction with industry experts, and topics still to be covered include sheep and cattle handling, welding, grader operations and tractors and implements.

Mr O’Dea says the course could be adapted to suit cattle or sheep properties and he hopes to expand it to other parts of the state in the future.

“It’s an opportunity for TAFE SA to reinvest in our rural communities through this training,” he said.

The Certificate III in Rural Operations (AHC32816) is endorsed by Livestock SA. For enrolment inquiries, contact Shanon Pillion at Port Augusta campus on (08) 8648 9980.

Pastoral Act under review

You are invited to have your say on the future of South Australia’s pastoral rangelands as part of a review of the Pastoral Act.

South Australia has a long history of shared responsibility for the state’s pastoral rangelands between land managers and State Government, which is governed by the Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989.

With a review of the Act now being conducted, stakeholders are invited to provide their views on the future management of the rangelands.

The review is designed to allow the Pastoral Board to operate under modern legislation that reflects the shared vision that South Australians have for the future of the pastoral industry and the public values of the rangelands.

It is hoped that a reviewed Act will ensure South Australians can realise the greatest value from the rangelands, while continuing to maintain the environmental and productive condition of the land for future generations.

You can have input to this process through questions posed in the discussion paper, which will help guide the changes considered to modernise the Act.

You will find the review papers at https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/decisions/pastoral-rangelands/about
TOP 10 TRAVEL TIPS

Arid landscapes are incredibly fragile. They support a wide range of truly unique and amazing plants and animals. Every step off the path and every wheel off the track will have a lasting impact.

If you are not travelling through a national park or conservation reserve, you are likely to be travelling through a pastoral property – someone else’s backyard – where people manage the landscape to make a living.

Here are 10 top tips to help enjoy your stay, and look after the landscape.

1. CHECK ROAD CONDITIONS
Outback road conditions can change quickly depending on the weather. Plan for your trip and check road conditions, including Desert Parks, roads, at bit.ly/outbackwise or call 1300 361 033. If you’re planning to head to a National Park book ahead at bit.ly/bookahead. Visitor Information Centres can also help with road information and bookings.

2. KEEP ON THE TRACK
For the safety of this fragile landscape and your vehicle, please keep to designated tracks. It is an offence to drive off established tracks without proper authority. Soils are fragile and prone to erosion, and plants can be very slow growing. Driving off track can also damage cultural sites.

3. CAMP IN DESIGNATED AREAS
Camp only in designated areas or where you have obtained permission by the land manager. Please respect all signs and directions and remember that pastoral properties and buildings are people’s homes and businesses. Please respect their back-yard and camp more than a kilometre away from any buildings.

4. CAMP AWAY FROM WATERPOINTS
Camping close to stock watering points disturbs grazing stock and could result in you having a few dozen noisy neighbours. Joining you at your campsite. Camp more than 500 metres away from these areas. Always seek permission from the land manager before camping on their property.

5. BRING YOUR OWN FIREFOOD
Do not collect wood in outback areas – it is in limited supply and used by wildlife for shelter. Always check fire restrictions and be aware that some National Parks do not allow wood fires.

6. BE MINDFUL OF WASTE DISPOSAL
Use designated dump points for RV and caravan waste and take your rubbish to the nearest town facilities for disposal in bins.

7. USE PUBLIC TOILETS
When possible plan your toilet stops by checking the distance to the next amenities. If toilets are unavailable, dig a deep hole, burn any toilet paper and fill in the hole.

8. KEEP OUR WATER CLEAN
Water is scarce and our unique plants and animals depend on it. Please do not use soap or detergents in or near waterholes, stock watering points or artesian springs.

9. WATCH FOR ANIMALS ON THE ROAD
Kangaroos come out after dark. Avoid a repair bill or getting stranded, by not driving after dusk and before dawn. Sheep and cattle also graze on unfenced pastoral properties so drive with this in mind. And for the safety of other road users please remove any deceased animals off the road.

10. STAY IN CONTACT
Many areas of the Flinders and Outback do not have mobile phone coverage, so UHF radios can be a great way to stay in contact with your convoy. UHF radios are also used by people living and working in the outback. Channels 11-30 are best to use, and in an emergency, Channels 1 to 8 or 31-38.

Looking for a true taste of station life? A number of stations offer a range of different accommodation options. Some also offer the chance to test your 4WD skills in an environmentally friendly way with 4WD tracks and tours.

Visit a local visitor information centre to see what is on offer.
If you would like more information about weeds on your property this glovebox guide can help.

It provides details on a number of weeds found in the Gawler Ranges.

If you would like a free copy please contact Chris Fulton on 8648 5376 or 0477 307 038 or email christopher.fulton@sa.gov.au.

Copies can be posted or Chris can drop it out when he is in your area.

ABOVE: Free copies of the WEEDeck glovebox guide to weeds are available.