

The TOAD TIMES

Timber Creek 2006 - Week #1



Report from the Great Toad Muster Timber Creek Friday 30th September 2006. By Graeme Sawyer

PLANNING

The planning and logistics have progressed well considering the size and complexity of the task. The calibre of the staff has meant that any difficulties have been overcome and within 2 days of starting the base infrastructure was operational.

With a few extra days of fine tuning and additional equipment we now have two very effective bases from which to conduct our activities.

Timber Creek Headquarters - The main camp at Timber Creek has good facilities and places to swim as well as showers and a shop. The shed area provides a good central meeting place.



Auvergne Lagoon Base Camp - This is the main operational base and has been set up to provide as much comfort as is feasible in such areas. Its creation has been a major feat.

The trailer provided by John Sinclair safaris has been a tremendous asset and made the creation of such a facility possible.

Many other groups and individuals have made amazing

contributions to make this exercise a possibility. More on them later.

Volunteers have assisted in all aspects of setting up required facilities including an electrical tent where essential activities such as charging batteries can be conducted efficiently.

TOADBUSTING

Training - The initial training was conducted on Saturday 23rd and a small toad bust trial was conducted at Pear tree tank and at a small waterhole in a paperbark swamp approximately 14kms west of Timber Creek. A total of 203 toads were collected but more importantly the volunteers were able to experience the practicalities of toad busting first hand.

Follow up training was conducted on Sunday 24th at Auvergne lagoon with specific field orientation and first aid and safety as the focus. We also placed emphasis on the development of skills and confidence for group leaders, equipping them to take squads into the field each night.

Again this training was completed with a structured toadbust and a total of 489 toads were collected.



VOLUNTEERS

The group of volunteers have been amazing in their ability to get going as a group and develop the cooperative spirit and camaraderie that has made the Auvergne base camp a special place to have been involved with. The positive approach and the can do attitude has led to the development of a comfortable camp in a fairly hostile environment and it has been a great place to spend time.

The nightly toadbusts have been very encouraging with the people responding magnificently to the challenge and finding great satisfaction from what they are doing. The enthusiasm displayed has been very rewarding to see.

PLANNING LOCATIONS

The ongoing planning for the toadbust is our biggest ongoing challenge as we have to modify our plans as we work, depending on the results and the reconnaissance work we have to do.

The use of the SlingAir Jet Ranger helicopter was an incredible boost to this aspect of our work. The hours in the helicopter enabled use to get GPS points for the water points right across the area in a few hours. To have done this work from the ground would have taken hundreds of hours.

We have found some significant new water bodies in the western side of the area but not as many additional water bodies to the east of the region. We still have significant work to do in the southern areas of the buffer zone to determine what needs to be done in that area.

RESULTS

As of Friday 29th we had a total of 3451 cane toads removed from the area from six nights of toadbusting. This is an average of 508 toads per night. Of these nights only three were "full night" busts, the others having also included training and travel.

It is clear that we have very significant toad infestations to deal with and that cane toads have been in the area longer than we feared. The numbers of small cane toads in the Ring Lagoon area indicates that toads have been in the area for at least one year. 60 mm toads are also present in large numbers in the area of the Baines River systems.

We have also begun some control work on minor tadpole and metamorph infestations in the Auvergne Lagoon area. It is interesting to note that numbers on some sections of the Auvergne lagoon have dropped significantly after four nights of toadbusting, indicating that we are having an impact.

Confirming the practical realities of our model and determining the level of effort required to eliminate toads from a specific location requires more work, but preliminary results are very encouraging. There are significantly more toads than expected in these areas.

It is clear we are going to get a very large tally as the toad's density will almost certainly be greater again as we move the operations further to the east.



Peter

MUSTER - TOAD TOTAL AT END OF WEEK #1 = 3451

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