

Toad Muster FAQs

Please read through these questions before contacting Stop the Toad's Campaign Manager, Kim Hands on kim@stopthetoad.org.au or (08) 9420 7266.

Registration

What kind of experience do I need to be a volunteer?

You need to be relatively fit, enjoy camping and have a love for the natural environment. An ability to work with others and take initiative when required is also important. The conditions are fairly challenging as the location is remote and the temperature will be hot; about 40 to 45 degrees Celsius during the day and 20 to 25 overnight.

Is there an age limit?

The minimum age for a volunteer is 14 years of age.

Do I need to go through an approval process prior to participating?

There is no formal application process, although you may be asked a few straightforward questions about your health and experience to see if this is an activity you are likely to contribute to and enjoy.

Can I recruit others to participate?

You can invite others to attend an information evening or ask Kim directly about recruiting someone if you know they are interested. They may benefit from reading these notes too before making up their mind that this is something they'd like to do.

Do I have to stay for the whole time?

No, you can stay for as long as you like. It generally takes about 2 days to settle into base camp life and the northern climate, so a minimum of 4 days is recommended.

Can I stay longer/shorter than planned?

Yes, please discuss this with Kim when you know you want to change your plans.

Getting there

Where will the Muster occur?

The Muster will occur on the eastern side of the WA-NT border. The closest town is Kununurra, W.A.

How do I get there?

You will need to fly/drive/bus it to Kununurra at your own expense. Airlines that fly to Kununurra include Qantas, Virgin Blue, Skywest and Airnorth. Greyhound Buses travels all over Australia to Kununurra.

When should I arrive?

Pick up days from Kununurra back to basecamp will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday, so please try and arrange to arrive one of these days.

How do I get between the airport and the site, and of course back again?

As your arrival will have been scheduled with Kim, transportation from the airport (and return) will have been arranged unless you have advised otherwise. If you arrive unexpectedly or earlier than scheduled you will need to arrange accommodation in Kununurra at your own expense until transport can be arranged.

Can I just rock up anytime or do I need to schedule a special time to go?

It is not helpful to the running of the camp to turn up unannounced. Tents, equipment and working schedules are allocated to volunteers at the camp and unexpected arrivals will frustrate the efforts to make sure everyone is adequately catered for. Please schedule your arrival time in conjunction with Kim.

Are any of the costs incurred by me, tax deductible?

No.

Am I insured as a volunteer while there?

Yes. You will be asked to complete some forms for the Department of Conservation and Environment which provides insurance for STTF volunteers.

What to bring**What will I need to bring?**

All the material required for the toad bust will be provided, although of course you can bring your own if you wish. This includes a tent, swag, gardening gloves, food, first aid supplies, a head torch for night work, a hat, insect repellent and so on. You will need to bring sturdy shoes or boots, your own washing/hair care items and other personal effects. You may wish to bring a sleeping sheet and or pillow case.

Can I bring alcohol with me?

There is a strong preference to keep the venture as a 'dry camp'. However, some people find it refreshing to share a drink at the end of the day (usually late at night) which has been acceptable. Drunkenness, loud, unruly behaviour is *completely* unacceptable.

Base-camp

What's base camp like?

The camp is set up under large tarpaulins and consists of an eating/relaxing area, a kitchen area with fridges and freezers, a battery re-charging area and Kim's office area.

Are there showers and toilets?

There are showers and portable toilets. The showers use water pumped out of nearby water source, while not heated the water, is quite warm.

Approximately how many volunteers will be at Base Camp at any one time?

The number of volunteers at the camp change on an almost daily basis varying from half a dozen to 30.

Is there a phone at camp that I can use? How can people contact me at camp?

There is a satellite phone available for emergencies but the camp is not within normal mobile phone range and there is no access to the internet. Your friends and family can contact you on the Sat phone in emergencies (the number will be given out closer to muster time).

Who sets up camp?

A team of volunteers go to the area the week before the muster to set up the camp. This team and other willing volunteers then dismantle the camp at the end of the muster.

Will we have any contact with the cattle station staff?

People from the cattle station occasionally call in when passing.

Daily activities

What is the best way for me to contribute?

The daily tasks needed to keep the muster going are varied and include the toad catching, counting and burial as well as a full range of domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, and so on. The most useful contribution is to volunteer for those tasks that suit you best. Everyone has a role to play.

What will I be expected to do?

The campsite needs all the jobs done that you would find in an ordinary house like cleaning, washing up, food preparation, sweeping and so on. During the day, equipment is prepared, the smaller bags are washed to be re-used, the lamp batteries are re-charged and fences put up around water holes and if possible some catching up on lost sleep as the working days are long (typically 7am - 11pm or later). Toad busting activities occur in evening.

Is there much free time and what kind of activities are available?

There is always something to be done, but some free time usually becomes available in the mid afternoon when it is a quiet period, between meals and it's too hot to work.

Can I go to town for a day if I'm there for a long period?

The Foundation is planning to have some accommodation in Kununurra for volunteers on their way to camp. It may be possible for volunteers to have a day off there when the vehicle goes to town to pick up provisions or other volunteers.

Toad busting**What is the general toad busting procedure?**

The toad busting procedures are many and varied but include driving to a water hole in the evening, walking around it several times and placing toads into a plastic bag. When the bag is full it is tied off and another is filled.

When it is felt all the toads have been found in that area the bags are collected and placed in the vehicle. The team may then go to another water hole or return to camp depending on the time. Back at camp the bags of toads are emptied into larger bags which are filled with Carbon Dioxide. In the mornings the toads are emptied out of these larger bags and counted before being buried nearby.

Will I need to wear long sleeves and long pants to protect myself?

These are not needed while within the camp but are advisable when catching toads as there are many insects and thorny plants. If in the sun during the day long sleeves are essential.

Will the difference between a cane toad and an ordinary toad be obvious? What if I collect the wrong one?

On-site training will be given to help you distinguish between the two, which becomes very easy after a short while.

Do we wear gloves when picking up toads?

Some people wear gardening-style or rubber gloves to protect their hands from sticks and thorns etc but after awhile you will probably find it easier not to use gloves.

What if I realise when I get there that I'm squeamish and can't handle things, are there other ways I can contribute without handling the toads?

Yes, everyone has a role to play and there are many essential jobs needing done around the camp that do not involve toads at all. The daily tasks needed to keep the muster going are varied and include the toad catching, counting and burial as well as a full range of domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, washing up dishes, putting these away, sweeping out the tent and living areas, refilling the water containers, stocking up smaller

water bottles for the freezer, setting up the equipment bags needed for catching toads, keeping some order in the kitchen/pantry/fridge etc, cooking meals, filling the generator with fuel, checking the shower water tank and many others. The most useful contribution is to volunteer for those tasks that suit you best.

How do you kill the toads?

They are killed humanely with Carbon Dioxide. They are then buried.

Health and Safety

Is there medical attention available if I get sick or injured?

Most of the work is done in very remote areas of the north of Western Australia and the Northern territory, well out of normal communication reception, although Kununurra hospital is only a couple of hours drive away.

Base-camp has an extensive supply of first aid equipment but if you need regular medication you must bring adequate supplies of it as there is no guarantee of being able to re-stock at Timber Creek or Kununurra.

STTF staff and some volunteers are trained in remote first aid but if there is a serious medical emergency, the Royal Flying Doctor Service will be contacted.

Is everyone accounted for each night?

Team leaders will be assigned to account for their team members each night. We also adhere to the common-sense rule of not venturing away from the camp unless with at least one other person, and preferably always with a two-way radio.

How do we protect ourselves against the local wildlife?

Reasonable precautions are adequate against most local wildlife i.e. using insect repellent, long sleeved shirts and long pants when outside the camp and watching where you step. We do not go close to waters' edge where crocodiles are present. An induction will cover what wildlife to look out for and what to do in the case of an emergency.

Food

Do I need to bring my own food?

No, all meals will be provided. Fresh fruit and vegetables are bought regularly from Kununurra. If you have special eating requirements (other than a vegetarian preference which is catered for) you will need to bring your food.

How are special dietary requirements dealt with?

All meals have a vegetarian component and quite a few are straight forward vegetarian meals. Other than that no allowances can be made for special

meals or allergic reactions to, for example, dairy products, nuts, shellfish etc as all meals are prepared in a camp kitchen using a limited number of cooking utensils, storage space, eskies etc.

If you have a particular choice of food e.g. gluten free bread, you are welcome to bring it along but please bear in mind cold-storage space is at a premium and cannot be guaranteed to be available.