GREAT TOAD MUSTER 2009 VOLUNTEER INDUCTION MANUAL

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BACKGROUND

The STOP THE TOAD FOUNDATION Inc is a non-government, non-profit organisation created to combat the imminent infestation of the Kimberley and other parts of WA by cane toads. We aim to protect our unique native fauna from this deadly introduced species and to protect our wonderful toad-free lifestyles.

Aim of The Great Toad Muster 2009

To undertake concerted control efforts at the time of year when toads are most vulnerable - at the end of the Dry season when they must congregate around remaining water bodies.



Picture: Graeme Sawyer holds a dead goanna found on the banks of Auvergne Lagoon during toad clearing operations.

TOAD HISTORY

Toads in Australia

Cane toads were introduced to Australia in 1935, in an unsuccessful attempt to control sugar cane beetles. From an initial release of 3000 young toads near Cairns, they are now estimated to be in their millions and cover about 1/3 Australia.

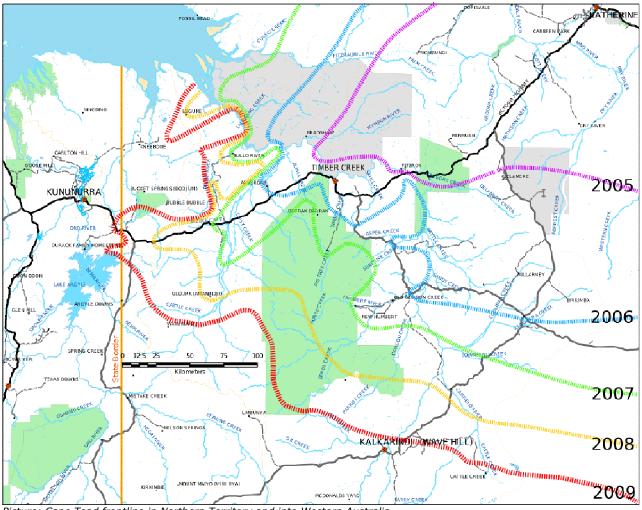
The ISSG (Invasive Species Specialist Group) of the IUCN (World Conservation Union) has included the cane toad in the 'One Hundred of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species' list (see link for further information).

Toads in NT

Toads arrived in the Northern Territory during the 1980's and hit southern Kakadu National Park in 2001, and reach as far south as Dunmarra (DEH 2005). Cane toads are said to be responsible for the extermination of Northern Quolls from parts of Kakadu and dramatically impact on goanna populations. They are known to cause deaths in a number of birds, fish, snakes, turtles, and crocodiles.

Toads in WA

The bad news is that a handful of cane toads were found in WA at the beginning of 2009. The red line on the map below indicates the likely 'current front line' for toads, although it is hard to know for certain due to the inaccessibility of some areas.



Picture: Cane Toad frontline in Northern Territory and into Western Australia

The aim of The Great Toad Muster 2009 is to reduce toad numbers and to push them back as far east as possible before the rains arrive and they are free to move westward once again. At its heart the plan is to create a 'buffer zone' in the most toad unfriendly parts of the NT and to drive the toads back each year until a biological king-hit can be found to put the toad genie back in it's bottle.

NOTE: Cane toads are a declared animal pest in WA and it is illegal to keep them or bring them into the State.

ABOUT TOADS

Identification

Cane Toads are heavily built and are generally 100-150mm in length, but can grow up to 230mm and weigh over one kilo. Cane toads' skin is usually dry and leathery, and in adult specimens,



females have creamy coloured, smooth skin, while males have yellow, rough skin, like fine sandpaper.

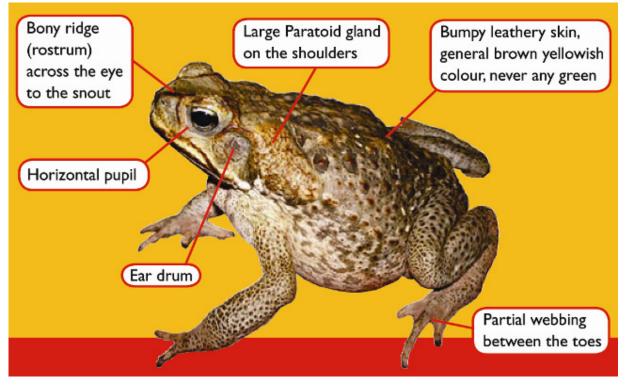


Picture: Juvenile toads

Juvenile and metamorph cane toads can be more difficult to identify (and pick up!). Some helpful identification features to look out for are pink spots and a line down their back, and that characteristic bony nose ridge.

Picture: Female (left) and male (right) adult cane toads

Don't worry; you will receive more on-ground training to help you identify toads correctly!



Picture: Cane Toad Identification

LIFE STAGES

Adults

A cane toad is considered an adult when it reaches a length of greater than 90mm from snout to vent. This is when a cane toad can begin reproducing. Adult cane toads will eat just about anything that fits in their mouth, this includes; insects, spiders, scorpions, centipedes and even native frogs. Adult cane toads are active at night (nocturnal) -so you can look forward to some late night busting!

Sub-adults and Juveniles



Sub-adult cane toads are between 30 - 89mm in length, they essentially act and look like smaller versions of adult cane toads. Although during this stage the toads are going from being active at day (diurnal) to being nocturnal. Thus they tend to be more active at dawn and dusk. Sub-adults can be further distinguished as juveniles; these are between 39-59mm in length. Sub-adults and juveniles are poisonous.

Picture: Juvenile cane toad

Metamorphs

Metamorphs are tiny toads, just over 1cm in length, which have just emerged from the water. They are very dependant on water and are usually found close to water or moisture. Metamorphs are diurnal, quite numerous and due to their small size and speed quite challenging to collect. When caught these can also be bagged and gassed. We are trialling a range of back pack delivered liquids that are apparently toxic to toads which may have an application for metamorphs.

Tadpoles

Cane Toad tadpoles grow up 30mm long. They are dark in colour, with short narrow tails. The tail is usually the same length or longer than its body. The tadpoles often group together and form a dark (black) mass on the water surface. Toad tadpoles can be collected using nets.



Picture: Mass of cane toad tadpoles



Picture: Cane toad tadpoles

Eggs



Eggs/spawn occur in the shallows of waterholes and form a sticky and gelatinous string that can be over one metre in length. This is quite distinctive from native frog spawn that tends to be in clumps. They can be collected by hand or using a net. **Cane toads are poisonous at all stages of their life cycle.**

Picture: Cane toad eggs

CONTROL OF TOADS

Hand Collection



Hand collecting has so far proved to be a very effective method of collecting toads in large numbers. This will be the main method employed during the Great Toad Muster. At this time of year water is at its lowest in this country and (being amphibians) toads must come to the water at least every six days (although the research that shows this is from wetter regions, it is more likely that toads need to come to water every 3-4 days in the drier regions, such as where the GTM is located). This dependence on water means the toads are found congregated in or near shallows of any remaining water at night. The toads are picked up and placed in a plastic bag. They are then euthanised using carbon dioxide gas $(CO_2$ is currently the most humane method available in the field). Later they are sexed, counted and measured for research purposes before being buried. A small net can be used if the toad is heading into water. A little experience will show you the best way to catch and pick up toads.

Picture: Hand collecting toads 'toadbusting

Fencing

The erection of toad fences may be used in a number of ways, with different aims. Many are worthy of experimentation and some have been evaluated during the course of The Great Toad Muster 2007 & 2008 with remarkable results (for more information check out the GTM Report 2008 which is available online at http://www.stopthetoad.org.au/main/publication s.php). Toad fences are temporary, wildlife friendly fences that are placed around large waterholes to deter the movement of toads back into these water holes once they have been cleared. Fencing is a major strategy to be employed by STTF in 2009.



Picture: Building a toad barrier fence

Euthanasia

In keeping with the ethics of humane animal treatment, all toads will be treated humanely and euthanised using CO_2 (carbon dioxide) gas. At no time are toads to be used for cricket or golf, or killed or maimed in any other way.

WHAT WE'LL BE DOING!

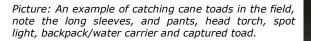
Work

During the toad muster there are many opportunities to get involved. The three main activities we will be undertaking are camp duties, toad busting and fence building.

Camp duties involve many different activities. These include kitchen duties (meal preparation/ cooking/ cleaning), toad processing (counting, measuring and burying toads) and camp maintenance (toilet cleaning, re-filling water containers, maintaining generators) to name a few. Everyone is required to help with domestic duties.



Toad busting is a night time activity that involves visiting the same water hole over a number of consecutive nights to manually collect cane toads. The aim is to have an early dinner after which teams will travel to toad busting sites before its dark. This allows time to familiarise with the site, and for safer travel. During toad busting participants can walk up to 6 km. This could be along rocky creek lines or around flat floodplain billabongs. Safety will be of the highest priority to all team members.



Fencing involves erecting barrier fences around water holes during the day. Due to the high temperature experienced during the day (it can get up to 45°C) it is best to undertake fencing during the early hours before it gets too hot. Fencing can involve physically hard jobs, such as knocking in posts and droppers, but also some fiddly work, such as attaching shade cloth. This year we hope to have fences pre-made so we can just roll them out and stand them up. This will make fencing very efficient.

Toad busting, fencing and other field work will be undertaken under the



Picture: Fence construction

supervision of team leaders. Team leaders will be experienced in this country and have First Aid qualifications. Most teams will move about the country in 4WD vehicles.

We anticipate that activities will be around 3-4 hours during the day, and 3-4 hours at night, depending on the level of toad activity. This year we aim to have an informal shift system to avoid having the people who have headed out early for fencing, then staying up late for busting. It is important to be at the afternoon/ evening briefing to find out where you are expected to be and when!

Typical day for Great Toad Muster activities:

- Morning: Fencing crew up bright and early aiming to get back to base camp and shade • before the midday sun takes hold. Camp crew begin daily duties; this involves processing toads (best done before the sun gets to the toads too much), maintaining equipment (making sure generator is fuelled, water is sorted, and spotlight batteries are charging).
- Day time: This is probably the best time to relax. It's hot, so pop you're feet in the inflatable pool and get some shut eye! Other activities for the more restless can include site reconnaissance, lunch preparation, metamorph busting, busting equipment maintenance and any other work required.
- Afternoon: As it "cools down" in the afternoon dinner preparation needs to commence. An • early dinner means more light to travel to and familiarise with busting sites.
- Evening/night time: After dinner busting teams will head out to various sites. When they return toads are euthanised and toad collection bags are washed and hung out to dry. Then it's sleepy time - after some pancakes of course!

Play

Don't worry; we don't expect you to work all the time! There are many opportunities to undertake leisure activities. At the 2008 GTM leisure activities included; sightseeing, bird watching, relaxing by the pool or in a hammock, fishing, bocce and even a little boot scooting and salsa dancing!!



Pictures: a little r & r time

Note: Will you celebrate a birthday or wedding anniversary or the like while with us? Please let us know when you register, so we can all celebrate together!

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION...

HQ Kununurra

This year we plan to have a Head Quarters in Kununurra located at a local caravan park (TBA). "HQ Kununurra" will be staffed by a volunteer for the duration of the muster. This means when volunteers arrive in Kununurra they can be met by the HQ staff who can run them through various things before they head out to the base camp. If you are arriving in Kununurra before a scheduled pick-up day (see Arriving in Kununurra) you will need to arrange your own accommodation in town. You are welcome to stay at the same caravan park as HQ, however you will have to pay for your own accommodation fees for the duration of this stay. At HQ Kununurra the aim is to get volunteers to fill in the required paperwork before heading out to base camp. This will mean when you do arrive out at base camp –after a camp induction- you'll be ready to get into it!

Base Camp (this is where you will spend your time)



Picture: Base camp 2008

This year base camp will be located on Newry Station. The camp will be in a remote location with few outside facilities available, i.e. no shops, email and only emergency satellite phone use. The base camp in 2008 was described as both luxurious and basic, depending on what people were used to. A detailed description of the likely set-up for base camp and facilities available are given below.

Group tarp: The main body of camp is made up of a large group tarp. This will consist of some pretty fantastic tarps and tarpology (the science of setting up tarps) set-up overhead to provide shade (and shelter from rain). This is the area where briefings, eating, relaxing and just about everything will take place.





Picture: Group tarp

Battery world: This is where (as the name might suggest) the batteries, radios and other electronic equipment is stored and recharged. Battery world will be run by an experienced volunteer. At the end of the night after busting make sure you return your spotlight batteries to be recharged for the following night! Other busting equipment may be stored in battery world.

Sleeping: Tents/ mozzie domes and swags are provided at base camp by STTF (you may bring your own if you wish). When you arrive you may have to erect your own tent/ mozzie dome or you could be lucky and some kind volunteer may have put it up for you already. Swags with foam mattresses are also provided. You will need to bring your own pillow, sheets and blanket/ sleeping bag (it can actually get a little chilly at night!).

Cooking: The camp kitchen is an open air affair. It consists of a few trestle tables, cooking and eating equipment and two freezers, a fridge and eskies for food storage. Cooking is done on three gas burners. Everyone is expected at some stage to help out in the kitchen, if you're a little daunted by the thought of cooking for a group of people, there are plenty of other opportunities to help in the form of food preparation and washing up!

Food: All food is supplied. All meals have a vegetarian component included, and some are entirely vegetarian. If you have special dietary requirements please let Kim Hands know when you register. Meals provided are simple camp meals. A rough guide is shown below.

- Breakfast: Help yourself cereal, toast (cooked on the gas burner), fruit, coffee and tea.
- Lunch: Usually a sandwich spread with salad and cold meats.
- Dinner: Dinners are designed around a ten day set menu that incorporates a variety of meals. Recipes and instructions are supplied. It is important to stick to the set-menu (circumstances permitting) as supplies have been preordered.



Picture: Picnic lunch

Kim's office: This area is set aside for the processing of toad data and to undertake administrative tasks. Kim requests that people only interrupt her in her office to bring her chocolate or bananas, oh and in case of emergencies.

Toad Hall: Toad hall will be set a little distance from camp in an appropriate location. This is where the toad processing will take place. This is where toads are to be brought and euthanised at the end of the night's toadbusting. The following morning the dead toads will be counted, measured and sexed for research purposes. The idea is to keep the toads and camp guite separate!

Picture: 'Toad Hall' - toad processing area



Toilets/ Showers: Toilets are provided in the form of porta loos. You will be introduced to these during your induction. Depending on the numbers of volunteers in camp the porta loos need to be emptied each day. An unpleasant, but vital job for the smooth running of base camp. Cold showers (a delight in hot conditions) will be available; these will be fed from a local water source (lagoon water). Both showers and toilets are designed to maximise star gazing time.

It is important to maintain good personal hygiene while at base camp. For the comfort and safety of yourself and others... wash your hands with soap; after toileting, before handling food or other kitchen utensils and after handling cane toads!

At this stage base camp is restricted to camping only. This means no caravan or camp trailers may be brought into base camp. Newry Station is a working cattle station; this means access to the base camp is only permitted when accompanied by STTF. When passing through gates on the station it is very important to leave them as you found them.

Communication with base camp is limited. Base camp will be equipped with a UHF radio. This can be used to contact crews working in close proximity to base camp. In case of emergencies base camp and vehicles will be equipped with satellite phones.

Satellite Camps

In addition to the main base camp some short term satellite camps may be established at other remote locations. You may be asked to volunteer to join one of the satellite camps for a few days.

EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR

Whether you are there for a couple of nights or the full duration of the Muster, you will be part of a team and respect for others will be an important ingredient for all participants to bring to the mix. Alcohol and field work do not mix so social drinking must be confined to times when it will not impair your work abilities- after toadbusting late in the evening. Bring some ways of amusing yourself. There will be some forms of entertainment provided. If you have any problems or concerns relating to safety, food, health, or other people you should always let Kim know. Anybody displaying anti-social behaviour, undertaking illegal acts or breaking the stated Muster rules, will be asked to leave.

Our activities are governed by the requirements of landholders and various legislation. Please note that neither guns nor dogs are allowed onto Stations (unless approved) or in National Parks.

GETTING TO KUNUNURRA

- **Flying** Qantas, Virgin, Skywest and Airnorth fly into Kununurra from Perth/Broome/Darwin. The days vary. Discounts are being sought so please contact Kim for further information.
- **Driving** Kununurra is 3200kms from Perth and you should allow 4 days for travelling. Please contact Kim if you would like to share the driving with another volunteer.
- **Bus** Greyhound busses travel all around Australia, including to Kununurra.

Note: There are <u>DESIGNATED PICK-UP DAYS</u> in Kununurra, these are <u>MONDAY</u>, <u>WENDESDAY</u> and <u>FRIDAY</u>.

Staying overnight in Kununurra

There are plenty of places to stay in Kununurra. Some suggestions are below:

Hotel Kununurra	Discovery Holiday Park
08 9168 0400	08 9168 1031
reservations@hotelkununurra.com.au	lakekununurra@discoveryparks.com.au

Facilities at Kununurra

Kununurra has the following facilities:

- Post office, pharmacy, two supermarkets (Coles is open until 8pm every night), pub, caravan parks, back packers, a hotel, a hospital, some cafes and restaurants.
- BP service station OPEN 24hrs
- There is only Telstra mobile phone coverage in Kununurra. Outside Kununurra reception is limited with Telstra Next G mobile phones only getting reception intermittently. There is no mobile phone reception at base camp.
- There is internet access is available at some accommodation and in some cafés in Kununurra.

For more information on facilities visit: http://www.kununurratourism.com/en/default.htm

GETTING TO BASE CAMP

Once you arrive in Kununurra you will be met by STTF staff in a Stop the Toad Troupe (contact phone number in the case no-one arrives is 0400130397). You will then be taken to Kununurra HQ where you will be required to fill out various forms before you head out to base camp. If you arrive in Kununurra on a designated pick-up day (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) you will travel out to base camp that day in a four wheel drive vehicle. Base camp is 70kms from Kununurra and will take 1 to 1 ½ hrs to reach. The scenery is amazing!

HAZARDS

Climatic conditions

September and October see rising temperatures in this region, with temperatures during the day, routinely in the high 40°s, and nights in the low to mid 20°s. Humidity is generally low during the day, and increasing overnight to be somewhat muggy and uncomfortable. Rain is possible at this time of the year.

While this may seem ideal from a southern winter perspective, it's important to note that dramatic changes in climate can leave you feeling drained, fatigued and generally unwell. It's important to take your first few days easy and not to overdo it, and drink heaps of water to stay hydrated. It will also be dusty with the potential for plenty of flies.

Dehydration

This is a hot and dry climate. It is vitally important to drink constantly during the day to stay hydrated, the usual rule of 2L per day, can be as high as 6 - 8 litres a day depending upon the level of activity you undertake. It will be important for you to be aware of the symptoms of dehydration and heat illness and look for them in both yourself and your team mates.

Crocodiles

This is Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodilus porosus*) country, and as such great care needs to be taken around ALL water bodies. The only swimming allowed will be in the blow up pool and in designated water holes – **no exceptions**. More information about Crocodiles will be provided during your orientation.

Snakes

Many venomous snakes inhabit this area, although their numbers have been depleted by cane toads. Do not attempt to catch or kill any snake you see, as this is when the vast majority of bites occur. Due to the remote nature of our work, avoidance is the key. Carry an elastic bandage in your backpack or pocket at all times. First aid for snake bites will be covered in more detail during your orientation.

Mosquito-borne diseases

Due to our proximity to waterways, mosquitoes will be present and active. Ross River Fever, Murray River Encephalitis, Barramah Forrest virus and Kunjin virus are known to be present in the area. It is strongly recommended you take precautions to avoid mosquito bites – wear long loose fitting clothing and use insect repellents when necessary.

Toads

Cane Toads have toxic secretions, which can cause irritation and potentially death (if eaten). With this in mind, it is important to maintain high hygiene levels and wear gloves when dealing with toads and be highly aware of keeping your hands away from your face especially. We will supply latex gloves for handling toads. Please advise us if you have a latex allergy.

Allergies

If you suffer from allergies (i.e. hay fever, dust mites) triggered by dryness, dust and/or flowering plants, you may need to bring lots of your allergy medication. Skin can be a problem in the hot, moist environment, with increased potential for rashes to occur (trust me I'm speaking from experience). If you have sensitive skin, please bring medication suited to treat your sensitivity (i.g. fungal cream or allergy medication). If you suffer from food allergies please discuss this with staff, as it will be difficult to source food products which don't contain wheat or nuts, for example.

Conjunctivitis

Another condition that may arise is dry or infected eyes (especially if you are not acclimatised to the local conditions). You may wish to purchase some artificial tears or antibiotic eye drops, if you know you are prone to this condition.

Fire

This is a highly flammable landscape. While fire is used at as a land management tool, this is the wrong time of year for landscape size fires. Great care needs to be taken with the use of camp fires, with no fires allowed during total fire ban days.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

- You will need to supply your own bedding: sheets, pillow and blanket/sleeping bag (tent/ mozzie dome and swags are provided).
- A small backpack is useful to carry water, lunch and other supplies.
- Long sleeves and pants are preferred to keep the sun off, a wide brimmed hat and sturdy shoes are required. Old runners or deck/ wetsuit boots are ideal for work around muddy waterholes.
- A head torch is necessary in many situations and will be useful both in camp and in the field. We will supply AA, and AAA batteries for field work. If you do not own a head torch we have some available for you to borrow.

- If you have any special dietary requirements please talk to our staff before departing your home location, so arrangements can be made. Due to the remote location, it will be difficult and nearly impossible to fulfil some requests, and you may need to be flexible or bring highly specialised items with you.
- Your medicines and any personal items you might require during your time with us.
- Lock up storage for valuables may be limited so don't bring unnecessary valuable items.

BRING ALL MEDICATIONS YOU MAY NEED WITH YOU Notify staff of any condition from which you suffer and any special storage required for medications eg. Refrigeration

DO NOT BRING

- Dogs/ other pets
- Illegal drugs
- A bad attitude

- Offensive material
- Firearms

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ensure your family and friends know where you are. Leave them with the following emergency contact numbers in case they need to contact you. We will also provide you with satellite phone contact numbers at the time so you can notify contacts.

These numbers should be used ONLY IN THE CASE OF EMERGENCY;

- Kununurra HQ P: 0400130397
- Head Office in Perth P: (08) 9420 7266 F: (08) 9420 7273
- Kununurra Police Station P: (08) 9166 4530 (only if unable to get through on the number above and the situation warrants Police assistance)
- 24hrs SES P: 1300 1300 39

WORKSITES AND PERMITS

Pastoral (Cattle) Stations

Much of our work will be carried out on pastoral stations. These are commercial cattle properties, and it is a requirement of management that all visitors undergo an induction and agree to a range of operating conditions while on the property. STTF has agreed to operate within these conditions and provide an induction for all volunteers. This induction will be undertaken prior to your first posting to a station. As these are working stations, cattle must not be disturbed, and a lookout maintained for crocodiles, wild pigs and buffalo.

National Parks

A permit is required from the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service to take fauna from a national park. You will be asked to fill in such permit applications as required if you are allocated to this area. If you are a photographer, a permit is also required to use any images of the park commercially.

EXTENDING YOUR STAY

Got more time up your sleeve? This is a great place to visit. Kununurra and Wyndham are worth having a look at and are close by. If you're driving up or back from Perth; Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungles), Karijini National Park and Broome are just some of the amazing places you can visit along the way. If you're driving down from Darwin; Keep River, Gregory and Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge), Litchfield and Kakadu National Parks can be visited.

Further information can be found at the following web sites:

Kununurra tourist information

- http://www.kununurratourism.com/en/default.htm

Broome tourist information

- http://www.broomevisitorcentre.com.au/broome.asp

General NT tourism site

- http://www.travelnt.com/en/

NT Parks and Wildlife Commission for info about Northern Territory National Parks

http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks/

FURTHER READING ABOUT TOADS

Publications on the STTF website

- http://www.stopthetoad.org.au/main/publications.php

The Federal Governments listing of Cane Toads as a 'Key threatening process'

- http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ktp/cane-toads.html
- A range of documents about cane toads and other feral animals
- www.feral.org.au

A range of information on invasive species from the IUCN

- http://www.issg.org/index.html

IUCN info page on Cane Toads

http://www.issg.org/database/species/ecology.asp?si=113&fr=1&sts=

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Lisa Brideson Josh Coates Carl Danzi Paula Diaz Mitch Farrell Russel Greig Russel Gueho Kim Hands Patsy Harmer Ian Kerr Derek Monks Karen Rusten Graeme Sawyer Megan Spence Corrin Everett

CHECKLIST

- □ Sheets, pillow and blanket (some nights do get a little chilly)
- □ Mosquito net/ Mozzie dome / tent (optional we do have some we can provide)
- □ Swag (optional we do have some we can provide)
- □ Daypack or small backpack for carrying lunch, water and equipment
- □ Water bottles for in the field (minimum 2 litres and preferably two of them)
- □ Clothing (light coloured long sleeved shirts, long trousers, hat, sturdy footwear)
- Personal gear (include sunscreen, lip balm and insect repellent, toiletries)
- \Box Medical/special requirements (enough for the duration of your stay and a little longer).
- □ Camera (optional)
- □ Sock protectors/Gaiters (to keep those pesky seeds out of your socks and mud)
- □ Fishing gear (optional keep it compact/light)
- □ Head torch (optional we do have some we can supply. Spotlights will be provided)
- □ Swimmers
- \square A mozzie net (hat type) is good of a night time and fly net for the day
- □ Spoken to staff about any special food requirements
- \square Spoken to staff about medical matters including storage of medications
- □ Sense of humour (essential)
- □ Your best jokes
- \square A couple of good books (although I never got time to read them)

If you don't have some stuff, talk about it with STTF staff BEFORE you leave home. We may be able to provide what you need.

If you have any further queries please read the FAQ page on the STTF website or contact:

Kim Hands P: 0400130397 E: kim@stopthetoad.org.au

STTF (Head office Perth) P: 08 9420 7266 w: http://www.stopthetoad.org.au/