

Rescuing the tuna fish

Reversing the sharp decline in tuna stocks was the focus of talks held in Kobe, Japan from 22nd to 26th January.

"We are deeply concerned about the future of global tuna stock," Japan's Fisheries Agency chief Toshiro Shirasu said in opening remarks. "We must strengthen our co-operation to tackle the issue."

Representatives from the commercial fishing industry, environmental groups and government regulators discussed ways to strengthen information sharing and co-operation among regional organisations to track and manage tuna stocks.

The conference was the first gathering of members of the world's five different regional tuna management agencies, including the oversight bodies for tuna fishing in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. They were told that all of the most popular types



of tuna are under pressure and the sought-after bluefin tuna is the hardest hit.

Simon Cripps, head of the World Wildlife Fund's global maritime program, told the BBC, "We're seeing around the world, alarming tuna stock decline because of aggressive fishing. There are 23 major stocks of tuna around the world and all of them are in trouble."

Though humans have been catching tuna for many thousands of years, industrial fisheries for these large ocean predators, a result of

increasing demand for tuna in canneries, did not start until the 1940s and 1950s.

Today, many stocks of the major commercial tuna species are fully or over-exploited. The total world catch of the major commercial species of tunas (albacore, bigeye, bluefin, skipjack, and yellowfin) has increased continuously during the last 50 years, with a tenfold increase, from 0.4 to over 4 million tonnes.



Tuna species are a significant source of food in many countries. They are very important economically, with world trade in tuna worth in excess of US\$5 billion. In terms of the global trade in fish commodities, tuna accounts for around 8 per cent of imports by value and quantity.

Of all the principle market species, bluefin have suffered the most from the ravages of overexploitation, for two main reasons: their slow reproductive rate, and their exceptionally high value in the sashimi market, where a single fish can be worth up to US\$100,000. Most seriously overexploited is the southern bluefin, which is now listed by the IUCN (the world



conservation union) as being Critically Endangered.

Simon Cripps said leaders can no longer ignore the scientific advice. "Governments need to listen to scientific advice, they routinely ignore scientific advice," he said. "They can implement conservation and management measures."

The conference aimed to reach agreement on the development of global management policies, with emphasis on catch management, and cracking down on illegal fishing.

Japan, the world's largest producer and market for fresh and frozen tuna and tuna-based products (excluding canned tuna), sought to take a leadership role in establishing a global system for managing the fish.



In October, the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna agreed at a meeting in Miyazaki, Japan, to reduce the global catch of the endangered southern bluefin tuna by more than 20 percent for 2007.

At that meeting, Japan also promised to halve its quota for the southern bluefin tuna as compensation for overfishing, but denied poaching allegations.

Australian government delegates sought to introduce measures such as a catch-to-market paper trail and vessel monitoring system. Australia has offered to host the next round of the talks late next year.

Sourced from: Associated Press, ABC Online, Environmental Justice Organisation

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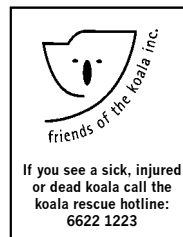
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For further information and faq's on this astounding supplement, please contact Mark on (02) 6633-7339 or log onto <http://my.waiora.com/home.php?944566>



Koala Kolumn



Frankie

As more of us discover the attractions of the Rainbow Region as a place to live, so collectively we humans increase the risks confronting its wildlife.

Whilst the number of reported dog attacks on koalas has fallen in recent years, they still occur, even when the dog owners are responsible and caring people.

This is the story of Frankie, the young koala who was pictured in our first Koala Kolumn in December NGT.

Frankie was found at a property on Boorie Creek Road in September last year. He was a very young joey sitting at the base of a tree with no sign of mum. The owners of the property did all the right things. After removing their barking dog they carefully wrapped Frankie in a blanket and took him inside and placed him in a box lined with soft bedding in a quiet room. They then called the Friends of the Koala's 24 hour rescue hotline and a trained carer collected him.

Frankie was very flat. The carer found puncture wounds and administered pain relief and antibiotics. Immediate veterinary intervention was arranged. The vet stabilised Frankie and put him on a drip for the rest of the night. He was taken to the Australian Wildlife Hospital the next day and found to have pneumonia. This was the reason why he was sitting at the base of the tree.

Frankie weighed only 1.11kilos. He was at the Hospital for two months. To care for a very young koala requires a high level of expertise from a long term wildlife carer. Fortunately we have such a home carer at Georgica who was able to commit to the 24 hour 7 day a week task.

Four months later Frankie now weighs a healthy 3.3kilos and has been placed in a pre-release enclosure. Young koalas need to socialise and Frankie is sharing his enclosure with Peter who was also found on the ground suffering from pneumonia.

With orphaned young koalas it is the job of the carer to teach the joey the skills he will need to cope in the wild. Frankie must develop good climbing skills, be weaned from milk and be on a full leaf diet before his release at approximately 18 months of age. He must be fully independent and his release will be in an area where he can be monitored regularly.

Koalas that have been the subject of dog attack, even suspected dog attack, must be attended to with urgency if the animal is to have any chance of survival. Characteristically trauma to muscle and

underlying tissues is much more severe than it appears on the surface. Minor external puncture wounds can be indicative of major internal injuries to organs and muscle layers. Such cases need to be treated aggressively for shock and severe infection (a dog's saliva contains bacterium to which a koala has little resistance)

Recent koala sightings have been reported along Nimbin Road and a sick mother and pouch young picked up from the roadside. Koalas have also been spotted crossing the roads at Goolmangar and Coffee Camp and on Stony Chute Road. A reminder that Sighting Sheets are available at the Nimbin Environmental Centre and online at Friends of the Koala's website: <www.friendsofthekoala.org>

If you think you may like to become a Friend of the Koala we are conducting a Basic Training and Information morning on Sunday 11th February from 9.30am to 1.30pm. A small charge of \$5 is asked to cover morning tea and training notes. Please call the hotline on 6622-1233 for location details.

Happy koala spotting – keep your dogs in at night and drive with care on our rural roads.



Peter

autograph
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Now banned, the 'bufiest' of Mexican waves - Part 2

Cane toad and native Australian predatory fauna related adaptations and behavior

by Ian Browne, Shamrock News, Darwin

Yes they do look cuter stuffed, lacquered, placed in a top hat and adorned with a walking stick than leaping around the backyard like a randy bulldog with syphilis. I was in Nimbin in January of 2003 when a local man ran from his house in the hills surrounding town to swat what he believed was the first cane toad he had ever heard in the area. I moved to Nimbin a couple of years later and many were to be seen in the warmer months. In fact before moving to Nimbin I lived in Nashua on a rainforest property, 25 minutes drive from coastal Byron Bay, and as the drought loosened its grip on the region I noticed not only the toads' numbers increasing but too the size of these amphibians.

Nearing 2000 as the toads marched nearer to the tropical Top End, frog call-recording stations were positioned in areas of Kakadu as a surveillance measure to alert rangers and Government bodies of the toads' arrival into ecologically sensitive areas. The ranger's trikes actually triggered off the recording sensors, sounding like a large *Bufo marinus*.

But 'hats off' to more recent management practices where native northern quolls who would have preyed upon the toads were relocated from areas of the Top End mainland to offshore islands in Arnhem Land, such as the English Company Islands on the Gove Peninsula, a safeguard against quoll extinctions. Removing quolls either way would have ecological flow on effects such as 'theoretically' allowing rare quail pigeons to increase in numbers where quoll predation impacts would be lessened.

However, the summer monsoon quiet literally rained upon the parade as storm debris such as floating logs with cane toads aboard washed from swollen river mouths out to these island refuges. A cruel reckoning indeed but this mustn't hamper native fauna protection measures, particularly when goanna numbers have been noticeably decreasing from areas such as Katherine Gorge, and barramundi have been seen floating belly-up in nearby Koolpin Gorge, whilst the humming bugle of a cane toad is heard from the reeds along the creek banks.

But could they have stopped the toad invasion in its tracks anyhow, this Mexican wave of ill repute? Probably not, as Sydney University Biologist Ben Philips believes that trying to trap these invasive toads would be like trying to find a needle in a haystack in overall population management impacts (ABC Stateline, 2006).

Famous Australian author Tim Winton and fellow Western Australian



eco-lovers have been rallying to try and prevent the toad invasion from inside the N.T. border into the Kimberley region. Folk from the N.T.'s 'Frog Watch' have been proud of efforts to trap toads and describe the stable goanna population along Darwin's foreshore proof of such success. Katherine resident Paul Baker won the Northern Territory Government's 'Great Cane Toad Trap' competition. He caught 112 toads in one trap!

Insects are attracted to lights, which then lure the toads up a ramp. The toads then fall through trapdoors into a box and cannot escape. You can also purchase cane toad traps from the FrogWatch website >www.frogwatch.org.au<. One field trap caught 453 cane toads in six weeks (CRC Aust.Savanna Links, 2005).

Native to the Neotropics (South/Central America), they were imported here in the 20th century from Hawaii to alleviate the sugarcane beetle problem in Queensland, only the warty blighters didn't actually engage in the hunting strategies the tropical agricultural industry and pest controllers anticipated.

That's right, they didn't actually jump high enough to snatch the beetles, they instead settled for anything native that came along closer to gut 'n' mouth level. "Great pre-release research hey?"

A thought occurred to me whilst I was researching this story for you in 2006: if sugarcane is a native of Papua New Guinea then why didn't the agricultural industry, scientists and pest controllers invest in localised research to discover a Melanesian hero? Perhaps they did?

And as Australia is actually connected to New Guinea; we are Australasia remember; as the Torres Strait Islands are mostly drowned Mountain tops, then perhaps there are subspecies of beetles or other sugarcane munching fauna already residing here. We share many fauna and flora species with Papua New Guinea, the waters off Papua New Guinea too deep to be heavily 'transpopulated' by South East Asian fauna except a few mammals, birds and humans of course.

Thus you might be asking yourself; "then why didn't these native heroes

march forward and make a feast of the cane beetle?" Well maybe the sugarcane was planted out in large areas too fast for the native cane beetle controller to be effective in the short term. And perhaps the introduction of the cane toad meant a feast in turn upon the native cane beetle controllers, thus a lack of visible native control to this day.

Anyway the research in those heady, naive days of the early-mid 20th century didn't really allow for the colonization time and demographics, and the negative effects upon other species, native competitors and prey that also fall into the introduced species' ecological niche. You only have to sing the song of the myriad of other feral species on this continent to understand what I am communicating here.

There was a lack of understanding of the establishment strengths, environmental tolerances and lag periods associated with an introduced species' subtle colonization before it explodes into highly invasive, unmanageable, potentially destructive populations. The adaptation of information concerning an organism's life history traits and population biology-demographics into scientific modelling for a release program of exotics into Australia was also at infancy stages in research.

Many species nowadays are not released for at least 8 years as studies of the ecological impact effects via CSIRO for example occur. This includes not only the introduced species' biological traits and environmental impacts but also the important research of an ecosystem's tolerance to an introduced species and also how the recipient environment in turn affects the degree of invasiveness of an introduced species (Sakai and Allendorf et al. 2002).

I recently described to Biologist Anthony Griffiths from Charles Darwin University, the theories I had heard of over the years in relation to red belly black snake numbers decreasing in moist, subtropical areas due to predation of cane toads. Many people believed that brown snake numbers had in turn increased as there was less predation upon juvenile brown snakes via the black snakes.

Anthony suggested that theories are one thing; speculative, and that scientific research is needed to practice and try and prove or disprove a hypothesis. Of course we discussed similar proven theories in the last edition and more is to come, so please stay tuned.

Cheers folk of the Bundjalung lands from a steamy old monsoon Darwin town.

For a copy of the full essay email Ian at <ctshamrock2@hotmail.com>

Help build the new animal shelter



The Animal Rights and Rescue Group is seeking help from the community to help build the first northern rivers animal centre.

The local northern rivers Animal Rights and Rescue Group was founded in 1994 and its ultimate goal has always been to build a much-needed animal centre in the northern rivers area. They are now at that stage and need help from the community.

Work on the animal centre is planned to start in February and ARRГ urgently needs the help of local skilled or semi-skilled tradespeople, and all other workers, to help complete the animal centre and to stay within a limited budget.

The completion of this animal centre will allow ARRГ to save many more unwanted, abused and homeless pets from the local region and unclaimed pets from local pounds that would otherwise die.

ARRГ also works with local agencies, such as our hospitals, women's refuge, Richmond mental health, Dept of aged & disability and others, providing temporary pet care and housing in times of crisis for their clients.

Anyone who can offer help or skills to help build this



much-needed animal centre call ARRГ on 6622-1881 anytime and speak to Barbara or Suzanne or mobile: 0432-890-687 during office hours, 9am - 3pm.

Visit our website for more information and to view many of the rescued pets, at <www.animalrights.org.au>

The Animal Rights and Rescue Group Inc is a voluntary, not-for-profit, no-kill organisation. All donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible and can be sent to PO Box 16 Wollongbar 2477.

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