



# Southern Biosecurity Group

**PESTS AND WEEDS**

*YOUR ENVIRONMENT*

*YOUR RESPONSIBILITY*

*YOUR LEGACY*

**ANNUAL REPORT 2020 / 2021**



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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

## KARYN TUCKETT CHAIR

*Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.* Mattie Stepanek

As a Recognised Biosecurity Group (RBG) and sub group of Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network (RAIN), we continue to have a close working relationship with (RAIN). We coordinate the control of declared species in the Shire of Ravensthorpe, which encompasses an area of 13,551km.

We believe declared pests can be better managed by a coordinated approach between community, industry and government. Southern Biosecurity Group is proactive in encouraging all stakeholder to adopt sound biosecurity practices. This will minimise the environmental, economic and social impacts of animal pest and weeds on agricultural industry, landscapes and biodiversity values within the Shire of Ravensthorpe.

Along with community members we have partnered with Department of Biosecurity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development (DPIRD), Southcoast NRM, State NRM, Main Roads WA, Shire of Ravensthorpe and RAIN to ensure we adopt a well-coordinated approach to declared species control in the shire.

As in previous years all landowners were forwarded an annual newsletter and survey. Responses from the survey assist the Management Committee in identifying declared species that are of concern within the shire. We

encourage landowners to continue to provide information to the Management Committee or Executive Officer so that we may make informed and prudent decisions on how the Declared Pest Rate is expended. Due to Covid 19 we felt it in the best interest of the community to minimise social interaction. We ensured access to the information via our website, telephone contact and articles in local media outlets.

Wild dogs were the main focus in 2020-21 year and it has been pleasing to again see a reduction in the number of attacks on livestock. This has been achieved through proactive control activities, with the aim of keeping a 20km buffer zone to the east of the State Barrier Fence free from wild dogs. We extend our thanks to Gavern House, Contracted Licensed Pest Management Technician who has undertaken control activities within the shire.

With the availability of declared pest rate funds, Licensed Weed Technician Mark Cronin was contracted to further extend Apple of Sodom control. Bridal Creeper control on the Hopetoun foreshore was also commenced and a small amount cactus control in the Oldfield River continued.

Monitoring animal movements at three river crossings prior to the erection of the Esperance Extension to the State Barrier Fence (SBF), a

project supported by funding from Sheep and Goat Industry Scheme has continued and is allowing a baseline of species using the corridors to be developed. Once the fence is in place this data will be valuable to ascertain if the fence causes any adverse effect on species. We extend our appreciation to Gavern House for co-ordinating changeover of camera cards and batteries and to Tracey Kreplins DPIRD for downloading of images and compiling the data.

It is disappointing the SBF construction has been slow, due to protracted stakeholder negotiations. We will continue to work with DPIRD and the Esperance Biosecurity Group to ensure the extension is finalised in the near future.

The Shire of Ravensthorpe were successful in securing funding through Australian Government Communities Combating Pest and Weed Impacts During Drought Program – Biosecurity Management of Pests and Weeds. In partnership with the Shire, RAIN delivered non declared species aspects of the project, with SBG delivering 6 project areas involving declared species. As part of the fox baiting project two reserves within the shire were baited. Additional baits were purchased from the Declared Pest Rate

funds to ensure optimum control. Release of the RHDV1 K5 rabbit virus also formed part of the drought project with declared pest rate funds utilised to further enhance control work by purchasing of additional vials of the virus and follow up destruction of identified rabbit warrens.

The SBG Management Committee, who work in a voluntary capacity to meet the objectives of the Strategic Plan needs to be acknowledged. The time they commit to the position does not go unnoticed.

We have a high percentage of the declared pest rate paid. To landowners, thank you for supporting the SBG through payment of this. The payment is received by RevenueWA and is matched dollar for dollar by the state government. This allows the SBG to have a sustainable income for coordinating control activities.

To all community members thank you for recognising your responsibility on private land and undertaking control of declared animals and weeds.

## ABOUT SBG

*We believe declared pests can be better managed by a coordinated approach between community, industry and government.*

The Southern Biosecurity Group (SBG) is a not-for-profit organisation and a subgroup of the Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network (RAIN) formed out of community concern about unmanaged declared pests. The SBG is a Recognised Biosecurity Group under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (BAM Act) and our aim is to initiate, promote and foster the management of established declared pests by landholders in the Ravensthorpe Shire.

We first began operating in 2002 as the Ravensthorpe Declared Species Group. At that time, our role involved coordinating wild dog control in the shire. We achieved good control of wild dog numbers through a range of activities including dispersing of 1080 baits, trapping and shooting.



Community funds raised through the Declared Pest Rate are matched dollar for dollar by government, enabling us to provide coordinated and targeted control of declared pests within the shire.

Southern Biosecurity Group contracts a part time Executive Officer and Licensed Pest Management Technicians (up to 100 days per year).

# MEET THE TEAM

Committee members for the 2020/2021 financial year comprised of volunteer community members:

## KARYN TUCKETT

Chair

## JEN CHAMBERS

Committee member

## GEMMA WALKER

Committee member

## REECE LAYCOCK

Committee member

## CHENAE COOPER

Committee member

The Committee was supported in delivering the works by the following contractors:

## GLENICE BATCHELOR

Executive Officer (to December 2020)

## GAVERN HOUSE

Licensed Pest Management Technician

## GREG ELLIOTT

Licensed Pest Management Technician

## MARK CRONIN

Licensed Pest Management Technician

The Committee would like to thank Elisa Spengler (EO R.A.I.N.), Jack Guthrie, Jennifer Biddulph and the R.A.I.N. Committee for their ongoing support and assistance.

# OUR PARTNERS 5



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



In the 2020/21 reporting period, we saw the successful continuation of many existing projects, including community education and on-ground pest management activities, as well as the development of new initiatives and alliances.

Our key achievements for the year included:

- ▶ Wild dog control
- ▶ Fox and Rabbit control
- ▶ Strategic weed control (Bridal Creeper, Prickly Pear and Apple of Sodom)

## WILD DOGS / FOXES

***Wild dogs do not respect tenure boundaries such as fences, borders or land uses. Management activities work best when they are coordinated and people work together.***

The aim of the wild dog control program funded through the Declared Pest Rate and coordinated by the SBG, is to keep a 20-kilometre buffer zone east of the State Barrier Fence (SBF) in the Shire of Ravensthorpe, free from wild dogs.

Wild dogs may enter onto the western side of the SBF, affecting livestock enterprises. They also present a real risk to human safety, with attacks on people reported in WA and across Australia during the past year.

Extension of 8km of the Esperance Extension to the State Barrier Fence, from Coxall Corner, in Ravensthorpe Shire has resulted in a reduction of wild dogs moving around the fence and entering crown and agricultural land. This has resulted in a reduction in livestock attacks and presumable reduction in loss of native animals.

SBGs contracted Licensed Pest Management Technician (LPMT) assists with trapping, shooting and baiting activities to limit wild dog numbers in the shire ensuring all activities are humanely carried out and adhering to the Code of Practice.

The SBG contractor is well experienced and will support landholders to manage wild dogs. Contractor reporting aims to capture and collect all relevant data, significant events and occurrences associated with the wild dog control program being coordinated by SBG. Information includes but is not limited to events such as number and location dog traps set, captures, photo's, activity found, baiting programs, opportunistic shooting and related control activities.

In 2020 control was impacted by Restricted Chemical Product Permits (RCPP) not being renewed. This resulted

in the LPMT not being able to access unallocated crown land to bait and trap for wild dogs and a build-up of wild dogs in the buffer zone to the east of the State Barrier Fence.

If Landholders suffer any losses from a wild dog attack, they can contact the LPMT directly on the advertised phone number to report the attack and for assistance. For any wild dog sightings Landholders are asked to email the Executive Officer to report the sighting and let neighbours know to monitor their livestock more closely.

Southern Biosecurity Group continued to support the neighbouring Shire of Kent in 2020/2021 with a Wild Dog surveillance and control program funded through the Industry Fund Scheme (Sheep and Goats). A condition of DBCA support was that an RBG manage the contracted LPMT due to experience and trust in management. By controlling Wild dogs through ongoing baiting and trapping, foxes are also being managed.

Landholders are regularly reminded that by law they need an approved Restricted Chemical Product Permit for their own control activities and for the contracted LPMT to work on their land to support their own management activities. Once the permit and training are completed, SBG submit the application. and cover the cost of the permit. As a Recognised Biosecurity Group, the SBG is eligible for a 50% reduction in the cost and we encourage landholders to hold a permit to cover wild dogs, foxes and rabbit in order that there may be shire wide cross boundary pest control.

From the Declared Pest funds, we supported fox baiting at the Longcreek and Cheadneup Reserves.



*Rabbits have been identified as an ongoing priority. The SBG funded release of the RDHV1-K5 (also known as Calicivirus) program. Funds were also committed to warren destruction.*

Rabbits are a serious environmental threat. This declared species impacts over 320 threatened species across Australia, making it an invasive species with the biggest impact.

Rabbits are Australian agricultures most costly pest animal: the annual cost exceeds \$215 million.

Each year rabbits cause an estimated \$600 million worth of damage to agriculture. They also cause serious erosion problems, prevent native vegetation from regenerating, attack domestic gardens and undermine farm sheds and other buildings.

Coordination of the release of the K5 virus enhances the outcomes of a variety of rabbit control activities

such as trapping, shooting and destroying of warrens. Broad-scale virus release is necessary to maximise the impact of the virus on the rabbit population, however, SBG encourages existing traditional methods and any action should always be a part of an integrated pest management program.

Rabbit Control Glovebox guides are readily available to assist and SBG has sought ongoing expert advice to help fine-tune the project and continue to improve Rabbit control.

Landholders are encouraged to indicate interest for involvement and key areas to be considered for targeted control.



# BRIDAL CREEPER

(*Asparagus asparagoides*)

**It is a 'Declared Pest' in WA and is nationally recognised as a 'Weed of National Significance'.**

Bridal creeper is a perennial climbing vine, which can sprawl for several metres, smothering the plants around it. This highly invasive weed causes serious problems outcompeting native plants and crops by smothering or preventing germination.

In the previous year, SBG funded a Bridal Creeper project aiming to control 4.6 hectares of bridal creeper along the highly visible Hopetoun foreshore through the Declared Pest Rate. This area was recovered in 2020/21 to remove any new growth. This is a process that will need to continue for at least another 12 months.

An additional 4 hectares was covered along the Hopetoun foreshore, and we continue to work collaboratively with Main Roads WA and other agencies to control bridal creeper on their land tenure.

The naturally occurring biological control agent known as 'rust fungus', or *Puccinia myrsiphylli*, was also released in the targeted area in an attempt to initiate its spread throughout the district. Similar trials have shown that the rust fungus is currently the most promising biocontrol agent being introduced into infested areas, although unfortunately, biological control will not kill the weed.

There has been substantial early knock-down of bridal creeper in the targeted area two months after the treatment with additional reports from members of the public indicating that the knock-down is also happening in areas further afield that were not treated.



Native to Eastern and Southern Africa, bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) was first introduced into Australia as an ornamental garden plant during the 1870s.

Unfortunately, bridal creeper now poses one of the biggest threats to native biodiversity across most of Southern Australia.

# Drizzling Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia monacantha*)

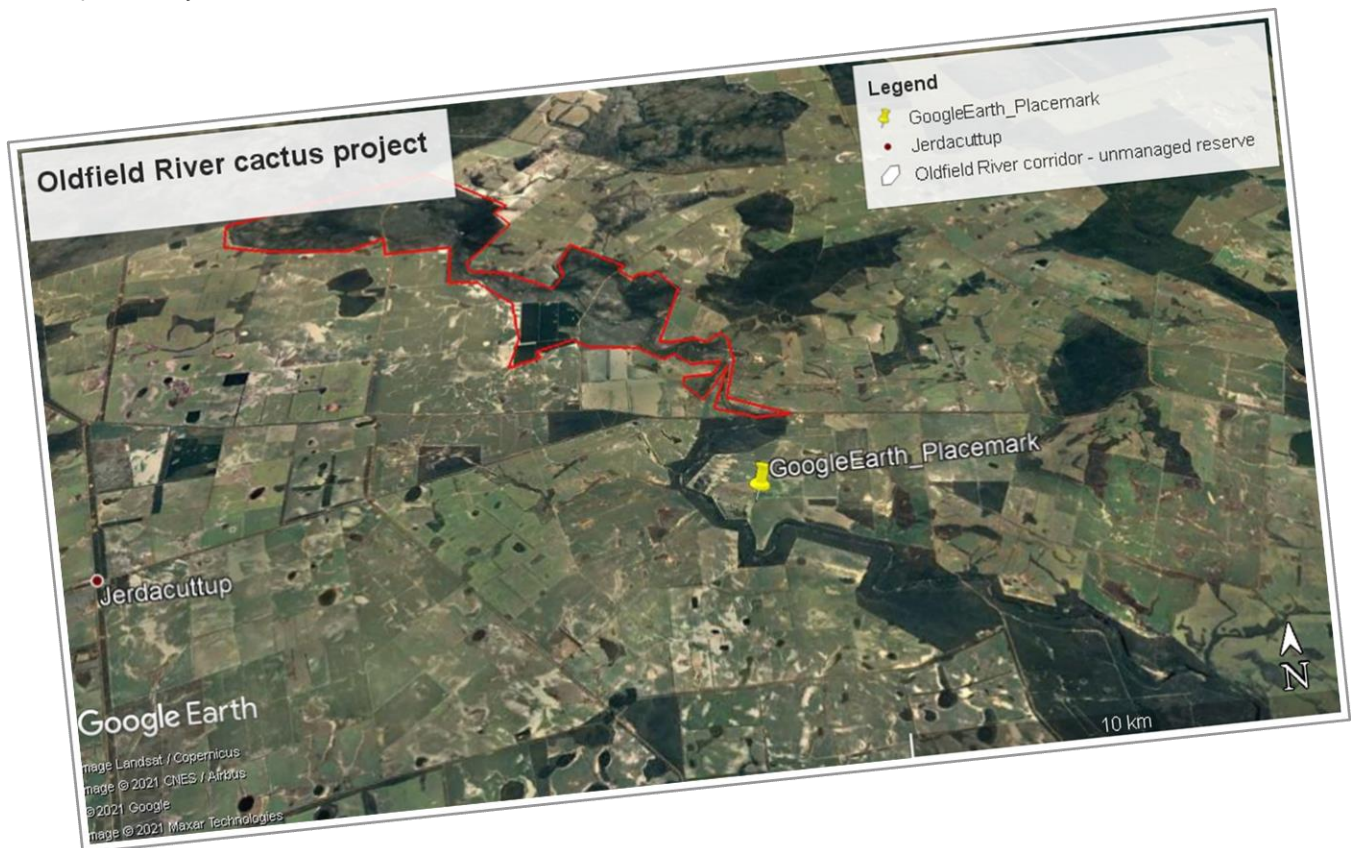
*If removed from the Oldfield River catchment site then these efforts will have successfully eradicated the Declared Weed from the river and prevented spread to agricultural and other riparian areas.*

Efforts to eradicate the drooping prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia monacantha*) continued throughout the 2020/21 financial year in the Oldfield River corridor.

The plants form dense thickets and out-compete native species. It also acts as a harbour for pest animals such as foxes, rabbits and fruit fly.

Additional funding was secured through State NRM to undertake additional control area and rechecking of previously covered areas.

Control included a range of techniques such as physical removal, chemical stem injection and Cochineal scale insect trials by attachment of infected cochineal pads (*Dactylopius ceylonicus*) to actively growing cacti. The cochineal became a permitted organism in WA whilst undertaking the DPIRD cactus project. The cochineal nursery has been maintained so as to breed further cochineal for release into the river system.



# Apple of Sodom (*Solanum linnaeanum*)

**Concerns for Apple of Sodom (*Solanum linnaeanum*) spreading throughout the Hopetoun/ Ravensthorpe area were raised by local landholders. Recent sightings in the Hopetoun area have been recorded.**

Apple of Sodom is listed as a declared species under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA)* and because of this, declared pest funds are available to mitigate its spread.

Following on from the initial survey that identified a considerable number of plants, we collaborated with landholders and the Water Corporation to ensure successful removal or treatment of the weed.

Regrowth will need to be monitored over the next few years.

We encourage the community to report any sightings of this weed.

As a landholder if you require direction on how to treat the weed on your land, please contact the SBG. By us all working together there is the opportunity to eradicate this weed from the shire.



# Funding sourced in addition to the DPR

*Apart from ongoing sustainable funding, one of the key benefits of being a RBG is that it allows the SBG to be seen as a legitimate supplier and key stakeholder of Biosecurity for management and control.*

The demonstrated strong governance and secure matching government funding means the group can facilitate and apply for a range of additional external funds to manage pests. This can be difficult to explain to concerned communities and the need for the DPR to be expended only within the prescribed area of SBG means that often pests that impact across boundaries are difficult to manage.

SBG seeks to address this through close collaboration and networking with other areas, like-minded groups and with neighbouring Recognised Biosecurity Groups. In 2020/21 the group continued projects funded in the previous year.

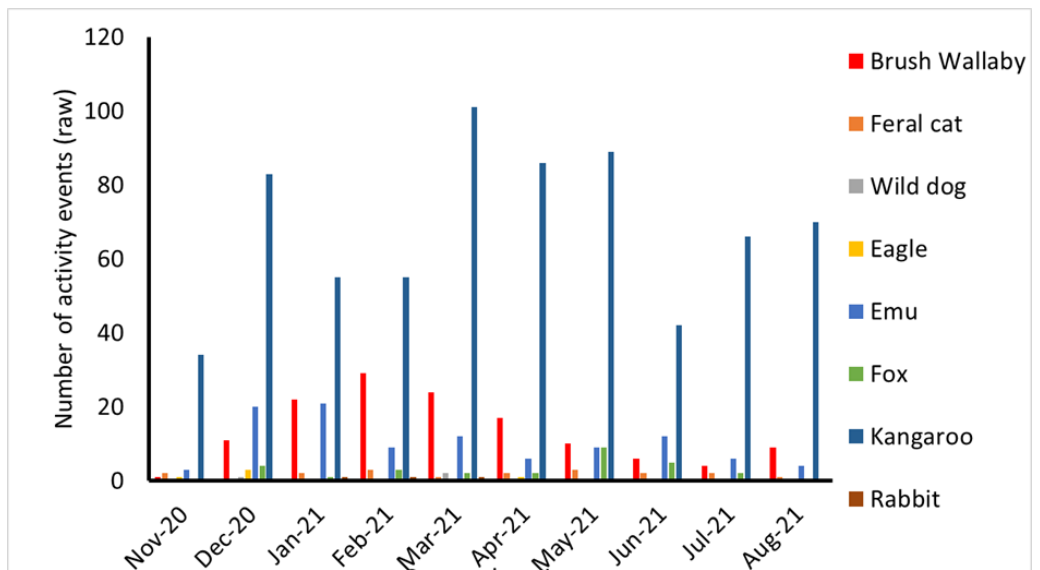
### Drought Funding

The Shire of Ravensthorpe’s Commonwealth Drought funding, provided the opportunity for the SBG to collaborate with the Shire and RAIN, to implement additional pest management work to add even more value to SBG’s existing programs. The SBG delivered projects with foxes, rabbits, cactus control in townsite areas and Apple of Sodom. All these projects further enhanced projects funded through the Declared Pest Rate. As part of the drought funding RAIN delivered projects around non-declared species.

### Industry Funding Scheme (IFS)

The funding from the Goat and Sheep Industry Funding Scheme to monitor wild dog activity along the extensions to the State Barrier Fence – before, during and after, continued in 2020/21. The three river corridors where the extension to the State Barrier Fence will not cross, due to the natural boundary, are specific areas that are being monitored.

A database of animal species using these corridors is being created. This will allow for action to be implemented once the fence is constructed and any adverse impact on animals is noted. Monitoring of animal movements will continue for a period following fence construction.



The image features a decorative graphic with a diagonal line running from the top right to the bottom left. Two overlapping rectangular boxes are positioned on either side of this line. The upper-left box is olive green and contains the title text. The lower-right box is a lighter, yellowish-green and contains the company name and ABN. The diagonal line is a light tan color.

# **Audited Financial Report 2020-21**

**Southern Biosecurity Group  
ABN 65 484 162 896**

# Audited Financial Statement 2020-2021

## Declared Pest Rate Shire of Ravensthorpe

Delivery Organisation Southern Biosecurity Group

### INCOME

Declared Pest Rate from landholders	\$ 71,247.00
DPR State Government matching funds	\$ 85,810.00
<b>Total funding</b>	<b>\$ 157,057.00</b>

### EXPENSES

<b>Program 1 - Declared animal species</b>	
<b>wilddog, rabbit, fox, cat etc</b>	
Licenses Technician (LPT)-	
Wild dogs	\$ 18,390.00
Rabbit	\$ 5,520.00
Foxes	
Baits, aerial baiting, poisons, biological control etc	\$ 7,625.00
Signage	
<b>Program 2 - Declared plant species</b>	
<b>cactus, bridal creeper, apple sodom etc</b>	
Licenses Technician (LWT)-	
Apple sodom	\$ 680.00
Bridal creeper	\$ 4,000.00
Cactus	\$ 3,350.00
Materials - herbicide, biological control	
<b>Program 3 - Governance</b>	
Accountant - audit etc	\$ 1,830.00
Committee honorarium/expenses	\$ 443.64
Insurance - SBG public liability - dogging acitivity	\$ 811.86
Insurance - Workers compensation EO	\$ 3,600.90
Insurance - RAIN 1/3rd share various policies	\$ 900.00
Teleconference/zoom meeting costs	\$ 98.18
Contingency	
<b>Program 4 - Administration</b>	
Contract Executive Officer	\$ 47,000.00
Office, phone, internet	\$ 1,019.90
RAIN finance administration	\$ 2,772.00
RCPP application fee	\$ 379.55
Stationary -postage	\$ 70.90
Subscriptions - memberships	\$ 286.38
Professional Development	
Travel Allowance	\$ 676.00
<b>Program 5 - Communicatons,Advocacy</b>	
Advertising	\$ 385.80
Annual letter(s) to landholders (incl of postage.,print,fold)	\$ 3,299.34

Biosecurity event/awareness incl market days	\$ 140.00
Promotional brochures, booklets, stands, banners	
Website	\$ 587.00
<b>Program 6 - Operations</b>	
Equipment purchase-replacement	\$ 2,682.04
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$ 106,548.49</b>

Auditor Signature



Date 6/10/2021  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contact \_\_\_\_\_  
 Registration Details 114007

MALCOLM W HEASMAN  
 Chartered Accountant  
 4/86 Dempster St  
 ESPERANCE WA 6450