

Annual Report

For financial year
2021-2022

Southern Biosecurity Group



Pests and Weeds

Your environment · Your responsibility · Your legacy

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

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

achieved. Mattie Stepanek

Within the Shire of Ravensthorpe, at this time rating of landholders through the Declared Pest Rate collected by RevenueWA and administered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is deemed to be the fairest and most equitable way to control declared pests, which roam free and do respect property boundaries.

Phytophthora dieback measures are required to be adhered to in contracts to technicians.

Declared vertebrate pest coordinated activities from the 2021-22 Declared Pest Rate budget included wild dogs, foxes, rabbits and feral cats.

Wild Dog control has remained our key focus. Maintaining a 20 kilometre buffer zone east of the State Barrier Fence free from wild dogs is our priority along with assisting landholders affected by wild dog activity. Sightings of wild dogs and evidence of their movement is ongoing, although in lower numbers to previous years. Ongoing control activities undertaken have resulted in a continued reduction in wild dogs moving from Unallocated Crown Land to the west of the State Barrier Fence onto private land. Stock losses however experienced as a result of the State Barrier Fence (SBF) being compromised following prolonged or heavy rain events.

Reduced stock attacks and lower wild dog activity in the agricultural zone, is a good result for livestock enterprises, other industries, the general public and the environment. The reduction in stock attacks has contributed to reduction in financial loss and mental anguish for landholders.

The Esperance Extension to the SBF, that had commenced in the Ravensthorpe Shire has resulted in no wild dog being identified as entering the agricultural zone by coming around the current fence end point. This is a positive result and supports the benefit of the SBF extension for wild dog and emu incursions onto agricultural land.

The wild dog program also sees an uptake of baits by foxes. Additionally, the SBG worked towards planning and implementing an ongoing integrated fox control program. This year, specific fox baiting has taken place at Longcreek and Cheadenup Reserves. The group will continue to collaborate with the local Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to understand their Western Shield Program locations and baiting times as this will enable best use of SBG resources. The annual Red Card Fox Shoot coordinated by the Hopetoun Clay Target Club has also been supported by the SBG.

Release of another round of RHDV disease was funded. To avoid resistance, build up to the previous strain released, an alternative strain was utilised. This along with warren destruction has assisted in reducing numbers in specific areas within the Shire. Anecdotal information received indicates rabbit numbers have increased over the last few years. This can be attributed to favorable seasons in the shire with plentiful water

and food sources. Landholders can assist in reducing rabbit numbers by controlling harborage/refuge areas, these include rock piles, deadfall timber and stumps, old buildings and abandoned farm machinery.

We were advised of high feral cat and fox numbers on a property that adjoins a river system and reserve. We coordinated trial work to ascertain possible viable options for control of either or both of these species. Preliminary work provided favorable results.

Declared Plant projects continued in the 2021-22 year included Apple of Sodom, Bridal Creeper and Cactus control.

Apple of Sodom is predominately being found in the greater Hopetoun area. With cooperation from landholders and reporting of the plant to the SBG, there is the opportunity for this plant to be eradicated from the Shire. We have the opportunity to achieve this through collaboration with community and government agencies. Benefits achieved from control include, less disruption of ecological process, removal of habitat for rabbits and foxes, dominance for significantly altering vegetation structure, composition and function of ecosystems.

Bridal Creeper is extensively spread and our focus has been to work towards removal from the Hopetoun foreshore area, in particular the proximity of the free camping area. We hope this will prevent or at least limit spread of the plant by tourists into the Fitzgerald River National Park and other tourist areas frequented. The spread of the rust disease (*Puccinia myrsiphylli*) has continued along the foreshore, Krystal Park Estate and other areas within the Shire. Main Roads WA have engaged with the SBG by spraying the plant on their land tenure along the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe Road. It is going to take a collaborative approach by all, over several years to have an impact on this declared plant and stop further spread. If this plant is present on your property do not allow flowering and berries to form, as this allows for further spread of the plant.

Continued control of the Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia monacantha*) in the Oldfield River was made possible through a successful funding application through State NRM. Biological control is proving successful with use of the cochineal insect (*Dactylopius ceylonicus*), a species specific to this cactus. Additional manual removal and herbicide treatment is being employed by the contractor as we work towards eradicating the plant from the river system, prior to any further large flood event. It is this type of event that has resulted in spread of the cactus downstream. Early advice on locations and removal of any cactus species is the best method to avoid establishment and spread.

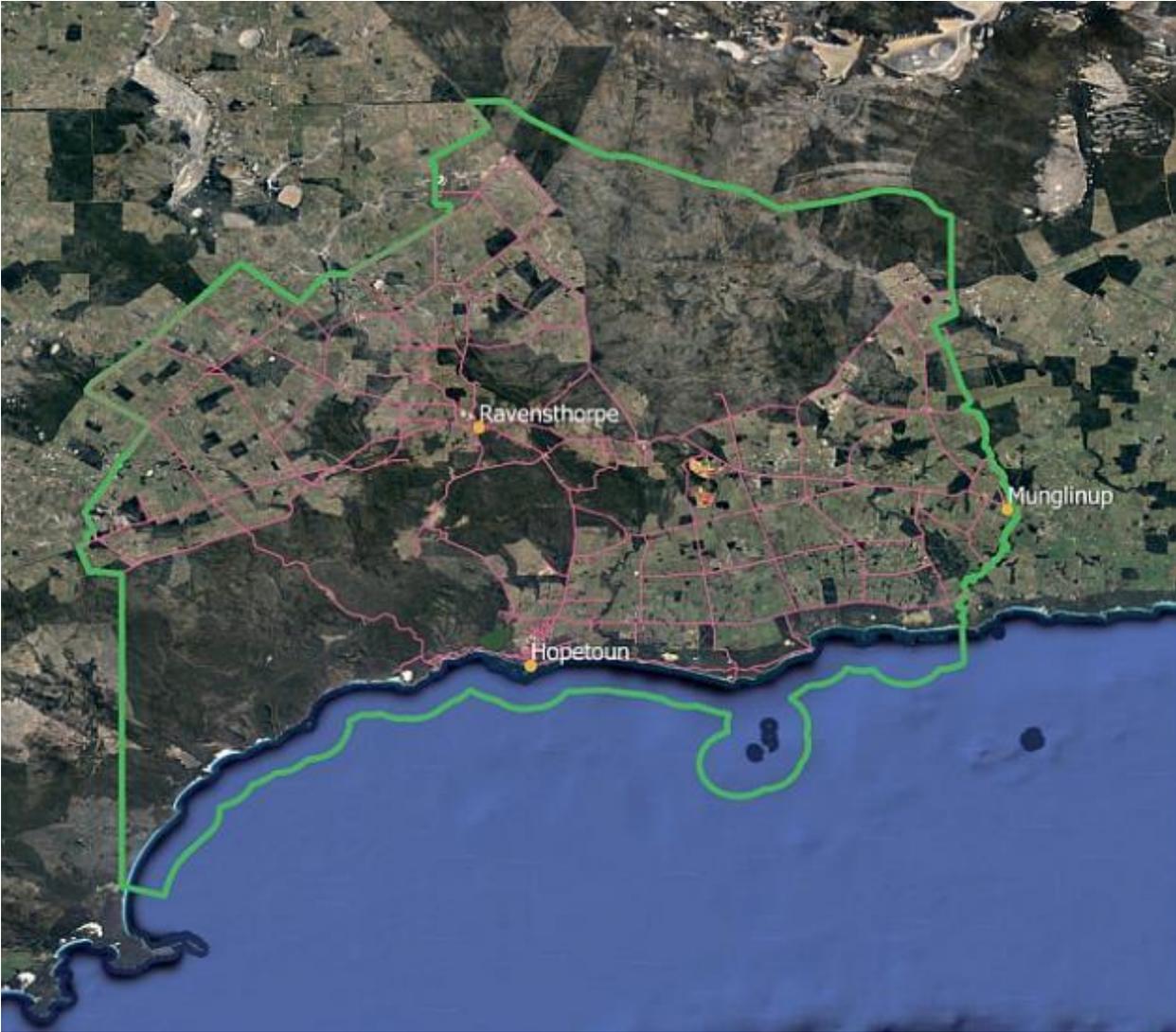
Good outcomes from the various projects coordinated by the SBG, emphasizes the benefits that can be achieved for native wildlife, plants the environment in general and the prosperity of all business enterprises within the shire. There is still a lot that can be achieved but small steps are required to achieve the best outcomes in the long term.

The Southern Biosecurity Group (SBG) is very conscious of the administration costs involved in operating and works to use funds available as efficiently as possible. There are processes such as provision of the Operational Plan and budgets, Annual Report, external audit and governance to comply with to access the WA State Government matching funds and Declared Pest Rate paid by landholders. Due to increased governance and administration requirements this has reduced available time for our communication efforts during the 2021/22 year.

Originally commencing operation as a Declares Species Group and then transitioning to become a Recognised Biosecurity Group, in 2022 the milestone of 20 years of community coordinated declared species control was achieved. To acknowledge this milestone and communicate an understanding of the need for control work being coordinated, we have supported the Dunnart Art Exhibition and sponsored artist Penelope and Michael

Wise in collaboration with Ravensthorpe Regional Arts Council’s “Artitude” after school activity program to deliver collage and shadow puppet workshops based around declared species within the Shire. A collage workshop based on this theme was also offered to adults. We are appreciative to participants who donated a piece of their work to create a wall hanging to be displayed during the Wildflower Show.

**SOUTHERN BIOSECURITY GROUP
AREA OF OPERATION**



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Wild dogs – numbers through uptake of a bait will not reflected in the table below, as it is very rare to locate an animal following this event.

Wild dog baits laid	Wild dog shot	Wild dog trapped	Fox trapped or shot	Feral cats trapped or shot	Reported stock losses
1316	1	1	1	0	23

Foxes – The integrated control program at Longcreek and Cheadenup Reserves was undertaken in December 2021 and January 2022 by Licensed Pest Management Technician Gavern House, Alpha Pest Management Solutions. Condition of 1080 baiting signs posted at all entry points prior to undertaking the baiting program were checked. A total of 597 baits were dispersed over the period of the two projects.

Rabbits – Warren destruction is one method of control and assists with reduction of numbers. Comprehensive RHDV disease release occurred at Krystal Park Estate and the Hopetoun Golf Course. Control resulting from this activity is to encourage landholders to continue ongoing control activity and necessary clean up to avoid rabbit habitat opportunity on their land. The Hopetoun foreshore area and Kukenarup Memorial Site was rechecked for activity and appropriate control undertaken if required. A cost of the RHDV disease cost per vial was \$140 plus the cost of the oats the suspension is mixed into and technician’s time.

Data on control points and methods

AREA	PROPERTIES TREATED	VIALS USED	VIRUS RELEASE	ADDITIONAL LINEAR KILOMETRE	WARRENS DESTROYED	TOTAL VIALS USED IN PROJECT
Krystal Park Estate	31	24	YES	11.8		
Hopetoun Golf Course			YES	6.4	31	
Hopetoun townsite			YES	2.4		
Agricultural landholders	3		YES			
Kukenarup Memorial Site			YES			
						34

Apple of Sodom - A total of 929 plants were either treated with herbicide or manually removed. Plants ranged from .25 metre to 2 metres in height. This is a reduction on size of plants treated in previous years. Coordinated control and assistance to landholders will be ongoing until the viability of the seed bank is exhausted. Important reasons for eradicating this plant from the shire are the berries are toxic to humans and animals, dense patches crowd out native and pasture species, can restrict stock and vehicle movement and provides a harbour for rabbits and foxes.

Bridal Creeper -



This plant forms a thick mat of underground tubers which impedes the root growth of other plants and often prevents seedling establishment. Rare native plants are threatened with extinction by bridal creeper.

Birds feed on the berries and later excrete the seeds at perch sites, usually within 100 m of source plants. However, seed dispersed by birds has helped spread the weed along roadsides and into native vegetation patches further afield. Rabbits and foxes also eat fruit and disperse seeds. Plant control should occur to avoid stems running up, flowering and seed set.

Bridal creeper has a number of features which make it difficult to control in particular its underground tuber reserves provide a buffer against adverse seasons. The large tuber area makes it difficult to manually successfully remove.



Contractor activity for the year included, the rust disease being released in numerous sites within the shire. It will take many years for the biocontrol agent to reduce the density of bridal creeper due to the huge reserves

stored in underground in tubers. Herbicide treatment was also undertaken in areas where rust disease not released.



Before treatment



After herbicide treatment

Funding sourced in addition to the Declared Pest Rate

Cactus – Working towards eradication of the Drooping Tree Pear cactus (*Opuntia monacantha*) in the Oldfield River continued with funds received from a State NRM grant. With the river corridor having a classification of an unmanaged area, control being coordinated is important in working towards eradication of the species at this location.

From soil movement and debris burying segments in previous flood events, the contractor continues to find newly emerged plants. It will take several years of revisiting previously treated sites to ensure the plant is removed from the river system. The goal is to work towards eradication prior to any future flood event.

As the river and its vegetated corridor are considered to be in the best environmental condition and intactness of any larger river on WA's south coast, the aim of the project is to retain this status and to preserve the significance of the site to Nyungar people. Spread of the plant onto agricultural and other reserves maybe avoid if eradication is achieved.

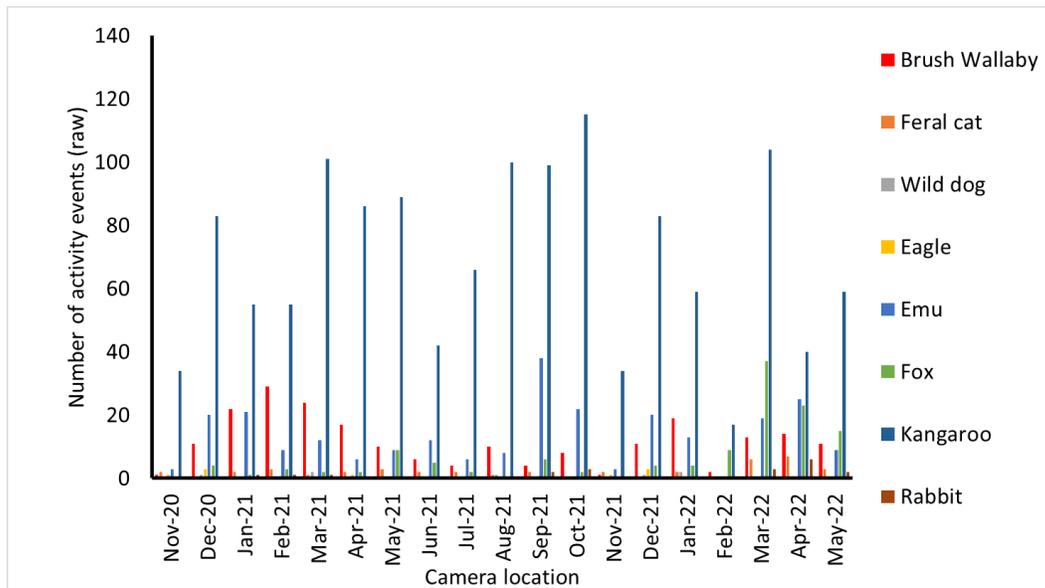
A minimum of 104ha of new area was covered with 149ha of previous control area being rechecked. Treatment was either by manual removal, cochineal establishment or herbicide application.

State Barrier Fence species movement monitoring – This project funded by the Sheep and Goat Industry Fund with the aim of establishing a baseline of animal movement prior to construction of the State Barrier Fence. Continued SD card and battery changeover and recording of data continued to be recorded.

Sample of images from remote sensor cameras



Graph of species from commencement of project to May 2022



Australian Wool Innovation – This project focused on wild dog and fox control training for the benefit of wool and sheep producers in WA.

Project outcomes have been for provision of a training trailer for use in producer development of the most needed knowledge and skills based around wild dogs and foxes. The unit will be an ongoing asset for community engagement and education of declared species. At the Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network Research updates held in March and the landholder event held in May, information was provided at levels appropriate to community needs.

A secondary focus of the funding was to develop, maintain and foster networking of professional Licensed Pest Management Technicians (LPMT). Access to technology being developed of a night vision vehicle was presented to a forum. Further information will also be presented in a video forwarded to the 14 Recognised Biosecurity Groups in the State for distribution to contracted LPMT's. Information on the Vertebrate Pest Management Association Australia, an independent, not for profit association for commercial operators, commercial wildlife and licensed professional pest controllers to be promoted as an organization that will allow for fostering of networking of professional controllers, in the case of this project specifically for wild dog controllers.

As part of the project the SBG in-kind contribution has been to develop an ongoing integrated fox control program. A map to identify all UCL, parks and reserves in the shire has been secured. This content along with collaboration with Department of Biodiversity, Conservations and Attraction's, Western Shield baiting program will allow for best use of resources.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS, CONTRACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The SBG Management Committee would like to thank Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network staff, Executive Officer Elisa Spengler, Finance Officers Jen Biddulph and Donna Higgins, NRM office Geoff Fyfe and the R.A.I.N Management Committee for their ongoing support and assistance.

Committee members for the 2021-2022 financial year comprised of volunteer community members:

Karyn Tuckett

Jen Chambers

Gemma Walker

Reece Laycock

Chenae Cooper

Contractors

- Licensed Pest Management Technicians
Gavern House
Greg Elliott
- **Licensed Weed Technician**
Mark Cronin
- **Executive Officer**
Meredith Lee Curtis

Stakeholders:

- Australian Wool Innovation Limited
- Biosecurity Council of WA
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Industry Funding Scheme (Sheep and Goat) Committee
- Local communities within the Shire of Ravensthorpe
- Main Roads Western Australia
- Other Recognised Biosecurity Groups
- Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network
- Shire of Ravensthorpe
- South Coast NRM
- State Natural Resource Management
- Water Corporation Western Australia

COMMUNICATION

Additional governance and administration requirements by Recognised Biosecurity Groups has contributed to the reduced time available by our Executive Officer to attend to communication extension planned for the 2021-2022 year.

Over the year we collaborated with Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network with presentations to ensure the best use of participant's time. The Research updates in February provided the opportunity for the SBG to engage with the 49 participants and update on coordinated control works and successes. In May a landholder event, with 28 participants the focus was on fox and rabbit control. Information relayed involved release of RHDV disease and availability of the virus not possible earlier in the year due to the flood events on the East Coast of Australia. Additional control options and emphasizing the need to keep the environment free from fallen trees and debris, as these points harbor rabbits and foxes. There was a demonstration on setting of fox traps and the loan option from SBG for use of the traps. Interaction from participants provided opportunity for additional questions to be asked and these included topics in addition to those being presented on the day.



Image taken during SBG presentation at landholder event in May

Understanding reasons for declared species control and benefits of this to native plants and animals was explored through the arts. To celebrate 20 years of community coordinated declared species control in the shire 2 afterschool activities and 1 adult workshop was offered to the community. A piece of work donated by participants to the group created a collage wall hanging displayed during the Wildflower Show.



Top – information board and wall hanging

Bottom – sample of afterschool activities created



After school activity participant



Portion of adult participation in the workshop

Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show celebrated 40 years of the event being held in 2022. Our participation in the event was a PowerPoint presentation of 40 weeds along with our banner being on display.

Visitor to Wildflower Show viewing the PowerPoint presentation



The Annual Newsletter, inclusive of the Annual Survey was mailed to all landholders in the Shire. The survey provides the opportunity for community input into species control to be considered in the upcoming Operational Plan and budget.

Due to the high number of absentee landholders in the Shire communication via the annual mail out is viewed as an important means of communicating to all landholders.

Declared Pest Rate Shire of Ravensthorpe
Delivery Organisation Southern Biosecurity Group

INCOME	
Declared Pest Rate from landholders	\$ -
DPR State Government matching funds	\$ 94,515.00
Total funding	\$ 94,515.00

EXPENDITURE	
Program 1 - Declared animal species	
Wild dogs	\$ 22,422.27
Foxes	\$ 7,431.69
Feral cats	\$ 2,000.00
Rabbit	\$ 10,000.00
Baits, aerial baiting, poisons, biological control etc	\$ 7,225.20
Signage	\$ -
Program 2 - Declared plant species	
Apple sodom	\$ 6,000.00
Bridal creeper	\$ 5,000.00
Cactus	\$ -
Materials - herbicide, biological control	\$ -
Program 3 - Governance	
Accountant - Legal	\$ 1,770.00
Committee honorarium/expenses	\$ 879.55
Insurance - Workers compensation ED	\$ 1,902.72
Insurance - RAIN 1/3rd share various policies	\$ -
Insurance - SBG pub lia(dogging)	\$ 1,839.18
Insurance License- SBG equipment (trailer)	\$ -
Teleconference/zoom meeting costs	\$ 54.55
Program 4 - Administration	
Contract Executive Officer	\$ 62,550.00
Office, phone, internet	\$ 450.00
Professional Development	\$ 390.00
RFP application fee	\$ -
RAIN Administration	\$ 5,120.00
Stationary-postage(exo annual letter)	\$ -
Travel-accomodation	\$ 2,610.56
Subs/Memberships	\$ 300.00
Program 5 - Communicaton	
Advertising	\$ 992.40
Annual letter(s) to landholders (incl of postage, print	\$ 3,791.21
Biosecurity event/awareness incl market days	\$ 3,054.76
Promotional brochures, booklets, stands, banners	\$ 1,290.00
Website	\$ -
Program 6 - Operations	
Equipment purchase-replacement	\$ -
Total Expenditure	\$ 147,074.09

Auditor Signature

Michael W Clarke

Date_27th September 2022 _____
 Name_Michael W Clarke CPA CD _____
 Contact arc Accounting Pty Ltd _____
 Registration Details CPA 376863 _____

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