

# Now banned, the 'bufiest' of Mexican waves

## Part 3 - It's Raining Death Adders and Toads!

Cane toad and native Australian predatory fauna related adaptations and behavior.

by Ian Browne, Shamrock News, Darwin

Well it's been a great wet season up here in the tropics and new research suggests that 60 species of gecko have been recorded as calling the Northern Territory home. The previous monsoon frogh to the one us Darwinian folk are currently 'sweating out' spawned Cyclone George, a tornado out in Kakadu, record flooding rains in western Arnhem Land-Oenpelli and Maningrida, and 2000 strikes of lightning were recorded in Darwin; the lightning capital of world in less than 3 hours! The temperature finally drops below 34c some days, the monsoon swell brings hordes of surfboards out of the woodwork and the humidity struggles to fall below 80% day or night in Darwin as the monsoon delivers luke-warm silvery purple torrential life bearing rain. Amongst the habitual whirling of ones' ceiling fans, sinful aircon units and The Pogues; through the louvered windows tree frogs croak relentlessly throughout the evening in lush rainforest gardens. But this weather also ignites horrible warty passions in our friends the cane toads.



Yes, they began their vile intrusion past the airport and down through Rapid Creek in Darwin's northern suburbs' cosmopolitan-tropical nirvana this wet season. In fact during the same week that sniffer dogs were recruited in Port Macquarie NSW to 'whiff out' the croaking bufoes, Graeme Sawyer of Darwin's 'FrogWatch' was called out to Jingili Water Gardens in the northern suburbs, where Rapid Creek idles through to the nearby Arafura Sea, as thousands toadlets and tadpoles of the dreaded Bufo-marinus were discovered and removed by FrogWatch troops.

Just previous to the brewing of Cyclone George in this, the steamy Top End, a huge cane toad was found and killed down in the city at the Parklands Golf Course and

weighed in at a whopping 400g and had 40,000 eggs aboard. "Yep, they are here!"

Just last night over a soothing ale, my brother and I debated whether the tadpoles swimming gleefully in his dingo dog's water bowl were either offspring of tree frog or cane toad. We are very fond of our garden and lawn residents up here in the Top End, Gilbert's water dragons and the cult-like, and extremely shy, frilled neck lizards. Are they to become a rarity now the toads have landed? Darwin just wouldn't be the same I ponder as my favorite 'Doves' song fills me with even more romantic remorse about departed native identity.

Graeme Sawyer believes so, gone from schoolyards and parks also of course the charms of our friendly companions. He is also worried about the plight of the very common yellow spotted sand monitor and is organizing toad busts this month in Darwin's outer suburbs. "You have to remember these invaders also kill crocs, nothing it seems is safe as the toadlets are also poisonous."

In the leafy mesophyll suburbs of Darwin there are

whistling kites, brahminy kites, square tailed kites and migratory black kites, rare barking owls, sea eagles, ospreys and collared sparrow hawks. I am concerned about them all also and not just because of direct predation upon the toads; but the ecological impacts as other prey species such Gilbert's dragon numbers decline."

Sadly I haven't seen or heard a pheasant -coucal since returning to Darwin from Nimbin last August. Gladly I am happy to say I have neither seen nor heard a cane toad since leaving northern NSW. Unfortunately this will change I am sure.

In Darwin's rural regions, friends living on properties have been sidestepping passive death adders and collecting toads as the heavy rains have attracted them to homes, dunnies and sheds. There are cane toad detention centres now set up in both Darwin and Palmerston Recycling Centres.

In the next edition I will discuss some new and exciting scientific facts, which both you and I will be the first to explore, before the mainstream get their mischievous hands on them.



by Jennifer Creed

In recent issues of the *GoodTimes* I have outlined how to spot koalas and how to distinguish between a healthy versus sick koala. Friends of the Koala not only rescue and treat injured koalas but also keep records of all sightings reported to us by members of the public. The information gathered is used to construct a detailed profile of koala numbers, and the health of individual koalas sighted in our region and is vital if we are to conserve not only our koalas but retain habitat for all species of wildlife.

With the influx of southerners seeking a tree change we will see an increase in flora and fauna stress parallel with the increase in population and inevitable new housing developments. So many newcomers to the region are excited to spot their first wild koala high in a tree in their gardens or newly acquired bush blocks but are unsure of how they can help retain a viable habitat and live harmoniously with these unique marsupials.

Our 24 hour 7 day a week hotline can refer any habitat enquiries to our experienced Trees Officer who will be happy to provide advice regarding tree identification, koala food trees and what makes certain trees significant to an individual koala.

All koalas brought into care are tagged, named and a record sheet begun.

In October 2002 a young female koala was found on the ground near Uncle Tom's Pies covered in ticks but no other obvious signs of illness. Because she was young at the time "Jane" was taken into home care at Myocum for observation. She was released

one month later near Manns Road.

On the 18th February this year she was again found in the Myocum area sitting on the ground but this time she had obvious signs of cystitis, conjunctivitis and poor body condition. The caller who rang the rescue line noted a tag in the right ear so the attending rescuer instantly knew it was a female (boys are tagged in the left ear). Upon checking the records for tag number 1018 she quickly realised it was Jane, the young koala she had cared for at her home some four years earlier.

Jane has had two trips to the Australia Wildlife Hospital since being in care this time.

The first trip was to make sure that as a result of the Chlamydia, she did not have ovarian cysts or any other internal damage. Her second trip was for a further check-up as she had developed a fungal infection which she is now being treated for. If all goes well she will be released back to where she came from in approximately two months.

She is currently being cared for in the Care Centre at Lismore.

Sightings of healthy koalas can be reported online at <[www.friendsofthekoala.org](http://www.friendsofthekoala.org)> or forms can be picked up from Nimbin Environment Centre. Please report any tags visible and what ear it is in even if you can't see the tag number as this is helpful in determining the ratio of male/female koalas present in a habitat.

If you are concerned the koala may be sick it is better to call the hotline as soon as possible for further advice. Our Hotline number is (02) 6622-1233.

Until next month, happy Koala spotting.

## Greenhouse Howard -

### Think globally, act locally on forests

by Ian Cohen

The Prime Minister's announcement of a plan to save the world's forests smacks of hypocrisy while Australian forests, including those in NSW, continue to be felled at an unacceptable rate, said Greens MP and forestry spokesperson Ian Cohen.

Oldgrowth forests and rainforests are still being logged right across Australia. In north-east NSW rainforests are being logged and threatened species habitats are being hammered. If the Prime Minister wants to save the forests, he should put pressure on state governments to protect forests here in Australia.

Any suggestion that logging is being done in a sustainable

manner is laughable. In NSW the government forest agency has signed contracts for volumes it can't supply from public forests and has now joined the ranks of those ravaging private native forests, which are not subject to regulation, in order to meet its contractual obligations.

If the Prime Minister is serious about forest protection he can ensure the review of the Regional Forest Agreements, scheduled for 2005 and still not started, and provide funds for those majestic forests still standing to be protected.

A good example is the imminent and unnecessary destruction of 300,000 river red gums from the Murray River region to supply Victoria with railway sleepers. There are more sustainable alternatives. The Prime Minister can save forests in our own backyard by insisting that Steve Bracks not sign the contracts for this appalling destruction of majestic red gum forests.

The Government is providing millions for tree planting while logging companies are awarded millions in public handouts. Intensive logging is doing irreparable damage to our water catchments and diminishing stream flows by significant amounts. It is releasing huge amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere, making our forests more flammable and reducing the survival chances of many of our unique plants and animals.

The PM needs to stop grandstanding on the international stage in an attempt to distract from his complete lack of action on climate change and take immediate action on keeping the remaining large Australian trees in the ground.

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