



# BOAB BULLETIN

No. 132

February 2016

## NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m.

**Dalkeith Hall, 97 Waratah Avenue, Dalkeith**

**Wednesday, 3 February 2016**

**“Bush Adventures in the Kimberley and Victoria River (NT) 2014-15”**

**Mike Donaldson: Northern Kimberley**

**Roger Passmore: Prince Regent National Park**

**Jeff Gresham: Victoria River region of the Northern Territory**

Following our usual format for February, this meeting will comprise three brief, well illustrated presentations by Society members about trips made to remote localities.

**Wednesday, 2 March 2016**

**“Animal Management in Rural & Remote Indigenous Communities”**

**Kim McCreanor (CEO, AMRRIC)**

AMRRIC is a national not-for-profit charity that uses a One Health approach to coordinate veterinary and education programs in Indigenous communities. Its approach recognises the links between human, animal and environmental health and wellbeing. By working with remote Indigenous communities to improve pet health, they help to create healthier, safer and happier communities.

**Wednesday, 6 April 2016**

**“Art of Station Time: Art of Indigenous people who worked in  
Australia's pastoral industry mainly in Northern Australia”**

**Darren Jorgensen (University of Western Australia)**

Darren is a senior lecturer in the School of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts. His key research is in Aboriginal art history and art theory; critical theory and Marxism; utopia and science fiction; communication and internet studies; Australian cinema and Australian studies; and continental philosophy.

Please note that, with many of our speakers involved in work-related travel, this program may change at short notice. Should a speaker not be available, the topic may differ on the evening.

Members and visitors are invited to stay for supper after the meetings.

The Society asks a \$2.00 hospitality fee from non-members.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to another year of interesting and educational presentations at your Kimberley Society.

The necessary change in venue for the December 2015 meeting to the Mount Claremont Community Centre occurred with minimal inconvenience to the Council and members. Unfortunately, a member did attend the Dalkeith Hall but was redirected with an appropriately placed sign provided by a Kimberley Society Councillor. The venue suited the evening's presentation and Christmas supper well so the Mount Claremont Community Centre may be considered in the future as a short term alternative if the need arises.

In preparation for this column I regularly scan the internet to gain insight into what is happening in the Kimberley region. Although vehicle and helicopter access is constantly being expanded and awareness of the remoteness and expanse of the Kimberley is progressing dramatically through education and access to the internet, this region continues to experience challenges that never change.

Recent news headlines include 'Highway Cattle Collisions Increase', 'Victim's Arm Found in Crocodile Stomach', 'Catastrophic Fire Conditions', and 'Broome Beach Closed After Irukandji Jellyfish Stings'. All infer that the Kimberley is still a largely untamed region with problems and challenges that have been ongoing for a long time. The isolation of the Kimberley, with an area of 423,517 square kilometres, and its unique environment is what attracts many thousands of visitors each year to appreciate its scenic wonders. The same things also encourage researchers to study and explore its natural history while challenging pastoralists and agriculture to be sustainably productive.

It is the irreplaceable character of Kimberley region with its unrivalled scenery, amazing flora and fauna, and a rich Aboriginal culture that provides the purpose of the Kimberley Society to continue year after year since its formation in 1992. Our purpose has always been to encourage research on, and disseminate information about, this remote region. Again, this year the Society will encourage studies that will enhance knowledge and understanding of the Kimberley's history, peoples, cultures, resources, natural history, heritage, and environment; encourage personal, organisational, corporate and government actions that will help to preserve the Kimberley environment, and its rich Aboriginal and European heritage; co-operate with other Associations having similar aims; and, in addition to the newsletter, produce a publication containing the talks at this year's natural history seminar.

So, I look forward to seeing those able to attend the monthly meetings at the Dalkeith Hall in Dalkeith and to sharing with you the interesting articles and news provided in the *Boab Bulletin*.

*Jeff Murray*

## FISH, TOADS AND LIZARDS

[University of Melbourne researchers](#) led by Dr Stephen Swearer and Dr Tim Dempster have discovered 20 previously unrecorded species of freshwater fish in the Kimberley. Set to boost the biodiversity of the country's freshwater fish species by ten per cent, the find consists of grunters, gudgeons and hardy heads.

An east Kimberley study by University of Sydney PhD candidate Georgia Ward-Fear and Balanggarra Rangers has gained international attention. Written up in '[Biology Letters](#)' by the Royal Society, it showed that free-ranging varanid lizards can be trained to avoid cane toads. The study suggests that release of small toads ahead of the invasion would generate taste aversion and, through lower toxicity, save lives.

## POLICING IN THE KIMBERLEY 1882-1905

On 5 August 2015, **Dr Chris Owen** spoke to the Kimberley Society about the research done for his doctoral thesis, which is to be published as a book by UWA Publishing with assistance from the Western Australian History Foundation. While Chris worked on his thesis, one of his published papers was titled "[The police appear to be a useless lot up there': law and order in the East Kimberley 1884–1905](#)". His thesis covered a slightly different period but, because the Press wanted the book to span the years 1882 to 1905, his presentation to the Society covered that period. Chris's précis of his talk follows. Our [website version](#), unhampered by space constraints, is illustrated with historical images.

My PhD thesis *'Weather Hot, flies troublesome'*: Police in the Kimberley District of Western Australia 1882-1901 will be published as *'Every mother's son is guilty...'* It focuses on policing of the Kimberley Aboriginal populations during 1882-1905. The Kimberley was one of Australia's last frontiers colonised for the industries of pearling, mining and pastoralism. Unknown at the time of colonisation was that the district was home to an estimated 27 different Aboriginal language groups—a population of between 10,000 and 30,000. Many Aboriginal people 'sat down' or willingly came and worked on pastoral stations whilst staying on their country. Others resisted.

Histories of Kimberley police tend to view the East and West Kimberley districts as discrete entities. West Kimberley histories are usually associated with stories of Aboriginal outlawry or resistance to colonisation, as in the mid-1890s story of Jandamarra ('Pigeon') and groups of Aboriginal men and women from the Bunuba people. East Kimberley histories, far fewer in number, tend to suggest that conflict was the random and sporadic result of overly aggressive policing on an uncontrolled frontier. Other histories tend to regard police actions as unconnected from political context and as autonomous and unauthorized, often implying that any killings of Aboriginal people that occurred were independent of the colonial administration.

My research showed that the period was far more complex than had been realized, with significant political and social forces shaping police actions. There were clear distinctions between the earlier protective role of the police and the later punitive role. One statutory role of the police was to protect Aboriginal people, as British subjects, from labour exploitation and from the worst excesses of colonisation. Police were also to protect them from 'summary justice' dispensed by some colonists who punished and even killed (at times burning to hide the evidence) Aboriginal people.

Some writers have suggested that 'violence was endemic from the very beginning' of European colonisation. This was not the case. Indeed, the most significant conflict occurred more than a decade after Europeans first arrived. In the early years of colonisation, police such as Patrick Troy thoroughly and conscientiously investigated allegations of abuse of Aboriginal people by colonists. For instance in 1884 Troy investigated the killing of Aboriginal boy Julemar, alias Dan, by a Derby colonist. In late 1886 he investigated a particularly repellent case where John Eatch, an ex-policeman, kicked to death a young Aboriginal station servant named Charcoal. In this early period police seemed prepared to prosecute the law equally.

During the mid-1890s, when WA had just attained responsible government with John Forrest as premier, the police, under instruction from the highest levels of the government, were used to contain and control Aboriginal people through arrest and killing so that the Kimberley pastoral industry could thrive free from Aboriginal interference. It is very clear that Aboriginal people, both by their presence as well as their resistance, were seen as threats to both colonists and commercial development. There were concerns at the highest level of government that Europeans might be driven out of the Kimberley; not just West Kimberley. Those concerns grew as years passed. In 1893, local Aboriginal people were said by one newspaper to be 'threatening Wyndham with absolute annihilation'. Police killed large numbers of

Aboriginal people, not through directives or orders to 'kill', but rather through legal euphemisms. 'Dispersals' were ordered by way of telegrams from the Commissioner of Police situated in an office over 1400 miles away in Perth. Aboriginal people refer to this time in the mid-1890s as the 'Killing times.'

The first factor shaping the history of Kimberley policing was the political and constitutional changes in WA. After gaining independence from British control in 1890, the legislature brought in oppressive laws and regulations aimed at controlling Aboriginal people. The second factor was the diversity of the Kimberley Aboriginal groups. While the Jandamarra episode is crucial to the history of policing in the Kimberley, it is best understood as a local conflict within the much broader West and East Kimberley conflict. Many other Aboriginal groups were involved in conflict, utilising the natural environment of the enormous semi-circle of ranges and hills. The third set of factors shaping the nature of policing was environmental, geographic and demographic. The Kimberley was situated in the most remote part of the largest Australian colony (later State) with unusually oppressive environmental conditions and the sub-tropical weather patterns, the monsoonal 'wet and dry'. The fourth factor was the social context in which colonists and police operated. While the West and East Kimberley were colonised primarily for pastoral based industries, the different nature and background of the colonists in the West and East produced differing social contexts in which the police operated. Perth based pastoral interests that initially invested in sheep farming took up land mainly in the West Kimberley. The East Kimberley was colonised generally by those called 'othersiders', cattlemen from New South Wales and Queensland who drove their stock overland to the Kimberley. These colonists came from areas where native police forces dealt with Aboriginal people forcefully and, without the pretence of the rule of law, through extreme violence.

Police in the Kimberley had to work in the context of social expectations that interfered with norms and conventions of policing. Local social 'understandings' exercised considerable influence. Colonial authority was so distant both physically and psychologically that it held little sway. The remoteness and lack of government and legal authority encouraged some pastoralists and others to take the law into their own hands and an extensive and pervasive 'conspiracy of silence' existed. The fifth factor shaping Kimberley policing is a largely unstated aspect of WA policing, the model of policing utilised. Financial constraints claimed by the government severely limited police numbers. This was critical as WA is the largest police jurisdiction in the world. Frontiers of settlement expanded northward following a similar pattern to those of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Western Australia differed however in not instituting a para-military native police force of the kind that had proved so devastatingly effective in subduing Aboriginal resistance in other colonies. Indeed, WA government authorities refused to implement one and had, therefore, to come up with a different model of policing. This model included innovations such as the use of armed native assistants or armed Aboriginal trackers (who curiously were not members of the police force) and, at times, the swearing in of special constables. While authorities insisted that Kimberley police were a civil force without military powers, the police during this period also killed very large numbers of Aboriginal people. Octavius Burt, the undersecretary to Premier John Forrest, was sympathetic to the rights of Aboriginal people and wrote to Forrest plaintively stating: 'There can be no doubt that from these frequent reports that a war of extermination is being waged on these unfortunate blacks in the Kimberley district.' There is no indication that either John Forrest or the commissioner of police took any action on this letter and evidence suggests they knew exactly what was going on.

In the Kimberley, 'bush patrols' or 'bush work' became the most contentious aspect of policing although it would be the model of patrolling that would endure well into the 1930s and 1940s. 'Good bushmen' (as opposed to 'new chums') were police who could camp out in the Kimberley landscape for weeks or sometimes months on end – known in the local parlance as a 'long pull.' They were familiar with horse work, useful with guns and, most importantly, were experienced in dealing with Aboriginal people, especially those they called 'bush blacks'. In the early 1880s bush patrols were long though relatively benign affairs. By the late 1880s and into the 1890s they became extremely dangerous and evidence suggests that many new and inexperienced police did not like them, for good reason. They were very dangerous and police risked being speared as they arrested large groups.

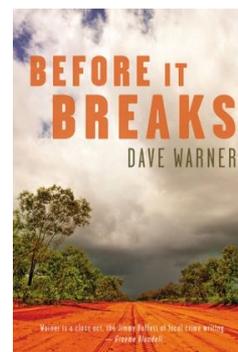
In a morning raid, where there may or may not have been shooting, known as 'dispersal' of those resisting arrest, the men, and at times children as young as eleven, would be detained and arrested, and charged with the criminal offence of cattle killing. At times the groups were up to thirty-three Aboriginal men at a time. After arrest, the accused would then be neck chained and chained together at times at a distance of just 24 inches (60cm) apart. Neck chaining was considered the most effective and humane way of restraining prisoners as it left their hands free though it was never used on non-Aboriginal prisoners. Police regulations issued in 1898 regarding chaining Aboriginal people stipulated that only Aboriginal people from the 'bush' or those of 'desperate character' were to be neck chained and the practice should not be used if it could be avoided. That stated all Aboriginal prisoners in the Kimberley were neck chained. Following a directive from senior police, Aboriginal women, although part of the same group, were never arrested. Instead, women, wives and relatives would be bought in as witnesses. Not for the defence of the accused but as witnesses for the prosecution. Despite having no charge against them and with no legal authority they too were ankle or neck chained. The group would then be forced to walk up to 15 miles a day (up to 200 miles). At night they would be chained together around an available tree. Police regulations stipulated that prisoners should be chained by the leg at night though this was ignored.

They would finally arrive at Derby, Halls Creek or Wyndham where all would be charged with the same offence and face court. The men, who speared cattle because their traditional food sources had been displaced by stock, would invariably plead guilty and could be found summarily guilty by a magistrate or justice of the peace (at times the JP who owned the property) and gaoled for up to three years with or without a whipping.

In the period after 1900 as Western Australia joined the commonwealth of Australia much of the larger police 'dispersals' had stopped but the problem of controlling Aboriginal people on country still existed. This period was characterised by widespread arrest and gaoling. During the period under study periodic reports of abuse in the Northwest and Kimberley would lead to calls for a royal commission to enquire into the treatment of Aboriginal people and labour conditions for workers on pastoral stations. This would be the impetus for Dr. Walter Edmund Roth's *The Report of the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives* ('Roth Report'). In January 1905 the Roth Report was tabled in the Western Australian parliament to significant Australia-wide and international controversy. The testimony was serialised and reported on in not only Perth newspapers but also all over the nation and overseas. The Perth *Daily News* declared 'Council of Churches. Horror-Stricken and Sorrowful.' The widely read *Sydney Morning Herald* proclaimed 'Blacks Brutally Treated,' 'Western Australian Sensation,' 'Horrible Cases of Cruelty.' '*Every mother's son is guilty...*' documents the history of Kimberley policing up to this point.

## BOOK NOTES

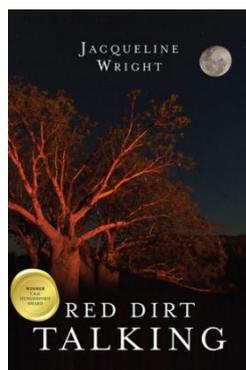
***Before It Breaks* by Dave Warner. Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2015, 344 pages, ISBN 9781925161175. Paperback. RRP \$29.99. Also in Ebook.**



The lead character in this novel, Detective Daniel Clement, is, like many fictional crime fighters, plagued by a broken marriage and too little time with his child. At times his preoccupation with his demons threatens to derail the story but, for the most part, it unfolds in an interesting and believable way. The writing is similar to that in Warner's [City of Light](#), published in 1995.

Set partly in Broome, the story has connections with Derby, Perth and, to a greater extent, Hamburg. Some of the action is at a local fishing spot called Jasper Creek, and some on roads and beaches out of Broome. Descriptive passages make it easy to visualise the surroundings. The introduction of bikers, drug dealers and users adds a seedy current day element which, coupled with the evolving Hamburg connection, keeps the reader guessing about the violence and murders at the heart of the book.

Warner's ability to weave small aspects of his characters' lives into a coherent story is enviable. So, too, is his ability to add layers of complexity to his plot without losing the reader in the process. Those things, combined with the simultaneous build up of the weather and the police investigation, certainly hold one's attention. The book has an ugly side but skilful handling of those parts keeps them from seeming gratuitous. It is too dark a book to recommend for enjoyment but it is definitely one that is well written.



***Red Dirt Talking* by Jacqueline Wright. Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2012, 368 pages, ISBN 9781921888793. Paperback. RRP \$27.99.**

Set in the Pilbara, in a fictitious town and Aboriginal community, this book is written by a Broome-based author with a Kimberley and Pilbara work background. The setting, given the author's capacity for conveying the feel of the north and its culture, could easily be transposed to the Kimberley. Jacqueline Wright's ability to tap into the connection between that culture and anthropological studies also gives the setting fluidity.

Annie, a 40-year-old anthropology postgraduate, is one of the book's central characters. Unprepared for the challenges she faces in her fieldwork, she becomes distracted by, and then immersed in, a mystery surrounding the disappearance of Kuj, an eight-year-old girl at the centre of a custody battle.

Like *Before It Breaks*, this novel graphically portrays the discomfort and enervation that most people feel during the build-up before the wet. Here, too, the weather exacerbates rather than causes the personal tensions underpinning the story, an aspect that becomes clear only as more of each thread is revealed.

*Red Dirt Talking* won the TAG Hungerford Award (most promising unpublished manuscript) in 2010 and was long-listed for the Miles Franklin Award in 2013.

Sample chapters of both [this book](#) and [Before It Breaks](#) are available on the Fremantle Press website.

*Cathie Clement*

## REST IN PEACE

On 10 December 2015, the Kimberley Society lost another of its founding members. **Norma Anderson**'s sudden but peaceful death ended a robust life that was filled with enthusiasm and determination.

Born into the McClymont family in Perth in 1922, Norma was raised in Donnybrook in the south-west of Western Australia. At the local State School, she was in the same class as young Jim Anderson who, despite being the target of her merciless teasing, would later recognise Norma as a soul mate and ask her to be his wife. That was in 1944, while Jim was on leave from the Royal Australian Navy. Their marriage took place in Donnybrook in May 1945. Jim served out of Sydney, and their first child, Ross, was born there. Keith was next, born in Donnybrook, and, after Jim's discharge from the Navy, they settled in Bunbury where Jim trained—and then worked—as a carpenter. Two daughters, Karen and Michele (Mitchy), arrived to complete the family.

Norma and Jim's long association with the Kimberley began in the late 1950s when they drove north with Norma's father to see her younger brother, Roy. Norma no doubt kept an eye out for interesting stones and rocks, items from which she assembled a fascinating collection over many years. Wine also appealed to Norma, with some of her choices reflecting the time she spent in catering and working at the Floreat Hotel.

Always animated and popular, Norma and Jim got to know many West Kimberley folk in the years 1986 to 1998, while acting as caretakers of Liveringa Station's beautiful old homestead. Being there enabled them to do long walks on which they explored such areas as Leopold Downs Station and the back portion of Fossil Downs Station. It was also during this period that the Kimberley Society formed. [Three talks](#) had been presented in Derby and Broome before the Easter Sunday of 1996 when Norma and Jim hosted a [visit](#) to Liveringa. Norma laid on a sumptuous morning tea, consumed on arrival, and Jim then took everyone on an informative tour of the buildings. The following month Norma participated in the Society's [coastal excursion](#) on M V *Sea Lion*.

On returning to Perth, and their Scarborough home, Norma and Jim attended the Society's talks and seminars, and lent their support to its projects. They were also very committed to the Royal Western Australian Historical Society and to organisations that supported their daughter Mitchy and other children with special needs. Never ones to broadcast their generous donations of time and money, they contributed several times to the appeal through which the Society raised funds to construct the protective roof over the Old Halls Creek post office ruins, and to then install interpretation signage there. It was nice to hear that, in the week before her death, Norma enjoyed reading the *Boab Bulletin* with its account of the long-awaited completion of that project. Had she been up to it, she would have enjoyed one last Kimberley trip. And, if she'd taken the road past the ruins, she could have seen her name and Jim's on the acknowledgments panel. Reflecting on the history of that place, and its long-running conservation, would inevitably have brought to mind the good times shared with their many friends in the Society and the Kimberley.

Norma's funeral service was held at Karrakatta Cemetery on 18 December. On 21 January 2016, an obituary by Patrick Cornish in *The West Australian* told of her life and fittingly described her as a "volunteer extraordinaire".

Vale Norma.

*Cathie Clement*

## KIMBERLEY MAMMALS: STATUS AND CONSERVATION

On 7 October 2015, **Andrew Burbidge**, a well-known conservation biologist, who first studied [Kimberley mammals](#) in 1971, shared some of his extensive knowledge with us. His summary of the evening's presentation follows.

Although our knowledge of what used to occur in the Kimberley is incomplete, 82 species of native mammals are known to have occurred there at the time of European settlement. These comprised one, possibly two, species of echidna, 31 species of marsupials, 28 of bats and 22 of native rodents. Eleven species of introduced mammals are feral in the Kimberley. Many species have much-reduced geographic ranges and some are threatened with extinction.

The [Short-beaked Echidna](#) remains widespread and occurs on eight Kimberley islands. It is still an open question as to whether the [Western Long-beaked Echidna](#) occurred in the Kimberley. Recently a specimen was located in a European museum, labelled Mt Anderson, 1901, and collected by [John Tunney](#). There is a fossil record of the species in Australia. However, enquiries of traditional owners suggest that there is no oral tradition of it in the Kimberley and it's possible that the label was transferred by someone to this specimen from another animal. Mt Anderson seems an unlikely location for the species, as in New Guinea, where it still occurs but is critically endangered, it prefers much wetter habitats.

There are ten species of [Dasyurids](#) (carnivorous marsupials) in the Kimberley. Best known is the [Northern Quoll](#), but there are also [dunnarts](#), an [antechinus](#), [planigales](#) and a [phascogale](#). There are three species of bandicoots: the [Northern Brown](#) and [Golden Bandicoots](#), and, along the Kimberley's southern edge, the [Bilby](#). Three species of possum and the [Sugar Glider](#) comprise the next group. This group includes the Kimberley endemic (occurs nowhere else) [Scaly-tailed Possum](#). Thirteen species of rat-kangaroos, wallabies and kangaroos are (or were) found in the Kimberley. The endemic [Monjon](#), the smallest rock-wallaby, occurs in a small area of the high rainfall north-west. Another small rock-wallaby, the [Nabarlek](#) is also found there; the Kimberley shares this species with the Northern Territory.

Three species of flying-foxes and 25 species of insectivorous bats have been recorded in the Kimberley. These include one endemic species, the [Yellow-lipped Bat](#). Native rodents are represented in the Kimberley by 22 species, including the endemic [Kimberley Rock-rat](#).

Four mammal species that occurred in the Kimberley are extinct and have been recorded only as subfossils (that is likely to have been alive at or shortly before European settlement). A further four species that have disappeared from the Kimberley still occur elsewhere in Australia. An enigmatic species is the Daada, known to older Aboriginal people but never recorded by scientists. It is (or was) another species of quoll, significantly larger than the [Northern Quoll](#). It is most likely to be the [Chuditch](#) (or Western Quoll), which once occurred throughout the western deserts up to the southern edge of the Kimberley and occurs (possibly as a closely-related species) in New Guinea.

The conservation status of the Kimberley's mammals varies with location, with many more species from drier areas being extinct or having declined than in the higher rainfall north Kimberley. This pattern is consistent with the rest of Australia. It had been thought for some time that the North Kimberley was the only, or one of very few, areas in Australia with an intact mammal fauna. However, recent research suggests that the mammals in this area are also declining. Nabarlek have not been recorded on the mainland since 1974, [phascogales](#) have only two sight records in the past 20 years, and [Black-footed Tree-rats](#) have not been located in the Kimberley for more than 20 years.

The major threats to Kimberley mammals are [feral cats](#), inappropriate [fire regimes](#), [cane toads](#) and over-grazing and trampling by stock and feral herbivores. Major mammal declines have been documented in Kakadu National Park and other areas of the Northern Territory and a similar picture is emerging in the Kimberley. In particular, large, very hot, late-dry-season fires open up vast areas of country making it easier for cats to hunt and eliminate native mammals. They also convert the vegetation, eliminating perennial plants in favour of annuals, especially promoting annual grasses such as annual native sorghum, making fires even hotter.

Fortunately, there is an increasing level of biodiversity research in the Kimberley, although not nearly enough. The [Department of Parks and Wildlife](#) and the [Australian Wildlife Conservancy](#) (AWC) have been active, and, increasingly, Aboriginal Rangers working with the [Kimberley Land Council](#) (KLC) and supported by the federal government and [WWF-Australia](#), are researching a range of threatened and other species.

Forty-two [Kimberley islands](#), which are protected from most threats, are known to have populations of native mammals and others are likely to have mammals as well. Northern Quoll, threatened by poisoning from eating cane toads, occur on 15 islands; however, there is concern that toads may reach some of these during floods as has happened to some islands in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Other rare or threatened mammal species that occur on Kimberley islands include the Golden Bandicoot, Scaly-tailed Possum, Monjon, Nabarlek and [Golden-backed Tree-rat](#).



The Golden Bandicoot (*Isoodon auratus*) once occurred over half of Australia, but is now restricted to a small part of the north Kimberley and six islands. Photo: Tricia Handasyde.



The Golden-backed Tree-rat (*Mesembriomys macrurus*) has disappeared from the Northern Territory, the Pilbara and much of the Kimberley, remaining only in the near-coastal high rainfall north Kimberley and on nine islands. Photo: Norm McKenzie.

Better fire management has been developing for some years, mainly via the KLC, AWC and Parks and Wildlife. Fires that are ignited, mainly from helicopters, in the late wet season and early dry season cover relatively small areas and help prevent the development of large, hot, late-dry-season fires. Research, especially by AWC, has shown that feral cats hunt more effectively in open areas, so patchy fires should reduce cat predation. Parks and Wildlife's [Eradicat<sup>®</sup> feral cat bait](#) has now been registered and current research in the Pilbara into its possible effects on Northern Quoll may lead to field trials in the Kimberley. Parks and Wildlife is also trialling [cane toad sausages](#) – it is hoped the sausages, which include minced cane toads and are laced with a nausea-inducing chemical, will deter carnivorous marsupials, including the Northern Quoll, from eating cane toads. Camera traps and faecal DNA analysis are revolutionising mammal survey and they are being used increasingly by Aboriginal Rangers and others.

The State government's [Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy](#) has seen the Kimberley receive increased conservation funding. This, along with increased involvement by non-government organisations, including AWC, the KLC and Aboriginal Rangers, WWF-Australia and [Bush Heritage Australia](#), is leading to better knowledge and better management outcomes. However, the Kimberley covers a vast area and the amount of biodiversity conservation funding it receives is low compared with most of Australia and much more needs to be done to conserve the Kimberley's rich natural heritage.

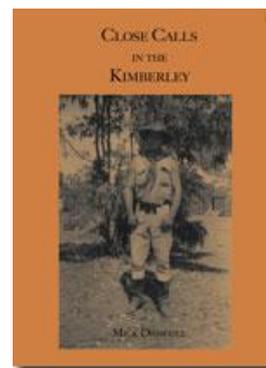
## **FERAL CAT CULL**

Threatened Species Commissioner Gregory Andrews has advised that the plan, announced last July, to kill two million [feral cats](#) over the next five years is to proceed. Said to have the support of major environmental organisations, the plan calls for humane culling with no slow deaths.

## BOOK NOTES

***Close Calls in the Kimberley* by D.M. 'Mick' Driscoll. [Hesperian Press](#), Carlisle, WA, 2015, 43 pages, ISBN 978-0-85905-614-4. Soft cover, A 4, stapled, illustrated. RRP \$22.**

Known as 'Mineral Mick', the author of these reminiscences died in Fremantle Hospital in 2003, aged 63, but his final resting place, in accordance with his wishes, was Halls Creek. After leaving his Perth home at the age of 17, he worked his way to the Kimberley to become a cowboy, bushman and prospector. He tells 15 stories about his adventures, and then relates 11 tales that were told to him by others.



The book, despite lacking flow and style, will appeal mostly to readers who know the Kimberley and its station people, and/or have an interest in the days when mustering was still done on horseback. The names of the locals are used—sometimes with surnames and sometimes without. Paddy Le Lievre, as the manager of Kimberley Downs Station, appears in the first two stories with his son Phil. Jackie Dann, one of their stockmen, is introduced in the second story, and, in the next, is credited with saving the author's life. Then comes another lucky escape, involving a close encounter with a bull on the original Silent Grove Station, which was worked by Len and Bill Connell. When it came to mustering, Driscoll noted that the Connell brothers' infinite patience made them the best he saw. Further along, a casual comment—the sort relished by people who enjoy piecing together history—mentions the brothers speaking of their father living in a stone hut on Milliwindie Station. Such snippets allow links to be made and sometimes illuminate other periods of history.

Some of Driscoll's adventures involve water, e.g. seeing crocodiles while fishing with Ron Ah Chee (story five) and rafting down swollen rivers from Napier Downs to Kimberley Downs (story six). There is even a reference to walking over glacier tracks near Mornington Station (story seven).

Dick Robertson, one of Derby's early private aircraft operators, pops up here and there, flying his small plane out to stations to deal with dramas and emergencies. One of those involved a life-threatening bite from a Redback spider (story seven).

Frank Bridge—'an honest and straightforward man'—is mentioned in his role as manager of Mornington Station (stories seven and eight). The stories in this section ramble but offer insight into country on various stations and the droving of cattle to the Wyndham Meat Works from Mornington and Tableland stations. There are also observations about natural history, tobacco, living off the land, and Driscoll attempting to put cattle onto a small block of his own (stories nine and ten). The fate of the block is revealed in story eleven, where we see the author having to find work operating a bulldozer on the Gibb River Road. That, too, brought close shaves.

More water-based activity follows, this time with failed fishing ventures. There are also further anecdotes about road works and prospecting. Few of the stories are dated but the first mentions a trip to Napier Downs in 1958 while the last mentions prospecting and incidents on Alice Downs Station in the early 1980s.

The 11 tales at the end of the book are from the Connells, Frank Bridge and others. Concern about possible litigation led Driscoll to suppress most of the names in his telling of them. That and the vagueness of some of the tales lessens their appeal but I found the first two interesting. One is about self-administration of strychnine.

While a manuscript as raw as this is seldom published, there is merit in making the stories available to a wider audience. The publisher is to be commended for that.

*Cathie Clement*

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 23rd AGM of Kimberley Society (Inc.) will be held at Dalkeith Hall, 97 Waratah Avenue, Dalkeith, on Wednesday, 6 April 2016, at 7.30 p.m. The Agenda will comprise: the President's Welcome, Apologies, Minutes of the previous AGM, Business arising from the Minutes, President's Report, Treasurer's Report and presentation of Accounts for approval, Election of Office Bearers and other Councillors, and General Business. The AGM will be followed by a guest speaker and supper.

The draft 2015 AGM Minutes appeared in the June 2015 *Boab Bulletin* (No. 128, pages 10–11).

*Jeff Murray, President (Perth, 25 January 2016)*

## COUNCIL NOMINATIONS FOR 2016–2017

The Constitution of Kimberley Society Inc. requires that the Council shall consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Membership Secretary, a Treasurer, and not less than 3, or more than 7, other persons, all of whom shall be Members of the Society. In the interest of conservation, nomination forms will be available at the February and March meetings or by request from a current office bearer. Signed forms must reach the Society by 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, **15 March 2016**. They can be emailed ([admin@kimberleysociety.org](mailto:admin@kimberleysociety.org)) but will be valid only if the original is lodged with the Society by 7.15 p.m. on Wednesday, 6 April 2016. If insufficient nominations are received to fill all the vacancies, further nominations will be received at the AGM. Should any positions remain vacant at the conclusion of the AGM, such vacancies will be deemed casual vacancies and may be dealt with by the Council according to the Constitution.

## COUNCIL 2015-2016

President: **Jeff Murray**  
Vice-Presidents: **Roger Passmore** and **Hamish McGlashan**  
Secretary: **Geoff Owen**  
Membership Secretary: **Mike Donaldson**  
Treasurer: **Jeffrey Gresham**  
Councillors: **Michael Cusack, Tony Gates, Margaret Shugg, and Sven Ouzman.**

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