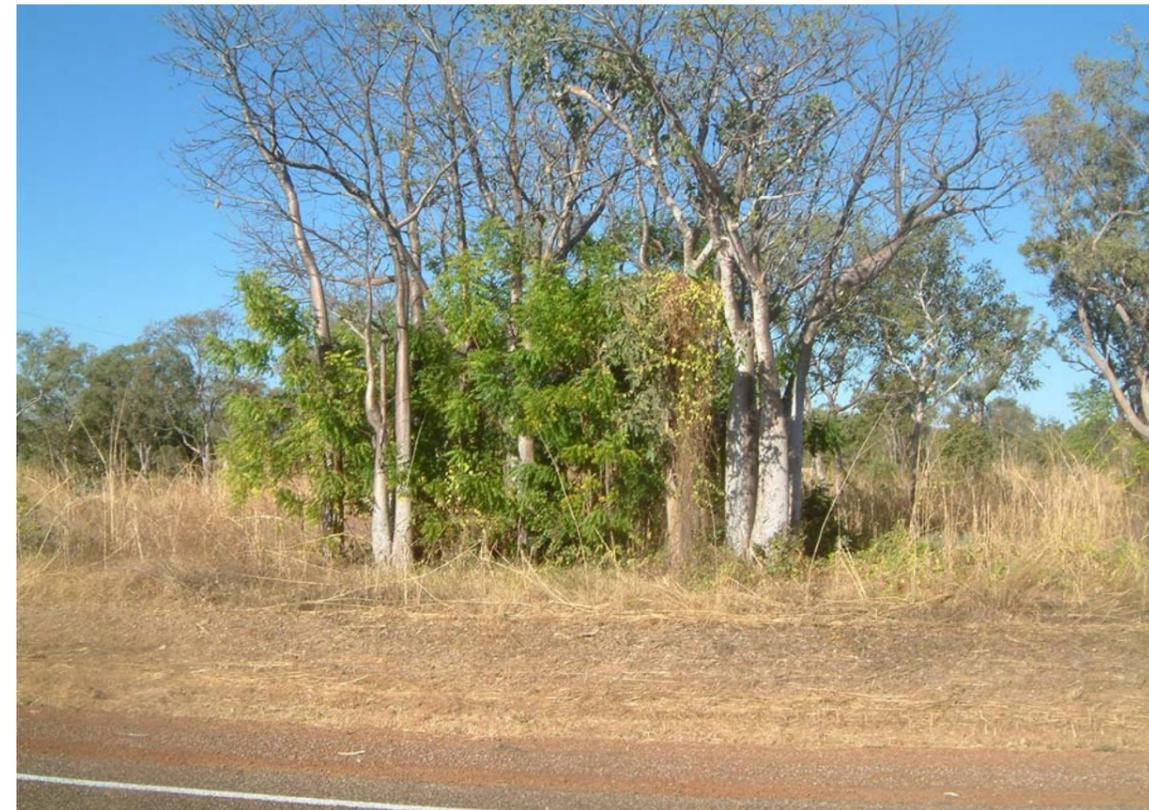


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## Boabs under siege



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Neem trees growing up through a family of boabs. In a matter of a few years these boabs will be totally hidden.

### Local Tree Planting Day

Kununurra's participation in the Planet Ark National Tree Day took a slightly different track to normal recently. Twenty seven people gave up their Sunday morning to mark emerging native trees along the road verges of Ivanhoe Road so they can be avoided when the verges are slashed later in the year.

The day was organised by the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley, Ord Land and Water and the Department of Environment with a large contingent of the Save Endangered East Kimberley Species group making up the numbers. Toyota sponsored the day and the Shire put on a BBQ for lunch for the participants at Celebrity Tree Park.

In all it was estimated that close to 1,000 trees were marked for protection over the 7 kilometre stretch of road. These included the species white wood, peach wood, sandpaper fig, eucalyptus, bauhinia, corkwood wattle and rosewood. It was a good sign to see that so many native trees were present on the verges.

Also noted were the efforts of the watermen from Ord Irrigation Cooperative in keeping the verges clear of calotropis. The advantage in protecting the existing seedling trees rather than planting is that there is no need for ongoing irrigation or cost of planting. Native plants are quite capable of existing in the harsh conditions until the arrival of the wet. There is a strong possibility that similar events could be organised later in the year for some of the lake's foreshore area.



Project officer Tristian Taylor (centre) supervising water quality testing and the monitoring of macroinvertebrates on a remote waterhole north of Kununurra.



A local wattle *Acacia bidwillii* is marked for protection along the verge.

### Pesticide biota project

Duncan Palmer and Tristian Taylor

Pesticides have been used in the ORIA since its development in 1964. The design of the irrigation area allows drainage water to return back to the Ord and Dunham rivers, potentially exposing waterways to chemicals. In the 1970s, an extensive fish sampling program identified high levels of Camphechlor and DDT (and its metabolites) in fish samples collected from the Ord River, a result of their heavy use on farms at the time. These chemicals were subsequently banned, yet a second sampling survey conducted in 2004 identified their continued existence within some fish and animals. This is a result of these types of chemicals very slow breakdown rates.

Pesticide in bush foods is of great concern to local Indigenous people. The concern has been identified as a key issue in a recent Aboriginal socio-economic impact assessment. To improve our understanding of pesticides in the environment, the Ord Catchment Reference Group obtained funds to determine the concentration of pesticide residuals in bush foods. The Department of Environment has employed a local Doorbeng man, Tristian Taylor, to play a key role in the project activities.

Tristian describes the project below:

"We are going to collect the samples around Lake Kununurra and around Lake Argyle and down on the Lower Ord. We're also going to the Pentecost and Keep Rivers and we are going to check the drains D4 and D7 and we might go to spillway.

We are going to do some fish, plant and animal sampling around the rivers to find out if the chemicals are still around today in the environment.

We are going to do some fish sampling around the rivers and check the plants while we are at it and we are going to look at all of the springs around Carlton Hill and up through Ningbing Range.

With a licence from Department of Fisheries we are going to use gill nets to catch a variety of fish from these locations. With a licence from CaLM we will collect wallaby and goanna."

### Survey shows boab's plight.

In a survey by Ord Land and Water of over 200 boab trees throughout Kununurra and the irrigation area more than a third were found to be threatened by neem trees. Some of the earliest trees to be affected are now becoming difficult to spot in amongst the forest of neems that have grown up around them to a height of 5 metres or more.

The line of survey ran from the meatworks out at Packsaddle to the end of the irrigation area along Cave Springs Road, and from the Dunham River Bridge eastward along the Highway through town until the 110km limit sign heading towards the Northern Territory border.

Hot spots of Boabs most affected were located along some stretches of Weaber Plains Road, an isolated section out at Cave Springs and the southern Packsaddle area. What was both interesting and encouraging was the observation that numbers of Boabs under threat rapidly plummeted a short distance away from the most likely sources of the initial Neem infestation.

Locally, neem trees appear to have started encroaching on native trees from gardens between five and seven years ago. At their current rate of spread it seems unlikely there would be boab trees not at risk around Kununurra in another five years, aside from a few growing on private properties or in parklands.

### Supertraps can control toads

The Northern Territory organisation 'FrogWatch' has been trialling what they've nicknamed supertraps since the beginning of this year for large scale cane toad control.

Conclusions from the work to date suggest that these bigger traps are capable of capturing large numbers of toads and significantly reducing populations where the toads have become resident.

The trial work was done on Ringwood station south of Darwin in the period between January and September 2005. Results show that the toad population around the trial area was reduced by 70% compared to a control site a couple of kilometres away, in total the number of toads caught was 1846. One of the pleasing aspects of the traps was that no by-catch was found in them over 250 nights of trapping.

The supertraps are fitted with solar powered lights that attract toads at night and they have one way doors to allow the toads access into the trap but no way back out. The trial also included different styles of lights including black light, UV, and white light tubes. To date it appears that the UV lights work better.

With this new information about the trap's effectiveness the next step will be to see how they work on a broader scale in significant wetlands in National Parks.

