

# Southern Gulf links

A Newsletter from SGC  
February 2009



## HIGHLIGHTS

SGC ROADSHOW

SPOTLIGHT ON  
COLLETT'S SNAKE

ATHEL PINE -  
REDUCING THE RISK

KALKADOON TRAINING  
FOR THE FUTURE

GHOST NETS GIVEN A  
NEW START

CALL FOR FUNDING  
PARTNERS

SGC ANNUAL  
GENERAL MEETING  
RESCHEDULED FOR  
SATURDAY 14TH  
MARCH 2009  
SEE BACK PAGE FOR  
DETAILS

## TAKING INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY

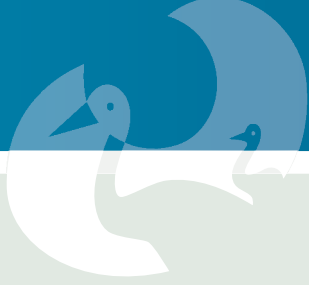
### **Southern Gulf Catchments Road Show will be visiting a town near you from the 9<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2009**

Starting on the Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March in Hughenden, Southern Gulf Catchments (SGC) in collaboration with Queensland Government agencies and researchers is undertaking a road show throughout the region to bring up to date and topical natural and cultural resource management information to our communities.

Presentations will be from 9am until lunch time after which the DPI&F Mobile Office will be open and all presenters available for one-on-one discussions.

There will also be an opportunity for people to 'yarn' about our special places and people; the events, changes and challenges that shape our lives and the country. So bring your memories, stories and old photos.





## SGC ROADSHOW

Find out about:

- Delbessie Agreement - NRW, Agforward
- Mapping technology - SGC
- Nature Refuges - EPA Nature Assist
- Grazing Land Management - DPI&F
- Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge research on the Flinders - Griffith University
- Cultural Heritage Awareness - SGC and local Traditional Owners
- SGC - activities and up coming projects

Lunch

- DPI&F Mobile office and displays from QRAA, RFDS and AgForce
- Presenters available for further discussions
- 'Local Yarns' session.

**Date**

**Where, what time and will I get fed?**

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**Hughenden**

**Diggers Entertainment Centre main meeting room Brodie Street  
9 am to 4 pm**

*Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided*

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**Richmond**

**Shire Hall - Goldring Street  
9 am to 4 pm**

*Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided*

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**Julia Creek**

**Recreation Centre - Julia Street  
9 am to 4 pm**

*Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided*

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**Cloncurry**

**Supper Room (Shire Hall) Scarr Street  
9 am to 4 pm**

*Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided*

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**Gregory Downs**

**CWA Hall Camooweal - Burketown Rd  
9 am to 3 pm**

*Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided*

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

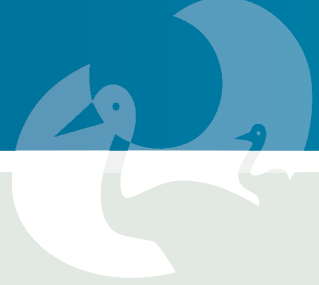
**Mount Isa**

**Outback at Isa - 19 Marian Street  
9 am to 12 pm**

*Morning tea and lunch provided*

**SGC AGM will commence at 2pm**

Please RSVP to SGC on Freecall: 1800 676 242 or email [kate.masters@southerngulf.com.au](mailto:kate.masters@southerngulf.com.au)



## SPOTLIGHT ON COLLETT'S SNAKE

### Collett's Snake (*Pseudechis colletti*)

Collett's snake is found only in central Queensland where it lives in dry inland areas. It is an attractive, solidly built snake with a slightly distinct head. It is beautifully marked with scales of varying colours from orange to dark brown, producing a speckled effect. The average length is 1.25m and may reach a maximum length of 2.5m. The snake hunts by day and feeds mainly on lizards, snakes and other small animals (Australian Venom Research Unit, 2005).

**Scientific name:** *Pseudechis colletti*

**Size:** 1 - 2.5 m

**Status:** Probably common

**Diet:** Feeds on mammals, lizards, snakes and frogs.

**Habitat:** Black soil flood plains, open scrubland and flood channels Open grasslands and woodlands of the black-soil downs central and western Queensland.

**Breeding:** The female lays up to 14 eggs in October to December. Hatchlings have an extremely vivid orange/red and dark brown colouration egg-layer (7-13); average snout -vent length of hatchlings 33cm.

**Identification:** Back brown with large cream to reddish blotches forming irregular bands; belly reddish-cream.

**Scale Counts:** Midbody scale rows 19; ventrals 215-235; anal divided; subcaudals single at front, remainder divided 50-70.

**Distribution:** Central-western QLD (see figure).

**Habits:** Active by day and night.

**Venom:** Myotoxic and cardiotoxic.

Collett's Snake is a placid snake but if cornered it will inflate its body and hiss in a threat display. Potentially dangerous, ranked as the 18th most venomous snake in the world. Apply first aid and seek urgent medical attention for all suspected bites.

(Queensland Museum, 2009)

### References:

Australian Venom Research Unit: [http://www.avru.org/general/general\\_colletts.html](http://www.avru.org/general/general_colletts.html)

Queensland Museum: <http://www.qm.qld.gov.au/features/snakes/snakedetail.asp?TaxName=Pseudechis+colletti>

Clinical Toxinology Resources: [http://www.toxinology.com/generic\\_static\\_files/cslavh\\_antivenom\\_black.html](http://www.toxinology.com/generic_static_files/cslavh_antivenom_black.html)



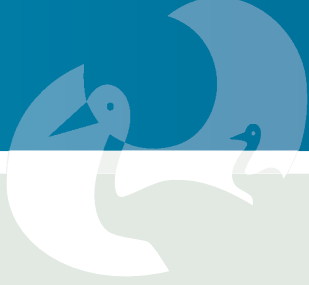
Photo courtesy: Angus Emmott



Photo courtesy: Angus Emmott



Distribution of Collett's Snake  
(Clinical Toxinology Resources, 2009)



## ATHEL PINE - REDUCING THE RISK

*Athel pine (Tamarix aphylla) could become one of Australia's worst weeds, with the potential to infest inland drainage systems across all mainland states and the Northern Territory. Because of its potential impacts on the Australian people, environment and economy, athel pine has been nominated as one of the country's 20 worst weeds, or a "Weed of National Significance".*

*Athel pine has already overrun 600 km of the Finke River in central Australia with devastating results, but its potential impact in Australia has hardly been realised. Most of this country's inland river systems, lakes, springs, waterholes and bore drains are at risk.*

*Athel pine originates from arid to semi-arid northern Africa and western and southern Asia, where it grows around oases and on sand dunes. Athel pine arrived in Australia in the 1930s and was widely planted for shade and windbreaks into the 1970s. Athel pine has naturalised - or gone wild - at only 20 locations, but any of Australia's thousands of domesticated athel pine trees could potentially start a devastating new infestation.*

*Athel pine threatens Australia's pastoral industry because it makes mustering difficult and expensive and dries up or salts the waterholes, springs and rivers where stock could otherwise drink. It threatens the environment by outcompeting the river red gums, coolabahs and endemic herbs which birds, reptiles and invertebrates rely on for food and shelter.*

Athel pine occurs at two main locations in the Southern Gulf - the Flinders River at Hughenden and in the vicinity of Mount Isa.

- Flinders River, Hughenden - centred on the sewerage treatment works outlet, the infestation is over one kilometre long and up to 120 metres wide and occupies the banks and sandy bed of the Flinders River, an environment not dissimilar to the devastated Finke River in Central Australia.
- Mount Isa - Behind Mount Isa mine and Haslingden Station. Athel pine is naturalising in several creeks - Kings Creek (1.5 km long, scattered but moderately dense in patches, largely confined to the stream system, on sandy channel between stream banks) and White Blow Creek, both of which flow into the Leichhardt River, and Templeton Creek into the Georgina River, and on roadsides and tailings damson higher ground. The tailings dam puts pressure on



Athel pine in Flinders River August 2008 (photo Charles Curry)



Flinders River after mechanical removal of athel pine in September 2008 (photo Charles Curry)

ground water resulting in raised water table and salt crusting in all creeks. The raised water table enables athel pine to naturalise and flourish. These infestations pose a high risk for the Georgina River (Lake Eyre Basin catchment) and Leichhardt River (Southern Gulf).

In Mount Isa itself, there are amenity plantings adjacent to the Aboriginal community of Yallambee, close to the Leichhardt River, on Breakaway Creek near the sewage treatment plant, and scattered plantings around town, including opposite the hospital on a drain into the Leichhardt River.



## ATHEL PINE - REDUCING THE RISK

**Southern Gulf Catchments has two aims with regard to athel pine:**

- 1. The prevention of new infestations of athel pine**
- 2. The eradication of all athel pine occurrences in riparian zones.**

SGC has received \$59,400 from the Queensland Government's Blueprint for the Bush Reclaim the Bush - Pest Offensive initiative to commence eradication of athel pine from Hughenden and Mount Isa.

**Flinders River** - a partnership was formed with Flinders Shire Council who contracted to carry out works on the Flinders. The site of seven hectares has been cleared of all standing athel pine and associated rubber vine, mesquite and prickly acacia.

A local earthmoving contractor who has previously worked successfully in the region subcontracted the project in September 2008 and cleared the site on non native species using a D7 dozer and heavy loader with steel chain. Partial heaping and burning followed.

Follow-up spraying of any surviving, regrowing or regenerating athel pine has already been and will continue to be carried out by Flinders Shire Council.



Athel pine in King's Gully, Xstrata mine lease (photo Sandy Leighton)



Athel pine in the Flinders River at Hughenden (photo Sandy Leighton)



## KALKADOON TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE

Kalkadoon Community Pty Ltd in partnership with Southern Gulf Catchments has been investing in the development of a team of professional and capable Kalkadoon Cultural Heritage Rangers to assist Kalkadoon in meeting core responsibilities and obligations associated with the management of the region's natural and cultural resources.

With funding obtained through Southern Gulf Catchments under the Australian Government 'Caring for our Country' initiative a team of 8 Kalkadoon trainees, supported by 4 Kalkadoon Elders, successfully completed an intensive program of professional development and training. Training included Introduction to GPS and GIS, partial completion of a Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management (specialising in Indigenous Land Management) and an introduction to basic archaeology skills.

Trainees were hosted by Birla Mt Gordon Mine at the old Gunpowder School while completing on-country training in Certificate II Conservation and Land Management modules. Here trainees acquired skills in assessing and recording information about country including places, artefacts, plants and animals and how to maintain cultural places such as understanding and mitigating threats and impacts and identifying stakeholders who can assist in developing and implementing management actions and strategies.

The third phase of training was a 3 day introduction to basic archaeology skills with Natural Resources & Water Cultural Heritage Officer, John Richter. During this time trainees learnt more about their local area and fortified skills in recording and understanding the significance of places and objects.

"Kalkadoon Community Pty Ltd Board of Directors is committed to ensuring the organisation has a sustainable future," said Kalkadoon Director and spokesperson Mrs Noeleen Dempsey, "It's critical that we have a team of skilled and competent people to ensure we have the opportunity to participate in and share the benefits of Government, non-Government and Industry initiatives pertaining to natural and cultural resource management." It has been really important to give these trainees formal skills but also to have the Elders accompany them and share their knowledge. "The support of Birla Mt Gordon, the Department of Natural Resources and Water and Southern Gulf Catchments has

been fantastic and we will be looking for new partnerships that support us to care for the natural and cultural resources of the region for the benefit of the wider community," said Mrs Dempsey.

**For Further Information Contact:  
Kalkadoon Community Pty Ltd on (07) 4749 2766**



GPS training at Lake Moondarra



Kalkadoon trainees and Elders



## GHOST NETS GIVEN A NEW START

*'Ghost nets are fishing nets that have been lost accidentally, deliberately discarded, or simply abandoned at sea. They travel the oceans of the world with the currents and tides continually fishing as they progress through the waters. As they are unattended and roaming, they fish indiscriminately, not only catching threatened species but undersized and protected fish as well as turtles. The Ghost nets program involves local communities working to clean up the discarded nets to stop them causing problems in the Gulf environment.'*

Sourced from: [www.ghostnets.com.au/](http://www.ghostnets.com.au/)

Artists have long been adapting different materials into their art to add depth, for enhanced meaning and life and are an artistic practice that has been long used in both indigenous and western art. The discarded net material found in the Gulf lends itself to a range of artistic purposes from the production of craft products such as bags, hats and belts through to large scale sculptural pieces. Indigenous artists have been using the net material both to make craft objects for sale but also to express their culture and history.

Southern Gulf Catchments, in partnership with the Ghost Nets Program, decided to take this concept further and see if a project could be developed involving the local artists working with sculptors to develop a large scale exhibition for touring to a larger audience. This would allow the artists to develop new skills, develop new audiences, markets and income, and to increase community awareness of the impacts of ghost nets on the aquatic environment and what is being done to reduce the damage caused.

Last year Southern Gulf Catchments received financial assistance from the Queensland Government's Arts Queensland Backing Indigenous Arts program to investigate the feasibility of this project and employed Sue Ryan to investigate and scope out the concept through visits to Gulf communities to meet and talk with the local artists. Sue has extensive experience in the development of Indigenous art projects and through her visits she has found great interest in the project from the communities as well as good prospects for the development of a larger exhibitions project.



Artist working with a Ghost net



Stephen Ambar, former Ghost Nets Ranger

Southern Gulf Catchments are hopeful of obtaining further support to fund a trial linking an experienced sculptor to work with a Gulf community to develop work for the First Cairns Indigenous Art Fair that will be held 21-23 August 2009 at the Heritage Sheds in Cairns.

Southern Gulf Catchments sees this project as an excellent way of reaching new audiences to inform them about our environment and work, assisting Indigenous employment opportunities and developing new ways of communicating natural resource management aspirations.

**For further information about the exhibition please contact Donald Coventry on 0427 174 720.**

**For information on the Ghost Nets Program: [www.ghostnets.com.au/](http://www.ghostnets.com.au/)**

# Southern Gulf Catchments

81 Miles St PO Box 2211  
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Fax: 07 4749 4887



## CALL FOR FUNDING PARTNERS

Southern Gulf Catchments is calling for partners interested in undertaking natural and cultural resource management projects within the southern gulf region.

Southern Gulf Catchments is seeking project ideas and partners to deliver the Australian Governments' 'Caring for our Country' outcomes.

Under the *Caring for our Country* program Southern Gulf Catchments will receive a base funding allocation for the next four years to continue delivering natural and cultural resource management projects throughout the region.

If you have a project idea or are interested in becoming an SGC project partner we want to hear from you.

The Australian Government priority investment areas include:

1. Setting up a National Reserve to manage land specifically for conservation purposes
2. Managing biodiversity by reducing threats such as inappropriate fire regimes, pest plants and animals, excessive grazing and habitat loss or fragmentation;
3. Protecting coastal habitats and wetlands from disturbance that leads to habitat loss and biodiversity decline;
4. Participating in coastal planning including fishing pressure and traditional use;
5. Improving land management practices to reduce the risk of soil erosion by wind or water and improve carbon content;
6. Enhancing the knowledge and skills of land managers
7. Increase local community groups participation in natural resource management projects and improving governance arrangements
8. Supporting indigenous groups to continue participation in natural resource management activities.

To register your interest please contact Southern Gulf Catchments on freecall 1800 676 242 or email [kate.masters@southern-gulf.com.au](mailto:kate.masters@southern-gulf.com.au)

## SGC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

(Rescheduled AGM for 2008)

We are pleased to announce the Annual Sector Meetings and the Annual General Meeting of Southern Gulf Catchments Ltd will be held on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at Outback @ Isa, Marian Street, Mount Isa.

Lunch will be provided at 12 noon.

Sector Meetings commence at 1.00pm and the Annual General Meeting will commence at 2.00pm

## STAFF CHANGES

### Farewell Natasha Packman

Natasha our Administration and Communications Officer since January 2007 left SGC in December to further her career with a contracting company in Mount Isa.

### Welcome Natalie Russell

Natalie joined SGC in January as the Executive Support Officer. She will be assisting with the day to day running of the office.

### Local Government Director

Annie Clarke, Mayor of Burke Shire Council, has commenced as the Local Government Director.



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