



# Working Together

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## Row boat from Renmark to Mildura, 1958—*By Therese Hocking*

Have you ever thought of travelling by river? Not in a comfortable steamer, but in an open boat. My father and mother, my sister and I, tried it some years ago when we did the trip from Renmark to Mildura and back. Our two-roomed canvas cottage that stood on blocks was exchanged for a rowing boat and a white tent. We rolled the latter, stowing it with only what was necessary, including a fortnight's groceries, into the boat and left early one morning. It was my job to mind my little sister, while mother and father, seated side by side, rowed the boat. Unfortunately Mary developed a love for watching things zig-zag down through the water out of sight. I am unable to remember how many odds and ends we lost this way until she tired of it. We then began to count the scarred trees out of which the aborigines had cut their canoes. On

the lonely stretches of the river there often were many. Posts for the tent were cut whenever we decided it was too chilly to sleep under the stars, or if we stayed a few days to fish or set rabbit traps. In fact, we travelled 'Wagga's way', as we came to call it; because he was the only other person we met using a rowing boat for that purpose. Wagga was the first, but one of the many characters we happened to meet. A big man, straight, in spite of "sixty years, He had a huge, rounded beard as black as midnight. So was his big cat Satan, who sat on the prow of his master's rowing boat and was the most 'human' cat I have ever met. Wagga always pushed, facing the front to row his boat, as he "liked to see the way", He was a super-cook and used the native fish or wild game, straight from line or gun, wrapped in clay and placed amongst glowing coals. When cooked the feathers stripped

off with the clay. We first met him one evening when he rowed across the river to warn us that the side where we intended to camp was haunted. The story was that a woman passenger on one of the paddle steamers had wandered off while the crew were cutting logs for the boiler fires. She was never found. Her spirit, we were told, used to come back to that part of the river looking for the boat. Mother is Irish, so we did not stay to find out the truth, but quickly crossed to the other side. It was here the next day that a huge ram frightened us. Father and Wagga went off shooting and we other three sat on a fallen gum tree to drink in the surroundings. Suddenly mother's sixth sense caused her to look round and there, not more than three yards behind, stood the ram. His curled horns looked really dreadful. We hastily and quietly withdrew to the boat and continued enjoying peace and

## Row boat from Renmark to Mildura *continued*

wild beauty from there. Between towns we met several families who had settled on the banks of the river. One that astonished us was the goat farm people. They were a big family and owned goats of every kind, size, sex and colour. They ate goats, milked them and used home tanned skins for rugs and mats. We were welcomed like old friends. A huge meal was

prepared for all and we thoroughly enjoyed it. I have often wondered how they never grew tired of goats, goats, goats. Sometimes we never met anyone for days; there was just the never ending scrub and the gurgling of the Murray River. Then, round a bend, a homestead would come suddenly into view. The people of the homesteads were mostly

kind, giving us meat and often flour. In return father would solder their leaking kettles and things. There was only one accident—Mary, running down to the water's edge to watch a paddle steamer, cut her foot badly. We came to a homestead next day and the people there re-bandaged it. Not a scar was left. We reached Mildura four days



## Row boat from Renmark to Mildura *continued*

**'...washed and cleaned every thing, giving the camp oven a good scrub with the clean, white sand found at the water's edge.'**

before Christmas pitched our tent opposite the town and decided to stay a few days. The next couple of mornings father spent in the township, trying to get soldering or other work. We others washed and cleaned every thing, giving the camp oven a good scrub with the clean, white sand found at the water's edge. Christmas was spent quietly, it was cool under the giant gums. Then it was decided we would go back to Renmark. In Renmark the fruit picking

season was about to start and father had been promised some work. So we started back. It took six weeks to come up, and a fortnight to get back.



## Eighth National Stipa Grasslands Conference

*Potential of Native Grasses*

Murray Bridge Town Hall

5-8th November 2013

Keynote speaker:

Professor Bill Gammage

*The Untapped Potential of Native Grasses*

For more information visit

[www.stipa.com.au](http://www.stipa.com.au)

**'...shrimp will carry eggs around under their abdomen and use the legs to keep fresh, oxygenated water flowing over them.'**

A lot of interest has been coming through about the difference between freshwater shrimp and freshwater prawn. Although the difference may seem minor to you or I, through the eyes of a fish or a bird, these differences can be major! Both belong to the group Crustacea (hard shelled) and both to the order Decapoda (5 pairs of legs). However, freshwater shrimp belong to the family Aytidae and freshwater prawn to Palaemonidae. That's enough

technical information for now, so what are the obvious visible differences? I'll start with freshwater shrimp, or species name *Paratya australiensis*. These translucent creatures have an adult size of around 2-4cm and are found in leaf litter or under rocks, logs or other vegetation. They generally feed on plant or animal detritus and bacteria and algae particles. They feed by gathering food particles off rocks or plants using the brush-like hairs on the tips of

their first and second legs. Female shrimp will carry eggs around under their abdomen and use the legs to keep fresh, oxygenated water flowing over them. They breed in summer in sheltered wetlands. As for the freshwater prawns, or *Macrobrachium sp.*, these guys might have been found on the end of a fishing hook a few times! They are translucent to opaque but can have quite dark markings and are slightly larger than the shrimp,

## Feral Cats

**'Feral cats occur right across the continent in every habitat type including deserts, forests and grasslands.'**

According to a publication put out by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy 'Wildlife Matters' Summer 2012/13 Feral cats occur right across the continent in every habitat type including deserts, forests and grasslands. Total population estimates vary from 5 million to 18 million feral cats, with the Federal Government citing a figure of 18 million cats in its statutory Threat Abatement Plan.

Each feral cat kills between 5-30 animals per day. While they appear to prefer small mammals, they also eat birds, reptiles and amphibians. Taking the lower figure in that range (five) - and multiplying it by a conservative population estimate of 15 million cats—gives a **minimum estimate of 75 million native animals killed daily by feral cats.**

The LAP over the years have had some interesting stories told of feral cats, some the size of a medium size dog and some of the numbers caught are quite frightening. The LAP is interested in your story of feral cats, if we can collect them all together we may be able to estimate the threat in our region and take some action to help control them in the future.

## Freshwater Shrimp and Prawns *continued* Catfish in River

with adults measuring 6-7cm (although species in South East Asia can grow up to 30cm!) and again found in vegetation and logs. The most obvious feature of the freshwater prawn is the presence of pincer-like claws on the second pair of legs which they use for fighting or self defence. They are scavengers, feeding on decaying plant and animal material, using their front pair of legs to move food through the mouth parts.



Freshwater Shrimp



Freshwater Prawn

There have been reports from fisherman about the increase in numbers of Catfish caught in the River and wanting the fishing ban lifted. SARDI are looking at the possibility of having a fishing competition later in the year to help provide information on what the actual stocks of Catfish really are in the river so informed decisions can be made about the status of these fish. So keep your eye out for an upcoming fishing day hopefully near Blanchetown in October.

***'They are scavengers, feeding on decaying plant and animal material, using their front pair of legs to move food ...'***

## Bat Pack—an educational resource

The Bat Pak is a resource for teachers and students and was originally compiled by Anthony Flaherty of the Gould League of South Australia as part of 'Save the Bush' and Primary Industries Forestry 'Forest Awareness Package' in 1994. Neville Ford, Ruth Pratt and Arthur Pratt also worked on the original project.

The updating of this document was then carried out in 2009 by the Goolwa to Wellington Local Action

Planning Board (GWLAP), with support from various parties until lack of funds



halted the project. Finally another attempt has been made through a NRM Community Grant 2012-13

by the Mid Murray LAP and tireless hours by Maree Kerr, Brad Law and Marg Turton updating information to where the resource is at now.

This package is designed as an activities workbook focusing on Australian bats. It targets science and a range of other subjects in later primary and early high school, but it is also relevant to senior high school science.

***'It targets science and a range of other subjects in later primary and early high school..'***

## Bat Pack—*continued*

The resource section provides background information. The activities section (Part II) provides lesson ideas labeled by subject area. This package is supportive of the concepts of environmental education— aesthetics, ecosystems, heritage, resources, growth, environmental ethics, decision making — and suggests a range of cross-curricular activities in the Australian Curriculum,

including arts, science, languages, math's, society and environment, technology and health and personal development. With over 100 pages of information this is a very useful educational resource.

The LAP would like to thank all contributors to this project and is very pleased that it is now available for use. If you would like more information or a copy of the disk please contact the LAP.

## Feral Goats

The Mid Murray LAP's Judas goat project has reaped rewards for the Marne River area with 9 feral goats shot. The location of this small herd of goats was made possible by tracking goat #1 who was wearing the satellite tracking collar, a professional shooter was engaged to destroy the goats.

Goat #2 is on the move near Swan Reach CP, hopefully she has found a herd and we can relieve our environment from more feral pressure.

***'..the Marne River area with 9 feral goats shot.. location of .. herd .. was made possible by tracking goat ....'***

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100% recycled paper,  
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Environment



Schools and cactus control

For the last 7 years Pembroke High School as been contributing some of their Science Camp time each year towards work that will assist the community. This year the LAP has had bus loads of students cleaning up roadsides around the Ridley Conservation Park to help create a buffer zone. Last year the students helped to rid a section of the Ridley CP of wheel cactus and the work we are doing this year

will assist in preventing new incursions into the park. So far we have collected several tonnes of cactus as well as old roadside rubbish. It has been a great partnership with the school and we have really appreciated the effort of the classes and teachers that we have had. Wheel cactus has been a real menace within the Mid Murray region and we will need to keep controlling it for years to come.



Pembroke students with a trailer full of wheel cactus that collected in June 2013 from Old Punyelroo Rd

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Sedan Community Forum by Joe Carli

A robust discussion was had by those who attended the Sedan Community forum on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Mid-Murray CEO. Mr. Russell Peate guided the gathering through aspirations put up by the community. There were many and varied topics, some of a more mundane, BUT, necessary nature, like ; footpath access and pooling of water in the most inconvenient places. There was some concern for the lack of town house numbers, and a request for a look-out on top of Sedan Hill.

A unanimous agreement was put to the council for truck-parking bays to be considered and an appeal for action on motor-cycle "bush-bashing" delinquency. Town beautification is a consideration...attention was sought for council to address concerns of dangerous and unsightly building structures collapsing onto public walkways, giving a unsightly view of the town. One surprising proposal was for the consideration of a change of district identity with

a new outlook on tourism seeing the area in a different light! Also to attract the eye and curiosity of the passing visitor with the addition of a artistic sculpture in the town triangle.....a sculpture sympathetic to indigenous, pioneer heritage and natural heritage of the district with a modest fountain and a border of native flowering shrubs. This last was met, first with pin-dropping silence, followed by metaphorical howls of laughter.