

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE AUSTRALIAN RANGELAND SOCIETY
BIENNIAL CONFERENCE**

Official publication of The Australian Rangeland Society

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The reference for this article should be in this general form:

Author family name, initials (year). Title. In: Proceedings of the nth Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conference. Pages. (Australian Rangeland Society: Australia).

For example:

Bastin, G., Sparrow, A., Scarth, P., Gill, T., Barnetson, J. and Staben, G. (2015). Are we there yet? Tracking state and change in Australia's rangelands. In: 'Innovation in the Rangelands. Proceedings of the 18th Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conference, Alice Springs'. (Ed. M.H. Friedel) 5 pages. (Australian Rangeland Society: Parkside, SA).

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The Australian Rangeland Society

The Rangelands Partnership: information to spur innovation in rangeland research, education and practice

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Keywords: web portals, information systems, knowledge sharing, rangeland management, international collaboration, resources and videos

The Rangelands Partnership started in the U.S. in 2001 as The Western Rangelands Partnership (Hutchinson, et al.) when 19 western Land-Grant Universities in the United States came together to develop a regional portal for accessing rangelands information. The University of Arizona (UA) had originally received a grant to fund the development of a Arizona Rangelands website in the mid-1990s, but early on it was recognized that many of the issues and resources affecting rangelands cross political boundaries. This was the impetus for the formation of what is today The Rangelands Partnership.

Content is added by members of the Partnership and grants have been secured to expand areas such as educational tools for students and teaches as well as a variety of videos for practical application by land managers and educators. From the beginning the efforts at the UA brought together rangeland specialists, librarians, and IT specialists – a collaboration that continues to this day in the Partnership.

In 2010, through a USDA International Science and Education grant, the Rangelands Partnership expanded to the “global” level by including international collaborators and associations. This has greatly increased the Partnership’s focus. The new vision for the Partnership is to be a worldwide, multidisciplinary collaboration that provides resources needed to inform public debate and decision-making regarding today’s grand challenges of food security, climate adaptation, environmental impacts, and economic development as they relate to rangelands around the world.

The Rangelands Partnership now seeks to actively collaborate with organizations in the U.S. and around the world to provide a variety of information and learning resources to the rangeland community. This innovative collaboration brings together worldwide resources with contributions from the U.S., Australia, Mexico, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). These resources integrate research, education, and Extension knowledge, and support the information needs of multiple audiences.

The central web portal is Global Rangelands, globalrangelands.org, which contains many resources and links to a variety of articles, videos, tools, and other content. A database of more than 15,000 resources covering full-text articles, conference proceedings, reports, videos, maps, and websites includes information relevant for scientists, professionals, land managers, and students. Included in the database are the proceedings from the Australian Rangeland Society Biennial Conferences, back files of Society for Range Management (SRM) journals, and worldwide rangeland materials from FAO, to name a few of the contributors. Some of the other web-based tools and resources available through Global Rangelands portals include the “Teaching Clearinghouse,” “Distance Course Catalog,” and “Multimedia Tools.” Global Rangelands provides an extensive YouTube channel consisting of more than 70 videos on various rangeland topics. The majority of these videos cover North America, yet some extend beyond to Mongolia and Australia.

One of the more unique resources on the Global Rangelands is WRANGLE (the World Rangelands Learning Experience). Here you can find 38 gigapans using photos and Google Earth as well as descriptive content. These resources highlight the diverse lands found throughout the world's rangeland areas. Australia is one of the more complete sections on the WRANGLE.org site, with 14 videos, 12 gigapans, and other information describing major types of ecosystems.

The Australian Rangelands Society (ARS) has contributed to the Rangelands Partnership by providing Biennial Conference proceedings and other documents for digitization and inclusion in an "Australian collection". You can access this collection and others by selecting the "Browse" option on the Global Rangelands home page. In the search box on the Global Rangelands site you can type in any keyword or phrase and retrieve a list of resources on that subject. Searches can be customized by limiting to specific topics, authors, geographic locations, and other attributes. At this time there are over 600 resources and videos specific to Australia in the Global Rangelands site and this will continue to grow over time.

Other international contributors include the University of Hermosillo in Mexico which is developing a "Sonora Rangelands" site. The Grasslands Society of South Africa (GSSA) is another recent "global" connection. The Partnership is working with GSSA to bring selected content into GlobalRangelands.org in the near future. Efforts are also underway to add resources from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and well as Canadian partners from British Columbia and Alberta provinces.

On the Rangelands West primarily North American portal, there are other unique rangeland materials such as educational resources and special sections on "Careers and Education" and "Teaching Tools." In addition, there are Extension/outreach resources for the broader public. To inform audiences about current issues, the Rangelands West website provides a collection of summaries and information resources on "hot topics" such as wolf reintroduction, grazing on public lands, and wild horses and burros.

Member states also maintain their own rangeland websites, e.g., Arizona Rangelands, Alaska Rangelands, etc. States can choose to use the template provided by the team at the University of Arizona or they can use a platform of their choosing, such as LibGuides or WordPress. The states' collected resources are discoverable through the search box of the Global Rangelands/Rangelands west database, or by directing visiting and browsing state websites.

The materials and resources are growing through the collaborations at all state, national and international levels and through connections with government agencies or non-profit organizations. The Partnership also maintains a Facebook page, a Scoop.it news service, and a Twitter feed among other social media outlets.

In conclusion, the Rangelands Partnership has a suite of websites, services, and social media freely available to the world. The purpose of these resources is to provide authoritative and useful information readers can be confident has been evaluated and prepared by experts in the field. We invite you to explore our web resources and welcome your questions, comments, and suggestions.

For more information, please visit:

<http://globalrangelands.org/>
<http://globalrangelands.org/rangelandswest/>
<http://globalrangelands.org/arizona>
<http://wrangle.org>
<https://www.facebook.com/RangelandsWest>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/GlobalRangelands>
<https://twitter.com/RangelandsPartn>
<http://www.scoop.it/t/rangelands>

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