



The Australian Rangeland Society

RANGE MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER
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Range Management Newsletter

Official newsletter of the Australian Rangeland Society

Editor — Dr. T. Fatchen, Roseworthy Agricultural College,
Roseworthy, South Australia, 5371

No. 79/3, September, 1979.

EDITORIAL

A casual reader of this newsletter could easily come to the conclusion that the Australian Rangeland Society comprises an executive committee, a Broken Hill Branch and a dozen or so members. The evidence is in past RMN issues: bylines for contributions almost invariably acknowledge executive members (minutes, finances), the Broken Hill Branch (activities coming and reported) and a handful of increasingly familiar individual names (argument!).

More contributions from more people would be more than welcome. In particular, the occasional rumour of Branch activities would help our widely spread membership keep in touch with the whole Society's activities. The space is available in RMN but is not being used enough.

TIM FATCHEN
Editor

Deadline for next issue: 30th November, 1979.
(That is, if there's anything to print.)

REPORT OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF THE JOURNAL

TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ADELAIDE MAY 1979

From: D.G. Wilcox, Business Manager, 54 Broome Street, Cottesloe W.A.

The Australian Rangeland Journal

The Journal of the Society is now published twice yearly in April and November or within a month of these dates. There should no longer be any delays with the publication of material for the Journal.

The next issue of the Journal will contain the papers submitted to the Poplar Box Symposium. The preparation is being handled by a guest editorial committee headed by Owen B. Williams. This issue of the Journal promises to be the largest produced by the Society.

Dr R.D.B. Whalley retired as Chairman of the Editorial Committee during the year. Under his guidance we produced two issues of the Journal. It has become a high quality publication and has been received well in Australia and overseas as evidenced by the demand from overseas libraries. The present Chairman of the Editorial Committee is Dr A.J. Pressland whose address is School of Resource Engineering, University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W.

The Society continues to receive orders for its first other publication, the proceedings of the 2nd US/Australia range panel. We have made a profit of between \$300 and \$400 from this venture and should make more. Preparations to publish the proceedings of the 4th meeting are now almost complete. Though the initial cost is about \$2 000 we expect to recoup this amount within six months of publication date.

Financial arrangement

After the publication of the November journal the publications account will be almost exhausted and will require a replenishment from the Society's general fund. These funds will be used to continue publication and mailing of the Society's Newsletter as well as the Journal and other publications approved by Council.

Finally, I would like to urge members to contribute to the Journal. There are now no extraordinary delays in publication. We are keen to accept material which is relevant to the rangeland situation, in its widest sense. The size of the reading public is expanding.

A.R.S. CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS (MAY 1979)

Conference working papers (139 closely typed pages) are still available from the Secretary.

Mr M.C. Willcocks
Soils Branch
Department of Agriculture,
G.P.O. Box 1671
ADELAIDE, S.A. 5001

Cost is \$3 per copy - value for money - plus postage (1 kg, cost variable but allow \$2.60 -. this will get it over a distance equivalent to Adelaide-Perth.)

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Yet another gentle reminder. Those members who haven't done so yet, please pay your subs for 1979 (\$16). Cheques to "The Australian Rangeland Society". The current treasurer is:

Mr K. Casperson
c/- Department for the Environment
Ansett House,
150 North Terrace,
ADELAIDE, S.A. 5001

If you are paying late, please read the comments on p.9 of the last newsletter.

ALLIES ABROAD

Graeme Tupper (CSIRO Div. Land Resources Management, Deniliquin) is currently in the U.S.A. on a Churchill Fellowship, and advises that if he is able to make contacts or do jobs for Society members and colleagues, would be happy to do so. His address for the remainder of 1979 is:

c/- Department of Earth Resources
 Colorado State University
 Fort Collins,
 COLORADO 80523, U.S.A.

ACTIVITIES OF THE BROKEN HILL BRANCH

From: Roger Stanley, Hon. Sec. Broken Hill Branch.

The Broken Hill Branch of the Australian Rangeland Society held its Annual General Meeting in July in conjunction with the annual Open Day staged by the University of New South Wales at its Fowlers Gap Arid Zone Research Station. The day was an outstanding success both for the University and the Branch with about 80 people at the business meeting. The Branch is to approach the University to tie its Annual General Meeting to the Open Day each year.

The following officers were elected:

President	-	W. Bolton-Smith "Wilangee"
Vice-President	-	P. McCluare "Pimpara Lake"
Secretary	-	R. Stanley, Soil Conservation Service
Treasurer	-	G. Woods, Dept. of Agriculture
Committee	-	J. Hughes, "Kars"
		Dr J. Reynolds, Fowlers Gap
		P. Crozier "Tor Downs"

Future Branch Activities1. Field Day, Lake Tandou:

On Tuesday, November 13, the Branch is organising a field inspection of the extensive irrigated cropping enterprise on the bed of Lake Tandou. The lake is one of a chain of overflow lakes on the western side of the Darling River below Menindee. Tandou Pty Ltd is growing a variety of winter and summer crops under flood irrigation, including wheat, barley, sorghum, lupins, field peas, cotton and lucerne, and runs stock in conjunction with the cropping activities.

A Director of Tandou Pty Ltd., Mr R. Smith will give a run-down on the scheme and there will be an inspection of the cropping operations, including harvesting which will be underway at the time. Participants will also see the plant, maintenance and grain storage facilities on the lake.

The day will commence on the lake at 9.3 a.m. Central Standard Time. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Roger Stanley or Geoff Woods at the N.S.W. Government Offices in Broken Hill. Bring your own food and refreshments.

2. Seminar - Practical Scrub Control:

The Branch is organising a seminar in Broken Hill in May 1980 on practical methods of scrub control. Inedible scrub is on the increase in the West Darling Area and the meeting will be of vital interest to any grazier who may have problems with hopbush, turpentine, punty bush, boxthorn, prickly acacia, mallee or other woody plants. The C.S.I.R.O., Soil Conservation Service and Western Lands Commission are developing practical methods of scrub control, concentrating on the use of fire and a new, relatively cheap and simple to use chemical.

As well as speakers from these organisations, guest speakers will include 2 graziers who will describe the impact of scrub and their efforts to overcome the problem. A speaker from the Soil Conservation Service will outline the extent of the problem in the Western Division.

Further details of this function will be advertised in the next edition.

3. Publication of Proceedings, "Financial Management for the Pastoralist."

In May this year the Branch held a highly successful meeting on financial management. One hundred and forty people attended and found the day to be most rewarding.

As a result of the meeting the Branch has organised a 3 day Bookkeeping School in September to be run by staff from Yanco Agricultural College. There is a waiting list for the school and the Branch will consider running future schools if the initial course is successful. Contact man is Paul McClure.

Further measures of success of the day were the Society gaining over 20 new members and the large number of requests for printed proceedings. C.S.I.R.O. staff at Deniliquin, in particular Peter Lynch and Mike Young, came to our help and spent many hours transmitting and editing the tape recordings of the conference. The Proceedings will be published in the November issue of the Journal. Separate reprints will also be produced. They will cost about \$1 to \$1.50 each. Any person wanting a copy should write to:

K.M. Howes,
C/- C.S.I.R.O.,
Private Bag, P.O.,
Wembley, W.A. 6014.

The Western Lands Commissioner has also forwarded to the Branch a booklet entitled "Sources of Rural Finance in New South Wales" by Peter Gisz, Economist, Department of Agriculture. Members who would like to borrow the booklet can contact the Secretary at the above address.

4. Branch Newsletter:

At its last meeting the Branch committee decided to circulate a Newsletter next year prior to the Annual General Meeting. The Society gives a \$2 per member subsidy to branches and this will be used to help put out the Newsletter. Branch members might like to consider contributing.

That seems to have exhausted Branch news for now. Members and friends should look forward to an interesting field day on Lake Tandou. See you there!

A GUERNSEY FOR VIC. AND RANGELAND PLANT INTRODUCTION

From: Lester Lord, Kolendo Station, via Pt. Augusta, S.A.

Congratulations Vic Squires for suggesting that Plant Introduction and reseeding could possibly be a topic for discussion at our next conference. (See last newsletter.) So much could be achieved to benefit vast areas of our arid and semi-arid country that I have often wondered why we hear so little about the subject.

Generally speaking science has left this part of research to the graziers, fortunately with magnificent results. However, the results could be adverse and we do need the scientists' help.

We should all encourage Vic to carry out his suggestion and hope for some positive results, as this could well be Rangeland Science at its best.

On the local scene, the scope for research in my area is limited due to soil type changes, however much of S.A. needs looking at. Our area is a typical case, to qualify this, we could get a 'yard' of rain in the middle of summer and have very little response 'feed wise'. It does very little to take the pressure off the saltbush.

I have always thought that 'Mitchell grass' may be the answer. Not that it's much good but it would make use of a summer rain, and it would never dominate as it's out of its area.

However after trying many such things I've had no luck - just fed the bloody ants a different bit of tucker.

NO WONDER THE EDITOR'S SLOW: HE CAN'T READ

From: G. Skipper, Manunda Station, Yunta, S.A. 5440

With yet further reference to my article on Kangaroos in RMN 78/4 (December) and the correction in RMN 79/2 (July) ... the "scrubber" is not an euro, but neither is it a "black pouger" - the word was PONGER. [Sorting out this taxonomic maze, the animal is the western grey kangaroo - Macropus fuliginosis Ed.]

We have had a 'roo shooter here on and off for about four years, but he is losing ground with the 'roos. Previously, I did not bother to have any shot but the string of good seasons this decade have increased 'roo numbers.

The "black ponger" is very much on the increase, for the shooters do not like handling them and their skins are of much less value than red kangaroos - the latter are usually shot in preference.

JOURNALS, CONFERENCES, BRANCHES: WHAT TO DO?

From: Roger Stanley, Soil Conservation Service of N.S.W.,
P.O. Box 459, Broken Hill, N.S.W., 2880

The last two issues of the Range Management Newsletter have contained various contributed and editorial comment on the Society's journal and biennial conference. My concern is that the Society is biased towards its "government members", except perhaps in areas where there is an active local branch.

The newsletter is an excellent publication of interest to all groups of members, however despite efforts to improve the journal and encourage contributions from graziers it remains of benefit only to academics. So too does the conference, because graziers generally cannot afford either the time or expense to attend.

In the March issue the editor strongly warned graziers not to rely on getting their "basics" from the newsletter. The obvious problem is that they cannot get them from the journal either! What then can be done to improve the Society for its grazer members? One suggested course of action, rightly rejected, was to produce both a technical and a general journal.

As the Society cannot afford to lose its graziers, the logical solution is to produce one journal containing both general and technical articles. A suitable model could be the journal of the Soil Conservation Service of N.S.W. This includes a good mixture of technical and extension articles, short general interest stories and many photographs. One obvious addition would be grazier contributions subject to refereeing of style but not of content. Academics will undoubtedly consider such a journal not sufficiently prestigious, but there are many alternative professional journals.

To improve the conference the executive should investigate the possibility of establishing a scholarship scheme to assist one or more graziers to attend. Scholarships could be awarded on the basis of contribution to the Society's activities, including local branches, the newsletter and journal.

Graziers can gain most benefit from the Society through the activities of its local branches. With the exception of Broken Hill, South Australian and perhaps New England Branches, there appears to be little activity in this field. The parent body can only provide so much encouragement and assistance - success of branches depends ultimately on the enthusiasm of the local members.

PERENNIAL SALTBUSH KILLED BY DROUGHT

From: Mark Westoby and Barbara Rice, School of Biological Sciences,
Macquarie University, North Ryde, N.S.W. 2113.

At Fowlers Gap, 100 km north of Broken Hill, we have been following some populations of perennial saltbush (*Atriplex vesicaria*) since 1975. This area was in drought from February 1976 to May 1978 (see Gray & Taylor RMN 78/3). Despite having been solicitously watered by about 250 mm, well spaced, from May to November 1978, much of the saltbush on the station hasn't leafed out. If anyone has had a similar experience, we would appreciate hearing about it.

Failure to leaf out for mature bushes varied at different sites from 0 to 100%, averaging about 70% over our permanent plots. There was no effect due to sheep grazing pressure, as measured by distance from water or by how late the water lasted into the drought. Since virtually all bushes were nearly leafless by August 1977, at which time there was still plenty of dry grass, presumably they were never heavily grazed. The area around the bore which supported very large stock numbers in the last few months of the drought - see Gray & Taylor RMN 78/3 - has fared no worse than elsewhere.

We have the impression that the patchy leafing out is mainly influenced by soil type, with populations on free-drained sandy alluvium or limestone soils surviving best, and those in gilgaid clay loams worst.

(Incidentally, at Fowlers Gap the "hill" or "limestone" ecotype of *A. vesicaria* seems to grow on limestone-derived soils, on some hill sites on sandstone, and on sandy alluvium. These sites have in common that they do not have gilgai. This distribution has meant that on the whole the "hill" ecotype has come through the drought better.)

There are excellent crops of seedlings at all the sites, so the saltbush cover of the pastures should be unaffected unless there are further droughts before the seedlings are established.

THE PERILS OF BEING A NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Getting out this little publication is no picnic...

If I print jokes, the readers will say I'm silly,

If I don't, then they'll say I'm too serious;

If I print smut, they'll say my mind is in the gutter,

If I don't, they'll say I'm not into the spirit of it all;

If I reprint material from other sources, I'm too lazy
to write them myself,

If I don't, then I'm too proud of my own writing;

If I don't publish contributed material, I don't
appreciate true genius,

If I do publish them, the newsletter is full of junk;

If I edit someone else's writing, I am too critical,

If I don't, then I must be asleep;

Likely as not, someone will say I must have
plagiarized this from some other publication;

I did...

Ed.