

"Do it with Dung"

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE MURRAY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 5: August 2009

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2009 Beetle releases complete

The planned 2009 beetle releases for the region are now complete. A total of 211,000 beetles (211 colonies) have been released; 90,000 *Geotrupes spiniger* beetles, and 111,000 *Bubas bison* beetles. It is important to remember that colonies can take three to five years to become established, so don't be too surprised if you don't notice an immediate difference.

Fewer *B. bison* being trapped

A number of monitors reported large trappings of *B. bison* in May. Over the following months there has been a marked drop in the number of trapped beetles across the region.

The following results demonstrate this trend:

Chiltern Valley – <i>B. bison</i> trap results					
15/4	13/5	27/5	18/6	2/7	17/7
9	144	18	51	18	6

Springhurst – <i>B. bison</i> trap results					
12/4	27/4	13/5	24/5	15/6	2/7
1	1	101	162	6	4

Meadow Ck – <i>B. bison</i> trap results					
18/4	28/4	11/5	27/5	17/6	4/7
6	13	16	135	8	0

Dederang – <i>B. bison</i> trap results					
15/4	30/4	14/5	28/5	16/6	3/7
0	125	33	22	6	0

Whilst the number of *B. bison* being trapped has dropped, most properties are observing considerable dung beetle activity in their paddocks.

There are a number of considerations when interpreting these results

- the high number of beetles trapped in May represents the new generation of beetles emerging from the ground. It is normal to see a peak in numbers early in the season.
- Once mature, the beetles spend less time flying between dung pads and more time in the ground building nests and brood balls.

Though the trapped numbers may be decreasing, this species is still proving to be very active. Monitors have also observed that *B. bison* appears to have a preference for older dung.

Native beetles identified

Dr Chris Reid from the Australian museum has kindly identified two native dung beetle species found in the region. These specimens will be included in the Australian museum collection.

They are:

1. *Onthophagus pexatus*, and
2. *Onthophagus victoriensis*

O. pexatus was trapped at:

Site 12: Wandiligong on 13/4/09 and at

Site 41: Tallangatta Valley on 15/4/09



Onthophagus pexatus

Colour: Greenish black, dark grey

Length: 4-7mm

Antennal clubs: Black

This species was trapped at Wandiligong & Tallangatta Valley in mid April

Image & Information source:
Fauna Net – Dung beetles of eastern NSW

O. victoriensis was found at:

Site 1: Corowa area on 4/5, 27/5, 5/6 & 2/7; and at

Site 19: Chiltern Valley on 15/4/09



Onthophagus victoriensis

Colour: Black

Length: 6-8mm

Found working in large numbers in sheep dung.



Head of male

Onthophagus victoriensis

Note the bifurcated (forked) horns on male specimens.

Image & Information source:
Tyndale-Biscoe, M. 2001 *Common Dung Beetles of SE Australia*, CSIRO

This brings the total number of native species trapped in the project to four: *Onthophagus australis*, *O. pentacanthus*, *O. pexatus* and *O. victoriensis*.

Upcoming Events:

Dung beetle Farm-walk and Workshop with Dr Bernard Doube

These will be held in 3 locations across the region:

Monday 7th September

Springhurst Hall

Tuesday 8th September

Lucyvale Hall

Wednesday 9th September

Milawa Hall

All workshops will run from 11.00am – 3.00pm

Program:

11.00am – 12noon

Dung beetle Farm-walk (locations to be advised)

12noon – 1.00pm

Lunch (at the Hall)

1.00pm – 3.00pm

Presentation by Dr Bernard Doube which will include an overview of his research into the carbon sequestration potential of dung beetles.

This is a free public event, and you are invited to attend all or part of the program.



Dr Bernard Doube worked for CSIRO for 29 years as a Research Scientist specialising in both earthworms and dung beetles. He was based in South Africa from 1980 – 1987 as part of the CSIRO dung beetle team. He is now the principal of Dung Beetle Solutions Australia and carries out commissioned research. In the past six years he

has written over 20 research reports outlining the significant agricultural and environmental benefits provided by dung beetles. We are delighted to have him as our guest speaker.

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL:

Please RSVP by Wednesday 2nd September to:

Belinda Pearce

Phone: 02 6027 5294

E-mail: abanas@bigpond.com

North East Annual Event – Soil, Carbon & Sustainability

Bernard will also be presenting a session on earthworms at the following events:

The Past's Future

Whorouly Recreation Reserve:

Friday 4th September

For more information contact: Wayne Donehue

03 5759 3613 sthsenko@skymesh.com.au

Rural Sustainability Forum

Beechworth Memorial Hall

Saturday 5th September

For more information contact: Trevor Danger

0439 393 019 upperovens@landcarevic.net.au

Monitoring Site Signs

We are planning to distribute project signs to monitoring sites in the upcoming months.

The signs are made of metal (approx. 300mm x 400mm) and have pre-drilled holes to allow the sign to be wired to a fence or gate.



Dung Beetle Monitoring Site Sign

The signs will serve a number of purposes:

- promote the project to the public
- provide a website for more information
- demonstrate Landcare projects in action
- acknowledge the support of the funding body (Caring for our Country)

The display of signs is optional. If you **do not** wish to have a sign, could you please let Belinda know by Friday 14th August by phone: 02 6027 5294 or email: abanas@bigpond.com. This will assist in the ordering and distribution process.

Upcoming monitoring weeks



Weeks commencing:

Sunday 9th August

Sunday 23rd August

Monitoring weeks commence on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. A big thank-you to all of the monitors for your ongoing support.

Reminder: Steering Committee Meeting

The next meeting will be held on:

Friday 28th August

10.00am – 11.30am (followed by lunch)

North East CMA Office, Footmark Court Wodonga

For catering purposes could you please RSVP to Belinda by Wednesday 26th August.



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OUR
COUNTRY



The "Do it with Dung – from the Mountains to the Murray" Project is funded by "Caring for our Country", managed by Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups and supported by regional Landcare Groups, DPI and NECMA. The project also receives direction from a voluntary steering committee.