



PhD project with full scholarship available

Stopping the cane toad invasion



A PhD project is available at Deakin and Curtin Universities centred around research to support and learn from the planned Toad Containment Zone. See www.toadfree.zone for further details.

Stopping cane toads before they reach the Pilbara will protect 27 million hectares of sensitive habitat and a trove of native Australian animals from population decline. Without it, toads will invade the Pilbara and regions further south, adding to Australia's biodiversity crisis.

The Toad Containment Zone is a collaboration between traditional owners, rangers, pastoralists, mining companies and scientists. It will halt the toad invasion with a landscape level strategy – a 'toad-break' - on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert south of Broome. Toads invade by steadily moving across the landscape in the wet season. Toads contract to water points, to wait out the long, hot dry season. Without access to water, toads perish. In the toad-break area, we will remove toads' access to water at 150 man-made water-points.

The PhD student can be based at Deakin University in Victoria or Curtin University in Western Australia. Field work will occur in and around the Toad Containment Zone Area to the south of Broome.

A range of possible PhD projects are available across the pure to applied research spectrum, including:

- Mapping the evolutionary and ecological changes that a hard barrier to dispersal places on an invasive species
- Testing changes in biodiversity across the Toad Containment Zone
- Testing ecological knowledge gaps to make the Toad Containment Zone more effective

If you have an interest in being at the forefront of research on this nationally significant biodiversity conservation plan, please get in touch. We can co-design a PhD project to suit your interests. Students will be supervised by [Prof. Tim Dempster](mailto:t.dempster@deakin.edu.au), [Prof. Ben Phillips](mailto:ben.l.phillips@curtin.edu.au), [Dr Judy Dunlop](mailto:j.dunlop@deakin.edu.au) and others depending on the topic.

Students will require a first-class Honours or Masters degree to qualify. An AUD \$34,400 per year (2024 rate) tax-exempt scholarship is available, with the possibility of a \$10000 per year top-up for excellent students. Full details of the scholarships can be found [here](#). The scholarship is open to domestic students only. The student would be expected to start between February to June 2025.

Expressions of interest (with CV attached) are welcome at any time until the position is filled. For further information contact Tim (t.dempster@deakin.edu.au) or Ben (ben.l.phillips@curtin.edu.au).