

2010/11 Scouts Environment Program

RabbitScan Field Guide

Scouts invitation to be involved in 'citizen science'

RabbitScan provides Scouts Australia with an excellent opportunity to be involved in an important research project: to map the distribution and density of the wild European pest rabbit, right across Australia.

No rabbits in your Scout area?

Where rabbits are not found, Scouts can search for other pest animals, including foxes, cane toads or Indian mynah birds. But first – have a look for rabbits and let us know whether they are evident in your area, or are absent – that is also important information, that the national RabbitScan Team needs to know about.

Where can you start your RabbitScan?

Scouts Field work can be on a sports field, farm, roadside verge, park, cemetery, school yard, beach, bushland – wherever your Scout Group can safely scan the landscape for the signs of rabbits and other pest animals

How long will it take?

- Your RabbitScan activity can be done in less than a day in the field – as little as an hour or two is all that is needed. Following that your Scout group can add your collected data to the national RabbitScan Website www.rabbitscan.net.au mapping portal, to add to the Google Map being created with community and schools, farmers and others helping out
- The Google Map technology will allow your data to be visible (to your group and to the public) and available to the research team for the national RabbitScan project.

What you need for your RabbitScan:

1. RabbitScan Assessment Sheet – (attached to this briefing note)
2. A map of your area or a GPS receiver (if you have them – if not all you need is a street address for your site (Google Maps can find your GPS points for you once you type your address in)
3. A digital camera for recording evidence of rabbits (optional) and of your team
4. Water, food, a first aid kit for accidents and appropriate clothing and foot ware (especially sunscreen, hats and walking shoes) to protect you from the elements.

Planning your RabbitScan Field Trip

1. **Plan your field trip** – talk to the landholder, get permission from the landholder and parents, organise your day, travel, refreshments, understanding of what you need to be looking for and other needs
2. **Register as a RabbitScan member group online** at www.rabbitscan.net.au (this gives you access to the RabbitScan mapping site) – you will need a login user name and password
3. **Travel to your site** (the best time is early morning or late afternoon, or early evening and night time, if you want to actually see rabbits) – but in the daytime you can look for other signs like rabbit dung, warrens and burrows, rabbit damage to vegetation and soils
4. **Do your on-site analysis using the RabbitScan Site Assessment Sheet** – this may take as little as an hour or up to a half day for the really keen, who want to cover a greater area)
5. **Return to your computer with your data** and location details
6. **Visit the RabbitScan website and put your details into the site** – to see them appear on the Google Map as a green, orange or red 'star' (you'll see your sites appear as 'bunny ears' and you can go back to them to change them as needed, if and when you next visit your site)
7. **Add your team's photos or blogs about your RabbitScan adventure** into the website's blog and gallery.

No time for a field trip, but want to contribute?

If you just want to record that you've seen a number of rabbits on your local oval or other area – just note the date, location, time and details on a note and send or email the RabbitScan team.

Contacts for RabbitScan: Email: rabbitscan1@gmail.com Mail: RabbitScan P.O. Box 4065 Warrimoo NSW 2774 - but for best and quickest results please go online: www.rabbitscan.net.au

RabbitScan Assessment Sheets

Use these sheets to assess the distribution and abundance of the wild European pest rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* in your area. Multiple sites are welcomed. The more data we have, the better the map will be.

How to Assess

(Print this sheet for each survey site, make notes, then enter data into the RabbitScan website using your log in)

- 1.1. Take 15 – 20 minutes to walk through an area of the ecosystem. You should cover about 2 – 3 hectares in this time
- 1.2. Observe carefully but don't stop too long at any given point
- 1.3. Use this guide to help you fill in the data sheet
- 1.4. Check for:
 - 1.4.1. Actual sightings of rabbits
 - 1.4.2. Rabbit dung or pellets (poo, waste) – little round shapes
 - 1.4.3. Warrens and/or burrows
 - 1.4.4. Damage to vegetation - scratchings on plant stems and tree stems, chewing marks on plants, bare earth where vegetation has been eaten by rabbits grazing

Your Survey Location

Site name or reference: [e.g. local name, owner's name details]

Name of assessor:

Date:

Inspection time: am/pm

Location [e.g. nearest town]:

Can be found when you go back to log on to the RabbitScan Google Map

Latitude [from GPS] [°S]:

Longitude [°E]:

Altitude [from GPS] metres:

Approximate area inspected [ha]:

Total area of land if known [ha]:

Land use[s] [e.g. grazing, cropping, rail reserve, state forest, farm, school, oval, beach]:

General description of site: [e.g. remnant native vegetation adjacent to cropland]

Rabbit abundance score

- Record evidence of rabbits as you walk; it will help form an 'average' picture of the whole area in your mind
- Rabbit warrens may be present, as well as scratches and 'buck-heaps' or latrines but the abundance of rabbit pellets (faeces) is the best measure to use (See picture ID sheet).

Score as follows on the data sheets attached

Score: Meaning:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 0 | None found in the 15 minute search |
| 1 | Isolated pellets and small clumps of 5 - 10 pellets 10 metres or more apart |
| 2 | Scattered pellets and clumps less than 10 metres apart |

- 3 Common, pellets in larger clumps, occasional buck-heaps on about half the areas you scan closely during the search
- 4 Abundant, pellets often in large clumps and buck-heaps obvious but not present across whole area
- 5 Very abundant, pellets and buck-heaps always apparent

Share your results with the world!

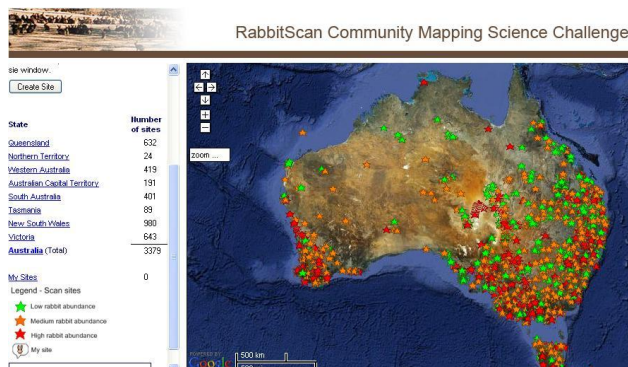
When you return to the Scout hall, home or office, type your data directly into the RabbitScan Website – you will find ‘drop-down’ menus to make this easy and quick. Then you will see your data being added to the national RabbitScan Google Map: www.rabbitscan.net.au

Mapping where rabbits are: your RabbitScan guide

- The RabbitScan ‘How-To’ Guides are available on the RabbitScan website menu (<http://www.rabbitscan.net.au>) This shows how to make a survey of rabbits in your area.
- The website provides the **RabbitScan Web Mapping Portal** for users to input their rabbit survey data via the web.
- The **RabbitScan Web Mapping Portal** will allow users to input location data by simply clicking on the map to record their location (there will also be an option for you to add your own location coordinates). This will prompt a **pop-up form** for you to fill out with the **RabbitScan Guide** data requirements included.

Evidence of rabbits

The web mapping site is already available and we have about 3,400 sites – but our challenge is to get at least 5000 sites scanned and recorded! Have a look at the RabbitScan Web Mapping Portal to acquaint yourself with the application. You will need to Register to have the ability to add information. So simply register today, do a location RabbitScan from May and then load your data to the RabbitScan Web (Google) Mapping Portal. Here is a peek view...



[Feral Animals in Australia – to be added later today: pics](#)

RabbitScan Visual Guide Field Guide to Dung

Rabbit scats

Kangaroo droppings

Cow pat

Sheep droppings

Possum scats (fresh)

Horse droppings



Other Animal Dung – pictures for comparison
Feral Animals in Australia

Feral Animals in Australia
RabbitScan How-To Guide

How to record your location and the place where you find evidence of rabbits and their damage:

1. a GPS (Global Positioning System): A GPS receiver or hand-held tool enables the user to determine their exact positioning, based on satellite systems. Users should check the settings menu to be sure that you are using the WGS84 datum. Enter your data in the format displayed by the GPS; i.e.

- a. in degrees/minutes/seconds;
- b. in degrees expressed in decimal format;
- c. in eastings and northings using the Australian Map Grid.

2. a map: If you don't have access to a GPS, then another option is to read your position off a 1:100,000 or 1:250,000 map available from most camping and outdoor sporting shops. You can express your location using:

a. **latitude and longitude** either in:

- i. degrees, minutes and seconds (e.g. 31 57' 33.27" S 141° 27' 48.04"E) or
- ii. in degrees in decimal format (e.g.*****).

Latitude and longitude coordinates are shown at each corner of a map's face. On some maps, short black lines along the edges of the map face indicate the minutes of latitude and longitude. When expressing coordinates, latitude is given first.

b. **Grid lines / Universal Grid Reference:** grid lines can also be used to express a location. Grid lines are the equally spaced vertical and horizontal intersecting lines superimposed over the entire map face. Each line is numbered at the edge of the map face. On 1:100 000 scale maps, the distance between adjacent lines represents 1000 metres or 1km. Instructions for expressing a location as a Universal Grid Reference will be found in the margin of National Topographic Map (NATMAP). Be sure to follow these instructions if expressing your locations as a grid reference and include the Grid Zone Designation as well as the number and name of the map that you are using

3. GoogleEarth: If you are familiar with using Google Earth on your computer then you may be able to zoom in on your location on Google Earth; place the cursor over the point to be reported and read off your location from the indicator near the bottom of the map window. The default format in Google Earth is Lat/Long in degrees/minutes/ seconds and decimals of seconds but this can be changed in options if preferred.

Remember to share your RabbitScan information with the nation (and the world) by loading it into the RabbitScan website.