



The hunt for the Condamine Earless Dragon

Researchers have been surveying the paddocks of the Darling Downs looking for the Condamine earless dragon (*Tympanocryptis condaminensis*), as this is only place in the world that the endangered lizard can be found.

Dr April Reside from the University of Queensland (UQ) has been leading a team of researchers with the goal in mind of finding out where these dragons live and how many there are.

Boots on the ground has proved to be the most effective method so far, although a sniffer dog has recently been added to the mix.

The Condamine earless dragon is six centimetres long from snout to vent (the base of its tail) and can be found in native grasslands, croplands and on the verges of roadsides.

The Threatened Species Recovery Hub, completed in 2021, named the dragon as one of Australia's most imperilled snakes and lizards.

Dr Reside is a Senior Lecturer in Wildlife Science and has been supervising three Honours and one Masters students as part of the project.

She said the majority of their investigation has been in the areas around Brookstead, Oakey, Jondaryan, Cecil Plains and Dalby.

The Condamine earless

dragon's habitat extends as far south as Clifton.

Dr Reside started working on finding more about the Condamine earless dragon in 2022 not long after moving to Queensland.

"I was interested in finding a local threatened species that might benefit from some research," Dr Reside said.

"There was not a whole lot of work on them when we started."

Dr Reside said there is still a lot to learn about the behaviour and habitat of the dragons.

"We want to know where in the Darling Downs the dragons are," she said.

"We want to know why they are in some paddocks and not others."

Where the dragons have been found they have been observed to be in healthy numbers.

Dr Reside said the cracking black clay soil might be the reason the dragon calls the Darling Downs home.

Interestingly, the species appears to be happily living amongst many types of crops including wheat, sorghum, maize and cotton.

"We think some types of cropping is working for the dragons."

Dr Reside said searching for them can be laborious task.

While one person is driving a car extremely slowly down the road, their passenger keeps their eyes peeled on the edge of crops looking for the Condamine earless dragon.

The dragons can often sense if there are people walking, making searching on-foot less successful.

"You roll forward and stare at the side of the road - it's surprisingly effective," Dr Reside said.

"It's a rush when you see a dragon but it does your head in when you search for hours on end and don't see a dragon.

"We do walk sometimes.

"When they see a car goes past, they don't necessarily see it as a threat."

The UQ team has recently introduced a new member of the team to help with the search - a sniffer dog named Evie.

"We're hoping the detector dog might help."

On the plus side when it comes to the dragon hunt,



A sub adult Condamine earless dragon (*Tympanocryptis condaminensis*).

Photo, Emilee Thomson

there is only one other species it can possibly be confused with, which is the baby bearded dragon.

The baby bearded dragon doesn't stay small for long, and looks a bit different so once you know what you are looking for they can be easily discerned from one another.

Dr Reside said the

project would not have been possible without the help of landholders.

"The landholders we have been working with have been so wonderful," she said.

"I've also been lucky to have a great team of students on the project and the dog handler and trainer - it's been a team effort."

In recent years the University of Southern Queensland has also begun a project that is looking into the Condamine earless dragon.

Have you spotted a Condamine earless dragon recently?

Let Dr Reside know by emailing her at a.reside@uq.edu.au

Dalby cattle sales - 19 February

The trend of increased numbers experienced at other selling centres continued at Dalby with agents penning 4,988 head an increase of 751.

A consignment of 109 head from Victoria was also included in the lineup.

Export and feeder buyer plus restocker attendance continues to be good and

all were active in a firm to dearer market.

Light weight yearling steers returning to the paddock were firm to 10c/kg better. Medium and heavy weight yearling steers to feed were also firm to 4c/kg dearer. Light weight yearling heifers to restockers lifted in price by 6c/kg. Medium weight yearling

heifers to feed improved in price by 11c to 13c/kg and heavy weight yearling heifers to feed sold to a very solid market. Heavy grown steers and bullocks were firm to marginally dearer. All classes of cows experienced some improvements of 4c to 8c/kg. Light weight yearling steers returning to the paddock made to a top of 448c with a good sample averaging from 402c to 406c/kg. Medium weight yearling steers to feed averaged 389c and made to 408c/kg. Heavy weight yearling steers to feed made to 403c to average 380c/kg. Light weight yearling heifers to

restockers averaged 315c with the occasional sale to 350c/kg. Medium weight yearling heifers to feed averaged from 318c to 337c and sold to 358c/kg. Heavy weight yearling heifers to feed also made to 358c to average 325c/kg.

Bullocks made to 359c to average 350c and the grown heifer portion made to 340c/kg. Medium weight 2 score cows made to 276c to average 267c/kg. Heavy weight 3 score cows averaged 280c and the best of the heavy weight cows averaged 299c and made to 310c/kg. Heavy weight bulls made to 318c/kg.

Cotton Australia meets with decision-makers

The National Water Agreement, Murray-Darling Basin Plan, workforce, connectivity, and energy were all on the agenda recently when Cotton Australia conducted meetings in Canberra with politicians, their advisors, and members of the Public Service.

Cotton Australia CEO Adam Kay and General Manager Michael Murray used the first sitting week of the parliamentary year to discuss key issues facing the Australian cotton industry with decision-makers.

The meetings involved representatives from all major political parties.

"As always, the key discussion issue was water," CEO Adam Kay said.

In a meeting with Minister for Agriculture Julie Collins, Cotton Australia acknowledged her work in raising the profile of agriculture in the draft National Water Agreement.

Meetings with National Party Leader David Littleproud and water spokesperson Senator Perin Davey also focused on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and the National Water Agreement.

Assistant Agriculture Minister Anthony Chisholm was highly engaged in discussions on the work of the Cotton Research and

Development Corporation (CRDC), the opportunities traceability offers the industry, and workforce challenges.

A meeting with Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations Murray Watt's office provided an opportunity to discuss the Farm Apprenticeship Project, the importance of the Working Holiday Visa Program, farm safety, and opportunities associated with the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme.

Cotton Australia also met with local members from electorates where cotton is a major crop, including Colin Boyce (Flynn) and Garth Hamilton (Groom).

Finally, a meeting with Murray-Darling Basin Authority CEO Andrew McConville rounded out the schedule, providing valuable insights into the work currently being undertaken to inform the Basin Plan Review, set to be completed in 2026.

The Hon. Pat WEIR MP
Member for **Condamine**

Working for our community

(07) 4570 4100
101 Campbell Street, Oakey QLD 4401
PO Box 65, Oakey QLD 4401
condamine@parliament.qld.gov.au
patweir.com.au f /PatWeirMP

Better Cleaner Easier
Battery Powered Garden & Power Tools from **greenworks**

NOW IN STOCK
24VOLT & 60 VOLT

RUSSELL & SONS (QLD) PTY. LTD.
Dairy Engineers, Pumping & Machinery Agents

18A Goggs St Toowoomba Phone 4688 9222
www.russellandsons.com.au