

'Dogger Don' Sallway: A profile

One of Don Sallway's earlier trappings was a 13-year old dog with only three stubs for paws. A wily old creature, it had obviously been evading trappers most of its life. While maybe the dog's luck just ran out, the capture of such an experienced old beast was a triumph for one still green to the trapping trade. The secret according to Don is an expert knowledge of wild dog biology and behaviour, as well as a healthy respect for the dogs' intelligence.

Don's life has always revolved around the dust and hardship of the Australian outback and despite stints working on the Ord River Scheme and for Main Roads, he has never drifted far from the rural life.

He grew up on the family property in Mitchell, was schooled locally and then went on to graduate from Longreach Agricultural College. Since then he has had a varied career, working as a jackaroo, shearer, wool classer, station hand, head stockman, bull catcher, fencer, windmill erector, horse breaker, dozer driver and Main Roads operator. Don has a reputation for doing the hard yards and is well known by many of the graziers in the region.

He's travelled a bit during the course of this work too. For many years, Don toured back and forth between the Northern Territory, Mitchell and Western Australia avoiding the NT's wet season so he could continue working when life slowed to a halt during the torrential rains of the monsoon.

It was during one of his stints in the NT that Don first turned his hand to trapping. At the time Don was working at Bam-Bam Springs Station, managing and taming water buffalo. Many wild dogs roamed these parts and Don began to apply the knowledge he'd gained through observing these animals across a range of environments to successfully reduce the population, sometimes trapping one dog per night.



It started out as a fascination with the tracks and what type of animal he would find at the end of the trail, and grew into a true respect for the animals and their complexities.

Don has now been trapping wild dogs in parts of the Booringa, Murweh, Paroo and Balonne shires since 1996. He promotes baiting to remove foxes and a percentage of young dogs prior to a targeted trapping program – and gets very good results. Don's efforts in both trapping and monitoring have complimented coordinated baiting programs in Paroo shire to the point where wild dog populations are kept in check.

While he enjoys the freedom the trapper's life affords, it can be lonely, arduous work, and he's not opposed to downing the tools and joining the boys on the annual fishing trip. It seems Don has plenty of mates who enjoy the same pleasures – a yarn, the odd amber draught, a fishing challenge and more of the great outdoors.