



# PITFALL

(AN OPPORTUNISTIC CULTURAL SURVEY) Keith Armstrong | Luke Lickfold | Rob Henderson

Front cover: *Imagery from work.* Image Robert Henderson and Keith Armstrong.  
(Location photos, Courtesy of the AWC)



**Artists:** RIGHT: **Keith Armstrong** (Director) TOP LEFT: **Luke Lickfold** (Sound Systems and Composition) BOTTOM LEFT: **Rob Henderson** (Visual Design)



*A pitfall is an unapparent source of trouble or danger; a hidden hazard: today we all face, or will soon be facing ecological pitfalls of many kinds.*

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*Long Haired Rat Skull*

Image Keith Armstrong (Courtesy of the AWC).

'Pitfall' is a continually-evolving artwork built from multiple screens, a tabletop landscape mapped with projections, fibre optics, 3D spatial sound and infrared night imagery. It builds upon ideas, recordings and cross-disciplinary processes developed during my 2012 - 13 ANAT Synapse Art-Science residency with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC), Australia's largest private-sector conservation organisation.

During that process I was invited to join and work with a team of field ecologists on a broad scale ecological survey of Kalamurina Sanctuary - a vast AWC property located in the Simpson/Tirari Deserts of central Australia. During that month we conducted 'pitfall surveying' - a technique utilising a network of guiding fences and pitfall tubes sunk into the ground, designed for catching both day and night mammals, reptiles and invertebrates.

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*Pitfall Lines in the Dunes.* Image Keith Armstrong (Courtesy of the AWC).

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*Feral Cat Caught on Night Vision Camera Trap.*  
Image Mark/Tess MacLaren (Courtesy of AWC).

As we worked together, we also undertook further 'opportunistic surveys' of nearby birds, plants, animals and related phenomena. So why not then also undertake 'opportunistic cultural surveys'? Why not ask the ecologists to also record 'data' about the cultural changes they perceived would be necessary to avert/avoid the ecological pitfalls looming ahead? The results of these 'opportunistic cultural surveys' were returned in paper, image and sample to me, and the 'numbers' were then 'run' through custom artistic processes.



*Native Long Haired Rats Caught in a Pitfall Trap. Image Keith Armstrong (Courtesy of the AWC)*

1845	DINGO	27-8046	138
1815	emu - 2	27-80365	138
1817	DINGO	27-80478	138
1827	DINGO	27-80006	138
434	Emu	27-77278	138
607	DINGO	27-74421	138
633	DINGO	27-79355	138
641	DINGO	27-80716	138
		27-85031	138

Survey Sheet Detail. Image Keith Armstrong  
(Courtesy of the AWC).

This led to the envisaging of a computational model that now drives the entire art work - driven by moving 'creatures' - each of whom embody qualities of a particular ecologist's responses around 'pitfall avoidance'.

These 'creatures' are suggested by animated imagery, infrared light and 3D sound that 'circulates', and sometimes 'collides' with a representation of a pitfall trap line.

Which of these 'mammals' in line for a fall will have the timely mix of 'boldness', 'focus' and 'size' to avoid the pitfalls ahead?

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*Dingo at Dawn.* Image Keith Armstrong (Courtesy of the AWC).



Mildura Rural City Council



MILDURA ARTS CENTRE

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For the past decade, ANAT <[www.anat.org.au](http://www.anat.org.au)> has supported 30+ artists to work alongside scientists and researchers - most recently through its Synapse art/science residencies and an aligned research database <[www.synapse.net.au](http://www.synapse.net.au)>

Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) owns and manages more than 3 million hectares, protecting more native Australian wildlife than any other non-government organisation. 80% of our staff are based in the field, turning back the tide of extinctions through practical land management and world class science. For more information please visit [www.australianwildlife.org](http://www.australianwildlife.org).



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*Samples from pitfalls. Image Keith Armstrong (Courtesy of the AWC).*



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