

Progress Report CF 2018-040

Fauna conservation and recovery

Species and Communities

Project Core Team

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Project Team	granted
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Fauna conservation and recovery

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Context

The fauna conservation team collates and manages biodiversity information and provides a range of science based support for fauna conservation and recovery. Maintaining and managing the Threatened and Priority Fauna database allows the department to provide accurate technical and scientific advice on threatened and priority fauna to decision makers in land use planning and environmental impact assessment processes. Undertaking conservation status assessments, including nominations for listing/delisting and change of status, ensures that the most recent biological and ecological information is available to stakeholders. The department facilitates the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) and coordinates recovery programs, including developing recovery plans and supporting recovery teams, to guide translocations and conservation activities involving threatened and priority fauna. The team facilitates the department's Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) to manage requirements for ethical consideration of animals in research projects.

Aims

- Provide evidence-based advice for the management, protection and recovery of threatened and priority fauna.
- Collate, manage and interpret information and data on the distribution, conservation status and recovery of threatened and priority fauna.
- Provide a data provision service to ensure threatened and priority fauna data are available within and outside the department.
- Guide strategic and coordinated recovery programs for threatened fauna, including translocations.
- Undertake assessments of conservation status based on all available data, and prepare nominations for the consideration of the TSSC.
- Inform policy and strategic direction relating to fauna, including animal welfare.
- Assess applications for Ministerial Authorisations to take or disturb threatened fauna under section 40 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, (BC Act) to ensure risks to individual animals and subpopulations are minimised during survey, monitoring and relocation activities.
- Provide technical advice on assessment of environmental impacts on fauna for development and vegetation clearing proposals, and licence applications to take fauna for relocation, scientific and other purposes, in accordance with relevant policy and legislation.
- Ensure that animals used for scientific purposes are cared for and used in an ethical and humane manner and that the department meets its commitments under the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*, its *Licence to use animals for scientific purposes*, and the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*.

Progress

- As at 31 December 2018 a total of 382 fauna species were listed on the specially Protected Fauna notice, of which 249 were threatened fauna species (57 listed as critically endangered, 58 as endangered and 134 as vulnerable), 23 presumed extinct, seven conservation dependent, seven other specially protected and 96 migratory bird species that are protected under an international agreement. There were 217 species on the department's priority fauna list.
- Twelve fauna nominations were considered by the TSSC, resulting in two additions (due to taxonomic revision of *Perameles* species) and two deletions from the list of extinct fauna (one rediscovered species transferred to the threatened list as critically endangered (Douglas's broad-headed bee, *Hesperocolletes douglasi*), and re-identification of museum specimens of Gould's mouse (*Pseudomys gouldii*) as an extant species (Shark Bay mouse, *Pseudomys fieldi*) already on the threatened list). Seven threatened species had their status re-assessed and moved to a higher category of threat (all to align with the national status),

and one species had a change to listing criteria only. One addition to the list of migratory birds was incurred, and nine nomenclature changes were implemented.

- A total of six fauna nominations were forwarded to the Australian Government for amendment of the threatened species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Six additions, six increases in category of threat and two nomenclature changes under the EPBC Act occurred for Western Australian fauna species.
- Two thousand, six hundred and ninety records of sightings, captures or evidence of threatened and priority fauna were added to the Threatened and Priority Fauna database, bring the total number of records in the database to 66,385.
- Two hundred and sixty five threatened and priority fauna data searches and extract requests were performed and numerous responses were provided to fauna enquiries.
- Forty five applications were assessed for Ministerial Authorisation to take or disturb threatened fauna under section 40 of the BC Act, which was a new requirement that commenced on 1 January 2019.
- Two hundred and five applications were assessed for licences to take fauna for scientific, education, public and relocation purposes under the *Wildlife Conservation Regulations 1970* (regulation 15 or 17) or for fauna taking biological assessment, scientific or other purposes, and relocation licences under the BC Act.
- Seventy five formal written advice requests were provided in relation to assessment of environmental impacts associated with clearing permit applications, mining development projects and land use planning proposals, in addition to numerous informal requests for potential or hypothetical significance of impacts on threatened or priority fauna.
- A recovery plan was approved for the Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) in Western Australia and the *Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds* (Commonwealth of Australia 2015) was adopted as an interim recovery plan for eight species of threatened migratory shorebirds visiting Western Australia. Two multi-jurisdictional recovery plans prepared by the Northern Territory in consultation with DBCA, for fauna species listed as threatened in Western Australia (central rock-rat, *Zyzomys pedunculatus*, and brush-tailed rabbit-rat, *Conilurus penicillatus*), were endorsed and adopted as national recovery plans under the EPBC Act.
- Support was provided to 17 fauna recovery teams.
- Eighteen translocation and captive-bred releases occurred for banded hare-wallaby, bilby, bush stone curlew, black-flanked rock-wallaby, dibbler, Gilbert's potoroo, greater stick-nest rats, malleefowl, noisy scrub-bird, numbat, orange-bellied frog, red-tailed phascogale, rufous hare-wallaby, Shark Bay bandicoot, Shark Bay mouse, western swamp tortoise, white-bellied frog and woylie.
- The *Management Plan for the Commercial Harvest of Kangaroos in Western Australia 2019-2023* was approved by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment.
- The AEC met six times, conducted a total of 334 assessments, approved 26 new projects and approved the renewal of 38 projects. There were 128 active projects that covered the following broad areas of research and monitoring: fauna monitoring, general fauna research, translocations, fauna surveys, education, feral animal control research and marine research.

Management implications

- Enhanced data sets and lists for threatened and priority fauna facilitate improved assessment and conservation.
- Updates to the threatened fauna database assists in resolving the conservation status of fauna and provides improved information for impact assessment, land use planning and management.
- Management advice, and assessment of applications for authorisations and licences to take and disturb fauna, or for the translocation of threatened fauna, assists the department and other land managers to maintain or improve the conservation status of threatened and priority fauna.
- Departmental animal welfare requirements are maintained through operation of the AEC.
- Industry management programs and threatened fauna recovery plans guide conservation outcomes.
- Provision of input into the environmental impact assessment and land use planning processes maximises the potential for positive conservation outcomes.

Future directions

- Continue to deliver strategic direction and coordination of the conservation, management, protection and recovery of fauna in an efficient manner.
- Transition to the new threatened species database, and test the new system to ensure it operates effectively.
- Prepare fauna conservation advice within requested time frames.
- Prepare one new threatened fauna recovery plan.
- Finalise the draft guideline for the survey and relocation of bilby, in relation to vegetation clearing and other significant disturbance activities.
- Continue to assist with the implementation of the BC Act and prepare additional guidelines, as required.