

Progress Report SP 1996-008

Gilbert's potoroo recovery plan

Animal Science

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Project Team

granted

Program Leader

granted

Directorate

granted

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A Friend

Context

Gilbert's potoroo is the world's rarest marsupial. The *Gilbert's Potoroo Recovery Plan 2003-2008* provides a list of actions to improve the conservation status of this Critically Endangered species. This project involves, or has involved collaborative arrangements with, Parks and Wildlife South Coast and Warren Regions, South Coast NRM, universities (The University of Western Australia, Murdoch, Edith Cowan and Adelaide), the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia, the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME), private sponsors and the Albany-based Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group to implement conservation actions.

Aims

- Implement the *Gilbert's Potoroo Recovery Plan*.
- Increase the numbers of individual Gilbert's potoroos known to be alive in the wild and increase the number of locations in which they occur.

Progress

- The updated Recovery Plan for Gilbert's Potoroo was given endorsement at the State level in September 2016. It is now awaiting endorsement by the Minister for the Environment and Energy.
- The suitability of Michaelmas Island as a haven for the small group of potoroos rescued from Mount Gardner after the catastrophic wildfire of November 2015 was investigated. Initial habitat assessment gave promising results but when four of the rescued potoroos were released on the island in July 2016 it became clear that insufficient food was present. Census trapping of other populations revealed 15-20 animals in the Waychinicup enclosure and five at Two Peoples Bay.
- Assessment of Middle Island in the Recherche Archipelago as a translocation site is being undertaken.

Management implications

- The establishment of two insurance populations under the Recovery Program and the earlier development of captive management protocols enabled effective management of potoroos from the Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve (TPBNR) population that was impacted by fire.
- Use of python management techniques in the Waychinicup enclosure is required to reduce predation on potoroos by carpet pythons.
- While islands provide safety for potoroos from introduced, and in some cases, native predators, careful prior evaluation of habitat suitability and in particular the adequacy of food resources is critical.
- Due to the small size of the Two Peoples Bay population, close management of all colonies to maximise numbers and genetic diversity will be required in planning translocations of potoroos.

Future directions

- Undertake analysis and publication of potoroo population demographics to determine future monitoring needs at all sites.
- Evaluate Middle Island (Recherche Archipelago) for suitability as a translocation site for Gilbert's potoroo utilising surveys for fungi and nesting habitat and implementing trial translocations.