

Concept Plan SP 2018-005

Demonstrating the Effectiveness of Detector Dogs for Feral Cat Control in Wheatbelt Reserves of Western Australia

Species and Communities

Project Core Team

Supervising Scientist	Manda Page
Data Custodian	Manda Page
Site Custodian	

Project status as of Dec. 4, 2018, 1:38 p.m.

Pending project plan approval

Document endorsements and approvals as of Dec. 4, 2018, 1:38 p.m.

Project Team	granted
Program Leader	granted
Directorate	granted

Demonstrating the Effectiveness of Detector Dogs for Feral Cat Control in Wheatbelt Reserves of Western Australia

Biodiversity and Conservation Science Program

Species and Communities

Departmental Service

Service 7: Research and Conservation Partnerships

Aims

Phase 1: Demonstration and comparison of operators available

- To identify potential partners/contractors who could deliver project outcomes
- To determine the capacity of a trained dog to detect feral cats in Tutanning
- To identify logistic and operational limitations of applying this technique in the field
- To inform development of subsequent project phases.

Phase 2: Testing effectiveness in the field

- To assess the effectiveness of using dogs to identify feral cat activity and locate feral cats
- To determine if strategic placement of traps (or other control techniques) in areas of high feral cat activity (as determined by dogs) improves effectiveness
- To increase numbat numbers over 2017 figures in Tutanning, Dryandra and Boyagin through destroying approximately 20 feral cats.

Phase 3: Comparison of cat control techniques (dogs, baiting, spotlighting, trapping) and/or testing effectiveness of dogs to detect cats in different environments

The development of this phase of the project must be informed by the outcomes of the previous phases to ensure the most appropriate investment. For example, the results of previous phases may indicate the need to:

- Operationalise the tool in Dryandra Woodland
- Further test the impacts on native or introduced fauna behaviour
- Test the effectiveness in different environments where other methods of cat control has been less effective or a different suite of native threatened fauna could benefit.

Expected outcome

It is anticipated that the project will provide an assessment of the effectiveness of detector dogs in a Wheatbelt woodland environment to detect and locate feral cats. It is intended that any feral cats located will be humanely euthanised reducing the number of feral cats present. Numbats will be monitored in Tutanning and Boyagin using camera arrays to confirm their presence in these reserves. Involvement of community members will support the department's relationship with Numbat Taskforce and Project Numbat, engaging the public in supporting conservation.

Strategic context

The endangered numbat is one of the 20 mammal species identified as priorities for action in the National Threatened Species Strategy. This project will contribute to the strategy's target of: Improving the trajectory of 20 mammals by 2020. The project also contributes to achieving the objectives of the Numbat Recovery Plan, including ensuring the security of existing self-sustaining subpopulations, and increasing community awareness and participation in the conservation of the numbat, by implementing the recovery actions: identify and implement appropriate methods of feral cat control at existing numbat subpopulation sites, support the Project Numbat community action group and seek grants/sponsorships to support numbat recovery.

Expected collaborations

The project is being funded by the Australian Government's Threatened Species Recovery Fund (via the Department of the Environment and Energy) and the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME). Collaborators include DBCA's Wheatbelt Region and community groups Numbat Taskforce and Project Numbat.

Proposed period of the project

July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019

Staff time allocation

Role	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Scientist	0.2	0.2	
Technical	0.1	0.1	
Volunteer			
Collaborator	0.15	0.15	

Indicative operating budget

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Consolidated Funds (DPaW)	in kind	in kind	-
External Funding			-