

Progress Report CF 2018-040

Fauna conservation and recovery

Species and Communities

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Project Team

granted

Program Leader

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Directorate

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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 flora 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 and coordinates recovery programs, including developing interim 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 ethics considerations 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.
- Provide technical advice on assessment of environmental impacts on fauna for development and vegetation clearing proposals, and licence applications to take fauna for scientific, education, public and relocation 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*, its *Licence to use animals for scientific purposes*, and the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*.

Progress

- A total of 381 fauna species are declared to be rare, likely to become extinct or otherwise in need of special protection under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*. As at 30 June 2018, there were 249 threatened fauna species (52 listed as critically endangered, 56 as endangered and 141 as vulnerable), 23 presumed extinct, seven conservation dependent, seven other specially protected and 95 migratory bird species that are protected under an international agreement, and 214 species on the department's priority fauna list.
- Ten fauna nominations were considered by the TSSC, resulting in two additions (Lake Goorly shield-backed trapdoor spider and ornate shield-backed trapdoor spider) and one deletion (Airlie Island *Ctenotus*) from the list of threatened fauna, one species moved to a higher category of threat (shield-backed trapdoor spider, *Idiosoma nigrum*) and one species moved to a lower category of threat (*Banksia brownii* plant-louse), and three changes to listing criteria only (Margaret River hairy marron, Mesa A *Paradraculoides* and sunset frog). Three additions to, and 11 deletions from, the list of migratory birds were incurred, and 37 nomenclature changes were implemented.
- A total of 15 nominations were forwarded to the Australian Government for amendment of the threatened species lists under the *EPBC Act*, and six additions to the *EPBC Act* occurred during the year.
- 13,734 records of sightings, captures or evidence of threatened and priority fauna were added to the Threatened and Priority Fauna database or the Fauna Survey Returns System. A total 63,695 records are

in the Threatened and Priority Fauna database.

- Two hundred and thirty nine threatened and priority fauna data searches and extract requests were performed and numerous responses were provided to fauna enquiries.
- Two hundred and fifty two 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).
- Fifty six 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 draft recovery plan was completed for the Australasian bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) and an interim recovery plan was completed and approved for the Abrolhos painted button-quail (*Turnix varius scintillans*). The numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*) and western ringtail possum (*Pseudocheirus occidentalis*) recovery plans were endorsed and adopted as national recovery plans under the *EPBC Act*.
- Support was provided to 17 fauna recovery teams that were active during 2017-18.
- Nine translocation proposals for introduction, reintroduction or restocking purposes were approved for: banded hare-wallaby, chuditch, dibbler, greater stick-nest rat, malleefowl, rufous hare-wallaby, Shark Bay mouse, and western barred bandicoot.
- Five amendments were granted for previously approved translocation proposals for: dibbler, Gilbert's potoroo, noisy scrub-bird, red-tailed phascogale, and western swamp tortoise.
- Eighteen translocation releases occurred for: banded hare-wallaby, Barrow Island boodie, bilby, black-flanked rock-wallaby, chuditch, dibbler, Gilbert's potoroo, noisy scrub-bird, numbat, orange-bellied frog, red-tailed phascogale, rufous hare-wallaby, Shark Bay mouse, tammar wallaby, western barred bandicoot, western swamp tortoise, and white-bellied frog.
- The AEC met seven times, conducted a total of 306 assessments, approved 14 new projects and approved the renewal of 16 projects. There were 131 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. Assessments included all applications that came before the committee for new projects, renewals, amendments, adverse events, and project annual reports.

Management implications

- Enhanced data sets and lists for threatened and priority fauna facilitate improved assessment and conservation.
- Updates to the threatened fauna data base assists in resolving the status of fauna and provides improved information for land use planning and management.
- Management advice, and assessment of applications for licences to take or for the translocation of threatened fauna, assists the department and other land managers to maintain the conservation status of threatened and priority fauna.
- Departmental animal welfare requirements are maintained.
- 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.
- Develop guidelines for bilby translocation.
- Facilitate Commonwealth endorsement of the new kangaroo management program.
- Prepare guidelines and procedures for the implementation of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act*.