Department of
Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future

ANNUAL REPORT
THREATENED SPECIES OR COMMUNITY RECOVERY TEAM

PROGRAM INFORMATION	
Recovery Team name	Dibbler Recovery Team
Reporting Period (Financial/Calendar Year)	Calendar year 2009

Current membership

Member		**Representing**
1. Chair	**Dr Tony Friend**	Supervising Scientist, Dibbler project, DEC Science Division
2.	**Tim Button**	Dibbler Technical Officer, DEC Science Division
3.	**Dr Roberta Bencini**	Research student supervisor, University of WA
4.	**Peter Collins**	South Coast Region, DEC
5.	**Rebecca Carter/Benson Todd**	Midwest Region, DEC
6.	**Geoff Burrow**	Malleefowl Preservation Group
7.	**Dr Vic Smith**	South Coast community
8.	**Jeremy Carter**	Jurien Bay Community
9.	**Dr Helen Robertson**	Director Animal Health and Research, Perth Zoo
10.	**Peter Orell**	Species and Communities Branch, DEC
11.	**Dr Tony Start**	Scientist with expertise in dibblers
12.	**Dr Pat Woolley**	Scientist with expertise in dibblers (corresponding)
13.	**Dr Chris Dickman**	Scientist with expertise in dibblers (corresponding)
14.	**Dr Dorian Moro**	Scientist with expertise in dibblers (corresponding)

Dates meetings were held	25th May and 23rd November 2009
One to two paragraph summary of achievements suitable for WATSNU	Dibbler recovery moved ahead in 2009, with the continuation of the reintroduction to Peniup proposed nature reserve, which saw the release of 34 dibblers from Perth Zoo in October and November. A December monitoring trip resulted in the capture of six of those animals and a new dibbler, all in good condition.

List of actions undertaken by Recovery Team (from actions in Recovery Plan)

Action 1 Monitoring	**Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP)** The Fitzgerald River NP is the stronghold of the dibbler. Its large geographical extent size ensures a diversity of weather conditions and fire regimes and consequently a number of areas experience favourable conditions for dibblers at any one time. Currently a large part of the western FRNP is recovering from a wildfire that affected 15% of the entire national park in January 2008 but the post-fire recovery of the vegetation has not reached the stage where conditions are suitable for dibblers. Low rainfall in the eastern FRNP was apparently the cause for low recruitment in 2008 when very few young survived the dry winter. Results of monitoring dibblers at the trapping grid near the intersection of Hamersley Drive and Moir Track during 2009 showed the lowest numbers since the study commenced in May 2005. **Jurien Bay Islands** The Boullanger Island population has showed a decline each year since 2005, although this slowed in 2009, whereas the Whitlock Island population has remained relatively stable. Declining rainfall appears to have a greater effect on Boullanger than on Whitlock Island. The Escape Island population was not monitored in 2009 due to limited funds. Numbers on Escape Island have fallen each year since 2006. King's skink numbers on Escape Island have increased and this may have affected dibbler trappability.
Action 2 Habitat Management	Fox control was carried out on all known mainland dibbler population sites by aerial and ground baiting four times a year under the Western Shield program. Supplementary monthly ground baiting is carried out at Peniup and at the Stirling Range dibbler release site. The wildfire in the FRNP, which started under extreme conditions, was contained after two days but resulted in a large reduction in available habitat for dibblers. This illustrates the importance of the current strategy of breaking up large unburnt areas by using linear fires of small extent.
Action 3 Survey	No surveys for additional dibbler populations were carried out in 2009 due to lack of funding.
Action 4 Captive breeding	The breeding colony at Perth Zoo produced 38 young dibblers in 2009, with 31 surviving to weaning. A group of 30 dibblers (20 males and 10 females) of a range of ages was provided for release at Peniup on 2nd October 2009 (see below). A trapping expedition was undertaken to the eastern FRNP in October 2009 in an attempt to provide 6 male and 6 female dibblers required for the breeding colony. However only 3 males and one female were captured and successfully transported to Perth Zoo. Further efforts to capture dibblers for captivity were not carried out due to the low numbers in FRNP. On the arrival of the four wild dibblers at Perth Zoo, four more captive animals (three males and one female) were released at Peniup, on 24th November 2009.
Action 5 Translocation	**Peniup proposed NR**: Releases of 40-50 captive-bred dibblers were carried out in Peniup in 2001, 2002 and 2003 and the population grew steadily until winter 2005 when it crashed. Some recovery was evident after baiting frequency was increased in 2005, but very few dibblers were captured in Peniup in 2007 and 2008. The recovery team supported the release of 40 dibblers in Peniup in October 2008 and on 3rd October 2008, 24 dibblers, including 7 wild-born animals, 13 young of 2008 and 4 older zoo-bred animals, were released in the reserve. Five dibblers were subsequently caught in November 2008. During 2009, dibblers continued to be caught in Peniup, including three in March and seven in September. On 2nd October 2009, 30 dibblers were released at Peniup. Seven dibblers were captured during the monitoring session in December 2009. These capture rates augur well for the future of the Peniup population. **Stirling Range National Park**: The recovery team decided not to release further dibblers in FRNP in 2008 but concentrate on the Peniup translocation as it had been more promising. No monitoring of dibblers in SRNP was carried out in 2009 due to lack of funds **West Coast site**: A proposed translocation to a west coast site has been cancelled due to lack of a suitable site. Recent attempted mammal reintroductions into Nambung NP have not been successful and there is not local support for further reintroductions into the District until extra resources for baiting are provided.

Action 6 Genetics	DNA samples are collected from each dibbler handled but no analysis has been carried out since 2001.
Action 7 Community involvement	Community involvement in the dibbler recovery program continued in 2009. Three community members are members of the recovery team. Local community members often work as volunteers to help with fieldwork and their assistance is vital to the success of the work. In 2009, 12 people accompanied dibbler project staff on field trips to Jurien Bay, Peniup and FRNP, carrying out a total of 40 person-days providing vital assistance in the field.
Action 8 Research	A three-year population study has continued at a newly discovered dibbler site with all-weather access in the eastern FRNP. This site provides comparative data against which population parameters in reintroduced populations may be assessed.
High Priority Actions Requiring Funding	
Task	**Amount needed and what for**
Monitor existing populations	$50,000 to cover costs of vehicle use, travel allowance, accommodation, staff food and boat transport to Jurien Bay islands. This item covers the monitoring of several FRNP sites as well.
Support for captive breeding colony at Perth Zoo	$10,000 to cover food supplied to 20 dibblers and their young in captivity each year. Salary and accommodation costs provided by Perth Zoo
Translocations to establish new populations and monitoring of new populations	$30,000 for costs of vehicle use, travel allowance, traps, bait to monitor the success of translocations to Peniup and other sites.