



THREATENED SPECIES AND/OR COMMUNITIES RECOVERY TEAM

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Recovery Team	Western Swamp Tortoise Recovery Team
Reporting Period	Calendar year 2011

Current membership

Please include email addresses as we would like updated contact details for recovery team members
Also please include vacant positions and regular guests

	Member	Representing
1. Chair	Craig Olejnik Craig.olejnik@dec.wa.gov.au	DEC - Swan Coastal District - Nature Conservation Coordinator
2. Exec Officer	Jacqui Maguire Jacqui.maguire@dec.wa.gov.au	DEC – Swan Coastal District
3.	Dr Gerald Kuchling Gerald.kuchling@dec.wa.gov.au	DEC – Swan Coastal District - Chief Investigator
4	Dr Andrew Burbidge amburbidge@westnet.com.au	
5	Helen Robertson (until Nov 2011)	Perth Zoo - Director Animal Health and Research
6	Bradie Durell (Guest) Bradie.Durell@perthzoo.wa.gov.au	Perth Zoo – WST Keeper
7	Dr David Groth igrothd@info.curtin.edu.au	Department of Biomedical Science, Curtin University of Technology
8	Jan Bant westernswamptortoise@yahoo.com.au	Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise (FoWST)
9	Prof Don Bradshaw Don.Bradshaw@uwa.edu.au	School of Animal Biology, the University of Western Australia
10	Byron Manning/ Terry Morley/ Gayle Males bmanning@zoossa.com.au	Adelaide Zoo
11	Nicki Mitchell nicola.mitchell@uwa.edu.au	University of WA - ARC Linkage Project

Dates meetings were held	15 th July 2011 and 18 th November 2011
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One to two paragraph summary of achievements suitable for *WATSNU*

- Thirty captive-bred Western Swamp Tortoises from Perth Zoo were translocated to Twin Swamps Nature Reserve in 2011 and 33 to Moore River Nature Reserve.
- Twelve of each group were radio-tracked and showed good growth rates in both reserves.
- Population monitoring demonstrated for the first time recruitment of hatchlings into the juvenile population at Mogumber where two 1 ½ year-old tortoises were found.
- No recruitment had been demonstrated at Twin Swamps Nature Reserve since the turn of the century, but following the installation of a new groundwater bore in 2010 and an earlier start of water supplementation into two swamp areas one hatchling from 2011 and one 2 ½ year-old juvenile were captured in 2011. It is reassuring to see the new management regime to show positive results.
- At Ellen Brook Nature Reserve, the last self-sustaining wild population, recruitment could also be demonstrated over the last few years: four hatchlings from 2011 and three new juveniles, two of which had hatched in 2008 and one in 2009 were found during 2011.
- The reasonably good rains during the spring of 2011 extended the activity season for the Western Swamp Tortoises.
- All hatchlings from 2011 had grown to a good size by late spring/early summer.

List of actions undertaken by Recovery Team member/s

Action 1 –Employment of Chief Investigator

Although applications for external funding were made, as of the end of 2011 there were no State NRM or Commonwealth grants obtained to fund implementation of the Recovery Program and employment of Chief Investigator in the 2011/2012 financial year. Consequently both the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 programs, which includes DEC's contributions to the Perth Zoo's captive breeding program and employment of Chief Investigator were unfunded.

Action 2 – Management of Ellen Brook, Twin Swamps, Mogumber and Moore River Nature Reserves

Routine management of the nature reserves continued as in past years, including fence maintenance, weed control and rehabilitation works. An improved vermin control (baiting for foxes and rats) program was implemented in 2011 and investigation of rabbit baiting at TSNR and EBNR was undertaken. In addition monitoring bores with data loggers were maintained and water samples were collected and analysed within swamps at all reserves.

Specific management works were conducted as follows at each of the reserves:

Ellen Brook Nature Reserve

- Weed mapping of the whole reserve was completed and will form basis of weed control program in 2011/12.
- New rat and fox baiting programs were implemented at EBNR
- Tambookie and Watsonia weed control occurred

Twin Swamps Nature Reserve

- A section of the fence on the northern boundary was replaced.
- Some of the shallow areas in the north west swamps were deepened with a bobcat to provide refuge for the WST when swamps dry.
- Maintenance and upgrades to pipe system from groundwater bore was undertaken and bore was switched on to the north west and south east swamps from June until November 2011.

Mogumber Nature Reserve

- 1080 fox baiting continued within the reserve and properties immediately adjacent.
- Firebreak maintenance conducted in September as this was required down one side of the reserve.

Moore River Nature Reserve

- 1080 baiting continued on a monthly basis.
- Vegetation monitoring of established transects conducted within the TEC area.

Action 3 – Tortoise population monitoring

Thirty captive-bred Western Swamp Tortoises from Perth Zoo were translocated to Twin Swamps Nature Reserve and 33 to Moore River Nature Reserve in 2011. Twelve of each group were radio-tracked and showed good growth rates in both reserves.

Population monitoring demonstrated for the first time recruitment of hatchlings into the juvenile population at Mogumber where two 1 ½ year-old tortoises were found. No recruitment had been demonstrated at Twin Swamps Nature Reserve since the turn of the century, but following the installation of a new groundwater bore in 2010 and an earlier start of water supplementation into two swamp areas one hatchling from 2011 and one 2 ½ year-old juvenile were captured in 2011.

At Ellen Brook Nature Reserve, recruitment could also be demonstrated over the last few years: four hatchlings from 2011 and three new juveniles, two of which had hatched in 2008 and one in 2009 were found during 2011.

There are still less than 50 adults WST estimated in the wild.

Water levels continued to be monitored within swamps at all the WST reserves. Water chemistry analysis revealed increased salinity levels in the bore water supplemented swamps at Twin Swamps Nature Reserve. Salinity levels will be monitored in more detail during 2012.

Action 4 – Captive Breeding

Perth Zoo is finalising a Business Case to go to State Treasury to facilitate the major upgrade of the captive breeding facilities at the Perth Zoo (up to 1.8mill applied for) new facility expected to last 20-30 years. Will hear back if successful in May 2012.

A total population of 156 WST (hatchlings, juveniles and adults) were at the Perth Zoo at the end of 2011

47 successful hatchlings were produced in 2011. Only one died at 1mth 8 days

Aestivation tunnels and banksia leaf litter continued to be used at the Perth Zoo to help the tortoises transition into the wild.

Action 5 – Translocations

Thirty captive-bred Western Swamp Tortoises from Perth Zoo were translocated to Twin Swamps Nature Reserve in 2011 and 33 to Moore River Nature Reserve. Twelve of each group were radio-tracked and showed good growth rates in both reserves.

Due to success of previous release and recorded recruitment there are plans to conduct another translocation at TSNR in 2012 of approx 20 individuals.

Action 6 – Education, Sponsorship and Publicity

Event conducted to release 30 tortoises to Twin Swamps NR was held in July 2011 involving the Minister for Environment, Perth Zoo, DEC, FoWST and interested members of the public and media bodies. The event was highly successful with media coverage including an article and photo in the Sunday Times newspaper and Bullsbrook Times. The Environmental Minister also published a media release on the translocation of WST at Twin Swamps and Moore River.

The Friends of WST successfully arranged to work with the Margaret River Chocolate Factory in Ellenbrook to produce WST shaped chocolates, proceeds of which will go to the FoWST and Recovery Program. The chocolates produced to date have been a great success and the Group is awaiting their first donation from the sale which will be used to purchase items endorsed by the Recovery Team to assist the Recovery Program.