

## Australian Wildlife Conservancy

**Paruna Sanctuary**

**Dec 2003**

### **Brushtail Possum**

*Trichosurus vulpecula*

*Translocation from Karakamia to Paruna Sanctuary.*

#### **Introduction and Background**

Under a translocation proposal endorsed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (November 2002) nineteen Brushtail Possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), consisting of 10 males and 9 females (with 2 juvenile male pouch-young), were translocated from Karakamia Sanctuary to Paruna Sanctuary during the period 25/02/03 to 24/06/03.

As part of the translocation proposal all possums were fitted with reflective ear tags (females with red, and males with silver). The monitoring protocol, undertaken by Australian Wildlife Conservancy staff, includes monthly spotlighting at the release site, and bi-annual trapping as part of the overall monitoring regime at Paruna. This report is an addendum to the report in June 2003.

#### **Methods**

Monthly spotlighting is carried out at Paruna Sanctuary as part of an overall monitoring strategy and involves recording numbers of all vertebrates observed along a standard route, using standardized methodology in the immediate vicinity of the Brushtail release site. The reflective tags allow easy identification of translocated animals.

Additional data on Brushtail Possums has been collected during this period via cage trapping as part of the Paruna Sanctuary biannual trapping program, as well as cage trapping specifically targeting Woylies. Although this trapping is not intended for Brushtail Possums, occasional individuals are captured.

#### **Results and Discussion**

The during this period there were 5 spotlight transects completed but they did not reveal any Brushtail Possum sightings.

During this period 2 Possums were captured, the same individual which was one of the animals translocated from Karakamia. It was in excellent condition.

Table 1 – Details of Brushtail Possums traps

Date	Species	N/R	Trap	ID	Sex	Age	Pes	Weight	Pouch	No C- R	Notes
17/07/03	BT Possum	R/I	OR6	747	M		54.76	1530			OR - Omera Ridge
27/11/03	BT Possum	R/I	S106	747	M	A		1660			

As only a low number of possums were recorded in this period, they may have spread out very thinly or they may have declined. One possible explanation is predation by the fox. On one of the spotlighting transects 23/7 two foxes were recorded in the middle of the sanctuary. Baiting was immediately increased in the area and no further sightings have been made. Foxes are known to prey on Brushtail Possums particularly if they spend considerable time foraging on the ground rather than the safety of the trees. Brushtail Possums at Karakamia are frequently seen foraging on the ground sometimes a considerable distance from the nearest tree. This ground dwelling behaviour appears to have dramatically increased in recent years. The possums translocated from Karakamia are likely to forage readily on the ground which is likely to make them very vulnerable to predation. A further translocation of possums from Karakamia to boost numbers at Paruna is recommended. As reported in the translocation proposal, numbers of Brushtail Possums at Karakamia remain exceedingly high.

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#### Introduction and Background

Under a translocation proposal endorsed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (November 2002) nineteen Brushtail Possums (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), consisting of 10 males and 9 females (with 2 juvenile male pouch-young), were translocated from Karakamia Sanctuary to Paruna Sanctuary during the period 25/02/03 to 24/06/03. In April 2004 a further 49 (22 Females and 27 Males) possums were translocated to Paruna from Karakamia Sanctuary. These animals were fitted with yellow or blue reflective ear tags to separate them from the previous translocation.

As part of both translocation proposals all possums were fitted with reflective ear tags. The monitoring protocol, undertaken by Australian Wildlife Conservancy staff, includes monthly spotlighting at the release site, and bi-annual trapping as part of the overall monitoring regime at Paruna. This report is an addendum to six monthly reports from June 2003.

One additional Possum was released during this period as part of the previous translocation proposals.

**Table 1: Details of Release**

Date	N/R	Tag Type	ID	Sex	Age	Weight	Pouch	Notes
19/07/2004	R	P	335	F	A	1790	MPY	Translocated from Karakamia Sanctuary

#### Methods

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Additional data on Brushtail Possums has been collected during this period via cage-trapping as part of the Paruna Sanctuary biannual trapping program, as well as cage-trapping specifically targeting Woylies. Although this trapping is not intended for Brushtail Possums, occasional individuals are captured.

#### Results and Discussion

During this period there were 6 spotlight transects completed and they revealed 1 possum sighting on 18/8. No tags were noted.

**Table 2 – Brushtails sighted during spotlight transect**

Date	No	Sex	Eartag	Time	Location
13/7/04	0			6.30pm-7.30pm	Drive Transect
18/08/04	1	U	U		Drive Transect
15/9/04	0			7pm-8pm	Drive Transect
14/10/04	0			7.10pm-8.10pm	Drive Transect
25/11/04	0				Drive Transect
16/12/04	0				Drive Transect

No brushtails were trapped during the biannual trapping period. .

Brushtail Possums are still being recorded in low numbers across the sanctuary and are occasionally sighted during spotlight surveys. Monitoring will continue in the proceeding months.