

# **Report on the implementation of the Lancelin Island Skink Recovery Plan and the activities of the Recovery Team, 2003-2005**

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This report about the activities of the Lancelin Island Skink Recovery Team and the implementation of the Recovery Plan covers the years 2003 to 2005. The main actions over this period have been the monitoring of the original population on Lancelin Island and the translocated population on Favorite Island at Jurien Bay.

The Lancelin Island Skink Recovery Team last met on November 23, 2003. The minutes of this meeting are attached.

## *Progress on the implementation of the Recovery Plan*

The Lancelin Island Skink Recovery Plan (Pearson and Jones 2000) identified 9 actions required to improve the conservation status of the species. The plan was never fully funded (estimated to require: 1999 \$ 15 500; 2000 \$ 22 000; 2001 \$ 16 000; 2002 \$ 10 000; 2003 \$ 10 000) and for the last three years, there has been no budget to continue the monitoring of the Favorite Island translocation. Progress on the nine actions is outlined below:

### **1. Examination of the genetic and conservation status of *Ctenotus* taxa closely related to *C. lancelini*.**

This action has not been pursued further. Earlier work by Dr Mark Adams of the South Australian Museum indicated that *C. lancelini* warranted distinct species status and was not a form or subspecies of the widespread *C. labillardieri*. A sister taxon to *C. lancelini* was found in the Meelup and Pinjarra area but there have been no recent efforts to survey this area for further specimens.

### **2. Monitoring of the *C. lancelini* population on Lancelin Island**

The Recovery Plan stated that annual monitoring of the Lancelin Island population should be undertaken using two periods of trapping between October 20 and December 1 that cover at least 12 days. This was costed at \$ 4 000 (vehicle use, boat hire and accommodation). Little monitoring has been undertaken. A monitoring trip was planned for November 2002, but cancelled when the project's budget was withdrawn by Science Division.

In November 2004, using funds from the Bankwest Landscape Visa Card, a monitoring trip was organised. Eight grids of traps were established in similar areas on the Island to those used by Barb Jones during her work. Gina Broun, Barb Jones and David Pearson conducted this trapping. A total of 26 *C. lancelini* were captured over a 5 day trapping period. It proved to be the second most abundantly captured lizard (*Morethia obscura* 46 captures, *Ctenotus fallens* 19, *Egernia multiscutata bos* 9) and was captured on all the grids. A short report was prepared by Gina Broun.

### **3. Research and monitoring of habitat on Lancelin Island**

No further activities on this action. Dr Nic Dunlop has continued his monitoring of seabirds and the impact of the presence of the boardwalk on Lancelin Island.

### **4. Visitor and fire management on Lancelin Island**

Andy Derbyshire has moved on from CALM and now works for Fisheries in the Arolhos. Isacc Hatch is now the ranger at Lancelin and he has been keeping an eye on activities on Lancelin Island.

### **5. Liaison with the local community and shire about the management of Lancelin Island**

This task has continued through close contact with the local community and the "Friends of Lancelin Island" group by the Lancelin rangers, Andy and Isaac.

### **6. Liaison and advice to government agencies and developers about potential mainland habitat**

No current issues in relation to this action.

### **7. Survey for other populations on the mainland and nearby islands**

No activity in relation to this action.

#### **8. Captive breeding with the maintenance of at least 50 adult individuals**

Captive breeding at Perth Zoo drew to a close in March 2004 as a consequence of budget restrictions. Most of the captive stock were released onto Favorite Island, except for a small number kept at the Zoo for public display.

#### **9. Evaluation of translocation options, if required**

Completed with the selection and subsequent translocations to Favorite Island. The Recovery Team may need to give consideration to further populations now that Perth Zoo does not have a breeding population.

On March 23 2002, 41 captive bred Lancelin Island Skinks (19 male, 22 female) were released on Favorite Island and trapping continued over the subsequent four days. Trapping was again undertaken after winter in December 2002. Two of the skinks released in March 2002 were recaptured and their colouration suggested that breeding may be occurring. A further 51 captive bred Lancelin Island Skinks from Perth Zoo were released on December 4 2002 and another 41 in November 2003.

The next sampling trip in March 2003 hoped to detect juvenile Lancelin Island Skinks that would indicate that breeding was occurring on Favorite Island. No juveniles were captured, although 2 adults were caught, both with extensive yellow flushes on their abdomen, a characteristic breeding sign.

Future releases of skinks are planned for November/December 2003 and monitoring at the end of summer (probably March 2004). Further and more detailed monitoring would be desirable but is dependent on available budget.

## MINUTES

### LANCELIN ISLAND SKINK RECOVERY TEAM MEETING JURIEN BAY - NOVEMBER 20, 2003

**PRESENT:** David Pearson, Keith Hockey, Rebecca Carter, Paul Doughty, Brad Maryan, Andrew Darbyshire, Helen Robertson, Barb Jones.

**APOLOGIES:** Nicky Marlow, Jim Rolfe, Brian Bush, Anita Jarvis.

Prior to the meeting Team members travelled over to Favorite Island to inspect the site of the translocation of captive bred skinks and to view some of the lizards captured in pitfall traps. Thanks to Jurien Sea Rescue for providing transport.

After a brief lunch, David Pearson opened the meeting at 1pm.

#### **1. Welcome and quick summary of the Lancelin Island Skink and the Recovery Plan to date- David Pearson**

- Lancelin Island Skink recognised as different taxon by Ford (1969) and raised to species status by Storr (1973). Listed as Schedule 1 (Rare or likely to become extinct) due to its restricted distribution (7.6 hectares).
- Browne-Cooper and Maryan (1992) reported decline in population.
- Lancelin Island Skink (LIS) Recovery Team established in June 1993 and first met in December 1993.
- Barb Jones employed for 2 years to research skink ecology on Lancelin Is.
- Mark Adams (SA Museum) examined taxonomic status using allozymes and confirmed its recognition as a full species.
- Mainland searches by CALM and WA Soc. of Amateur Herpetologists 1993-5; one individual found near Lancelin Pub. Further trapping there failed to locate any others.
- Captive breeding of closely related Red-legged Skink (*C. labillardieri*) commenced at Perth Zoo in September 1994.
- Gravid LIS from Lancelin Island taken to Zoo in December 1995 and January 1996; breeding successful over following years.
- Research on the impact of the herbicide "Fusilade" by the late Dennis King (Dept of Agriculture).
- Friends of Lancelin Island group formed in 1997 and Andrew Darbyshire co-ordinated with this group to build a boardwalk across LI in May 1997
- Translocation options examined and plan approved in 2000.

## **2. Review of Recovery Actions**

### **(a) Genetic status**

Team discussed the genetic similarity of the *Ctenotus* aff. *lancelini* population at Pinjarra and Meelup. Further tissue is required to make a decision on the status of this population. No current survey work in this area, although trapping by Nic Dunlop and others failed to locate any of these skinks. Cost is one barrier to doing this work. Peter Spencer (CALM/Murdoch Uni) may be able to do genetic work if more material can be obtained.

ACTION: DP will follow up with Mark Adams (South Australian Museum) to see what tissue they have.

ACTION: BM to contact Kate Creed (Lake Meelup Preservation Society) to find out about options to collect further specimens.

### **(b) Population/habitat monitoring**

#### **Population Monitoring**

Team discussed the lack of population monitoring that has occurred over the past years due to insufficient resources allocated for the project.

Short term options:

Rebecca Carter tabled the recent funding application to the Bankwest Landscape Conservation Visa Card grants.

Recovery Team supported application, but decided to postpone the monitoring from Dec 2003 to Nov / Dec 2004 so an appropriate monitoring program could be formulated. The monitoring regime outlined in the Recovery Plan (up to 12 days trapping in November) was viewed as too expensive in terms of staff time and costs. Barb Jones asked to revisit her data and formulate a more restricted sampling regime to maximise effectiveness of field time.

Team discussed Nic Dunlop's research on the Island this December in regards to bird scaring monitoring. Another reason why monitoring should be delayed so liaison with Nic can be conducted so his study is not impacted.

ACTION: Barb to look at her past trapping results to develop a future program for population monitoring that is a trimmed version of that in the Recovery Plan but will provide comparable results to past work. Barb offered to be part of the monitoring set up and methodology.

Helen Robertson informed the Recovery Team of a funding opportunity the Zoo offers. Team will apply next year for funds to assist with Nov/ Dec 2004 monitoring.

ACTION: Helen Robertson to inform Rebecca Carter/David Pearson of the call for funding proposals when available next year.

Long term: need to address this after next monitoring has been carried to ascertain methodology and time frame of future monitoring. Recurrent funds unlikely even though KPI's in relation to population status occur in the Lancelin Island Skink Recovery Plan and in the indicative Turquoise Coast Island Management Plan.

ACTION: Recovery Team to examine long term monitoring requirements after the results of the 2004 monitoring are known.

#### **Habitat Monitoring**

Due to dynamic nature of the Island habitats, the Recovery Team discussed and decided only gross changes in island vegetation needed to be monitored such as the impact of weeds and/or fire.

ACTION: Barb Jones to send David Pearson historical photos of Lancelin Island for filing

ACTION: David Pearson to produce photographic record of vegetation history for both Lancelin Island and Favorite Island.

**(c) Visitor and fire management on Lancelin Is.**

Andrew Derbyshire spoke of new signage on Lancelin Island that has plinths with storage boxes that contain basic fire fighting equipment such as a rake hoe; backpack spray etc. Recovery Team thanked Andy for his excellent work with the community on the management of Lancelin Island.

**(d) Liaison with public, government and media**

Little has happened in this area. David Pearson asked that if the translocation was referred to, it should only note an island off Jurien, not the actual island name so undue attention is not attracted to Favorite Island.

**(e) Management of mainland popn./survey for further popns.**

Nothing has happened in this area due to lack of resources.

**(f) Captive breeding at Perth Zoo- Helen Robertson**

HR informed the Recovery Team of an unfortunate incident at the Zoo with the captive breeding air conditioner in the demountable braking down and the result of losing 32 captive bred Lancelin Island Skinks.

HR informed the Recovery Team of the lack of resources at the Zoo due to cost cutting and thus the captive breeding program was under jeopardy. HR requested that the Recovery Team release the remaining stock prior to Christmas 2003 leaving the Zoo with 6:6 for any future breeding opportunities if funding increases.

DP requested the release happens after the March 2004 translocation monitoring as then will be able to see if past releases are breeding (as will expect to catch juveniles during the March monitoring).

ACTION: DP to release Zoo population in March 2004 to reduce Zoo population to 6:6.

**(g) Translocation options/ Translocation to Favorite Is.**

DP explained the survey of the coastal Islands from Rockingham to Leeman to select Favorite Island as the Translocation for Spring 2000.

- March 2002 first translocation to Favorite Island: 41 captive bred skinks released
- December 2002: 51 captive bred released onto Favorite Island.
- November 2003 : 17 captive bred released onto Favorite Island

**3. General discussion**

DP informed Recovery Team of discussions with Laurina Bullen about the Turquoise Coast Island Management Plan and the inclusion of KPI's for the Lancelin Island Skink.

**4. A new Plan or roll it over or ?- general discussion**

Recovery Team discussed the options and decided that the most appropriate action would be to redraft the current Plan once time allows more knowledge in respect to the translocation success.

ACTION: Roll plan over for one more year to see how the translocation goes, then review plan once have greater knowledge.

**5. Identification of future recovery actions- general discussion**

- promote the values of the islands assemblage of lizards: pockets of biodiversity that doesn't occur (anymore) on mainland.
- Mainland monitoring – Recovery Team requires funds

ACTION: DP to write a letter to Peter Mawson regarding training staff in reptile handling and identification. Also about conducting a refresher course and including a trip to the Museum as part of the training.

## **6. Recovery Team membership**

ACTION: DP acts as Chair until the review of the Recovery Plan, which is scheduled to occur in 2005.

## **7. Other business**

BM: 2000 data on captive breeding needs to be written up and published

ACTION: HR to follow up including the Husbandry Manual for Captive Breeding.

BM: Barb's data needs to also be written up

ACTION: Barb to write up her data with the assistance of DP – mid next year

## **8. Conclusion**

Next meeting – Flag next meeting for end of 2004

ACTION: DP to email Recovery Team results of the March 2004 monitoring

Meeting closed at 4:20pm.