Department of Parks and Wildlife

RECOVERY TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

THREATENED SPECIES AND/OR COMMUNITIES RECOVERY TEAM

PROGRAM INFORMATION	
Recovery Team	Dibbler Recovery Team
Reporting Period Submission date 31 March	**DATE FROM: 1st January 2013 DATE TO: 31st March 2014** **(in transition from calendar year to April-March, as requested by SCB)**

Current membership

Member		**Representing**
Chair	**Dr Tony Friend**	Supervising Scientist, Dibbler project, Animal Science Program, DPaW
	Dr Roberta Bencini	Research student supervisor, University of WA
	Steve Buitenhuis	Moora District, DPaW
	Geoff Burrow	Malleefowl Preservation Group
	Tim Button	Dibbler Technical Officer, Animal Science Program, DPaW
	Jeremy Carter/ Rebecca Carter	Jurien Bay community
	Peter Collins	Albany District, DPaW
	Prof Chris Dickman	Scientist with expertise in dibblers (corresponding)
	Cathy Lambert	Supervisor, Zoology, NSBP, Perth Zoo
	Dr Peter Mawson	Director Animal Health and Research, Perth Zoo
	Dr Harriet Mills	Research student supervisor, University of WA
	Dr Dorian Moro	Scientist with expertise in dibblers (corresponding)
	Dr Manda Page	Species and Communities Branch, DPaW
	Dr Juanita Renwick	Ecosystem Health Branch, DPaW
	Dr Vic Smith	South Coast community

	Dr Tony Start	Scientist with expertise in dibblers
	Dr Pat Woolley	Scientist with expertise in dibblers (corresponding)

Dates meetings were held	26th March 2013, 16th July 2013 and 4th March 2014
Highlights of achievements for the previous 12 months suitable for publication in *WATSNU* and contribution to DEC annual report. Provide 1-2 paragraphs summarising total number of new populations located, surveys completed, list major management actions etc	Breeding by dibblers released into the Waychinicup National Park enclosure has been recorded for the first time. This exciting development indicated that this reintroduction is heading for success. The Jurien Bay island dibbler populations have recovered from low numbers caused by several years of poor winter rainfall. The Boullanger and Whitlock Island populations will also be assisted by the planned eradication of mice on the islands in 2015, funded by State NRM. The reintroduced population at Peniup reserve is well on its way to becoming self-sustaining, with good numbers being recorded again this year despite the lack of any dibbler releases there since 2010.

List of recovery actions coordinated by Recovery Team
Detail under the headings below the recovery actions undertaken during the reporting period. Provide separate detail for each species/community against each action. For species/community-specific recovery teams, the generic activity types below can be replaced by the specific recovery actions from the recovery plan where appropriate.

Action 1:

Monitoring

Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP)

The Fitzgerald River NP is the stronghold of the dibbler. Its large geographical extent ensures a diversity of weather conditions and fire histories and consequently a number of areas experience favourable conditions for dibblers at any one time.

During 2013, dibbler monitoring by trapping was carried out at the Hamersley-Moir site on 18th – 22nd November, the first monitoring sessions since December 2012. Five dibblers were caught, including three new animals (2 males, 1 female) and two recaptures (2 males). This low total was unexpected given the good winter rains but shows that this site has a stable, persistent population.

Jurien Bay Islands

Dibbler populations on Boullanger and Whitlock Islands recovered strongly in 2012 from the low levels seen in late 2010 and early 2011. While the recovery on Whitlock continued in 2013, Boullanger island numbers dropped off somewhat.

Monitoring on Boullanger and Whitlock Islands was carried out from 13th – 17th May and 14th – 18th October 2013.

In May 2013, 35 dibblers (6 new) were caught on Boullanger island (May 2012 total 17 dibblers, 9 new) and 22 dibblers (0 new) on Whitlock Island (May 2012, 14 dibblers, 2 new).

In October 2013, 40 dibblers (25 new) were caught on Boullanger (October 2012 total 71 dibblers, 53 new) and 36 dibblers (20 new) on Whitlock (October 2012 total 26 dibblers, 16 new).

The translocated Escape Island population was monitored during a trip from 17th – 21st February 2014. This was the first monitoring session since December 2012. Trapping over four nights involved 374 trapnights, with only 76 out of 100 traps set on the first night. Despite this, 26 dibblers were caught, comparing well with the 2012 total of 24. . This included 20 new individuals and involved the capture of 17 dibblers on the fourth day of

	trapping. These numbers signify a strong recovery since 2008, when only 10 dibblers were caught. **Peniup reserve** The reintroduced dibbler population at Peniup reserve near Jerramungup was monitored by trapping three times during the reporting period, from14th - 18th January 2013, 2nd - 6th September 2013 and 3rd - 7th February 2014. In January, 9 dibblers were caught (5 new), in September, 8 dibblers (5 new) and in February 2014, 7 dibblers (4 new). The September total was lower than expected at that time of year, but this trip was earlier than previous September trips and it is likely that juveniles were just beginning to leave the nest. These results indicate that the Peniup population is also doing well and may now be self-sustaining, given that there have been no releases since October 2010. It still remains to be seen whether the population can survive dry years.
Action 2: **Habitat Management**	Fox control was carried out during this period in all known mainland dibbler population sites (FRNP, Peniup and around and within the Waychinicup enclosure) by aerial and ground baiting four times a year under the Western Shield program. Supplementary monthly ground baiting is carried out at Peniup and within the Waychinicup enclosure. Funding was granted to DPaW under the State NRM Strategic Priority Projects scheme for a project that aims to eradicate house mice from Boullanger and Whitlock Islands off Jurien Bay. These islands support original dibbler populations. The funding runs from October 2012 to December 2015 and trials have been carried out to determine bait uptake by mice and non-target species and longevity of baits in the field. Logistics planning is well advanced for the eradication baiting in 2015. The current proposal is to remove dibblers and larger skinks (*Egernia kingii, Liopholis pulchra longicauda* and *L. multiscutata bos*) into captivity while baiting and bait degradation occur.
Action 3: **Survey**	The survey of the FRNP to provide data for predictive modelling of dibbler habitat use continues, with new dibbler locations along the Marshes Track in the Wilderness Area recorded by South Coast region staff during a survey in March 2013.
Action 4: **Captive breeding**	The strategy of enlarging the breeding group to ensure that 50-60 young are available for release was maintained in 2013. Fourteen males and 16 females were available for the breeding season. The strategy involves the contingency to release females with small pouch young if more young were born than the Zoo had resources to hold. Sixty-nine young were produced and retained to weaning this season. Consequently, six females, two with a total of 16 pouch young, and six adult males were provided to DEC for release into the Waychinicup enclosure in April and June 2013. Forty-six dibblers (28 males and 18 females) were provided for release into the Waychinicup enclosure in October and November 2013.
Action 5 **Translocation**	The translocation to the 380 ha Waychinicup enclosure continued in 2013, with releases of six adults on 12th April (four females that had been observed to mate, and two males) and six on 13th June (four males and two females, both of which were carrying 8 pouch young). The major release of 43 dibblers (one wild-born adult, three captive-born adults and 39 captive-born young) occurred on 8th October 2013, followed by three captive-born males, held back due to a health issue, on 28th November. Trapping was carried out on the dibbler monitoring grid (an Elliott trap and a Sheffield cage trap at each of 60 trap sites) on 14th - 18th April, 22nd – 26th July and 16th – 20th December 2013. No dibblers were captured on this grid on these occasions. In other trapping using only Sheffield traps, however, two female dibblers released in October 2012 were caught at different sites within the enclosure. On 4th July, female 271 was captured on the F250 trapline, where she had previously been caught in December 2012. She was carrying one pouch young, signifying breeding within the enclosure. Female 772 had also bred when

	captured on the F232 trapline on 10th, 11th and 12th July 2013, displaying 8 lactating nipples. These results indicate that the establishment of dibblers at Waychinicup NP is slow, but breeding has now been recorded. Monitoring will continue and the Recovery Team will assess the results in order to decide on the 2014 release program.
Action 6: Genetics	DNA samples are collected from each dibbler handled. A UWA Animal Biology Ph.D. student, Rujiporn Thavornkanlapachai, is well into her study of the genetic implications of dibbler translocations and has been given access to tissue collected through the recovery program.
Action 7: **Community involvement**	Community involvement in the dibbler recovery program continued in 2013. Four community members are on 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 2013, 21 people accompanied dibbler project staff on field trips to Jurien Bay, Peniup, the Waychinicup enclosure and FRNP, carrying out a total of 714 hours providing vital assistance in the field.
Action 8 Research	An eight-year population study has continued at a dibbler site in the eastern FRNP with all-weather access. This site provides comparative data against which population parameters in reintroduced populations may be assessed. The survey of the FRNP to provide data for predictive modelling of dibbler habitat use continues, with new dibbler locations along the Marshes Track in the Wilderness Area recorded by South Coast region staff during a survey in March 2013. The recovery team continues to support student projects. In addition to the genetics project above, a study by UWA Ph.D. student Luke Kealley on the physiological and behavioural characteristics of individual captive-born dibblers related to their success on release commenced in 2012.