

Fences and their foibles: Matuwa, a case study.

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The arid and rangeland areas of Australia have suffered a high rate of loss and decline of mammal fauna in the past 200 years. Fauna reconstruction is one of the ecologically integrated components of the Rangelands Restoration Project, which aims to restore natural ecosystem function and biodiversity at a landscape scale. The project is being undertaken on the Matuwa Kurarra Kurarra Indigenous Protected Area (formerly Lorna Glen and Earahedy pastoral leases), on Martu traditional lands, in the northern Goldfields region of Western Australia. Direct wild translocations of several threatened mammal species to Matuwa in 2007-2009 had mixed success, with some heavily impacted by introduced predators such as feral cats and wild dogs. Following this outcome, a 1,100 ha feral predator proof fenced enclosure was constructed in 2010. Its aim was to create a protected area in which species' could acclimatise to the environment before being wild released, and where secure populations of more predator sensitive species' could persist for extended time periods, until improved environmental conditions and translocation techniques might allow successful wild release. In this presentation, we describe the outcome of translocations into the enclosure, outlining the benefits and challenges experienced at Matuwa, and discuss the pros and cons of fenced 'mainland islands' generally, their unique management requirements, and their place as one tool in a larger fauna reconstruction context in Australia.



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ABSTRACT BOOK