

Chuditch (*Dasyurus geoffroii*)

Program Management Category: 1

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The Recovery Plan for the Chuditch was revised by the Recovery Team including members of CALM, Alcoa, WWF, Environment Australia (EA) and Perth Zoo. The revised Marsupial and Monotreme Action Plan (Maxwell et. al. 1996) listed the Chuditch status as Vulnerable.

The Recovery Program was funded for 1996 by Environment Australia's Endangered Species Program, CALM, Perth Zoo and the Department of Defence.

Primary goals

The revised Recovery plan identifies a strategy of habitat maintenance, survey and vermin control to maintain population viability for Chuditch in established reserves. A strategy for captive breeding and the release of animals will remain a large component over the 1997 period.

Perth Zoo and CALM will continue to manage the captive breeding program in order to establish a viable population within the Lake Magenta region.

Field surveys/research

Surveys will continue to document the effect of timber logging, rehabilitation after surface mining and the prescribed burning of habitat on local Chuditch populations.

Surveys of the Lake Magenta population released during 1996 have begun and are to be continued.

Surveys following surface mining were conducted by Alcoa, studying Chuditch recapture rates in both natural and reforested habitat. Sightings were confirmed and with continued fox baiting numbers are expected to increase. An additional survey of an unmined site was conducted but no Chuditch were captured.

Eradication of foxes will continue under the management of CALM and will now extend into the semi-arid, Lake Magenta region. Surveys conducted in fox bait regions have indicated that Chuditch numbers are being maintained and recapture percentages have exceeded 60% in some regions. Additional results have indicated a smaller home range of both males and females within these regions in comparison to Jarrah areas not exposed to the Fox-Glove program. Results of these surveys will be concluded when further information is acquired.

Results of sampling over the past twelve months have given an indication that none of these disturbances have effected population numbers or condition. Blood samples continue to be collected from individuals within the captive colony and individuals caught during field surveys to determine normal values, as well as for DNA analysis.

Field health surveys were conducted by CALM and Perth Zoo.

Release program status

The release of eighteen males and thirteen females into the Lake Magenta region occurred during October 1996. Reintroduction of captive born animals to Lake Magenta will continue in 1997.

The Recovery Team has indicated additional captive born animals will be required for the translocation program to Lake Magenta. Additional enclosures were commissioned by Perth Zoo to hold new young. A restructure within Perth Zoo created a Native Species Breeding Program to effectively manage marsupial captive breeding programs within Perth Zoo. All future captive breeding at the zoo will be conducted under the management of this unit.

Current population status

The captive colony is comprised of 27 males and 34 females. All founders of the captive population were captured in forested regions of the south-west Western Australia.

Forty-eight young were produced from ten of 18 breeding females. Five young were lost at an early age. All surviving young have been fitted with transponder microchips for identification.

Two males and two females died during the year, one male and one female being euthanased. One male was transferred to Big Swamp Wildlife Park for display purposes.

It is planned that breeding Chuditch from the mesic region for release in Lake Magenta Nature Reserve will continue. Review of the pedigree data is to be undertaken during 1997 in order to establish 20 breeding pairs prior to the 1997 breeding season.

The captive colony suffered no significant health problems, apart from injuries resulting from within-pair aggression (a high incidence of this was noted during the past year, resulting in the death of two animals). Husbandry techniques have been modified to allow closer supervision of new pairings.

A detailed Captive Management Plan is to be completed in 1997, resulting in revised management recommendations establishing 20 pairings prior to commencement of the 1997 breeding season.

Progress towards goals

- Forty-eight young were successfully bred in 1996, of these 43 captive-born young survived to weaning.
- Twenty-four captive-born animals were translocated.
- CALM and Perth Zoo continued to monitor the health status of the wild populations.
- CALM continued to monitor the status of wild populations and the effect of translocation within these populations.
- An Endangered Species Unit was developed within Perth Zoo for effective management of the captive breeding colony.

Short-term goals

- Continue to produce young in 1997.
- Maintain constructive membership of the Chuditch Recovery Team.
- Complete a detailed Captive Management Plan.
- Establish 20 pairings for the 1997 breeding season.
- Review husbandry and breeding protocols.
- Continue translocation of captive stock from Perth Zoo to Lake Magenta.

References

Maxwell, S., Burbidge, A.A. and Morris, K., IUCN/SSC Action Plan for Australian Marsupials and Monotremes, 1996.


Morris K., CALM; Chuditch Recovery Team, Annual Report 1996

Perth Zoo; Endangered Species Meeting Minutes; 1996

Pavlinovich S., Perth Zoo; Draft Chuditch Studbook; 1996

| Captive program | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 |
|--|------|------|------|
| No. participating institutions | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| No of births in CMP | 12 | 39 | 48 |
| No. of births surviving to end of year | 12 | 32 | 41 |
| No. of deaths in CMP | 4 | 9 | 12 |
| No. of captive born animals released to wild | 18 | 2 | 53 |
| Total no. in captive population | 28 | 55 | 61 |



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