

Translocation to safe havens averts extinction of the world's rarest marsupial, Gilbert's potoroo.

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After the rediscovery in 1994 of Gilbert's potoroo in long-unburnt vegetation at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, it was quickly recognised that catastrophic bushfire in the reserve posed the greatest threat to the species' existence. Establishment of insurance populations was quickly prioritised to avoid the potoroo's extinction in the event of such a fire. *Ex situ* methods were trialled to generate translocation stock, with limited success. With close monitoring of the 30-40-strong Two Peoples Bay population, transfer of a few young animals each year to the preferred translocation site, Bald Island, was proposed. Ten individuals were transferred in 2005-2007, showing reliable breeding and high survival. Four years later the new population had grown to over 70 animals.

A grant from the WA State Government funded construction of an 8.2 km predator fence enclosing 380 hectares of suitable habitat in Waychinicup National Park for a second insurance population. Predator removal and release of the first 10 potoroos from both existing colonies had been achieved by March 2010. This population grew more slowly in the presence of native predators, particularly carpet pythons, reaching stable numbers of 25-30 animals.

A catastrophic bushfire occurred in November 2015, following an intense lightning storm along the south coast. Ninety percent of the potoroo's habitat at Two Peoples Bay was consumed and although several individuals survived, there was insufficient unburnt habitat to sustain a population. Without the insurance populations, the species would have become extinct.

Ingredients for success were sustained support from both the Western Australian and Australian Governments, strong community support from the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group and many other willing volunteers and the oversight of principal stakeholders through the Gilbert's Potoroo Recovery Team.