



The bilby is rarely seen due to its nocturnal and solitary habits, photo WA Dept of Biodiversity, Conservation & Attractions.



Northern Australia
Environmental
Resources
Hub

National Environmental Science Programme

Monitoring, mapping & safeguarding Kimberley bilbies

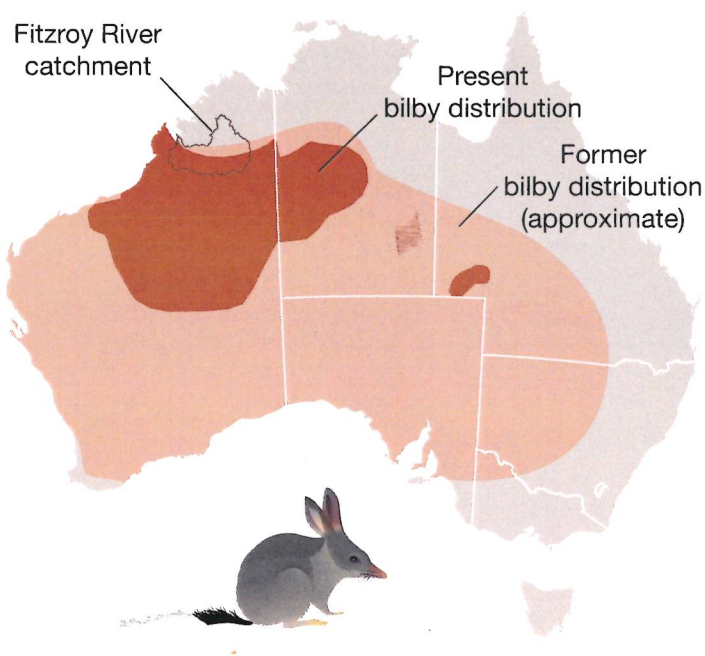
Start-up factsheet

Kimberley bilbies are vulnerable

The Greater Bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*) is an iconic Australian marsupial that is known for its conservation significance and high cultural importance to Traditional Owners. Nationally listed as Vulnerable, the bilby is suffering an ongoing decline in range and abundance due to pressures such as habitat loss and degradation, altered fire regimes, and introduced animals like cats, foxes, camels and

unmanaged livestock. While the bilby populations in Queensland and the Northern Territory are relatively well-studied, there is not as much known about bilbies in Western Australia.

The West Kimberley region, especially the Dampier Peninsula, La Grange region and southern parts of the Fitzroy River catchment, appears to be a stronghold for wild



The Greater Bilby formerly occurred over much of arid Australia, source IUCN.

Overview

This project will:

- deliver information on the distribution, abundance and habitat suitability for bilbies in the study area, including data on the connectedness of bilby colonies
- improve understanding of how current pressures impact bilbies in the catchment and how they can be reduced or prevented to stop the species' ongoing decline
- work with Traditional Owners, rangers and pastoralists to monitor bilbies, refine survey methods, undertake threat management and help build local capacity in these areas
- support land use planning, healthy country planning and co-existence of grazing and wild bilby populations.

bilby populations. Consequently, more data is needed from this region to inform land use planning and development decisions, as well as assist ongoing management.

Knowing more about bilbies in the Fitzroy River catchment can help protect them

In the Fitzroy River catchment, bilbies occur across a range of tenures such as pastoral leases, Native Title lands and conservation estates, and a collaborative approach is required to effectively conserve and manage the species. This project will bring together on-Country Traditional Owner land managers and researchers to build management capacity and help secure the future for bilbies in the Fitzroy River catchment. Project teams will collaborate with pastoralists to undertake studies of bilby populations and provide outcomes for effective coexistence of pastoral land use and the persistence of wild bilbies. This project will provide an accurate understanding of where bilbies occur and how they use their habitat in the Fitzroy River catchment. This information will be used to identify and implement on-ground actions that will help ease the impacts of threats to bilbies.

As well as gaining an understanding of the status of bilbies in the catchment, this project will contribute to species recovery planning and threat abatement programs. Broader natural resource management and conservation planning will also be supported through the research. The project will extend existing bilby research and management efforts and contribute to the Kimberley Bilby Network. It will also link with work outside the catchment, such as the Dampier Peninsula Bilby Offset Project and bilby projects in the Pilbara.

Project activities

- Assess the distribution and trends in occurrence and abundance of bilbies in the Fitzroy River catchment
- Investigate how bilbies use their habitat in the Fitzroy River catchment and relate this to habitat attributes and threats
- Reduce the impact of introduced predators on bilbies with an appropriate predator control program
- Assess the impacts of managing introduced predators, fire, grazing and other pressures on the bilby.

Anticipated outputs

- Management recommendations (e.g. for fire, grazing and pest control) based on an understanding of bilby distribution, abundance and habitat suitability to help ensure the co-existence of wild bilby populations and pastoralism
- Information on introduced predators and the response of bilby colonies to predator abatement actions
- Better data on bilbies for Traditional Owner databases and for portals such as NatureMap and the Atlas of Living Australia
- Factsheets, posters and presentations
- Peer-reviewed publications and technical reports.



Bilbies are now found predominantly in the driest and least fertile parts of their former range, photo Julie Burgher.

Who is involved?

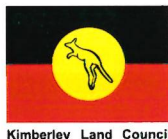
This project will be managed by Dr Stephen van Leeuwen at the Western Australia Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). Dr van Leeuwen will be assisted by bilby scientist Dr Martin Dziminski and other researchers at DBCA, Traditional Owner ranger teams and the Kimberley Land Council.

Contact: stephen.vanleeuwen@dbca.wa.gov.au, 08 9219 9042.

For further information and project updates, visit the project webpage at www.nespnorthern.edu.au/projects/nesp/bilbies



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



Kimberley Land Council



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nespnorthern.edu.au

nesp.northern@cdu.edu.au



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