



No.14 Trapping and export of native animals

Why aren't native pest species, particularly birds, captured and exported on a commercial basis rather than killed, as a control measure?

For many years there has been a ban on the export of live Australian native fauna from all but a handful of sources. There are several reasons for the ban – most importantly, Australia is a signatory to an international treaty that enables the control of animal trading.

Even if the Commonwealth Government altered its policy on live exports, it is unlikely it would permit the live export of wild-caught animals, particularly adult birds.

CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) provides for international cooperation in controlling the trade of endangered species. It also assists in reducing the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. Australia, together with more than 140 other countries, is a signatory to CITES. In Australia, CITES is administered by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, in Canberra.

The ban on live animal export

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) controls the export of Australian native animals and plants. It also fulfils Australia's legislative requirements as a signatory to CITES.

Under the provisions of the EPBC Act, the export of live native animals is prohibited except:

- Where captive-bred animals are being transferred between approved zoos.
- For the purposes of prescribed scientific research carried out by scientific institutions approved under the Act.
- When a pet bird of a limited range of species is being exported by a person taking up permanent residence in another country.

For some native animal products (e.g. kangaroo, emu and crocodile products) commercial export is enabled where animals are taken under an approved management program or where the animals are captive-bred in an approved facility.

Arguments for and against the export of live wild-caught pest animals are summarised in the table below.

Further reading

- Fauna note no. 15 Options for corella, galah and cockatoo control. DEC, Western Australia.
- Fauna note no. 18. Options for parrot control. DEC, Western Australia.
- [Sustainable Economic Use of Native Australian Birds and Reptiles](#), Handbook For Farmers and Investors, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra.

References

Garnett, S. (1999) Caught on the wing. Wingspan – September 1999.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee (1998) Report on the commercial utilisation of Australian native wildlife. Parliament of Australia, Canberra.

Advice or information on the export of fauna

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Further Information

Contact your local office of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

See the department's website for the latest information:
www.dec.wa.gov.au.

Arguments for and against export of native pest species as a component of pest management

FOR	AGAINST
1. It will reduce pest populations.	a) Wild-caught adult birds do not humanise, are not suitable as pets and would almost certainly not be preferred for export. Juvenile birds may make suitable pets but as many of them die in the wild anyway, catching and exporting them will have little effect on wild pest populations.
2. It will eliminate smuggling.	a) Statistics indicate 'pest' species are rarely involved in smuggling. b) Fraudulent substitution of some species for other species is likely and would require strict regulation. c) Demand for non-pest species will remain high.
3. Export will stimulate tourism by creating international interest.	a) Export for exhibition in zoos is already allowed. b) There is no evidence that commercial export will increase tourism.
4. Export will offset the cost of damage sustained by landholders.	a) A substantial monetary outlay is needed to establish an effective system of regulation (inspection, policing, administration) for exports. b) Any profits from export will be depleted by these costs. c) The prices quoted for native animals overseas are based on inflated market values currently demanded because of the limited supply. Increased supply would result in decreased prices, thereby affecting the viability of any legitimate commercial operation.
5. Export will replace poisoning and shooting as control methods.	a) There is no evidence that pest species will be reduced or that export will resolve pest problems.
6. Export creates employment and provides revenue for research and supervision of export programs.	a) Fauna export is unlikely to result in an overall profit margin. b) The only people profiting would be a handful of dealers. c) Rather than create additional employment in the areas of research and supervision of an export program, trade in native fauna would more likely draw resources away from other areas where they are already fulfilling an important role. For example, management and conservation of endangered species.
7. Export is acceptable to some countries.	a) Some countries will not accept pest species. The export of species that have proven to be pests in their natural environment could result in them becoming a pest in foreign environments. The number of exotic species that have become pests in Australia is proof of this. b) There are high mortality rates for wild-caught exported native fauna. Statistics indicate that 17 per cent of wild-caught birds imported into the USA died. c) Export of native animals is contrary to the spirit of CITES and could have international consequences for Australia. It may also weaken Australia's position in pursuing world environmental conservation objectives.

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Further Information

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