Research to improve the management of feral cats and red foxes

Project information

Feral cats and European red foxes may cause the extinction of more than 120 threatened species within Australia. Reducing the threat that feral cats and red foxes pose to priority species and in priority places are central targets of The Threatened Species Action Plan 2022–2032. Research currently underway at the NESP Resilient Landscapes Hub will provide new data, tools and management actions that will contribute to achieving the Plan's targets.

Project 2.2 Best-practice management of feral cats and red foxes

Experts in the management of feral cats and red foxes have assessed the effectiveness of techniques such as aerial baiting, ground baiting, leghold trapping, cage trapping and shooting for each species, across a range of ecoregions. Hub researchers will use this information to develop online decision tools for feral cat and red fox management.

## Project 2.7 Research to support the management of priority desert threatened species

Feral cats are a significant threat to desert species including the bilby (Vulnerable), tjakura (great desert skink; Vulnerable) and night parrot (Endangered). Hub researchers are working with Indigenous land managers and ranger groups to quantify the impact that feral cats and other introduced predators have on these species. They will then develop management actions to reduce these threats.

Project 3.11 Informing the management of cats and foxes in priority areas

Kangaroo Island and the Fitz-Stirlings are priority places under the Threatened Species Action Plan 2022–2032.

In the Fitz-Stirlings, Hub researchers will work with local research users to collect new data on feral cats and red foxes. This will be incorporated into practical recommendations for best-practice management (including monitoring) of feral cats and red foxes.

On Kangaroo Island, an existing 'safe haven' is threatened by feral cats moving through a 'leaky' fence. Sound-producing devices that deter cats are being trialled, as well as using GPS telemetry to understand how cats move through the landscape.
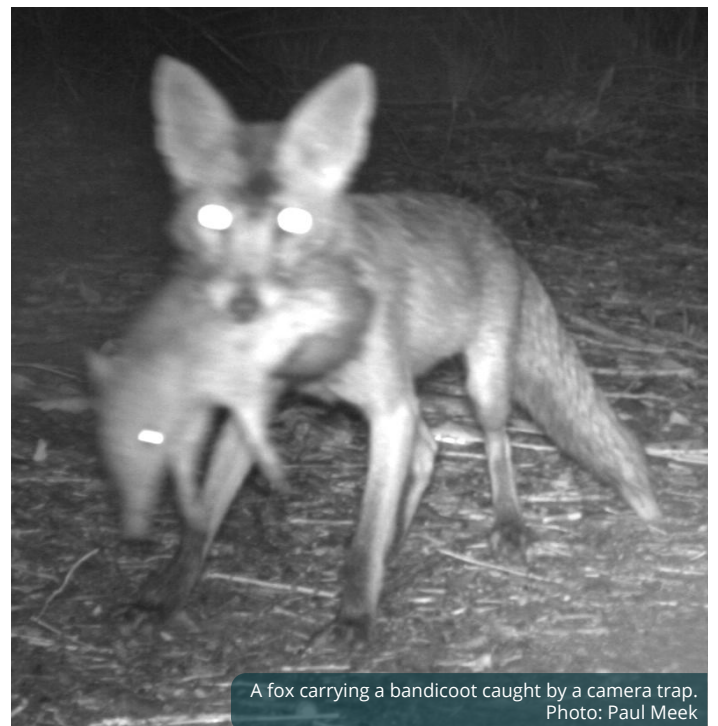
A fox carrying a bandicoot caught by a camera trap.
Photo: Paul Meek

Project 3.12 Best-practice fox control in Booderee National Park

The reintroduction of the eastern quoll into Booderee National Park has been repeatedly hampered by fox predation, despite a long-term program of fox control within the park. Hub researchers are working with national park managers and the Wreck Bay Caring for Country Rangers to study the behaviour of foxes using satellite-enabled telemetry and camera-trap monitoring. Camera-trapping will also be used to alert managers to new incursions of foxes into the park.

Project 5.7 Understanding the ongoing decline of a threatened arid mesopredator – the kowari

The causes of decline in kowari populations are not well understood. This project will assess the threats to the kowari, including the influence of predators such as feral cats and red foxes on kowari dispersal and survival. The research will provide land managers and conservation practitioners with scientific evidence to support or adapt their management practices to promote the recovery of kowari populations.

Feral cat with brush-tailed phascogale.
Photo: Northern Territory Government

Kowari (*Dasyuroides byrnei*). Photo: Nathan Beerkens

Further information

Project 2.2 Best-practice management of feral cats and red foxes

Project 2.7 Research to support the management of priority desert threatened species

Project 3.11 Informing the management of cats and foxes in priority areas

Project 3.12 Best-practice fox control in Booderee National Park

Project 5.7 Understanding the ongoing decline of a threatened arid mesopredator – the kowari

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