



South West  
NRM

# Case Study

2018 – 2023

Creating safe havens for the western ringtail possum and priority nationally-listed threatened species in the south west



The South West is home to 167 EPBC Act-listed threatened species, of which 25 are critically endangered, 82 are endangered, 59 are vulnerable and three are conservation dependent.

This program aimed to improve the trajectory of the western ringtail possum/ngwayir, numbat, chuditch, woylie and malleefowl by enhancing habitat and reducing threats.

### Funding program

This project was delivered by South West NRM, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

### Funding

National Landcare Program – \$5,500,000

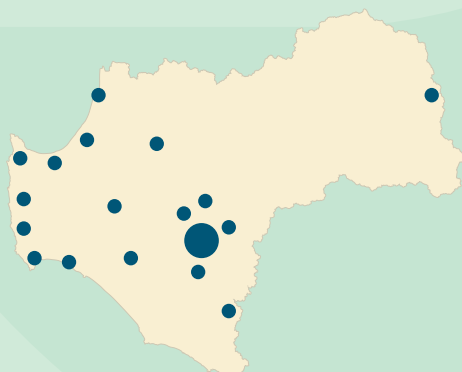
### Stakeholders

State and local governments, Traditional Owners, landcare and wildcare groups, community, landholders, universities.

### Program manager

Dr Brian Chambers

### Regional coverage



Australian Government

National Landcare Program



# Key achievements

## On-ground habitat improvement

- 143 ha of native revegetation undertaken to increase habitat for threatened species.
- 240 ha of weed control and 26 km of fencing to protect 229 ha of habitat for threatened species.
- 64 Land for Wildlife property assessments undertaken to provide guidance to landowners on the biodiversity values present and how they can be managed. These assessments covered 4,473ha of privately managed remnant vegetation.
- Two rope bridges were constructed in Busselton and Dunsborough for western ringtail possums, that are successfully being used by 3 to 10 possums per night.

## Western ringtail possum rehabilitation

- 126 rehabilitated western ringtail possums were tracked across seven releases to determine survival rates and test management interventions. Survival rates increased from 5% in the first release to 67% in the final release. Factors found to improve survival rates were sustained fox control and predator awareness training.

## Feral predator control

- 58,000 ha of feral animal control delivered to protect threatened species from predation by foxes and feral cats.
- Four trials of Felixer™ grooming traps were completed across 56,000 ha of the Upper Warren. These trials recorded 7,000 sightings of feral cats and 41,000 sightings of native fauna from almost two million images. Cat activity was reduced by up to 49% after Felixers™ were deployed for three months.



# Key achievements

## Improving our understanding of threatened species

- 224 fauna surveys covering 76,000 ha were undertaken to improve our understanding of threatened species populations, habitat use and activity patterns across the region.
- 5,303 ha of potential malleefowl habitat surveyed and recently active mounds found at Merilup Nature Reserve. Survey data will be used to manage threats to remaining malleefowl populations.
- A detailed camera trapping survey of the entire Wellington National Park was completed to record the distribution of four threatened and three priority mammal species. Almost 5,000 images of feral animals were captured, allowing for targeted control measures to be implemented.

## Engaging the community in threatened species conservation

- 165 community engagement events were delivered, reaching 7,000 community members.
- Average participant feedback demonstrated a significant increase in knowledge and skills, with participants reporting 'high or very high' levels of knowledge increasing from 31% before events to 90% following events. Similarly, before attending events, 32% of participants stated they had 'very high' willingness to act towards threatened species conservation which increased to 68% after the event.
- Community members helped to plant 15,005 trees over 9.5ha and build 39 artificial dreys for western ringtail possums.
- 1,600 responses received to responsible pet ownership surveys in the greater Bunbury area.
- 29 community members supported to install catios via rebate program to reduce predation of threatened species in the greater Bunbury area. This has the potential to save 50,000 native animals over 10 years.
- Proportion of cat owners in the Bunbury area keeping their pets contained increased from 56% in 2020 to 74% in 2023.
- Increase in proportion of dog owners containing their pets at night from 32 to 43%.





## Potential future activities

Further funding will allow South West NRM to build on this project to:

- Test the long-term use of Felixer™ grooming traps to control feral cats and increase numbers of threatened native species.
- Continue to advocate for and support responsible pet ownership behaviour to reduce the impact of pets on threatened species in urban areas.
- Trial innovative methods to improve the effectiveness of fox baiting programs.
- Create additional, much needed habitat for threatened species across the region.