



Australian Wildlife
Experience



Conservation Activities of Queensland Bilbies

Dreamworld
Save the Bilby Fund Inc (SBF)
Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM)

The Australian Wildlife Experience at Dreamworld has developed a Conservation Strategic Plan to guide the co-ordination management and communication of our support for conservation and research initiatives. This has assisted Dreamworld as an organisation to effectively consider bona-fide external projects of which the Queensland Bilby Project satisfies the values and criteria of Dreamworld's conservation strategy.

This is an update on current Bilby conservation breeding, recovery and educational activities occurring in Queensland, with particular reference to Dreamworld's involvement in collaborative work with SBF and DERM.

Anticipated and actual strategies over the past four years have been realised as part of the Queensland components of the National Recovery Plan (2006). This update will report on the current status of the recovery program under the following six strategy headings within the Queensland Recovery Plan (2006). Some actions have been realised whilst others continue to be a work in progress and / or under further investigation.

1. Monitoring of bilby population

Under the detailed guidance of DERM QLD, in particular the Threatened Species Unit and Field Scientist Peter McRae; the population of wild bilbies in Queensland continues to be monitored in two locations, Astrebla National Park and Currawinya National Park (established captive bred population within predator control fence area). The last remaining naturally occurring Queensland Bilbies are only at Astrebla. Estimates of the wild bilby population from field monitoring programs conducted by Peter McRae concludes that the animals could be as high as 1,500 during boom times and as low as 600-700 during bust. Peter McRae also suggests that the "Boom" and "Bust" regime that these unique critters habitat is becoming tighter. That is, the "boom" times of the population appears to be shrinking and "bust" times are getting lower. This ongoing population monitoring is critical to the success of the overall project. Field monitoring also occurs at Currawinya National Park within the predator control fence area – estimated population numbers by Peter McRae suggest approximately 50+ animals.

2. Management of threats to existing "wild" bilby populations in Queensland

Predatory feral animal control of cats and foxes has been critical to the success of the wild population of bilbies. The eminent threatening process to the wild population at Astrebla is ever present and continues to be resource intensive.

The construction of a 29 km² (2,900 Ha) predator proof fence area has protected a second re-introduced population of bilbies from the feral cat and fox. This fence was developed by SBF's Frank Manthey and Peter McRae with additional funding from DERM and Federal Government to mitigate the risk of loss of a species whilst only one wild population was in existence. This fenced area also requires regular maintenance and management to ensure it operates effectively against the feral cat and fox population that exist outside the fenced area. The resources for management and maintenance come from DERM QLD and SBF.

3. Translocation of bilbies to suitable habitats

19 bilbies have been captive bred and translocated into Currawinya National Park's predator control fence area. Recent wild population monitoring in North Western Australia is revealing that numbers have crashed considerably; hence this program in Queensland is even more critical.

DERM and SBF are undergoing investigations into future suitable release sites that will contain a third wild population of bilbies which will not contain a predator control fence area.

4. Captive breeding to support translocation, research and education

Collaboration between DERM, SBF and Dreamworld has produced a managed captive population of bilbies for education, translocation and research. Other institutions also support SBF and the program, i.e. Ipswich Nature Centre, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary and Featherdale Wildlife Park.

5. Programs to raise community awareness and education

The Queensland Bilby population is the most threatened and genetically distinct population in Australia. It has declined in range during the last ten years and is continuing to do so. Frank Manthey (SBF) and Peter McRae (DERM) continue to work with conservation partners like Australian Wildlife Experience, Dreamworld to raise community awareness in programs like; National Bilby Day (second Sunday in September), National Schools Crossword Competition, in-house and external education programs and Threatened Species Day activities.

6. Co-ordination of the Recovery Program

Co-ordination of the Recovery Program is conducted through the Threatened Species Unit of DERM. With future investigations into further release sites, improvement opportunities could be possible by the involvement of additional stakeholders to be part of the decision making table.