



Understanding Idnya behaviours

***Across The Outback* has been reporting on the trial release of 41 Western Quolls (Idnya) since they were released in the Flinders Ranges National Park in April. This project has brought together a range of volunteers and partners but also university students who have been conducting important research into Idnya behaviours.**

PhD student Melissa Jensen (University of Adelaide) has been involved with the project from the start, with her work on the ground important in investigating potential shelter sites (eg tree hollows, burrows and rock crevices) before the Idnya were released into Wilpena Pound and along the Wilcollo Track.

After the release, she monitored the sorts of shelters that were being used by the reintroduced Idnya.

Melissa is also interested in understanding whether the way Idnya are released back into the environment will affect the success of reintroduction.

Back in April, 10 Idnya were "soft" released into 10 by 10 metre pens where they were kept for 10 days before being released in the wild; the remaining 31 Idnya were "hard" released directly into the wild.

Melissa has been tracking the response of these Idnya and whether the soft-release pens has helped them acclimatise to their environment and thereby improve their chances of survival.

She has also been investigating the Idnya's individual temperament types and stress levels by observing their behaviour before and after release into the wild, and by analysing the stress hormones

in their scats – would Idnya that showed more cautious characteristics survive better in the wild than ones that are bold or aggressive? And would there be differences in their reproductive success or movement? And is there a pattern evident with stress levels?

Meanwhile, before the Idnya were released, in order to support their successful reintroduction, it was first necessary to know what potential predators and competitors of the Idnya occurred in the Flinders Ranges National Park and at what densities.

Honours student Alyson Stobo-Wilson (University of Tasmania) spent the year looking at the influence of fox-baiting on both fox and feral cat activity as well as prey species, such as rabbits, goannas and Idnya.

With cats removed from the Idnya reintroduction area prior to their release, Alyson has also been interested in whether this has resulted in a reduction in cat activity.

FAME and DEWNR thank Melissa and Alyson for their time on this important project and for their contribution to improving our knowledge of the habits and behaviours of the Idnya.



Melissa Jensen with newly radio-collared juvenile quoll



Juvenile quoll

TRAPPING THE IDNYA

The project team spent a fortnight in early December conducting intensive trapping of Idnya to evaluate the ecological success of the trial – with most of the collars off the Idnya, the team are particularly keen to trap as many adult and juvenile quolls as possible to see that they are surviving in the wild. We'll present the results of the trapping in the next edition of *Across The Outback*.

Thanks to the many volunteers, contractors, donors, land managers and partners of *Bounceback* and **FAME** for their support for this project.

FAME is leading the drive to raise approximately \$1.7 million over a five year period to support the recovery of the Idnya. They need your help to continue this vitally important project and make it the success it deserves to be. Donations to the Western Quoll project can be made by visiting fame.org.au/projects/western-quoll or contact fame@fame.org.au for more information.

