

IDNYA and VIRLDA e-NEWS

Welcome to the ninth edition of e-News, a regular update on the trial reintroduction of the western quoll and brushtail possum to the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park. Idnya is the Adnyamathanha name for the western quoll whilst Virda is the name for brushtail possum.



BACKGROUND

During May 2016, we released another 15 idnya from Western Australia into the Ikara-Flinders National Park. This is the last of three releases that occurred between 2014 and 2016 totalling 93 individuals. In June 2016, we also released another 50 brushtail possums from Yookamurra Sanctuary and 19 from the Southern Flinders near Melrose and Wilmington.

UPDATE- IDNYA

FAME donors, Adnyamathanha reps and DEWNR staff attended the release in early May and the release featured in the Advertiser newspaper. Idnya were flown over from WA via Qantas freight, met at the Adelaide airport and then flown up to Wilpena in the DEWNR plane. All idnya were released that night on the outskirts of the known population (Sacred Canyon and Bunyeroo-Brachina Road). A special thanks to WA Dept of Parks and Wildlife staff who coordinated the trapping of the idnya in Western Australia, especially Brent Johnson, Kelly Rayner and Fitzgerald River NP staff. Project Coordinator Katherine Moseby was lucky enough to go over to WA to assist with the trapping. Idnya were named after national parks and nature reserves in WA including Giralia, Indarra, Cervantes, Xantippe, Dryandra and Fitzgerald.

Of the 15 idnya released in May 2016, one male was killed (possibly by a bird of prey). The remaining animals are doing well with breeding recorded in most females. Idnya are sheltering in rock piles, hollow logs and rabbit warrens. One female was attacked by a cat and is at the Adelaide Zoo recovering. Some of the radiocollared idnya are refusing to go into cage traps to be monitored. Dryandra, a female living down rabbit warrens on the Telegraph Track, has had traps set for over 14 nights using a variety of bait and still refuses

to be captured. Burrow traps set into the entrances of the rabbit warren also failed to trap her; she simply dug a new burrow out under the cage trap.

We trapped idnya in June to monitor their population growth and survival. Project Coordinator Katherine Moseby led the trapping with assistance from DEWNR Bounceback Ranger Darren McKenzie, subconsultant Pat Hodgens, PhD student Hannah Bannister and volunteers, Bec West, Cat Lynch, Dave Armstrong, Peter Bird and Samantha Dorries. Encouragingly our trap success rate is increasing and is now over 6%. This compares favourably with Idnya populations in WA. We also caught 18 new animals and captured females with pouch young. Population estimates and radiotracking data suggest that our population now numbers around 160 individuals but cat predation continues to threaten the reintroduction.



Zoos SA volunteer Lib Olds and DEWNR pilot Matt Graham with the idnya just arrived from Western Australia on the Qantas flight.

Table 1: All of the idnya released or captured in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park to date

	Males	Females	TOTAL	Source
April 1 st and 29 th 2014	20	21	41	Moopinup (11), Julimar (17), Perup (8), Collie (1), ASDP (4)
May 6 th 2015	17	20	37	Manjimup (12), Julimar (19), Fitzgerald River (6)
May 6 th 2016	8	7	15	Dryandra (10), Fitzgerald River (3), Lake Magenta (2)
New individuals	47	45	92	Flinders Ranges



The “Motley Crew” June trapping team after 5 nights of trapping. Darren McKenzie missing from photograph

Table 2: Trap success of idnya in each of the four trapping sessions since release

	June 2016	Dec 2015	March 2015	December 2014
Trap nights	172*4=688	172*5=860	162*4=648	152*4=608
No. captures	63	69	36	19
Trap success	9.1%	8%	5.5%	3.1%
No. individuals	43	46	29	16
Individual trap success	6.25%	5.3%	4.5%	2.6%
2014 release animals	3	5	15	8
2015 release animals	3	3	-	-
2016 release animals	7			
New animals	18	34	8	8



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An idnya asleep in the back of the cage trap



DEWNR Bounceback Ranger, Darren McKenzie receiving training in capture and processing of idnya



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Virda

Two possum releases occurred in 2016, 19 possums from the South Flinders from the 14th-16th May and 50 possums from Yookamurra Sanctuary from the 16th-28th May. Ian Smith from Zoos SA attended the South Flinders release and conducted vet checks and Helen Crisp from AWC assisted with the Yookamurra release. A big thanks to the landholders near Melrose and Wilmington who kindly gave us permission to trap possums on their properties. Possums were captured using a team of dedicated possum netters who spotlighted at night and flagged possums down from the tops of trees. Other possums were captured in cage traps but netting was the most successful method used.

We radiocollared 20 possums and have recorded no deaths since release. The first pouch young are now emerging from this release. PhD student Hannah Bannister is studying the behaviour and survival of the juvenile possums and has found up to 50% juvenile mortality rate. Causes of mortality include cat and possibly quoll predation as well as possible heat stress and/or bird of prey. More effort will be focussed on understanding if there are actions that can be taken to increase juvenile survival.

The release was attended by Adnyamathanha rangers from Nantawarrina and their families who are keen to release possums at Nantawarrina in the future. A summary of the possum releases to the Flinders Ranges is below. A total of 148 possums have been released in the last 12 months and an additional 24 new subadults have been captured out of the pouch.

Table : Summary of possums released or caught in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park

Date	Males	Females	TOTAL	Source
June 2015	40	39	79	Yookamurra
May 2016	9	10	19	Sth Flinders
May 2016	25	25	50	Yookamurra
New individuals	11	13	24	I-FRNP
TOTAL	74	74	172	



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Volunteers Brodie Philp, Kathryn Venning and Samantha Dorries assisting with possum catching in the South Flinders. The radiocollared possum is recovering from the anaesthetic.



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Nantawarrina rangers and their families assisted with the possum release in June 2016

June and July were extremely busy months with three reintroductions and a large trapping session. I would like to thank all the staff and volunteers who assisted with these events and helped ensure everything went smoothly for the releases. There were some long hours in the field and some lighter moments. Highlights included the dinner at Wilmington Pub, catching Hermaphrodites the possum and losing the quiz to Dave and the Ginger Genius.

Report by Katherine Moseby (Ecological Horizons Pty. Ltd.)

THE REINTRODUCTION TEAM

Idnya Reintroduction Team- **FAME** Peter Kay (Chair, Executive Taskforce), Cheryl Hill, Tracy McNamara, Elizabeth Davis, David Peacock; **DEWNR** Anthony Freebairn, Rob Brandle, Trish Mooney, Greg Patrick, Peter Copley, Jenny Barker; **Ecological Horizons** Katherine Moseby (Project Coordinator); **WA Department of Parks and Wildlife** Keith Morris.

Idnya contractors- Pat Hodgins

Idnya volunteers-Samantha Dorries, Peter Bird, Bec West, Dave Armstrong, Cat Lynch, Brodie Philp, Kathryn Venning, Helen Crisp, Lib Olds, Ian Smith (and other Zoos SA vets), Darren Niejalke, Andrea Tschirner, Kim McCallum, Fred the champion possum netter and the Nantawarrina Rangers

Idnya Pilot- Matt Graham

Idnya research student- Mel Jensen, The University of Adelaide

Virda research student- Hannah Bannister, The University of Adelaide



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Last seen in the Flinders Ranges during the 1880s, the Western Quoll is a small Australian native carnivorous marsupial which once thrived across 80% of the Australian continent. Until the start of the trial re-introduction project, the nation's western quoll population could only be found in the south-west of Western Australia.

Virda were once widespread and abundant throughout South Australia's arid lands but were driven to extinction by introduced animals causing habitat degradation and loss through predation by foxes.

Expected to bring ecological and tourism benefits to the Flinders Ranges, Idnya and Virda also have great cultural significance for the Adnyamathanha people, for whom the Idnya is a totem and an integral part of their Dreaming.

Since their release, Idnya and Virda survival rates are being actively monitored by radio tracking and trapping individuals to assess their condition and breeding status.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The Idnya and Virda reintroduction is a partnership between the Foundations for Australia's Most Endangered Species and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

Through its Bounceback program, the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources has been controlling predators such as foxes and cats, and herbivores such as goats to protect the habitat in the Flinders Ranges needed for the Idnya and Virda's long term survival.

FAME is raising the funds that have enabled the translocation of both species into their former home.

Western Australia's Department of Parks and Wildlife has donated the Idnya from their conservation parks. Australian Wildlife Conservancy donated the Virda from their sanctuary at Yookamurra in the Murraylands.

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

KEEP INFORMED!

To receive these regular e-updates please email SAAridlands@sa.gov.au with the subject 'Quoll update' and you will be added to or contact the Natural Resources Centre in Port Augusta 8648 5300.



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