

## IDNYA & VIRLDA e-NEWS

Welcome to the seventh edition of “Idnya & Virda e-News”, a regular update on the trial reintroduction of the western quoll and brushtail possum to the Flinders Ranges National Park. Idnya and Virda are the Adnyamathanha names for the western quoll and brushtail possum.



### BACKGROUND

During April 2015, 37 idnya were released into the Flinders Ranges National Park following on from the successful release of 41 idnya in 2014. The release is a partnership between the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered species (FAME), the South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) and the Western Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW). In July 2015, 79 brushtail possums from the Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Yookamurra Sanctuary were translocated to the park to reverse the extinction of possums that occurred in arid South Australia. These reintroductions are testing whether the Bounceback predator and herbivore control programs have improved conditions sufficiently to sustain mid-sized mammals that once lived in these areas.

### IDNYA UPDATE

It's denning time! Our female idnya are all denning at the moment with most females now with denned young. Idnya carry their young in their pouch until around 60 days when they become too large to carry easily. They are then deposited in a hollow log, hollow tree or burrow and weaned at around 5 and a half months. When they are first denned they are hairless and cannot thermoregulate so the mother needs to stay with them for long periods to feed them and keep them warm. We are trapping female idnya to remove radiocollars and need to check traps regularly through the night to ensure they spend as little time as possible away from their young. All female idnya we have captured have 5 or 6 pouch young so it's a very productive year so far.

This is the first project to attempt to reintroduce idnya into South Australia and is an opportunity to learn about their breeding, habitat use, food preferences and interaction with predators.



Large pouch young belonging to "PK" who was taken to Adelaide Zoo for tail surgery before being released back into the wild. These young would have been denned within a couple of weeks of her capture.



Volunteer Tali Moyle after finally finding Georgette in the Heysen Range



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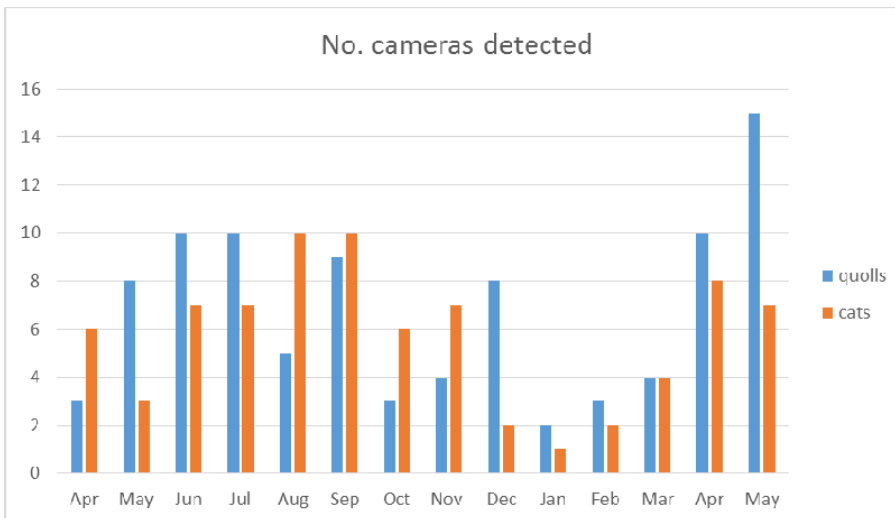
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We have had 6 known deaths of idnya from cats since the release in early May. To counter this threat to their establishment we are carrying out periodic cat control. Recently we trapped “white tip”, a 6.2kg adult male cat who has been seen on cameras in Wilpena Pound since May 2014. Large cats like him have been found through DNA analysis to be responsible for most losses that we have had.



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## VIRLDA UPDATE

We released 79 brushtail possums in July 2015 after great winter rainfall. The release areas were green and lush and we released possums into 4 main release areas (the pound, Wilcolo Track, Spring Track and Jones camp). We purposely released females with small pouch young to enable recruitment into the population in the first year.

This release method paid off as we have only lost 1 pouch young since release with 28 females still with pouch young. These young are now furred and have their eyes open. They will start emerging out of the pouch and onto mum's back in the next month or so. Of the 48 radiocollared possums we have been monitoring after release only one has died since release. Hannah Bannister (PhD student from Adelaide Uni) has been closely following the possums since release and most have settled down into predictable shelter sites in river red gums, rough-barked coolibahs and hollow logs. Weights initially dropped slightly after release but possums are now regaining weight.

The next few months will be busy for the reintroduction team with young idnya and young virllda emerging and dispersing. We plan on increasing cat control between October and December to protect dispersing young and will also be collaring some juvenile possums over the summer to monitor their survival.



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Pat Hodgens with a captured possum during the release. Unfortunately this possum was too small to release and was released back into Yookamurra Sanctuary.



The possums were transferred from Yookamurra Sanctuary (owned by AWC). A big thanks to all those who assisted including AWC staff members Noel Riessen and Anna Copley.



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

### THE REINTRODUCTION TEAM

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

Idnya contractors- Pat Hodgins

Idnya volunteers-Tali Moyle, Cassandra Holt and Kiarrah Smith

Idnya Pilot- Matt Graham

Idnya research student- Mel Jensen, The University of Adelaide

Virlda 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. Vilda 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 quoll (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

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 quoll's long term survival.

FAME is leading the drive to raise approximately \$1.7 million over a five year period that will support the recovery of the species in one of its former territories.

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](mailto: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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