

IDNYA e-NEWS

Welcome to the fourth edition of "Idnya e-News", a regular update on the trial reintroduction of the western quoll to the Flinders Ranges National Park. Idnya is the Adnyamathanha name for the western quoll.



BACKGROUND

During April and May 2014, 41 idnya (21 females and 20 males) were released into the Flinders Ranges National Park after an absence of more than 150 years. The release heralded the start of 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).

UPDATE

After successful denning occurred between June and August, a number of juvenile quolls were sighted on remote cameras at den sites in October and November. Up to four juveniles were recorded at den site cameras, wrestling, exploring and venturing out of their denning burrows. Both burrows and tree hollows were used as den sites by female idnya.



Lotsa's juveniles playing at the entrance to the denning burrow

All radio collars were removed from adult idnya and monitoring is now being conducted using remote cameras and cage trapping. Some of the idnya were extremely difficult to re-trap when removing collars and a variety of baits were used to attempt to entice them into traps. Concoctions of roo blood, meat meal, stinky chicken, peanut butter and sardines were brewed but some quolls were still unimpressed. Eventually some idnya had to be captured using burrow traps or by hand within logs.

Radiotracking data has indicated that we have lost at least 13 of the 41 idnya released, 11 due to cat predation. Eleven of the 12 known surviving females were recorded with pouch young between June and October and a comprehensive trapping session was conducted in December to determine whether any new idnya had successfully survived to weaning.

A dedicated team of trappers descended on the Wilpena Shearers Quarters on the 2nd of December to set cage traps at 152 trap sites over 8 nights (each trap was trapped for four nights). Despite the long hours and early mornings, the group was ecstatic to capture the first new subadult idnya on the first night of trapping along the Wilcolo Track.

Reintroduction team member Dave Peacock and volunteer Rachel Ladd with one of the new idnya recruits from the recent breeding season



In total we captured 10 new subadult idnya (8 during trapping and 2 afterwards) and also recaptured 12 of the original release animals. Results are encouraging and suggest conditions are suitable for idnya re-establishment in the park. All adult females that we captured had large post-lactating teats suggesting that they had successfully raised young.

DPaW volunteer Kelly Rayner with the first subadult idnya captured during the recent trapping.



Post-lactating teats in a captured adult female idnya, a sign of successful breeding



The subadult idnya were fitted with special “drop-off” radiocollars to enable us to monitor juvenile survival over the summer months. These collars weigh just 7 grams and are attached using thread which breaks after a few weeks of wear. We welcome two new volunteers who are kindly assisting us with this trapping, Rachel Ladd and Stephen Robinson. We hope that they enjoy their time in the Flinders Ranges and manage to keep tabs on the subadults.

Measuring the head length of a new subadult idnya. Head length can be used to age idnya.

Other highlights of the week included a sighting of a rare carpet python; capturing “Elouise”, an uncollared original release female idnya who has not been seen since release; two film crews who came to film the quoll trapping; catching a large male cat in the area where the young idnya were found; and the idnya quiz night held on the last night of trapping.

During the last Idnya e-News we discussed the 7 orphan idnya that were rescued and taken to the Adelaide Zoo for hand raising. When they were taken to the zoo they weighed just 100g and were about 3 and a half months old. During December these juveniles were re-released back into the wild in the park after spending 10 days in a soft-release pen to acclimatise them to the local environment. They weighted up to 960g (males) when released suggesting that the Adelaide Zoo had done a great job in raising them to weaning. All seven of the subadults were fitted with drop off collars and so far are doing well.

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



A carpet python seen during the recent idnya trapping

THE IDNYA 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, Jenny Barker, Nicki Stewart; **Ecological Horizons** Katherine Moseby (Project Coordinator); **WA Department of Parks and Wildlife** Keith Morris.

Idnya contractors- Pat Hodgins

Idnya volunteers- Hannah Bannister, Bronwyn Fancourt, Alyson Stobbo-Wilson, John Read

Idnya Pilot- Matt Graham

Idnya research students- Mel Jensen, The University of Adelaide, Adele Thomasz, Murdoch University

Idnya cat shooters- Frank Bernhardt, Dylan Koerner

Juvenile Idnya rescuers- Steve Jennings and Arthur Coulthard



Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources



Department of
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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.

Expected to bring ecological and tourism benefits to the Flinders Ranges, the western quoll also has 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 the quolls' survival rates and well-being have been actively monitored by radio tracking individuals and, once the re-introduced quolls have established themselves in their new habitat, trapping will be undertaken to assess their condition and breeding status.

If there are positive signs of the population re-establishing itself, then a full re-introduction will be considered.

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 Western Quolls from their conservation parks.

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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