



Christmas Island feral cat eradication

The Threatened Species Commissioner has mobilised a \$500,000 contribution from the Australian Government towards Christmas Island's feral cat eradication plan.

Project

In August, a bold plan was announced to completely eradicate feral cats from Christmas Island. This \$500,000 boost will contribute to a long-term eradication plan, alongside the contributions of other partners and action on other key threats such as rats and crazy ants.

Funding

\$500,000 contribution to a long-term project.

Partners

The eradication plan is underpinned by an enduring cat-control partnership between the Australian Government, the local community, biodiversity experts and major on-island organisations including the Shire of Christmas Island and Christmas Island Phosphates.

Eradicating feral cats will take a number of years and funding will come from a range of partners. The island's phosphate mine has earmarked \$1.35 million for cat eradication through an environmental offset, to be matched by the Australian Government. Additional partners will also be sought.

Background

Feral cats are a major threat to Christmas Island's wildlife and are implicated in the decline of the island's native reptiles, including the Christmas Island forest skink which is thought to have become extinct earlier this year. There are estimated to be hundreds of feral cats on the island, and they combine with other invasive predators such as rats, crazy ants, wolf snakes and giant centipedes to present a fearsome threat to native species.

Eradication is only possible because of the foundation laid by the Christmas Island community. Christmas Island already requires pet owners to register and desex all domestic cats on the island, and no new cats may be brought in. Over recent years, Christmas Island National Park, the Shire, Christmas Island Phosphates, Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development and the WA Government have pooled resources to keep feral cat numbers down. Through baiting in settled areas, more than 600 feral cats have already been removed. This resulted in great benefits for seabirds, with a 90 per cent jump in breeding success for the red-tailed tropicbird which nests in nearby cliffs.



Photo: A red-tailed tropic bird (Tony Palliser)

Photographer: Tony Palliser

Species to benefit

The critically endangered Christmas Island flying-fox, forest birds including the endangered emerald dove and thrush, ground-nesting seabirds and native reptiles.

Eradication of feral cats will also have socio-economic benefits for the island. For example, feral cats are known to play a role in spreading toxoplasmosis and other diseases that affect humans.

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