

Question 3.

The objectives and purposes of the action

The objective of the proposed action is to establish a large, self-sustaining second population of the Eastern Bristlebird in Victoria that requires limited long-term management intervention and is geographically isolated from the extant population. This objective will be achieved by reintroducing the Eastern Bristlebird to Wilsons Promontory through wild-to-wild translocation of birds sourced from the Bherwerre Peninsula population (New South Wales and Jervis Bay Territory) and the Croajingolong National Park subpopulation (Victoria). If successful, the reintroduction will decrease the extinction risk of the species in Victoria and globally by increasing total population size, the number of populations, area of occupancy and extent of occurrence, and by spreading the risk of extinction across widely separated populations. Moreover, re-establishing a population at the former southern extent of the distribution of the species may mitigate the potential long-term negative impacts of climate change on the Eastern Bristlebird. The success of re-establishing a population will be determined through monitoring in the short, medium and long terms. Wilsons Promontory was selected as the reintroduction location as: there is evidence of the former occurrence of the species up to at least the early 1900s; extensive areas of suitable habitat are present; the location is actively managed primarily for biodiversity conservation and ecotourism as a National Park, and; the location is widely separated from the extant population thereby decreasing the likelihood that a single catastrophic event (e.g. widespread bushfire) will impact both populations.

The equipment and methods used

Sixty wild individuals (ideally an equal sex ratio and mixed ages) will be captured using 9m-long or 12m-long, 31mm or 38mm mist nets with an acoustic lure at sites spread widely across the Bherwerre Peninsula in Jervis Bay (80% of individuals) and across the core area of the extant Victorian population at Croajingolong National Park (20%). These individuals will be translocated to part of the former range of the Eastern Bristlebird at Wilsons Promontory National Park, which has extensive areas of suitable habitat for Eastern Bristlebirds and is managed primarily for biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. Individuals will be transported overnight by road in custom-made transport boxes securely placed within a modern SUV or van (or similar vehicle), released directly into a large but relatively contained area of suitable habitat (heathland) at Wilsons Promontory National Park the following morning, and monitored intensively in the short, medium and long terms, using radio-tracking, passive-listening transect surveys and call-broadcasting surveys.

Translocations will occur in autumn of three (ideally consecutive) years with source populations alternated, commencing with a target of 16–20 individuals from Bherwerre Peninsula in the first year (2022), followed by a target of 12 birds from Croajingolong National Park in the second year, and the remaining individuals from Bherwerre Peninsula (to achieve a total of 60) in the final year. The temporal sequence of translocations may be revised to translocate both the second and third cohorts in the second year, depending on learnings from the translocation and post-release monitoring in 2022. A staged translocation allows a cautionary approach to undertaking the reintroduction given the long distances between source and reintroduction locations, permits better management of impacts to source populations from harvesting birds, overcomes logistical challenges of sourcing from multiple locations, and enables refinement of translocation procedures through adaptive management. Translocating birds from Croajingolong National Park in the second year optimises the integration of genetic diversity from this population with that of the primary source population.

Source populations will be monitored before and after the removal of birds for translocation to ensure there is an acceptably low risk of impact to the source population from harvesting individuals and to measure any impact from harvesting. Such monitoring will be incorporated into existing long-term monitoring programs for these populations which are implemented by Parks Australia, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, and Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The design of all aspects of the proposed translocation has been strongly influenced by learnings from past translocations of Eastern Bristlebirds and has been assessed to have a moderate to high likelihood of success. For example, the highly successful reintroduction to Beecroft Peninsula (Baker *et al.* 2012) was undertaken over three years (2003–2005) with 15–20 individuals translocated from Bherwerre Peninsula in autumn each year. Radio-tracking, passive-listening transect surveys and call-broadcasting surveys robustly measured the success of the reintroduction in the short, medium and long terms. Monitoring of the source population did not reveal any clear impacts to the population from the removal of individuals for translocation (Bain and French 2009). The proposed translocation differs notably in sourcing from multiple source populations, capturing individuals from a broader area within each source population, and translocating a larger number of individuals in total. These modifications are intended to increase the likelihood of successfully establishing a genetically and demographically robust population and to minimise the impact to source populations from harvesting individuals.

References

- Bain, D. and French, K.O. (2009). Impacts on a threatened bird population of removals for translocation. *Wildlife Research* 36, 516–521
- Baker, J., Bain, D., Clarke, J. and French, K. (2012). Translocation of the Eastern Bristlebird 2: applying principles to two case studies. *Ecological Management and Restoration* 13, 159–165.

Question 6.

The proposed action constitutes conservation management rather than research.

A. The Translocation Proposal prepared for this action—which has been peer-reviewed and endorsed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Translocation Evaluation Panel on 20/09/2021—is attached to this application.

B. The names and affiliations of persons involved in the proposed action are included in the Translocation Proposal.

C. The first year of this project (2021-2022 financial year) is being funded under the Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery Program <https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/home/biodiversity-bushfire-response-and-recovery> being implemented by the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Funding for subsequent years has yet to be confirmed.