



ISLAND SAFE HAVENS

AUSTRALIA'S ISLANDS

Australia has 8222 completely unique islands. Each island represents a precious ecosystem, a place where plants and animals interact in a delicate balance. They can be isolated places, and this is exactly what makes them so important, but also so vulnerable.

Island species are highly susceptible to disruption by invasive species, such as feral cats. By eradicating feral

cats from islands, we can transform them into safe havens for threatened species and establish islands as one of our key assets in the fight against extinction. A feral-free island can support threatened species, by allowing for existing populations to recover, or through careful reintroductions of species. This is why Australia's Threatened Species Strategy commits to 5 feral-free islands by 2020.



WHY ISLANDS?

ACHIEVABLE - Islands are more likely to yield results as their size provides advantages for successful eradication. When an island community demonstrates a strong commitment to maintaining the unique ecological character of its island, this produces a powerful force for action and provides a building block for invaluable partnerships.

BUILT-IN BIOSECURITY - The isolation of islands means they have a natural biosecurity barrier that dramatically reduces the cost of maintain a feral-free environment and provides a high level of on-going protection against reinvasion.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT - With a natural biosecurity system in place, an initial investment is more likely to achieve early and sustainable eradication.

MULTIPLE BENEFITS - Islands free from feral cats, and other invasive species, become safe havens for threatened species, but also reduce problems associated with the parasites spread by feral cats, that can affect health and impact agricultural productivity. Also, a feral free island may boost tourism potential by appealing to visitors who seek a destination with strong natural values from abundant wildlife.

WHY SHOULD WE TACKLE FERAL CATS?

Feral cats are the single greatest threat to Australia's native mammals. They have directly contributed to the extinction of more than 20 mammals since first arriving in Australia. They imperil around a third of our threatened mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds. We need new tools, approaches and partnerships to limit their impact.

Today, feral cats roam across 99.8 per cent of Australia. Only a small number of islands and mainland exclosures provides secure, feral-free habitat for our small mammals. Adding extra islands to this will provide the much needed assistance to allow our threatened animals to recover in safety.

By controlling feral cats, we reduce harm caused to Australian animals and reduce the risk of their extinction. Tackling feral cats humanely and effectively is thus one of the highest priorities for protecting Australian wildlife. It also has flow-on benefits for agriculture and tourism.



HOW BEING FERAL-FREE CAN HELP YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY

SAVING OUR THREATENED ANIMALS AND PLANTS

Feral cats hunt, kill and eat bilbies, numbats, quokkas, quolls, bandicoots, parrots, lizards, frogs and many other endangered animals. On an island free of feral cats, our threatened species are free to thrive, increase in number and exist in safety.

Islands can be used as safe havens for species reintroductions or as a place to keep precious insurance populations secure. Feral-free islands are one of our greatest opportunities to prevent extinctions and can offer threatened species a place to recover in safety.

PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH, ANIMAL HEALTH AND FARMERS' INCOMES

Feral cats can cause substantial economic loss to farmers by spreading two parasitic diseases: toxoplasmosis and sarcosporidiosis. These diseases can cause reduced birthing rates in livestock and create scar tissue in meat, which reduces farm productivity and farmers' incomes.

Humans and domestic pets are also susceptible to the parasites spread by feral cats, particularly if their immune system is suppressed from illness, stress or pregnancy. An island free from feral cats will become free from these damaging diseases and improve the health and wellbeing of island communities whilst booting farming productivity.

POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM

Imagine a destination where you can spend your morning sampling some of the finest produce the area has to offer, your afternoon relaxing in beautiful natural landscapes and your evening meeting some of Australia's most threatened mammals. This could be the reality for so many lucky tourists who visit Australia's islands that have worked hard to provide a safe haven for our threatened species.

Research by Tourism Australia has shown that Australia's biggest strength is its world class nature, followed closely by our food and wine and local hospitality. There is huge potential for feral-free islands to attract visitors and boost their economies in the process.



STORIES OF SUCCESS

NORFOLK ISLAND GREEN PARROT

The critically endangered Norfolk Island green parrot is one of the world's rarest birds. It is highly vulnerable to invasive predators, like black rats and feral cats, as it nests in holes in tree trunks that are located close to the ground.

The island community decided, in partnership with the National Park, to boost rodent control and implement nest protection to improve the recovery of the parrot. This was done as part of an integrated pest management approach that also included tackling feral cats.

Since beginning the project, Norfolk Island green parrot numbers have been steadily growing. In the first year alone, the known female population doubled in number. Current monitoring has recorded 81 chicks that have successfully fledged, which is an increase of 44 chicks from the year before.

The species is now well on the way to recovery thanks to a committed local effort to control rat and feral cats. This amazing increase in numbers is testament to the potential of islands to dramatically improve the future of our threatened species.



WILDLIFE ON CHRISTMAS ISLAND

The impact of feral cats on Christmas Island wildlife has been significant, with four of the island's mammals becoming extinct and many more species currently threatened.

This loss of natural heritage was of such great concern to the island community and the land management agencies, that a bold plan has been announced to completely eradicate feral cats from Christmas Island.

As part of this, pet owners are now required to register and desex all domestic cats on the island, with no new cats to be brought in. Across the whole island, 23,000 baits have been deployed and 700 feral cats removed as part of eradication efforts. This activity has occurred as part of a broader approach to control rats and yellow crazy ants. This improves whole of island health.

These efforts have already contributed to a 90 per cent jump in breeding success for the red-tailed tropicbird, which nests on the island's cliffs. This result was only made possible by the collaborative effort between a determined community and committed land management agencies.