

Forty years of fauna translocations in Western Australia: lessons learned

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Summary

Since 1971, fauna translocations have been used in Western Australia (WA) as a tool to improve the conservation status of threatened vertebrates and, more recently, to reconstruct faunal ecosystems. Over that period, there have been 232 translocations recorded, involving over 12000 individuals of 43 different species. Predation by exotic predators and inadequate post-release monitoring were significant issues identified from a review of the translocation history in WA. Offshore islands have played an important role as secure translocation sites for threatened species. Changes to how translocations are now undertaken in WA include the development of a state-wide Fauna Translocation Strategy, the use of meaningful success criteria, and use of genetic and population viability analysis (PVA) tools to assess long-term viability of translocated populations. The WA Department of Parks and Wildlife continues to recognise the important role that translocations can play in threatened fauna recovery programs.

Introduction

Fauna translocations for conservation purposes have been underway in WA since 1971. These have mainly been reintroductions or reinforcements of threatened species for conservation purposes (conservation translocations), but translocations have also been conducted for other purposes, including salvage translocations (also called 'mitigation translocations') of species impacted by land clearing (Chapter 19), and more recently for reconstructing faunal assemblages.

WA has undertaken more fauna translocations than any other Australian state or territory. There are two key reasons for this: first, many threatened fauna species have only persisted in the south-west of WA, or on offshore islands, and were available for translocation; and second, the high tolerance of native fauna in WA to the toxin sodium fluoroacetate (1080) and our ability to apply broad-scale baiting for fox control.

Research undertaken in the 1980s identified the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) as the primary cause of decline