

# PROTECTING THE GREATER BILBY IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

## PROJECT FACTSHEET

### *The challenge*

The greater bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*) is an iconic digging marsupial that has disappeared from 80% of its historical distribution. It now occurs mostly on Indigenous lands across arid and semi-arid areas of the Northern Territory, with the central deserts region likely one of its last strongholds.

Bilbies are nocturnal, wide-ranging, elusive and shy, making them difficult to observe in the wild. They're threatened primarily by introduced predators (especially foxes), overgrazing and habitat degradation caused by livestock and other introduced herbivores, and inappropriate fire regimes.

Bilbies are listed as Vulnerable by both the Australian and Northern Territory governments and are a priority species in the Australian Government's *Threatened species action plan 2022–2032*.

### *Project goals*

This project aims to help protect the bilby across the arid and semi-arid zones of the Northern Territory.

This project will:

- improve understanding of where bilbies live;
- improve understanding of how many bilbies there are and the genetics of wild populations;
- improve understanding of how bilbies respond to threats (such as widespread late-season wildfire) and the management of those threats;
- manage foxes to protect bilby populations; and
- work collaboratively with Traditional Owners, First Nations ranger groups and other key stakeholders.



### *Working together*

We're working with First Nations ranger groups, Traditional Owners and many other stakeholders to protect the bilby in the Northern Territory. All project activities will be based on participatory planning and consultations with relevant Traditional Owners and other key stakeholders. We'll use a combination of methods – such as helicopter surveys, drones and non-invasive genetic sampling – to assess the distribution and abundance of bilbies at key sites.

We'll support fire management being undertaken by rangers and trial novel methods for managing foxes that exclude non-target species that are culturally and ecologically important (such as dingoes).

This project will run from June 2024 to June 2028.



## Making a difference

This project will increase knowledge of bilby populations in more locations. The genetic information we'll collect will help with ensuring that captive and fenced bilby populations are robust and healthy. By managing foxes, we'll address a key driver of bilby declines. This project will also address other key research and monitoring priorities outlined in the national recovery plan and Indigenous Protected Area plans of management.

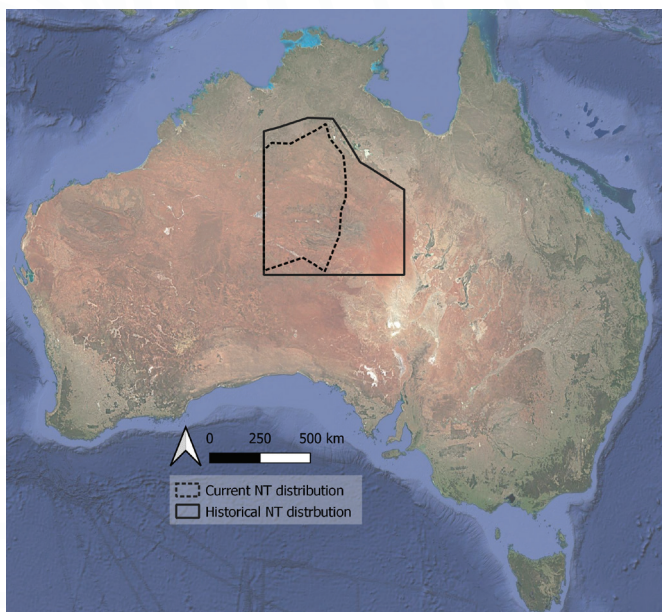
There'll be opportunities for Indigenous rangers and Traditional Owners to get involved in research activities, and we'll provide training and upskilling opportunities to increase capacity and ownership of the project from our Indigenous partners.



## Next steps

Initial planning and consultation are underway for project activities.

We'll be revisiting sites surveyed as part of a previous project to collect scat for genetic analysis and to compare to baseline information – for example, we'll be looking to see if the same bilbies are persisting in these areas or if new bilbies have moved in. We'll also visit sites that haven't been surveyed recently. Planning is well underway for the fox management trial, which will be undertaken in collaboration with the Central Land Council and the Northern Territory Government.



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Australian Government



### More information

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