

FAME

SAVING OUR ENDANGERED FLORA & FAUNA



On The Brink

Issue

01

2017

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From the CEO

The team and I were excited to release the latest edition of our newsletter – “On the Brink” – named by long-time FAME supporter Mark Learmonth (you can read more about Mark and his passion for Australian flora and fauna on page 5). The newsletter may have a new look and feel but ultimately, nothing more has changed. Its focus is on our projects and the differences we, along with our partners and valuable donors, are making in changing the landscape of Australian conservation.

Recently we underwent a brand refresh after appointing a new creative agency, Welbourn O'Brien, who agreed to work with us at a not-for-profit fee to support the priorities in our new Strategic Plan. We wanted two things from the revised brand. Firstly, a more simplistic look, still reflecting flora and fauna and secondly a significant symbol that would be recognisable as FAME. We have achieved both.

It was pleasing to be informed that our quolls and possums in the Flinders Ranges are remaining stable with the biggest threat to their sustainability being feral cats. Late last year the trapping results showed the feral cats were starting to affect quoll numbers. We know first hand the effects these feral cats are having on their populations and the impact at large they have on the environment as a whole.

It has to be said – feral cat control is a ‘hot topic’ at the moment and unfortunately it must be. The key to the discussion is to

create awareness between a feral cat and a domestic ‘moggie’, as well as an understanding of the devastating impact these animals are having on our native species. In some cases they have been shown to be responsible for the near extinction of some species.

The stark reality is simple. As an organisation we must fund and support projects that assist the control of feral animals to allow our Australian fauna to flourish.

FAME, in conjunction with the Ian Potter Foundation, provided a grant to support the optimisation of the Felixer Cat Grooming Trap (more on page 7). We have also funded a PhD student's study into an implant and recently, the Board financially supported the purchase of a fluidised bed spray coating machine (page 5) to assist with the study.

Not everyone is aware of the important role the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) play in keeping our quolls and possums protected from feral cats, so we asked SSAA to tell us more about their involvement in the project on page 6.

Once again, we were pleased to support our friends at Devil Ark with their recent crowdfunding campaign to double their size to 360 devils. Our support, along with many other generous organisations and supporters saw them raise \$377,654 – above their estimated target. A fabulous achievement.

On a final note, it was heartening to read the depth of projects in the Threatened Species Prospectus* recently released by the Australian Government.

The impact of the sum of all these separate projects, once complete, will be remarkable. We often talk about our role as caretakers of this planet and the amazing outcomes we can achieve, together, every time we restore or bring back from the brink, a small piece of nature. The reintroduction of the Western Quoll, which was once extinct from the Flinders Ranges, is a prime example of the extraordinary impact of what we can do by working together and how you, our important donors and supporters, are making a difference.

Tracy McNamara, Chief Executive Officer

* The Prospectus can be viewed at www.environment.gov.au.

About FAME

FAME is an independent, non profit organisation based in South Australia but operating across the country. Donations to FAME are tax deductible under relevant Australian legislation.

We are pleased to advise that the majority of funds raised, some 82%, are directed towards our conservation efforts with the remaining 18% covering our administration costs. This is a significant achievement in Not For Profit areas.

The FAME Newsletter is published by the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species Ltd.

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the content within this newsletter. We apologise for any omissions or errors that may have occurred.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Country

The Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME) acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.



Welbourn O'Brien

Welbourn O'Brien is proudly associated with FAME as we work together toward sustainable biological diversity.

Update: Western Quoll and Brush-tailed Possum

Reintroduction project slow but steady

Trappings

In late 2016, quoll and possum trappings were conducted throughout the Flinders Ranges with 172 traps set at sites in the Wilpena Pound, Wilcolo, Sacred Canyon and Jones Camp areas for a 5 night period. Conditions were mild to hot (25 - 40 degrees) with cool, dark nights and no moon.

Twenty-four individual quolls were captured and 7 possums. Eleven of the 24 quolls were new untagged animals, 10 were previously tagged but Flinders born and 1 was a male released in 2015. The sex ratio was 13 males to 11 females. Only four post-lactating females were captured.

Possum detections were low in the Pound and Jones Camp, but increasing in Wilcolo. The number of cameras with possums detected is steady at around 8 of the 30 cameras.

The female possums have bred continuously since release with some females now carrying their 5th pouch young. Survival of adult possums from the 2016 release has been high with only one death since release. Juvenile possums have been fitted with radio collars and have been recorded dispersing through the release area with some subadult males moving off the park. During the last trapping event in November 2016 we caught our first adult untagged possum in the traps and the capture rate of possums is gradually increasing. Good rains recorded over the last 12 months have helped possums establish.

Feral Cats

Three large male cats were captured during trapping, all over 4kg. Unfortunately these three cats were likely to have been capable of killing large numbers of quolls and thought to be responsible for multiple possum deaths on Jones Camp. The overall trend in cat detections rates is increasing due to a large number of cats in one area of the release site. This high rate of cat detection is due to the high density of rabbit warrens, which provide a steady source of food and shelter for cats with very few quolls seen in the areas.

Members of the Sporting Shooters Association Australia (SSAA) are now visiting the region monthly to help deal with the feral cat threat.

The Project now sits at a critical point. Although the quolls and possums have been reintroduced, and by all accounts numbers are steady, for long-term success, the numbers need to continue to grow.

In 2017/18 we will enter the most important part of the project – sustaining the numbers in the wild, which relies on continued feral cat management and ongoing maintenance over the next few years to ensure the best possible chance of their longevity.

Information within this newsletter is sourced and provided courtesy of DEWNR and is an abridged version of a report by Dr Katherine Moseby (Ecological Horizons)



Benefits of Reintroducing The Western Quoll and Brush-tailed Possum to the Flinders Ranges:

Quolls are top-order predators. The presence of a top predator is vital to the balance of any ecosystem and has a positive influence at all levels down to and including vegetation.

Quolls are known to impact rabbit populations both by eating young rabbits and providing pressure on adult rabbits to avoid quoll habitats.

The presence of Quolls will strengthen tourism in the region providing motivation to local landholders to move toward sustainable land management practices that promote environmental health.

Western Quolls were once part of Australian ecosystems in every mainland state but are now restricted to south western WA. The establishment of a population in South Australia will be an important step in the recovery of this species.

Brush-tailed Possums improve the health of native vegetation by controlling the effects of mistletoe and by spreading the seeds of other species e.g. native orange.

Possums thrive in urban areas but are declining in the bush where they are needed most.

Both the Western Quoll (Idnyia) and Brush-tailed Possum (Virda) are totems of the local Adnyamathanha people and part of their dreaming.

Follow us on social media   

Southern Cassowary

Species Profile:

At FAME we strongly believe in raising awareness of all threatened Australian species, not just the flora and fauna relating to our current projects. To uphold this belief we plan to include a profile of a threatened species in each issue of our new newsletter "On The Brink".

The first endangered species to be profiled is the **Southern Cassowary**. The Southern Cassowary (*Casuaris casuaris*) is a flightless bird native to Far North Queensland and New Guinea. It is the third largest bird species on the planet and is easily recognised by its striking black feathers, blue and purple neck with red wattles and helmet like skin flap on its head called a casque.

Conservation Status

The species has become a mascot of the rain forests of far North Queensland featuring heavily in advertising material and souvenirs promoting this unique Australian wilderness. Despite their notoriety, Cassowary numbers continue to decline in the wild and the species is listed as endangered under the EPBC Act. Estimates place the current Cassowary population at under 1000 individuals in the wild within Australia.

The species decline has historically been attributed to the destruction of rainforests for farmland and suburban expansion, which leads to fragmentation and a reduction in suitable habitats. In recent years, vehicle strikes (hit by moving cars), have become the leading cause of cassowary deaths in wild populations. Studies have shown in some areas 55% of documented Cassowary deaths are attributed to vehicle strikes.

Ecological Importance

The Cassowary plays an important role in maintaining the number and diversity of plant species in the rainforests where they live. Over 238 plant species have been recorded in Cassowary diets. This, combined with their large home range of up to 7 square kilometres makes them the major seed distributor within the rainforest ecosystem.

The Future

The plan to secure a future for the Cassowary is centred on habitat protection and rejuvenation programs in conjunction with captive breeding programs to ensure genetic diversity is maintained.

A significant part of the plan involves community awareness initiatives to encourage land owners to preserve Cassowary habitats on their properties and plant natives where possible. Additionally, land owners and visitors are also advised to lower speed limits in Cassowary habitats, keep dogs on leads or fenced in and avoid contact and feeding of wild Cassowaries.

The outlook should be good for the Cassowary. The major hurdle for the species is changing human behaviour and awareness in the regions the cassowary lives and of course, finding funding to continue habitat restoration and expand captive breeding programs.

Blake Hender

FAME Board supports ongoing commitment to Feral Cat Abatement

The 'population-protecting implant' (PPI) project is a collaborative effort between conservation experts at PIRSA, Ecological Horizons, researchers at the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia. The project aims to introduce a new strategy to remove introduced predators when they prey on native wildlife. We have known for over 20 years that we can remove foxes from conservation areas to protect wildlife but often feral cats then kill the native animals we are reintroducing or trying to protect.

This project aims to remove these introduced predators with the first animal they kill and eat. Central to the success of the project is the development and testing of a controlled release capsule (PPI) containing a toxin – a natural poison produced by a number of Australian native plants – that is lethal to feral cats and foxes. Our objective is for the PPI to be injected under the skin of the native animal where it remains inactive and inert.

If the native animal is eaten by a feral cat, the capsule becomes activated in the stomach and releases the toxin, killing the cat and preventing it from killing any other native animals. If per chance the implanted native animal was eaten by a larger native predator, then the small amount of natural poison shouldn't be enough to hurt the native predator due to their much higher tolerances.

FAME's association with this project has previously resulted in funding of a PhD student (Maria-Olga Bargsted Aravena) to investigate the concept and efficacy of the PPI in animals and more recently the purchase of a fluidised bed spray coating machine. This machine will enable consistent manufacture of batches of PPIs for preliminary safety testing in lab animals to be conducted by the student. Prior to such automated manufacturing techniques, the PPIs were prepared by hand which was time consuming, labour intensive and introduced slight variability between the performance of individual PPIs. Automation of the manufacturing process will, for the first time, provide access to large batches of identical PPIs which will help to streamline preliminary testing and accelerate the project towards field trials in the wild.

The FAME Board strongly supports this project, and in doing so, donated the funds to purchase the fluidised bed spray coating machine.

More details on the PPIs can be found in Maria's previous article in the 2016 Issue 2 FAME Newsletter.

Dr Anton Blencowe

"The project aims to introduce a new strategy to remove introduced predators when they prey on native wildlife."



Rename the Newsletter Competition Winner

The winner of the competition to rename the FAME newsletter is long time FAME supporter **Mark Learmonth**. Mark has been supporting FAME since 1998 when FAME was running under its previous incarnation as Earth Sanctuaries Foundation Inc. Mark came up with the idea for "On The Brink" from the commonly used phrase "on the brink of extinction" and thought it would be a catchy way to remind people about FAME'S important conservation work.

Although retired now Marks passion for the environment was also his profession. For many years he was a secondary

school chemistry and environmental science teacher. Mark enjoys bush walking and tries to travel to natural places wherever possible. He, with his good friend Sylvia, particularly enjoy visiting Islands off the Australian coast. Together they have visited King, Flinders, Gabo, Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands, however, Kangaroo Island is a standout favourite. They both agree the island is a special place that offers a diverse range of plant and animal habitats that are readily assessable to visitors.

Blake Hender



Kofron, Christopher P., Chapman, Angela (2006). 'Causes of mortality to the endangered Southern Cassowary *Casuaris casuaris* in Queensland, Australia'. *Public Conservation Biology*, 12, 175-9.
<https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/endangered/endangered-animals/cassowary.html>
<http://save.thecassowary.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Save-the-Cassowary-Fundraising-Guide-March-2014.pdf>

**Update:
Devil Ark**

FAME are proud to be Founding Partners of Devil Ark and share a strong association with the organisation.

Devil Ark recently undertook a crowdfunded campaign to raise \$375,000 for Stage 1 of a four stage project to more than double the size of Devil Ark from 150 to 360 devils. Monies raised will expand their current facility in readiness for the devils to move into by 2017. This expansion requires fencing borders of 4 square km and building suitable homes and nests for the Devils. Stage 1 will allow Devil Ark to house an additional 50 devils, (25 males and 25 females). We were delighted to pledge \$10,000 towards the campaign to continue their important work in saving the Tasmanian Devil from extinction.

We are thrilled to advise Devil Ark reached their goal – raising \$377,654!

Our pledge and ongoing commitment in supporting Devil Ark could not be achieved without the continued support of our donors and for that, we say **thank you**.



FAME and Welbourn O'Brien 2017

Welbourn O'Brien is proudly associated with FAME as we work together toward sustainable biological diversity.

Following a competitive pitch (late 2016) the FAME Board appointed Welbourn O'Brien as their creative agency partner.



“ Our team is excited to work with an organisation whose noble purpose is vital to the protection of the Australian landscape, funding important flora and fauna projects nationally” *Josh Welbourn, Principal – Creative.*

Shooters assist in Western Quoll reintroduction

You are probably well aware that one of the deadliest threats to our native species is feral animals and feral cats in particular. What you might not know is how much conservation work is done behind the scenes by shooters. The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) and our members play a crucial role in protecting Australia's threatened species from these introduced predators. Licensed shooters are on the frontlines of protecting our native species and helping restore some balance to our environment.

In fact, ground shooting that is properly carried out and causes instantaneous death is one of the most humane methods of reducing feral cat numbers, according to PestSmart guidelines and the RSPCA. Accredited shooters paved the way for the reintroduction of the western quoll in South Australia. In total, 115 feral cats were removed from the area where the western quolls were reintroduced. Without the efforts of shooters and traps, there would have been a much smaller chance of the western quolls re-establishing their population. Removing pest animals might not always be glamorous work but it is necessary and gives native species their best chance of survival.

Something else you might not be familiar with is the program SSAA Farmer Assist. This simple online-based platform connects shooters willing to volunteer their time with farmers who need help controlling pest species on their land. This broader pest management strategy takes a huge strain off native species that are forced to compete with introduced species.

Our members are often not only on the frontlines of conservation but they also usually own the land where the battle between endangered species and introduced species is happening. Most of our endangered species are not designed to handle introduced predators such as foxes and cats. Shooting is a key ingredient in returning the balance to the environment and giving endangered native species a fair chance.

Sam Talbot, SSAA Communications Officer



“ ...one of the deadliest threats to our native species is feral animals...”

FAME's Highlights

Since 1993 FAME and our loyal supporters have helped bring more than 20 unique Australian species back from the brink of extinction and assisted in funding many other conservation projects. Wherever possible, we support protected areas so native species can live in their natural environment, safe from the combined threats of habitat destruction and introduced predators and competitors.



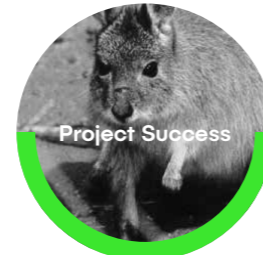
Numbat
FAME established a colony of endangered Numbats, previously extinct in South Australia, at Yookamurra Sanctuary.



Burrowing Bettong
FAME established a colony of endangered Boodies (Burrowing Bettongs) – previously extinct in South Australia, at Yookamurra Sanctuary.



Bridled Nail-tail Wallaby
FAME established a colony of critically endangered Bridled Nailtail Wallabies, previously extinct in New South Wales, at Scotia Sanctuary.



Endangered Mala at Scotia Sanctuary
FAME established a colony of critically endangered Mainland Mala, previously extinct in New South Wales, at Scotia Sanctuary in NSW.



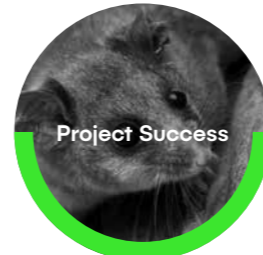
Saving Native Orchids
FAME funded a research project into the effects of habitat fragmentation on native orchids.



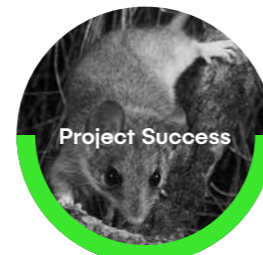
Mt Lofty Ranges Emu Wren
FAME provided funding to protect the critically endangered Southern Mt Lofty Ranges Emu Wren and its critically endangered habitat (the swamps of the Fleurieu Peninsula in SA, Australia), at Yookamurra Sanctuary.



Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat
FAME funded strategies to expand the population of Northern Hairy-nosed Wombats in Queensland.



Mountain Pygmy Possum
Only a few hundred Mountain Pygmy Possums remain in just 3 isolated populations. FAME supported a groundbreaking project aimed at increasing the viability of Mountain Pygmy Possum population at Mt Buller by introducing greater genetic diversity.



Keeping Endangered Wildlife Safe at Wadderin
FAME helped the local community bring back endangered wildlife, including the Red-tailed Phascogale and the Waylie, to the central wheat belt of WA at Wadderin Sanctuary.



Cane Toad
FAME collaborated with Sydney University and others on a project to stop the spread of the introduced cane toad on its southern front. The cane toad has a very destructive effect on wildlife and may drive some species to extinction if not controlled.



Western Quoll and Brush-tailed Possum
FAME has partnered with DEWNR (South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources) and Partners to return the Western Quoll and Brush-tailed Possum to the Flinders Ranges, South Australia. The relocation is the first public/private partnership in Australia for restoration of a locally extinct species without fencing.



Tasmanian Devil
FAME is proud to be a Founding Partner of Devil Ark and continually supports their work where needed. Devil Ark, in NSW's Hunter Valley, has the largest mainland insurance population of endangered Tasmanian Devils.



'Felixer' Cat Grooming Trap
FAME, in conjunction with the Ian Potter Foundation, fund a grant supporting environmental consulting company, Ecological Horizons, to further develop the Optimising Felixer Grooming Trap. The grant will enable Ecological Horizons to optimise the automated grooming traps for conservation projects where feral cats present a key threat.

Vision

Our vision is to prevent any further extinction of Australian flora and fauna.

Core Values

- Commit to conservation and environmental issues.
- Embrace open transparency at all times.
- Display strong, clear corporate governance.
- Maintain inclusiveness with all stakeholders and donors.
- Respect the culture of Indigenous Australians.

Mission

FAME is the only organisation dedicated to helping Australian species most at risk of extinction. FAME seeks to fund on-ground conservation outcomes with a focus on seed-funding and innovation.

To make a donation, visit fame.org.au, or detach and complete this form and return back to us in the supplied envelope.

Donation Form

Yes, I would like to assist FAME to continue their work in making a difference to the survival of endangered Australian species.

\$100 \$50 \$250 or \$ _____

Please direct my support to the following:

- Projects presented and chosen by the FAME Board that best advance FAME's vision.
- The continuation of the Quoll/Possum Project.
- A project to control feral predators.

Payment Method

- Cheque/money order enclosed and made payable to 'FAME Ltd'.
- Credit Card

Please debit my Mastercard Visa

Card Number _____

Expiry Date ____ / ____ CCV _____

Name _____ Signature _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Or Donate online at www.fame.org.au/donate

- I prefer that this donation remains anonymous.
- Please send me an "I support FAME" sticker with my receipt.
- Please send me information about making monthly direct debit donations from my credit card.
- Please send me information about how to help FAME's endangered species work through my will.

Please send me a copy of FAME's newsletter. Hard Copy eNews

*All donations over \$2 are tax deductible and we will send you a tax receipt.

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The fight against Feral Cats

Feral Cats - ferocious and large versions of the domestic variety - pose an ongoing and severe threat to Australian mammals and have contributed to at least 20 of Australia's 30 mammal extinctions.

FAME are excited to fund, in conjunction with the Ian Potter Foundation, a grant supporting environmental consulting company, Ecological Horizons, to enable them to optimise automated grooming traps for many conservation projects where feral cats present a key threat.

The grooming trap, or Felixer, will assist rural and regional communities to undertake sustainable and targeted feral cat control without exposing working dogs, dingoes or other non-target wildlife to conventional predator control.

It's important to understand that a trap isn't simply set. The highly specific, humane and automated grooming trap uses an array of sensors to distinguish the body shape and walking style of feral cats from other animals. It is finely adjusted over time and tested using photographic mode only for a period to ensure only predating cats trigger the device. The cats are lured towards the machine with a range of animal calls. The Felixer sprays a measured dose of toxin onto the cat's fur, which it consumes while grooming itself, causing it to die peacefully in its sleep.

It is, for some people, an uncomfortable truth that feral cats and the species we are working so hard to protect cannot mix. To survive, a feral cat must hunt and, as is the way in nature, seldom eats poison baits when live food is available,

Recent research suggests that there are between 2 and 6 million feral cats in Australia and that these populations are limited mainly by food. Unfortunately many of their favoured prey are threatened native species of mammal, bird and reptile.

The Felixer will be able to target individual cats in sanctuaries or high conservation areas where they have inherently learnt to avoid conventional controls and, in doing so, help to protect millions of native Australian Animals.

"Recent research suggests that there are between 2 and 6 million feral cats in Australia..."



Monthly Giving

Unfortunately, FAME's work is never done and never will be. Indeed, despite our successes to date, the list of endangered species in Australia continues to lengthen.

126 species of Australian plants and animals have vanished in almost 230 years. A further 182 species are classified as endangered and 201, including 63 mammals or 30% of what remains of our mammal species, are threatened with extinction.

FAME's projects are carefully chosen so that our precious funds are put to work in the most effective way possible. We do not gamble with the financial support of our members and donors because we know when we choose wisely we can have the greatest impact on endangered Australian flora and fauna.

When you give monthly, you become an important part of FAME's ongoing commitment to stop any further extinction and allow the Foundation to allocate foreseeable income to support worthwhile projects that will save endangered wildlife from extinction.

As a monthly donor you will receive a regular copy of our newsletter, email updates, "I support FAME" sticker, an annual summary and receipt for tax purposes and the right to change or cancel your contribution at any time by request.

Most of all, you have the satisfaction of knowing that your support will help increase FAME's ability to seek out and support projects that will save endangered flora and fauna from extinction.

For this, we say thank you.

A monthly gift is easy to arrange - email the Foundation at fame@fame.org.au and we will send you the information. Alternatively, you can join through our website at fame.org.au donate and click on the donate monthly tab.

Thank you
for your
support!