

Water Mouse Project Results

Overview

The Water Mouse Project concluded its field work in October 2019. Works took place on four National Parks and involved ground truthing of habitat data, remote camera monitoring, public field events, and pest detection/management work. The parks were Cape Palmerston National Park, Sandringham Bay Conservation Park, Bakers Creek Conservation Park and Skull Knob Conservation Park. A snapshot of the results are detailed below:

Awareness Raising

Water mice are considered an indicator species of the health of its mangrove home. This makes water mice very important, and raising awareness in the community was a goal of this project. To do this, PCL engaged the community through field days, newsletter articles, educational materials, and a volunteers program. Volunteers from Birdlife Mackay, Central Queensland University, Mackay Regional Council, and the general community assisted with various aspects of the projects field work. The community field days were at key sites for the mouse, and helped to generate awareness of the species, its habitat, as well as the threats they are facing.



Water Mouse

Water Mice (*Xeromys myoides*) were photographed at three out of the four parks surveyed. This was an amazing result, as the species is quiet elusive and sightings are very uncommon. Bakers Creek Conservation Park was the only site where evidence of water mice populations was not found. However, the park does contain habitat which is suitable for water mice populations so there is a possibility they could present. Another significant find was a Water Mouse nest at Sandringham Bay Conservation Park, which are rarely seen in this region.



Threats

Several threats were noted during on ground works. Foxes were photographed at the same three parks that water mouse were found, often on the same cameras as mice. This is concerning as foxes are a known predator of water mice. Evidence of large numbers of feral pigs at each of the parks included images of pigs captured on monitoring cameras and significant ground disturbance and damage to mangroves and other vegetation in the inter-tidal areas of each of the monitoring sites. Feral pigs pose a significant threat to water mice through habitat destruction. It is likely that pigs opportunistically predate on water mice and their nests. Other observed threats include the illegal use of motor vehicles in sensitive areas, presence of wild and domestic dogs, illegal hunting, and some parks being accessed by cattle.



This project received grant funding from the Australian Government through the National Landcare Program.