



WWF

UPDATE

2017

CAMERA TRAP SURVEY © JESSICA KOLECK / WWF-AUS



NORTHERN BETTONG PROJECT

UPDATE #9: APR-JUN 2017

The search continues

We're still holding out hope that there might be other populations of northern bettong out there, somewhere! We're systematically searching all potential habitats, and to-date we have installed cameras at well-over 300 points outside the Lamb Range, giving us a fantastic insight into the small mammal assemblages in these areas.

Over the past few months, the Girringun Rangers and Green Army Team have been undertaking these surveys as part of their work program on threatened species. They've placed cameras in national parks, state forests and on Indigenous-owned private land, led by the Traditional Owners of each area. This joint effort has really increased the area surveyed, and the extra effort by the Girringun teams means that many more cameras have been set than would have been otherwise. As yet, no northern bettongs have turned up on these surveys, but there are still a few more places to look!

Partnering up

Arguably, the biggest strength of this project has come from its collaborative nature, providing better outcomes than if the work was divided and undertaken separately. We're now teaming up with another James Cook University project conducted through the Centre for Tropical Environmental & Sustainability Science (TESS), which is looking at predator occurrence through Far North Queensland. We're working together throughout the



FIELD TEAM © JESSICA KOLECK / WWF-AUS

Girringun Camera Trapping: by Numbers

- > 8 rangers involved
- > 13 Green Army Team members involved
- > Cameras set at 104 sites so far

northern bettong's range to determine how predator abundance varies, which will have implications for future management in these areas.

The cameras that are set and baited (using our peanut butter/oat/sardine/truffle oil/vanilla essence mixture) for northern bettongs are left for at least one month. We then come back and change the setup to try to attract predators, leaving the cameras in place for an additional month.

The predator camera setup utilizes two different types of lures: scent and visual. The scent lure is an incredibly foul smelling liquid called Magna Gland that mimics the smell of a decaying carcass. Trust me, this stuff smells awful! A few drops are placed in front of the camera on a small board and tacked into the ground. We then put a trail of pig's blood leading from the nearest road/trail to the camera. Honestly, it's the most morbid camera work I've ever participated in, but it's all in the name of science! The visual lure is much more pleasant to set up. It's a contraption made from a CD and dyed feathers suspended in front of and above the camera (see image on the left). I admit, it's quite mesmerizing to watch flitting in the wind. We're hoping predators (especially cats) think so too! Cats are sly, cautious animals, and there's evidence that scent lures can actually deter them from cameras. Cats are also incredibly inquisitive, so the TESS research team is trialling the cats' response to these visual attractants, hoping the cats' curiosity will lead them to the cameras.

The cameras are running 24/7 and we're just starting to notice something odd; almost all of our cat detections so far have been during the day. Usually you would expect cats to be most active and hunting at night. It's been suggested that cats modify their behaviour and active periods to avoid other large predators in the area. Could this be happening here as well? And if so, what are they avoiding? Hopefully this new project will be able to dig deeper and find out!

Signing off until the next break from the field - Jess Koleck

Special thanks

A huge thank you to our volunteers from the second quarter of 2017: Charlotte Eurlly, Rhys Sharry, Aram Madigan, Salome, Simon Towle, Sian Tia Towle, Katie Chilton-Towle, Eion O'Rourke, Lilli Usher-Chandler, Janelle Lynnae, Mike Gaia, and WWF interns Naomi Bowie and Penny King, and a special thank you to the Girringun Rangers and Green Army Team for your many hours of hard work in the field. We couldn't do it without you!

If you would like to volunteer with us, please send me an email at jkoleck@wwf.org.au.

The Northern Bettong Project is a collaboration between WWF, James Cook University and the Queensland Government. Funding provided by the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country grant.



CAMERA SETUP VISUAL LURE © JESSICA KOLECK / WWF-AUS



WWF in numbers

+100

WWF is in over 100 countries,
on 6 continents

6,628

WWF has 6,628
staff worldwide



1961

WWF was founded in 1961

+5.4M

WWF has over
5.4M financial



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and
to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

wwf.org.au

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