

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR EASTERN QUOLLS ON NORTH BRUNY ISLAND

QUARTERLY PROJECT UPDATE APRIL 2023



FERAL AND STRAY CAT TRAPPING UPDATE



A total of 114 cats have been removed from the project area to date. Trapping rates of feral cats have reduced dramatically over the course of the project (a good sign that we are having an impact!), and all captures this quarter have been of stray cats.

Unlike feral cats, stray cats are reliant on humans for some food or shelter and therefore are often trapped near urban areas. Reporting of cats by members of the public is by far the best way to keep track of where strays are likely to be found. For example, one report of a stray cat this quarter led to the trapping of 7 cats in that area.

A number of feral cats continue to be seen on cameras, particularly around Cape Queen Elizabeth and the seabird rookeries. These cats are savvy of the traps but might be more willing to enter as food sources change in coming months. The main driver of this will be the migration of short-tailed shearwaters, departing in late April for their wintering grounds in the Northern hemisphere.

We'd like to extend our thanks to everyone who is carrying out trapping on their property and those who have reported cat sightings. It all helps us to better manage the impacts of cats on Bruny's wildlife and agriculture.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project was recently featured on the ABC 730 report (Tuesday April 18th - now available on iView) as part of a broader feature on cat control.

Catherine from NRM South and Conrad from Bruny Farming were interviewed about the project and the importance of domestic and feral cat control to protect our native wildlife.

We are very excited that Lou Purcell has recently joined the program. Lou has a background in teaching, ecology and environmental education and her work on Bruny will help engage the community, especially tourism and accommodation services in cat management.



Kingborough Council have been contacting cat owners recently to check-in about compliance with the Bruny Island Cat By-Law which requires domestic cats to be registered with Council, microchipped, desexed and contained to their property. Rates of by-law compliance remain steady, with 74% of households with cats now fully compliant.



A common barrier to complete compliance is containment. This can be a big lifestyle change for some people and their pets, but it is possible. Cat owners say that this transition is much easier for their cat when they provide a stimulating home environment; make regular time each day to play and interact with their cat and when they consistently reward their cat's positive behaviour. Winter is also a great time to gradually increase the hours a cat is inside. Information on transition and enrichment can be found at <https://www.tassiecat.com/at-home>

Not only does cat containment protect wildlife and livestock (from diseases carried by cats), it also keeps our valued pets safe. There are many ways of containing a cat to your property, from simply keeping them indoors to attaching a guard to the top of fences, or building a cat enclosure.

If you need advice on how to contain your cat or assistance constructing a cat safe area, don't hesitate to get in touch with Kingborough Council kc@kingborough.tas.gov.au or 6211 8200.

The feeding of stray cats continues to be a concern on Bruny and it is prohibited under the Bruny Island Cat By-law. Stray cats can quickly breed to create a much bigger problem, and while people feed them out of concern, these cats end up living a life of disease and neglect. The best way to help these cats is to contact Council (6211 8200 or kc@kingborough.tas.gov.au) or Bruny Farming (0409 804 340) so they can be trapped and then receive the necessary care and assessment. Wherever possible, trapped cats are reunited with their owners or rehomed.

RESEARCH RESULTS



In order to investigate the habitat use and home range of feral cats and eastern quolls, a number of feral cats and quolls were trapped, fitted with GPS collars and released. Analysis of this data is now complete and all collars have been removed from animals.

This work was undertaken by project partners Biosecurity Tasmania. In total 2 feral cats (1 male, 1 female) and 12 quolls (10 males, 2 females) were captured in the northern part of the Neck Game Reserve and fitted with GPS collars.

The GPS data shows that in general, the cats and quolls used similar habitat types and there was a lot of overlap in home ranges within and between species (see home range map on the next page).

The male cat roamed over a huge 3104 ha, covering ground from the very south end of the Neck Game Reserve close to Bruny Island Chocolate Co, and north to Get Shucked. In comparison, the female cat stayed mostly close to the airstrip, covering 517 ha. Home ranges of eastern quolls were much smaller, ranging from 16 ha to 396 ha.

Quolls generally used more modified land (agricultural) than the cats. This is likely related to their different diets and foraging strategies. While feral cats are largely hunters, targeting birds, reptiles and small wallabies/pademelons, quolls are more likely to scavenge or hunt insects in open paddocks. The home range sizes found for eastern quolls in this study are larger than previously calculated for eastern quolls in Tasmania (in 1982) but within estimates for other Australian quoll species. The development of small, lightweight GPS technology allows more accurate calculations and will continue to improve our knowledge of animal movements and habitat use.

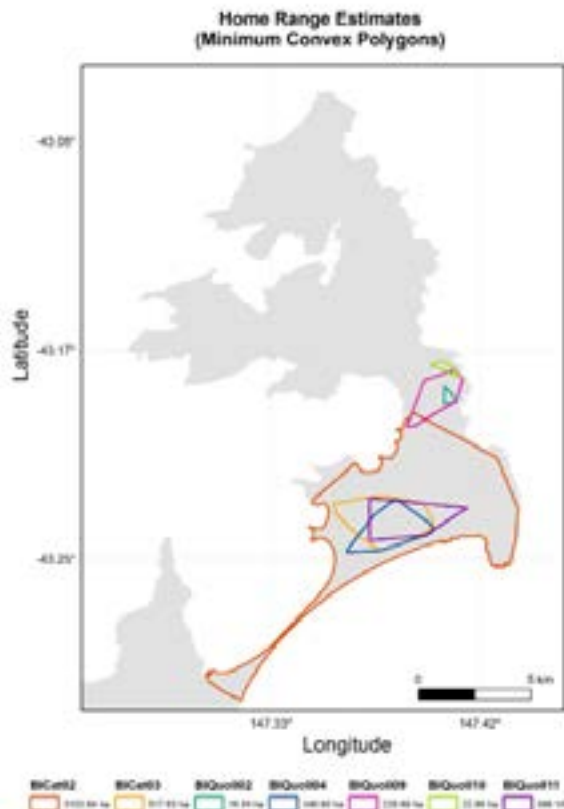
Trapped eastern quolls were also given a thorough health assessment by veterinary staff from the department of Natural Resources and Environment. The individuals assessed varied in health condition with a number found to be infected by parasites carried by cats (toxoplasmosis and intestinal worms); showing signs of anaemia; and/or maintaining high to medium external parasite burden.

For the next stage of the project, permits have been granted to deploy Felixer grooming traps to target feral cats in remote areas, following on from the successful non-lethal trials conducted earlier in the project. It is hoped that Felixer traps will be effective at targeting feral cats that are unwilling to enter cage traps. Felixer grooming traps are passive and only require the feral cat to pass in front of the device, therefore they are better able to target more wary individuals. This trial will inform us on the potential use of these devices on Bruny Island in the future. In total three devices will be placed with the northern end on the Neck Game Reserve for four weeks in May 2023. These devices are trained to specifically target cats and earlier trials have shown the risk to native wildlife is minimal. [More information on Felixers can be found here](#) (or head the resource library of our website and type in "Felixer FAQ").

HOW YOU CAN HELP



- Record all sightings of feral cats on Bruny Island via FeralCatScan. Visit the [website](#) or download the free smart phone App or contact Kingborough Council ph: 6211 8200 / kc@kingborough.tas.gov.au to report a cat sighting.
- Get assistance to trap stray or feral cats on your property. Contact Kingborough Council's Cat Management Officer, on 03 6211 8200 or kallan@kingborough.tas.gov.au for information. Where appropriate stray cats are transferred to Ten Lives Cat Centre for rehoming.
- Encourage cat owners to protect their cat, along with local wildlife and livestock by complying with the Bruny Island Cat By-Law.
- Find out more about the project [here](#), or contact NRM South on 0447 266 527.



Home range estimates for tracked cats and quolls

Project partners



Supporting organisations



This project is supported by NRM South through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. It is delivered in partnership with Bruny Farming, Biosecurity Tasmania, Kingborough Council, Ten Lives Cat Centre, the South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Cooperation and with support from the weetapoon Aboriginal Corporation.