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Project update Feb 2019 – July 2019

Contents

Control of feral and stray cats

Since the program commended in late 2016 **122 stray and feral cats** have been managed from the Neck Game Reserve, Simpsons Bay and Alonnah areas. This includes 17 feral cats trapped by Bruny Farming between April and July (2019) within the Neck Game Reserve seabird colonies. Roughly half of these 17 cats were trapped at Cape Queen Elizabeth and the remainder at the Neck. Of the 41 feral cats removed from the Neck Game Reserve area since the program commenced trapping in July 2017, 69% were juvenile or sub-adult and 68% were female. The vast majority were trapped with the use of tuna between April and July once the shearwaters left the seabird rookeries.

Research by the University of Tasmania (School of Biological Sciences) during the seabird breeding season found that between 2016 and 2019 the density of feral cats within The Neck seabird colony reduced from 51 to 15 cats/km^2. These results are currently being verified, and suggest good news for the seabirds. However, several feral cats have continued to evade capture by traps including three cats with GPS collars.

The UTAS 2019 monitoring at the Neck and adjacent areas captured the same five individual cats on camera in both April and July (including one of the cats with a GPS collar). This was despite intensive trapping in these locations during this period. In addition, four new individual cats were detected in June and July, including two sub-adult cats. These findings confirm that methods other than trapping are needed, and that cat numbers can rebound quickly. Clearly for control to be effective it must be ongoing and consistent and include strategic monitoring to enable management to adapt where necessary.

Female feral cat with 4 kittens
courtesy of Cyril Scomparin UTAS

'Catch per unit effort' (CPUE) is a commonly used to indicate trapping efficacy (Figure 1). A lower rate indicates better efficacy. However over years of consistent trapping and as feral cat numbers decline CPUE generally increases as it takes more effort to catch the remaining 'smart' cats.

Many factors optimise trapping success/CPUE and the most effective techniques often differ between locations. Factors include knowing where and when to trap, the best lures and trap set up, how to avoid capture of non-target species, and the behaviour of different cats and age-classes.

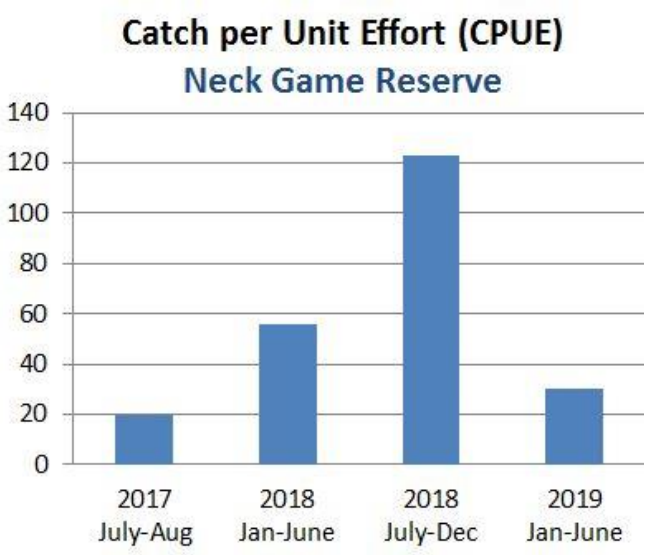


Figure 1: 'Catch per unit effort' (CPUE) is estimated by multiplying the total number of days that traps are set by the number of traps and dividing by the number of feral cats caught. A lower rate indicates better efficacy.

Differences in the CPUE (Figure 1) can largely be explained by seasonal difference in trapping success. In addition, since Bruny Farming started work with the program in December 2017 their monitoring and trials have enabled them to develop an understanding of individual cat movements and refine their trapping techniques. For example, some feral cats display a regular seven to ten day movement pattern through an area (confirming DPIPWE findings); using GPS data three cats that frequently used the culverts to access the tidal flats of Simpsons Bay were successfully trapped; placing tuna in re-usable small plastic containers has reduced dryness, extended the lure and reduced mess and waste during transport and setting; identifying and trapping near local food sources (such as food waste, grain stores and abundant road kill) can assist success. This knowledge and skill is reflected in the 2019 CPUE and will help reduce the time and costs required for each feral cat trapped in future.

Unlike other programs, shooting has not been able to be used as a control method. This is because of the restrictions placed on control activities within public land, the large number of people accessing the Neck Game Reserve and adjacent areas and the challenges posed by dense vegetation.

The program would like to extend special thanks to Paul Davis, property owner of Fairyland and Sally Bryant, manager of Lutregala Marsh which is owned by Tasmanian Land Conservancy. These properties lie immediately north and south of The Neck (respectively) and their participation has extended the reach and effectiveness of our work.

Before feral trapping began in mid-2017 all residents within 2 km of the Neck Game Reserve were notified and no domestic cats have been trapped during the program. However since September 2016, **81 stray cats** were managed in the Simpsons Bay and Alonnah areas. The vast majority were taken to the Ten Lives Cat Centre, where approximately 37% were able to be desexed and vaccinated and either rehomed off the island (29%) or returned to an owner on the island (8%). Bruny Farming has been the key point of contact for private landowners seeking help with stray and feral cats on their properties. Having their local presence will continue to be crucial to building community involvement in the program.

Stray cat received by Ten Lives Cat Centre staff

Council would like to thank all those community members that have worked with the program to help manage these stray cats. In addition, this work would not have been possible without the dedicated work of the Ten Lives Cat Centre.

Bruny Farming is now employing two other Bruny Islanders on the cat management program.

They also continue to provide work experience for the school-based Aboriginal apprenticeship program in Conservation and Land Management.


Staff of Bruny Farming from right, Conrad, Leisha and Paul

Results of elevated platform trial – modern rubber-padded (or soft-catch) leg-hold traps are used by most large-scale feral cat management projects around the world, especially during the later stages and to capture 'trap-wary' feral cats. A range of techniques have been effectively used to minimise the risk of trapping and injuring non-target species. However because Bruny Island has several native animals that could potentially be trapped by leg-holds, every effort must to be made to prevent this, should they ever be approved for use. In WA leg-hold traps set off the ground (on a platform) and baited with cat specific lure (cat faeces and urine) have been found to reduce the number of non-target captures.

In partnership with Sue Robinson (DPIPWE), Bruny Farming ran a trial of raised platforms at 22 sites around The Neck area. Interestingly the study showed a very low level of attraction (0.8%) to the platforms by feral cats. Only 1 cat on one occasion jumped onto a platform to investigate the scent lure despite 130 images of cats near the platforms. In comparison, 12.8% of all images of Eastern Quolls were of Quolls on the platform, indicating a potentially high by-catch rate. Brush-tailed Possums recorded a 3.9% potential by-catch rate. The study also found that Forest Ravens, Black Currawongs and Boobook Owls may also be at risk of by-catch depending on how the traps are set.

Overall the study found that the platforms and lures trialled did not effectively attract cats or deter Eastern Quolls and Brush-tailed Possums. It is recommended that other techniques be investigated to improve effectiveness and to mitigate any potential impact on non-target species.

It should be noted that the use of leg-hold traps in Tasmania requires a Ministerial exemption under Section 12 (2) of the Tasmanian *Animal Welfare Act 1993.*

A Brush-tailed Possum, Eastern Quoll and feral cat investigate the platforms lured with cat urine and faeces.

Diet of feral cats - Analysis of the gut contents of 21 feral cats trapped by the program (most within the Neck Game Reserve seabird colonies) between 2017 and 2019 was undertaken by Cyril Scomparin's UTas PhD research. Seventy one percent of the cats had evidence of the presence of birds as prey items and 47% has evidence of the presence of mammals. Further genetic analysis will be undertaken to identify the individual species.

Feral cat and swamp rat
courtesy of Cyril Scomparin UTAS

Monitoring and research

Feral cat density & distribution on North Bruny (research by Matt Pauza, Invasive Species Branch DPIPWE)

Remote camera monitoring at 18 sites across North Bruny and the Neck was undertaken between November 2017 and March 2018. Analysis to date has identified approximately 27 individual feral cats. The cats were identified based on their physical characteristics using six or more independent images. The features assessed were size, sex, ear damage, tail shape and coat patterning (specifically on the fore and hind leg, shoulder and tail). Twenty three of these have been clearly identified from their physical characteristics and the remaining four can't be clearly identified.

Distribution and density (Figure 2) - feral cats were detected at 11 of the 18 (61%) survey sites (each site consisted of 6 cameras). Only one of the identified cats was recorded on one occasion at one site while the remaining 22 cats were recorded at two or more sites across the study area.

Only five (18%) of the 27 feral cats were detected north of Great Bay. This is an area of approximately 72 km^2 giving a density estimate of roughly 0.07 feral cats/km^2. The remaining 22 (82%) cats were detected in the area between Great Bay and the Neck Game Reserve (approximately 30 km^2), giving a density estimate for this area of roughly 0.7 cats/km^2.

Approximately half (14 individuals or 52%) of the feral cats were detected at survey site 20 at Cape Queen Elizabeth. Based on the area surveyed (1.6km^2) the density estimate for this site is 8.8 cats/km^2. Sixty two percent of all feral cats identified were detected at sites 20 and 13 which both lie within the seabird colonies of the Neck Game Reserve.

Interaction of feral cats with other species – black rats and rabbits were detected at 12 (66%) and 10 (55%) of the 18 sites respectively. Of the 11 sites where feral cats were detected, 8 (72%) also detected black rats and 7 (63%) also detected rabbits.

Behavioural observations - many of the identified feral cats were detected on numerous occasions at multiple survey sites. For example two cats were both detected travelling between sites 16, 18 and 19 (an area of approximately 13 km2) on a seven or ten day cycle. Over the 35 day survey period, another cat was observed four times moving in alternating directions along a track. The time between detections was about five to seven days. This information suggests habitual movement patterns along defined routes for hunting or access to particular areas.

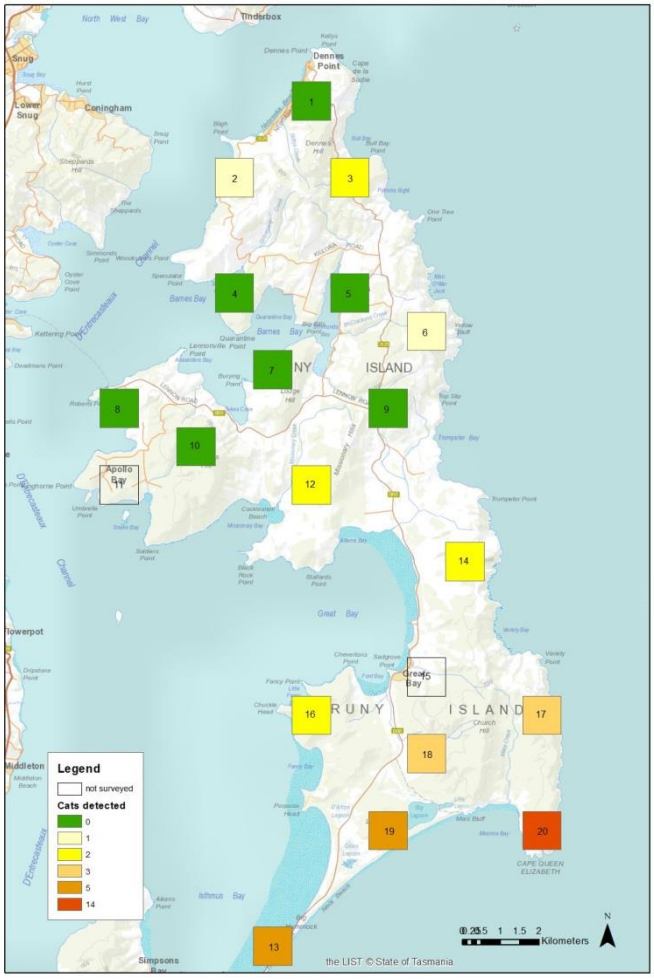


Figure 2: Number of individual feral cats detected on remote cameras across North Bruny between Nov 2017-March 2018 courtesy of Invasive Species Branch, DPIPWE

Tracking feral cats at the Neck Game Reserve

Picking up the GPS signals from collared cats with antenna

The GPS tracking of feral cats has provided invaluable information to help target control. The Neck and Cape Queen Elizabeth seabird rookeries have been critical sites for control of feral cats that travel large distances from the rookeries into North and South Bruny.

Seven feral cats were tracked (three female and four male) and monitored for up to 14 months. The cats showed some similar movement patterns throughout the monitoring period. The seabird colonies were a focus for all collared cats. While two of the female cats rarely moved far outside the boundaries of the colonies throughout the year, one female travelled well beyond the colony when the shearwaters were absent. The movement of male cats varied from a long distance across the study area to smaller home ranges that focused on seabird colonies and adjacent habitats. The home range of the three female cats varied between 0.5 and 3 km^2 while the home range of the four male cats varied between 8 and 50 km^2.

Male cats have overlapping home ranges in and adjacent to the sea bird colonies suggesting abundant food resources and an absence of territoriality. All cats utilised open beaches and fore-dunes to travel with some cats using the sand flats at low tide for travel or foraging.

Figures 3 & 4 highlight the different movement patterns when shearwaters are present and absent for the 3.1kg female and 4.7kg male. Seasonal movements of the other feral cats are currently being investigated.

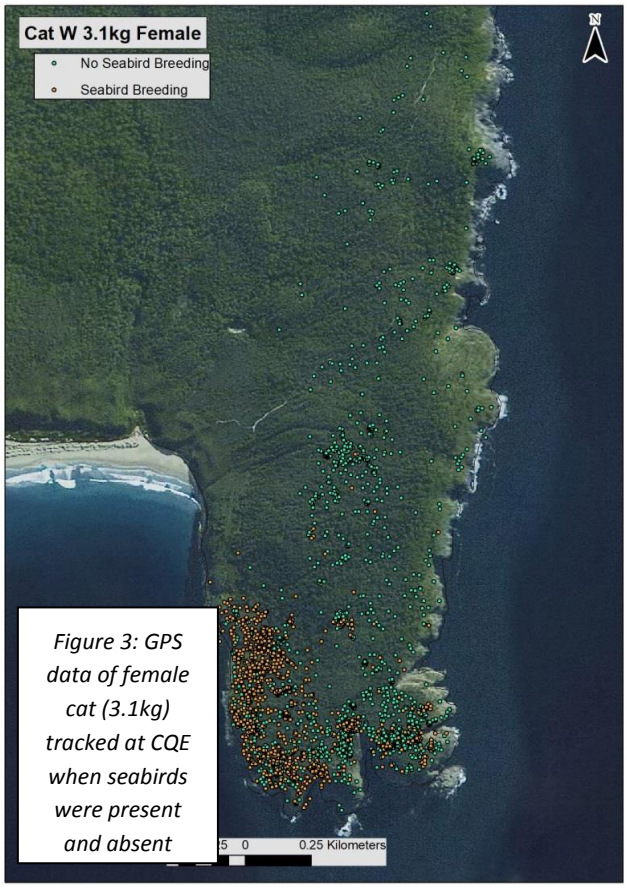


Figure 3: GPS data of female cat (3.1kg) tracked at CQE when seabirds were present and absent

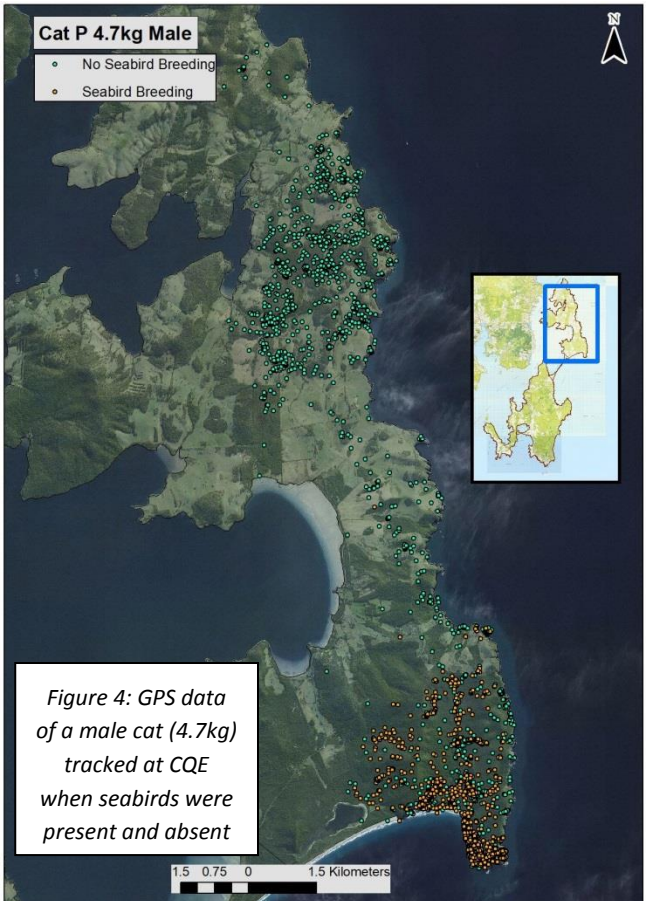


Figure 4: GPS data of a male cat (4.7kg) tracked at CQE when seabirds were present and absent

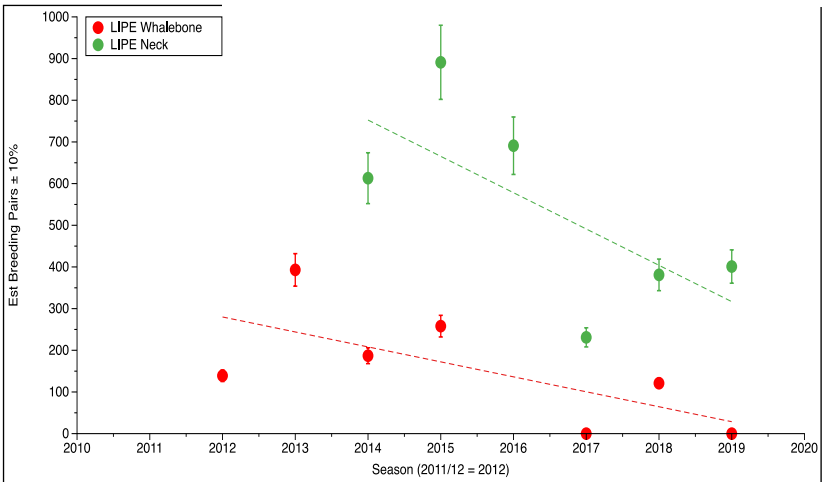
The density figures for feral cats (page 5) and the home ranges of the seven tracked cats will soon be refined based on innovative modelling techniques that combine the camera and GPS tracking data.

Monitoring of seabirds and Hooded Plovers to assess impact of feral cat management
(research by Birdlife Tasmania)

A fundamental part of the feral cat management work on Bruny has been to evaluate the impact of cat management on the native species we are trying to protect. Ground nesting seabirds (shearwaters and little penguins) and shorebirds (Hooded Plovers) are particularly vulnerable to predation from cats due to their lack of defence and the fact that they breed at a much lower rate than cats. Many studies have shown that control of feral cats on islands helps seabird breeding populations recover.

Birdlife Tasmania (BT) undertook annual surveys of Short-tailed Shearwaters, Little Penguins and Hooded Plovers from Dec 2016 to Dec 2018. The aim was to use these results, along with previous BT data to establish baseline breeding populations at the Neck (intervention site) and Whalebone Point seabird colonies and beaches (control site). This is to help assess the impact of feral cat control on their populations over time and to identify any trends from the data to date.

Figure 5: Breeding pairs of Little Penguins (LIPE) at The Neck & Whalebone Point colonies



Little Penguins and Short-tailed Shearwaters - data from 2011/2012-2018/19 indicated considerable variation between years in the size of Little Penguin (LP) and Short-tailed Shearwater (STSH) breeding populations at the Neck and Whalebone Point colonies.

At the Neck colony, data from six summer surveys from 2013/14 to 2018/19, found the mean annual population of LP to be 535 ± 241 pairs and STSH to be 9872 ± 2930 pairs. At the Whalebone Point colony, data from seven summer surveys from 2011/12 to 2018/19, found the mean annual population of LP to be 157 ± 140 pairs and STSH to be 5518 ± 2158 pairs.

Overall, the surveys identified a small decrease in the annual estimates of breeding populations of LP at both sites. While this was not statistically significant, BT suggested it may indicate the future for these colonies. For the second time in three seasons, the survey at the Whalebone Point colony found no evidence of penguins in burrows (along the transects), despite adjacent fresh penguin splash. In contrast, the data suggests an increasing trend for STSH at The Neck colony. However this trend was also not statistically significant.

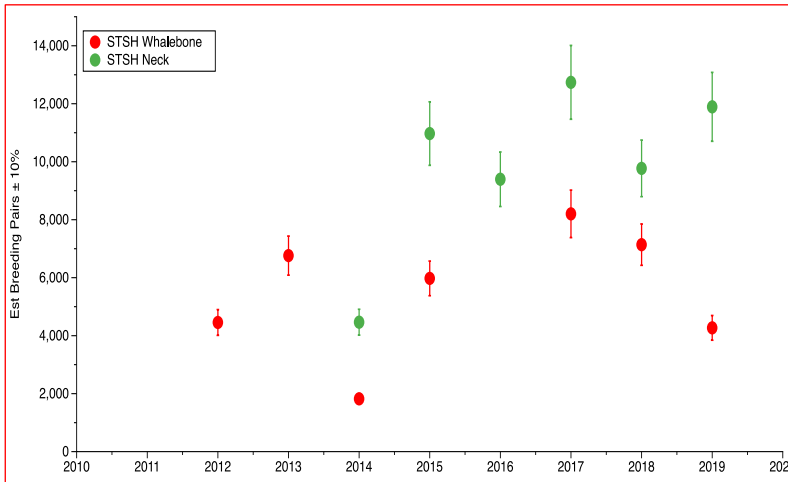


Figure 6: Breeding pairs of Short-tailed Shearwaters at The Neck & Whalebone Point colonies

A broad range of off-shore and land based factors impact on these species and contribute to the variation in breeding populations between years. 'At sea' threats include impacts of climate change on food availability (due to ocean acidification and warming) and extreme storm events, and interaction with fisheries. For example, lower numbers of STSH in the summer of 2013/14 coincided with large numbers of dead shearwaters washed ashore around southern Australia. Land based threats include disturbance and habitat degradation from human activities, coastal development, pollution, invasive plants, dogs and cats. These are particularly significant for shearwaters that migrate long distances from the northern hemisphere to southern Australia.

At The Neck, changes over several decades in vegetation and erosion, has also resulted in undercutting of the fore-dunes and dense growth of coastal wattle and marram grass. This is creating difficulties for Little Penguins to access their burrows, which in turn increases predation risk.

Because LP and STSH are both long lived and there is large variation in the size of breeding populations between years, much longer term data sets are needed to be able to confidently assess the overall trends and consider any impacts of feral cat control. However disentangling the relative contribution of cat predation from other impacts will be a challenge. BT has recommended ongoing annual summer surveys of LP and STSH at the Neck and Whalebone Point. Long term monitoring of these species, both in Storm Bay and around Tasmania is also recommended to determine if the Bruny Island populations are representative of broader trends.

Hooded Plovers - at the Neck Beach, data from nine summer surveys from 1980 to 2018, found the mean breeding population of Hooded Plovers (HP) to be three. It also showed an overall decline since 1980, when five pairs were recorded to no pairs in 2018/19. This was the first time they were not recorded.

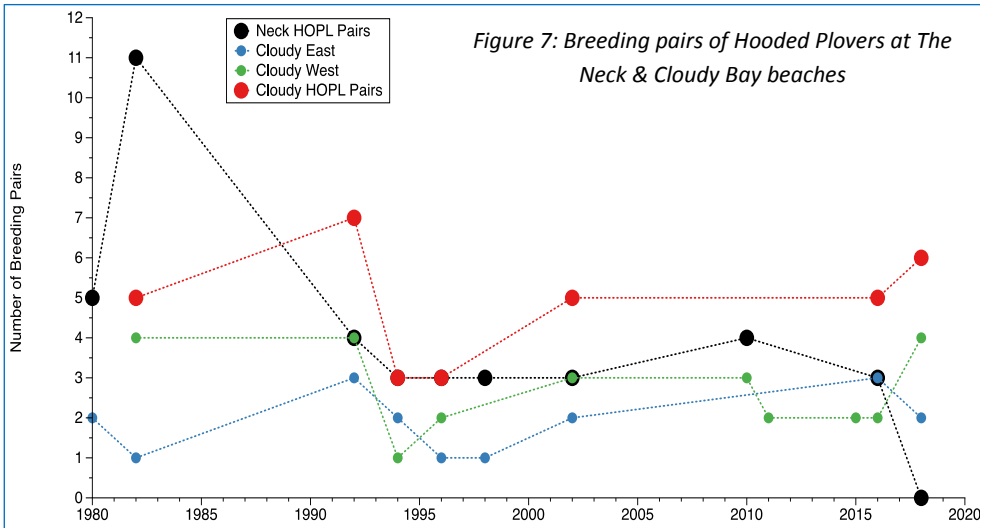


Figure 7: Breeding pairs of Hooded Plovers at The Neck & Cloudy Bay beaches

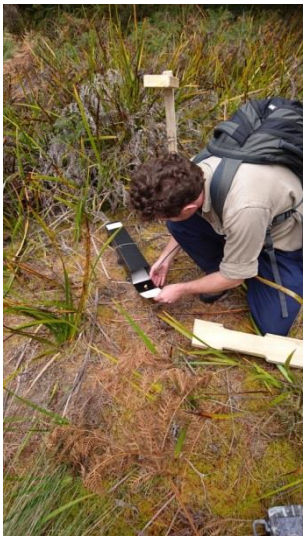
According to Birdlife Tasmania this reflects the trend for the species across southeast Tasmania where disturbance from human activities on beaches is increasing, especially in summer months when the birds breed. Increases in tourism and recreational activities at the Neck Beach including walking dogs off-leash were noted as contributing to this loss. In addition recent winter storms are causing increased erosion of the Neck Beach decreasing the amount of suitable breeding habitat for HP above the high water mark.

In comparison the breeding population of HP on Cloudy Beaches has remained relatively stable since 1982/83 (three - seven pairs). However BT predicts future declines due to increasing disturbance on these beaches from vehicles, visitation and dogs off-leash. Birdlife Tasmania has recommended ongoing three to five yearly summer surveys of HP at the Neck and Cloudy Bay beaches.

Influence of feral cats and seabirds on rodent populations on Bruny Island (research by Lachlan Francis, Threatened Species Recovery Hub, University of Queensland)

Research has shown that invasive rodents are common across Bruny landscapes, including in seabird colonies. Because cats prey on feral rats and mice there are concerns that they may increase on Bruny if feral cats are managed or eradicated. To examine this possibility, in 2018 Lachlan Francis from the Threatened Species Recovery Hub (University of QLD) undertook field work as a part of his Honours research. He investigated the interactions among feral cats, rats, and seabirds. Study sites with different combinations of invasive rats, cats and seabirds were chosen. All sites have black rats: The Neck and Whalebone Point which also have cats and seabirds; Courts Island which also has seabirds; and Partridge Island which has neither cats or seabirds.

Rat tracking tunnels (baited with peanut butter) were used to detect the presence of both invasive and native rats, and tracking results were modelled to investigate the influence of cats and seabirds on rodent tracking. The aim was to determine whether rats are less abundant when cats are present and more abundant in the presence of seabirds. The study found that the while the presence of cats did not have a significant impact on the likelihood of detecting rats (modelling showed a slight, but insignificant, negative response), rats were more likely to be detected when seabirds were present.



Rat tracking tunnels baited with peanut butter and an example of the rat tracks recorded

While this was a small study and with limitations, the findings suggest that the size of invasive rat populations on Bruny are potentially more influenced by the availability of their food supply than by the presence of a key predator e.g. feral cats. Bruny Island's fertile soils, high rainfall and diverse ecosystems, supports a large range of food sources for rats including seeds, fruits, grasses and a variety of invertebrates and small vertebrates. Thus rats are likely to already be present at high levels across the landscape. Other islands where invasive rats have increased once cats are removed are characterised by lower food availability.

The field work also identified the presence of the highly competitive native Swamp Rat at some sites. Interestingly, results showed that black rats and Swamp Rats typically did not occur together at the same study sites. It is proposed that if feral cats were significantly reduced or eradicated, the competition from Swamp Rats may assist to help to limit any increase in invasive rodent populations, although Black Rats may already be at levels close to maximum populations. The study concluded that feral rats are not likely to drastically increase in response to cat eradication or control, given their existing interactions with Swamp Rats and the ecological complexity of Bruny Island.

Photo of native swamp rat courtesy of Hans & Annie Wapstra

Protecting Bruny's unique ecosystems and habitats is critical to safeguarding native species (e.g. Swamp Rat) and maintaining species interactions. This is the only approach that offers long term resilience for native fauna in the face of numerous threats such as climate change, disease and invasive species.

University of Tasmania (School of Biological Sciences) PhD Research (Cyril Scomparin)

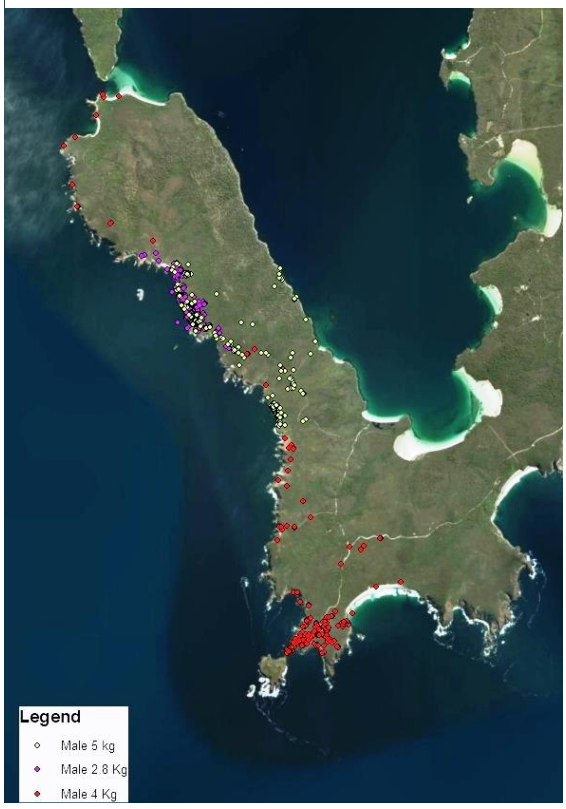
Cyril Scomparin commenced his PhD research with UTAS in April 2018. His work is financially supported by Pennicott Wilderness Journeys and Bruny Island Coastal Retreats and will be critical to better understand the distribution and ecology of feral cats across the entire island and the impacts of cat control on both native and invasive species.

Early analysis of Cyril's camera data from 14 sites across the island has confirmed the findings of previous monitoring by UTAS (2015) and DPIPWE (2017/18). On North Bruny few feral cats were recorded north of Great Bay, while the seabird colonies of the Neck Game Reserve recorded the highest cat densities. On South Bruny more feral cats were recorded across different habitats than in the north, and wet forests were among the habitats with the most feral cat detections. No Eastern-barred Bandicoots, Southern-brown Bandicoots or Tasmanian Bettongs were detected at any site despite the presence of suitable habitat and the extensive survey.

With the help of Conrad Daniels and veterinarian Andrew Nicholson, Cyril has also trapped and fitted nine feral cats on South Bruny (in the wet forests and Labillardiere Peninsula) with GPS tracking collars. This work will help to understand their movement patterns across different landscapes and seasons, and plan any future control efforts.

Given the density of vegetation in the wet forests it has been difficult however to log the GPS signals for those cats and different methods are currently being trialled. One month (mid-June to mid-July) of data from the three male feral cats tracked on the Labillardiere Peninsula is shown in Figure 8 While their home ranges vary considerably, they all overlap and all cats visit the seabird colonies of the Peninsula. The 4kg male cat travelled over an area of approximately 12km^2.

Figure 8: GPS data of 3 male cats on Labillardiere Peninsula courtesy of Cyril Scomparin UTAS



Other points of interest from Cyril's trapping work include: of the nine feral cats trapped for collaring, eight have been males; in the wet forests, red meat has been more successful than tuna to trap cats and most of these cats are black (compared with 28% of those cats trapped within the Neck Game Reserve). In addition, on the Labillardiere Peninsula the GPS collared cats have been re-trapped several times, indicating they aren't trap wary.

Cyril has also developed an effective method using cameras to identify individual Eastern Quolls and thus provide density estimates. This method will likely be important to assess the impact of future cat control work focussing on North Bruny. Cyril used two cameras, one facing downwards to capture the unique spot pattern on both sides of a quoll's body and the other facing vertically to capture multiple quolls in the area. This is very time consuming work. For example, at one site, which is not the quoll's preferred habitat, 38 individual quolls were identified from 2600 photos taken over 70 nights of monitoring from 20 cameras.

Management of domestic cats

Bruny Island Cat By-law - Tasmania's first comprehensive cat By-law (Bruny Island Cat By-law) was approved under the *Local Government Act 1993*. Written submissions were received from six people during the public consultation period. Key concerns focussed on the registration process and permit system (for keeping more than two cats); the need for ongoing positive community education and engagement; and to ensure effective enforcement. Three minor technical changes were made to the By-law as a result of the feedback. The By-law is now being phased in.

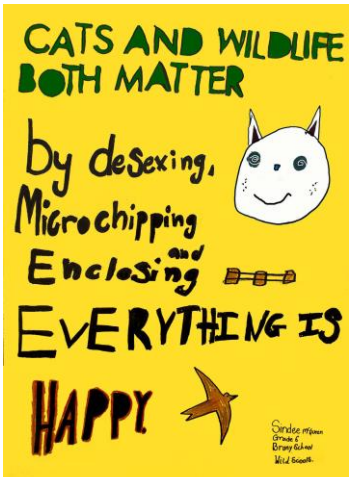
One-on-one contact with cat owners has been important to build trust and to understand and address concerns, especially about 'cat containment'. Discussions revealed the concern that cat enclosures will be required and inspected. This helped us ensure that the By-law is consistent with the *Dog Control Act 2000* and enforced in response to community complaints and evidence of a cat being outside the owner's property boundaries. Cat owners can choose to keep their cat inside their house, within an enclosure, use a fence-top system or a harness and lead (when outside with their cat). As is the case with dogs, it is fine for a cat to be unrestrained on an owner's property e.g. when household members are outside with them and thus effectively under their control.

Assistance to Bruny cat owners - with extra funds from BICA, BIEN and the Ten Lives Cat Centre, Council is continuing to offer assistance to Bruny cat owners to plan and build containment options for their cats (e.g. enclosures, cat flaps, verandah netting). To date Council has provided support to 14 households and advice on helping cats make the transition is also available.

Scoobie' s new home (just completed) at Alonnah

Bruny cat holding facility - funded by Council and the Ten Lives Cat Centre the facility has been completed and transported to Alonnah. The facility will provide a place for the community to bring stray and feral cats for assessment and care. The Facility is currently being furbished and will be operating next year under the guidance and policies of TLCC. Kaylene and Conrad Daniels (Bruny Farming) spent time at TLCC this year to learn about the practicalities of intake, assessment and care for cats. The operation of the facility on Bruny will help safeguard the humane treatment of all cats and ensure wherever possible that any domestic cats are returned to their owner. These principles are critical to building community engagement in the program.

Community engagement



Community engagement survey - views and ideas from the Bruny community on cat management.

Early this year, Council undertook a community survey to better understand community attitudes towards feral and domestic cat management on the island and to identify ways to keep the community involved and informed. Fifty six people completed the survey, including 42 Bruny residents and 14 non-resident rate payers. Sixteen respondents were from North Bruny, 40 were from the South and 12 were cat owners.

Respondents were very willing to be engaged in the program. The most popular activities included, reporting the presence of feral or stray cats to Council (86%), allowing access to properties for feral cat control (82%), participating in citizen science programs e.g. monitoring (73%) and advocating for the program to others (61%).

The research highlighted however, the need for information and discussion about future methods to control feral cats *before* they are introduced. Baiting, leg-hold traps, detector dogs and fences were of particular concern and require information on how such methods would be used, the risks managed and feedback and results on their use in other programs. The need to ensure adequate training of those undertaking the control was also highlighted.

The survey identified that there is still some confusion about cat owner obligations under the new Cat By-law and that more promotion and education is required, particularly about cat registration. There was also concern that the By-law be implemented effectively and fairly; in a way that does not create community division; and support is offered where appropriate to cat owners. It was positive to note that both cat owners and non-cat owners were willing to talk with other community members about the importance of complying with the By-law.

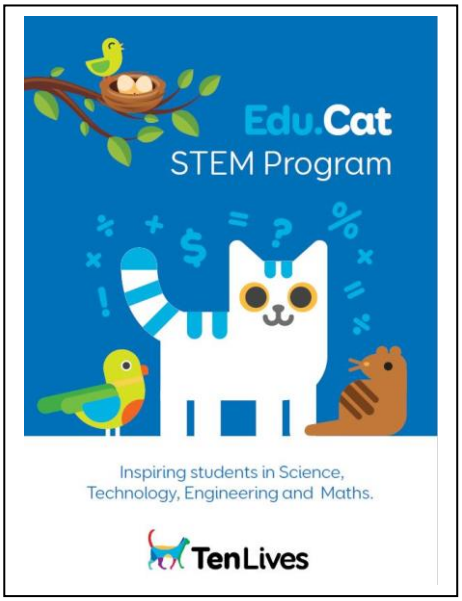
The survey found that there was significant support for establishing a Bruny Island Community Ranger program to assist with implementing the By-law, including trapping stray cats. Respondents were keen for a Ranger position to also help address other issues such as weed management, littering, visitor information, illegal camping and dog management.

A range of other ideas were put forward to engage and inform the community. These ranged from local employment opportunities and creating a 'visible' presence on the island (e.g. signage and a shop front), through to, the development of an effective public reporting and feedback system for cat sightings and adding $5 to the proposed tourist levee to fund feral cat eradication.

How the program is promoted also received considerable attention. Respondents identified the need to promote good news stories, including the broad benefits of the program and how community members are getting involved; promote the program to island visitors and use inclusive communication messages rather than anti-cat sentiments. Nearly half of respondents provided their contact details for future involvement in the program.

Council wishes to thank Anne Morgan and Adrian Howard for their work to encourage people to participate in the survey, Dr Lynette McLeod (University of New England) for assisting with the survey design and analysing the results and all the people who took the time to respond to yet *another* Bruny Island survey – thank you! A full copy of the survey results can be found at: https://www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/engaging-bruny-island-community/

Bruny Island District School - in 2018 all students from Kinder to Year 7 at Bruny District School completed the *Edu.Cat program*. The program was developed by Ten Lives Cat Centre and uses STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) based education to create long term change in how people care for cats, wildlife and the community.



Feedback from Ten Lives staff highlighted the broad knowledge and interest of the Bruny students and teachers compared with other schools. The students drew extensively from their existing understanding about looking after pets and the impact of cats on the environment. They were particularly strong in interactive aspects of the program, including designing education messages that creatively engage audiences. Well done Bruny students and staff!!

Bruny Island Aboriginal Ranger Program - since September 2018 the program has supported weetapoona Aboriginal Corporation's school-based apprenticeship program in Conservation and Land Management. Bruny Farming generously provided weekly work experience for Blake Lovell in feral cat monitoring and control and agricultural land management. The program has provided excellent hands-on experience for Blake and will support the future employment of Aboriginal Rangers on Bruny.

Council consulted with weetapoona Aboriginal Corporation to develop a proposal for the Bruny Island Aboriginal Ranger position. A business case and position description were prepared and presented to Council, along with letters of support from key community organisations. It was proposed that the program undertake community liaison, education and enforcement of the Bruny Island Cat By-law, along with broader environmental compliance work. This position would also build Aboriginal enterprise, training and employment opportunities on Bruny. While Council did not fund the program in their 2019-20 budget, we will continue to seek funding opportunities.

Field Day for land owners - over 50 Bruny Islanders joined Council, Tasmanian Land Conservancy and NRM South in April at Apollo Bay to learn about how to protect and create wildlife habitat and monitor for feral cats and native animals on their properties.

Apollo Bay Field Day

Promotion activities and presentations - about the program were undertaken as part of the Bruny Island Bird Festival, PWS Summer Ranger program, Quarantine Station Science Day and Bruny Island Easter Woodchopping Carnival. A new promotional video was also prepared by Brad Moriarty (Pademelon Creative) with the involvement of the Bruny Farming team. More information & videos on the project: https://www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/cats-bruny-island/

Future directions

With the first stage of the project completing in June 30 this year, Council partnered with NRM South and DPIPWE to prepare a proposal to the Federal Government's Regional Land Partnerships Program. The proposal was successful under the Federal Government's Environment Restoration Fun and the Federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley visited Bruny on September 23 to announce the funding. The new project will be co-ordinated through NRM South and the project plan is currently being developed. It will build on the investments and outcomes to date and address outcomes for threatened species on the island (particularly the Eastern Quoll). It will intensify work at the Neck and across North Bruny and importantly work to engage community members and land managers. It will also progress island wide adoption of responsible pet cat ownership.

Federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley and Noel Hunt Manager of Ten Lives Cat Centre at Alonnah cat facility

THE BRUNY ISLAND CAT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY MANY PARTNERS

The program would also like to extend special thanks to all those Bruny land owners or managers that allowed us to monitor on their property.