

# King Island cat control project



Sand trap for cat prints



## Outputs

Cats trapped: 131

Area surveyed: 45km of coast and 20 sand pads surveyed for cat prints

## Products

- *Responsible Cat Ownership* brochure
- Community survey
- Cat Database and data recording sheets
- Maps of cat distribution on King Island

## Expenditure

TSN grant funds - \$38,071.00

Proponent - \$120,674.40

Total project - \$158,755.40

Feral cats are believed to be a major threat to critically endangered orange-bellied parrots during their stop over on King Island. With the assistance of a Threatened Species Network Community Grant and in partnership with the Parks and Wildlife Service, King Island Council, community groups and landholders, the King Island Natural Resource Management Group conducted cat control to reduce and quantify the suspected impact of cats on the parrots and to determine additional priority sites for future control. A community education program was also initiated to encourage the responsible ownership of domestic cats.

## Species Profile: Orange-bellied parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*)

Commonwealth Status: Critically Endangered (EPBC Act 1999)

Tasmania Status: Endangered (Threatened Species Protection Act 1995)

Orange-bellied parrots are small green parrots with a distinctive orange patch on their bellies. They breed in Tasmania then migrate to the coasts of Victoria and South Australia for the winter, with many individuals stopping over at King Island on the way. Probably due to loss and fragmentation of habitat, the species has declined severely to fewer than two hundred mature individuals. The remaining birds are threatened by many factors, including lack of habitat, natural disasters and predation from feral cats and foxes.

Other King Island fauna potentially threatened by feral cats include the King Island green rosella (*Platycercus caledonicus brownii*), Latham's snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*), King Island scrubtit (*Acanthornis magnus greenianus*) and many other birds and small animals.

## Project outcomes

Over a hundred and twenty cats were trapped on the island, reducing their impact on wildlife and also generating important baseline information on feral cat distribution and food preferences. Cats were found to be extremely common all over the island and some of the cats were caught in close proximity to the known orange-bellied parrot roosting and feeding sites. The community education program and subsidised de-sexing offered for domestic cats proved very effective, with over thirty domestic cats de-sexed as part of the project. Ninety-eight percent of 134 respondents to a community survey strongly supported control of feral cats.

The project relied heavily on volunteers and has greatly expanded the network of people able to effectively control feral cats into the future. Project volunteers, landowners and Parks & Wildlife rangers are committed to ongoing cat control; and King Island NRMG will maintain a project officer to assist and coordinate volunteers. Future objectives of King Island NRMG include securing more funds for orange-bellied parrot conservation, and in the long term eradicating feral cats altogether and establishing a cat management plan in conjunction with King Island Council.

King Island Natural Resource Management Group Inc (2006) Final report to the TSN on "King Island Cat Control Project" (TSN reference TAS02/105).

Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Team (1998). Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Plan, Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania.