



Potoroo Postings

Issue # 2023/1



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CALENDAR

NOTE: All volunteers undertaking field work with GPAG require a DBCA Dieback Green Card. See details on page 8

Members will be emailed with more details on upcoming events & volunteering opportunities as dates etc firm up. Non-members should keep an eye on our social media channels & website for more information or email mail@potoroo.org.

May 22 - 27, May 31 - June 6: Bald Island trapping with Dr Tony Friend. If interested please email tony.friend@dbca.wa.gov.au & cc mail@potoroo.org for more information.

June 8, 7.00pm: GPAG AGM, online via Teams/Zoom.

June: Vegetation & fungi surveys, dates to be confirmed. Email mail@potoroo.org for more information.

GPAG ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE NOW

In early March we sent out our annual membership invoice to those whose membership is tied to our financial year, so this message is just a gentle reminder to those of you for whom paying might have slipped your mind. Your being part of our group is very important to us and we'd love you to continue your membership. A big thank you to those who have already paid and updated their personal details to ensure our data base is correct. We are delighted that our GPAG membership has remained at about 100 (about the same number as there are Potoroos in the world but we'd really love to get both those numbers higher!) and we hope, whether you are old or newer members, that you will all choose to renew your membership for another year – or join for the first time if you've been following what we've been doing but haven't quite got around to joining... If you've set up an annually renewing membership through the website you will not have received a renewal notice as your membership will be renewed automatically on your payment anniversary. Thank you everyone for your ongoing support!



Contact us: Email: mail@potoroo.org, Mail: PO Box 654, Albany, WA 6331

Visit us: www.potoroo.org

Follow us: [@gilbertspotoroo](https://www.facebook.com/GilbertsPotorooActionGroup) [@gilbertspotoroo](https://www.instagram.com/gilbertspotoroo)

FROM THE CHAIR

From the Chair

I did wonder whether the long drive to Esperance for our Kepa Kurl Community Conservation Forum on 25th March was going to be really worthwhile but it proved to be an excellent day and more than worth the effort of getting there (see report on p. 10). The nearly 40 attendees on the day were treated to a variety of interesting and very well-presented talks, ranging from the work being done to save endangered species like Gilbert's Potoroo and the Western Ground Parrot, to the conservation work of the local Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation and volunteer groups in the Esperance region. We even had a fascinating talk on the surprising diversity of the carnivorous plants of Kepa Kurl! Dinner and local culturally inspired food tastings at the Lucky Bay Brewery rounded the day off perfectly. As always, Jackie Courtenay's organisation of the event was excellent, with thanks also due to committee members Leigh Whisson and Jen Merritt for their contributions and Hannah Blampied from the Esperance Civic Centre for her help with set up and pack down and managing the complex technological requirements on the day.

Of course, our primary focus is on helping to save Gilbert's Potoroo, and Tony Friend provides members in this issue with an excellent summary on progress to date with potoroo translocations and the vital role played by insurance populations. We are keeping fingers crossed that this month's servicing of the 10 GPAG/State NRM funded cameras on Middle Island will reveal a healthy and thriving Potoroo community.

Unfortunately for us, Sarah Comer, who has chaired the Potoroo Recovery Team for the past 13 years, has left DBCA and will not continue in that role. Sarah has done a great job and we will miss her expertise both in the running of the meetings and in Potoroo matters generally. We don't know yet who will be taking her place.

Welcome to Rebecca Quah, a PhD student at Edith Cowan University (see p. 12). Rebecca's research will be funded by the large State NRM grant obtained by GPAG last year to develop environmental DNA techniques that will assist DBCA to identify suitable future translocation sites for Potoroos. We look forward to working with her on this important project.

Alan



Above left: The title slide of Thilo Krueger's presentation on The Carnivorous Plants of Kepa Kurl/Esperance at GPAG's Kepa Kurl Community Conservation Forum in March (details of the forum p. 10-11). Photo: Jackie Courtenay. Above right: Rebecca Quah, the new Edith Cowan University PhD student who will be working with GPAG on our new State NRM funded eDNA project (details p. 11-12). Photo provided by Rebecca Quah.

RECOVERY PROGRAM REPORT

Insurance populations prove their worth for Gilbert's Potoroo!

By Tony Friend

In the days after the rediscovery of Gilbert's Potoroo at Two Peoples Bay in 1994, the need to set up insurance populations became clear. This course of action became even more urgent as the search for other populations along the south coast progressed without success. The greatest risk to the tiny colony of 30-40 potoroos, and the species itself, would be the occurrence of a large bushfire on the Mount Gardner headland, in difficult terrain where fire would be fought only with extreme difficulty. The only long-term hope for the species would be the establishment of other populations, so that a single large fire would not cause the potoroo's extinction.

By 2015, through translocations from Mount Gardner, there was a strong colony of more than 70 animals on nearby Bald Island and a stable group of around 20 in a fenced enclosure in Waychinicup National Park. Plans for careful prescribed burning to reduce the spread of any fire on the Mount Gardner headland were being formulated. On 14th November 2015, however, a lightning storm and the ensuing fire left very little habitat suitable for potoroo and despite the short-term survival of a few individuals, the original colony was lost.

Despite the desolate appearance of the potoroo's former haunts near Mount Gardner directly after the fire, good rains over the next few months kick-started the recovery of the vegetation. GPS data from three surviving individuals two years later showed that one was spending time in the burnt areas adjacent to their unburnt refuge. Just three years after the fire, the only surviving female was regularly resting in a densely recovering burnt area during the day.

By 2021, when potoroos were no longer being detected by cage-trapping or camera traps, the burnt vegetation had thickened up sufficiently in places that plans were made to carry out a series of trial translocations of potoroos from insurance populations back into Two Peoples Bay. Could potoroos find sufficient food and shelter to survive and breed?

The three-year plan involved not only returning potoroos to Two Peoples Bay but also moving small numbers between the insurance populations, by now including the growing Middle Island colony, to encourage genetic flow. In the first year, however, all the action would be at Two Peoples Bay, where up to eight potoroos from the Waychinicup enclosure and Bald Island would be released in 2022.



Above top: Smoke from the Two Peoples Bay fire started by lightning in mid-November 2015. Photo: Tony Friend. Above: Tony Friend using a radio-tracker to search for the Potoroos that were carrying transmitters in the desolate aftermath of the fire to see if any had survived. Photo provided by Tony Friend.

With a target of only one male and one female from Waychinicup, capture and transfer were quite straightforward. Tony Friend and Saul Cowen set 30 traps on three permanent traplines in the enclosure and on the morning of 13th September found 2 males and 3 females in the traps. Suitable candidates for translocation would be healthy young individuals, but the female could not have a large pouch young or show evidence of suckling a young-at-heel. One animal of each sex meeting these criteria was selected and both were taken in bags to the vehicle parked nearby, while the others were released at their trap sites. The two potoroos for release were taken to the Two Peoples Bay research facility where they were kept in a quiet room until evening. After each being fitted with a tail-mounted transmitter and tiny GPS unit to allow close monitoring, they were released after dark into the largest unburnt habitat remnant on the slopes of Mount Gardner (see article in Potoroo Postings # 2022/4).



A Bald Island potoroo being released at Two Peoples Bay by Hannah Bannister in September 2022. Photo: Bronte van Helden, South Coast NRM



"Your transport awaits": helicopter for the December Bald Island trip. Photo: Anne Cochrane

The capture and transfer of the targeted three male and three female potoroos from Bald Island was more complicated and threw up new problems. Helicopter transport was required to bring the potoroos from the island directly to Two Peoples Bay and minimise the stress to the animals. Tony and Larisse Guerlain flew to the island, set up camp and then walked out to set 40 traps on four of the permanent traplines. Leaving camp at first light on 29th September, they found they had caught 13 potoroos, comprising eight males and five females. Animals that met the selection criteria were left in bags in the traps for an hour or two until the return trip, in case more suitable individuals were found later. Three young males were easily selected, but the females proved more difficult. Amongst the five caught, two showed signs that they were suckling young and two of the others were old (at least 10 and 7 years respectively). The other female was 3-4 years of age and was selected for translocation, leaving us two females short of the target. The four potoroos chosen were flown with us back to Two Peoples Bay, for fitting with tracking devices and release in the evening.

Another Bald Island expedition to collect two additional females was planned, becoming more urgent after the predation of both females already released (more on this in the next newsletter). Unfortunately, a suitable helicopter was not available for several months, seriously delaying the exercise. On the morning of 5th December, Tony and Anne Cochrane boarded a helicopter for Bald Island, heading out after making camp to set 35 traps on six of the traplines. The next morning, three male and four female potoroos were waiting in the traps. One female carried a furred pouch young, and another had a lactating teat, leaving

just two candidate females, both about five years of age. These two animals were flown back to Two Peoples Bay, for release that evening following the usual protocols.



Anne Cochrane sets a cage trap during the potoroo capture trip on Bald Island in December 2022. Photo: Tony Friend



Potoroo transport: The safest way to carry potoroos along the overgrown tracks on Bald Island. Photo: Anne Cochrane



This very large pouch young was the reason his mother wasn't moved to Two Peoples Bay! Photo: Anne Cochrane

While the required number of animals was reached, this selection process is biased towards females that are not currently breeding. While some females may just be having a break, others selected this way, especially older ones, may have stopped breeding altogether. Selection of females most likely to breed at the new site may require targeting females that are breeding and waiting until they reach a stage when they can be moved without risk to dependent young. This could occur once the enlarged teat and the active mammary gland have regressed, even if a tiny pouch young were present. Potoroo capture procedures for translocation in future will be modified to produce the best results possible.

So, while there have been some hiccups, the existence and use of insurance populations has put the recovery program in a strong position to bring Gilbert's Potoroo back from the brink – again!

The Gilbert's Potoroo translocation program is run by DBCA, and received funding from the Australian Government through the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc and South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc.

Farewell to Sarah Comer

We are very sorry to advise our members that Sarah Comer, Regional Ecologist for the DBCA South Coast Region since 1999 and Chair of the Gilbert's Potoroo Recovery Team since 2009 has left DBCA to take up a new role as South West Regional Ecologist with Bush Heritage Australia. She started her new position in early February. While we are excited for Sarah and wish her well in her new job, we will miss her support for GPAG and her expertise on all things Potoroo – and the Recovery Team won't be the same without her.

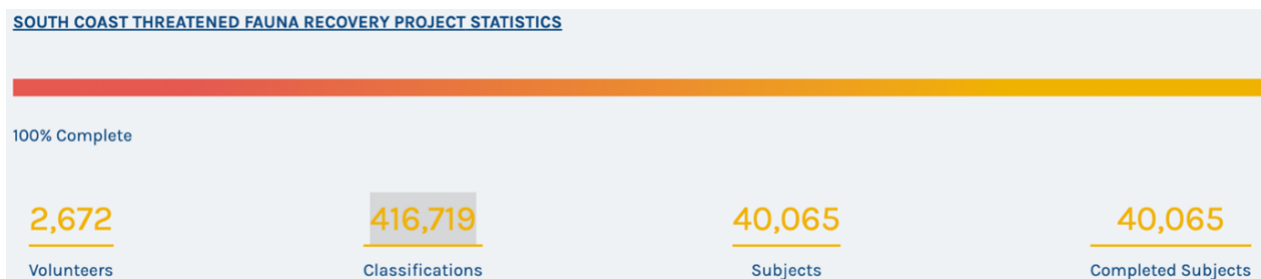


Sarah Comer listening for Western Ground Parrots at Cape Arid. Photo courtesy Jennene Riggs, Riggs Australia.

VOLUNTEERING

South Coast Threatened Fauna Recovery Project: Image analysis on Zooniverse

As of May 8, we are delighted to announce that 2672 volunteers have completed 416,719 identifications and have finished analysing all 40,065 subjects i.e. images that have been analysed by the required number of people for them to be considered “done” that made up the first batch of uploaded images for this project. That is an average of nearly 156 images per volunteer although some have done many more than that. Really looking forward to the next batch of Two Peoples Bay photos, which will include images from the 15 extra cameras purchased by GPAG last year with funding from the Australian Government, being uploaded soon so that all these enthusiastic volunteers can continue looking for the newly translocated Potoroos (see story on page 3 above and in Potoroo Postings # 2022/4)!



The South Coast Threatened Fauna Recovery Project statistics from May 8. Image is a screen shot from the Zooniverse project home page <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/abbsta/south-coast-threatened-fauna-recovery-project>

New partnership between GPAG and Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

GPAG are very excited to announce that we have formed a new partnership with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award to work together to encourage young people (aged 14-25) to participate in conservation volunteering in general, and especially to



help with projects relating to Gilbert's Potoroo in particular. We had been thinking of approaching the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to discuss a possible partnership for a long time, but an Award participant indicating that they were hoping to count time spent working on identifying images on the Zooniverse project (above) towards their Award's volunteering requirements finally provided the impetus to contact them. But there is another reason, apart from attracting more young volunteers, that GPAG partnering with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme makes special sense – there is already a connection between Prince Philip, the late Duke of Edinburgh, and the protection of Two Peoples Bay that led indirectly to the survival of Gilbert's Potoroo.

We talked about Prince Philip's involvement in helping save Two Peoples Bay from development in Potoroo Postings # 2022/1 after the Times of London picked up the story from our social media after Prince Philip's death in 2021 and they, Sky News UK and other outlets such as Marie Claire all ran versions of the story in January 2022. But in case you missed those stories:

In 1961, the Noisy Scrub-bird was rediscovered at Two Peoples Bay, near Albany, after having been thought extinct for 70 years, but at the time Two Peoples Bay was scheduled to be cleared for a housing



development. When visiting Perth in 1962, Prince Philip, an avid bird watcher and already an established conservationist, heard about the threat to the Noisy Scrub-bird and expressed to the then Western Australian Minister of Lands his hope that the bird would be protected. Over the next 3 years he continued to publicly express this view including rebutting articles in the Perth Daily News that were in favour of building the town and risking sending the Noisy Scrub-bird into actual (not just presumed) extinction.

In April 1966, the Western Australian State Government announced its decision to halt the development and declared Two Peoples Bay a Nature Reserve. Well known Western Australian naturalist Dr Vincent Serventy stated that “had it not been for the action of the Prince by personal representation made in November 1962 and later correspondence, the government would certainly have gone on with the scheme”. Instead, as declared by the Chairman of the City of Westminster Chamber of Commerce, Mr Alfred George, in a speech in April 1973 “The species was saved for all time”.

What was not realised then, and was not known until November 1994 when Gilbert’s Potoroo was rediscovered, was that by saving Two Peoples Bay from development to protect the Noisy Scrub-bird, Gilbert’s Potoroo was also saved from certain extinction.

Jessica Moseley, Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award WA Program Development Officer provided the following statement about both the Awards and our new partnership for this newsletter:

“The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award is a global framework for non-formal education, which challenges young people aged 14-25 to dream big, celebrate their achievements and make a difference in their world. The Award runs in over 100 schools in Western Australia. Through developing transferable skills and volunteering in their community, the Award helps young people to find their purpose and place in the world. Increasingly Participants are using their Award to work on conservation projects and the environment. From volunteering with organisations like Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, to learning about increasing diversity in their own backyard, or collecting data through Zooniverse, Participants are discovering their passions. We are excited to build a partnership with Gilbert’s Potoroo Action Group and offer young people more exciting opportunities.”

GPAG are also hoping that this collaboration with the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, which already has a strong focus on developing a culture of long-term volunteering among young people, will also benefit other small conservation community groups that are struggling to attract and retain younger volunteers.

THE PRINCE AND THE NOISY SCRUB BIRD

Although the Noisy Scrub-bird is well known to most Western Australians and to keen ornithologists overseas, perhaps many people are not aware of the personal role that H.R.H. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh played in ensuring the survival of this bird species.



We were very pleased therefore, to receive the text of a speech made by Mr. Alfred George, Chairman of the City of Westminster Chamber of Commerce, when introducing Prince Philip to the guest speaker at London's Dorchester Hotel on 30th April, 1973, before an audience of 800.

“Your Royal Highness, my Lord Mayor, Mr. Minister, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

“We in the Westminster Chamber of Commerce are indeed honoured that you should come to talk to us on our aspect of conservation. Some of us here today may not realise how deeply and how long you have been personally and actively involved in the many conservation problems that face mankind. When in 1961 the World Wildlife Fund was formed, you took an active part in its formation and have been President of the British National Appeal ever since. Not, Sir, as a figurehead, but as an extremely active and effective supporter both of the British Appeal, which raised over one half million pounds last year, and of the World Wildlife Fund International Fund, of which you are a Trustee.

“During National Nature Week in May 1963 when you attended the Wildlife Exhibition you initiated the five year movement called The Countryside in 1977. Three conferences were held in 1965, 1967 and 1970. You were President of all three. Your active participation helped to get the message of the conference across to the Press and, probably more than any other single factor, changed the public attitude towards the environment.

“We all know you have written books and produced wildlife films. The fact is evident, but I want to finish with the story that illustrates your deep personal identification with the Noisy Scrub-bird. I think the title of my story should be ‘The Prince and the Noisy Scrub-bird’. Near Albany in Western Australia there was rediscovered in 1961 a little thrush-sized bird with one of the loveliest voices in Australia – the Noisy Scrub-bird. It had been mentioned as extinct in the 19th century and indeed the world, once, and especially Doctor Scullin and Australian naturalists, were pleased and excited, but they were alarmed because the area of the discovery was already scheduled as the site of a new town to be called Casuarina.

“In 1962 Prince Philip visited Perth for the Empire/ Commonwealth Games heard about this bird. He personally expressed to Mr. W. S. Bovey, the Minister for Lands, the hope that the bird would be protected. For the next three years he publicly maintained this interest even to the extent of, through four Admiral Bosham-Carter, a member of his staff, rebutting in the Perth Daily News articles in favour of building the town and risking the ultimate destruction of the species. On 22nd April, 1966, the Western Australian Government magnanimously, and in spite of the need for industrial development, announced that the project for the new town had been abandoned and the area was declared a nature reserve. The species was saved for all time and in making our guest to address us, I finish with the outcome from a report made for me by Dr. Serventy, he says and I quote: ‘... had it not been for the action of the Prince by personal representation made in November 1962 and later correspondence, the Government would certainly have gone on with the scheme.’

“So you have to address you today, a man who has personally saved a species from extinction.”



This speech indicates the vital role played by Prince Philip in initiating the conservation of the Noisy Scrub-bird. But the story did not end with the establishment of the Two Peoples Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. As conservationists in W.A. will be aware, the Sanctuary now has a full time ranger, and is the subject of a planned management programme (see S.W.A.N.S. Vol. 2, No. 3). Continuing research is being carried out on the ecology of the Noisy Scrub-bird and methods of management to ensure its persistence.

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An article published in S.W.A.N.S (a precursor to DBCA’s *Landscape* magazine) in 1973 The article can be read by clicking on the image above or at the following link
<https://library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080073/080073-04.02.pdf>



Analysing camera trap images on Zooniverse is one form of conservation volunteering that young people can be involved in through GPAG. Zooniverse photos shared under Creative Commons 4.0 International License.



IMPORTANT REMINDER ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

All volunteers for field work require a DBCA Dieback Green Card

With the new State NRM Grant surveying for fungi and collecting soil samples and seeds over the next two years getting started early next year, this is just a reminder that if you wish to volunteer with GPAG on these various field projects DBCA require us all to complete Dieback Green Card training. The training can be done at home and takes about an hour to complete. The card can then be either posted out or collected at the DBCA office in Albany. If you think that you might be interested in volunteering sometime in the future, even if you are not planning to immediately, it is a good idea to complete your training and get your Green Card as soon as possible so that you are able to participate at short notice when opportunities arise or you are available. Please email Jackie Courtenay on communications@potoroo.org if you want to undertake the training and she will email you the training materials.

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FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Current and Recent Fundraisers

Australian Geographic Fundraiser

The Australian Geographic fundraiser for Gilbert's Potoroo finished in late January and we were recently contacted by their fundraising staff to let us know that they had raised a total of \$9056.60. This is a wonderful surprise for us as the online fundraiser had only reached \$1150 by the end of December (see Potoroo Postings Issue # 2022/4) so they must have been receiving many more donations through other platforms. Thank you to everyone who generously donated to this appeal and we look forward to providing an update in due course on how the money has been spent to help the precious Potoroos.



AG Society Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group

With only 100-120 remaining in the wild, the Gilbert's Potoroo is critically endangered and at serious risk of extinction without continued conservation action. Because of its sensitive nature and extremely specialist diet, Gilbert's potoroos do not do well in captivity, so the creation of safe haven populations is the only way to increase their numbers. They are threatened by fire, feral predators, inadequate gene flow between the sub-populations and climate change. Your donation will help Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group support critical recovery actions undertaken by scientists and volunteers to help Gilbert's Potoroo survive into the future.

 **Australian
GEOGRAPHIC**
Link via our website: australiangeographic.com.au/fundraising

New GPS Data Loggers received

In September last year GPAG supporter (and now member!) Shelley Foster held her Chopping My Locks fundraiser which raised \$4150 for Gilbert's Potoroo (see the report on this amazing effort in Potoroo Postings # 2022/3). We announced then that the funds raised from Shelley's campaign would go towards purchasing GPS data loggers to support intensive monitoring of Potoroos following their planned reintroduction back into Two Peoples Bay by DBCA after the population there was made functionally extinct by the catastrophic 2015 fire. The money raised by Shelley covered almost half the cost of the data loggers and their chargers and the remainder was covered by other generous donations that GPAG has received from



Shelley Foster before and after last year's "big chop" of her hair to raise money for Gilbert's Potoroo. Photos provided by Shelley Foster.



The 10 new tail mount GPS units have arrived! Tony Friend (left & above) connects one of the units to the “gang charger”, which allows up to six units to be charged simultaneously. Photo: Dave Atkins, DBCA.

members and supporters over the past few years. Thank you to everyone who has donated money to GPAG whether through Shelley’s fundraiser, via our website or to other campaigns. We are very excited to now be able to announce that the 10 data loggers and their chargers have been received and passed on to Tony Friend at DBCA and they will be fitted to translocated Gilbert’s Potoroos at Two Peoples Bay sometime in the next few months. You can read more about the

progress of the translocations that were carried out late last year in Potoroo Postings # 2022/4 and in this current issue and we look forward to providing you with some more photos and updates on this exciting project in future newsletters.

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Ongoing Fundraisers

Containers for Change

GPAG Member #: C10289767

Since our last newsletter on December 31 generous supporters have donated \$227.20 in refunds from their drink containers returned for recycling. That's an extraordinary 2272 drink containers in the past approximately 3 months – a great donation to GPAG but also a lot of plastic, aluminium, glass and cardboard saved from landfill!! Thank you everyone who has donated their containers. While the pictured donation is amazing and was our largest during the time since our last newsletter, don't be disheartened if you only have a few containers to donate! Half of the donations were for \$5 or less and only four of the 16 donations we received were for over \$20 and yet we still ended up with over \$227 in donations – every donation, however small, helps, as well as being great for the environment!

Drop-off point locations and information on what types of containers are accepted for refunds can be found at the following link <https://www.containersforchange.com.au/wa>. Thank you once again for any support you can give us.



HI GILBERT'S POTOROO ACTION GROUP INC,

Great news! One of our Change Makers has returned 586 containers to the Containers For Cash - Spencer Park container refund point and they've donated their **\$58.60** refund to your cause. What a legend, right?

The notification received for the biggest donation of container refunds made to GPAG since the last newsletter.

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Awareness Raising

Kepa Kurl Community Conservation Forum, Esperance March 25

On March 25, GPAG held our first ever event in Esperance! Ever since the Gilbert's Potoroos had been translocated to Middle Island in 2018 following the catastrophic fire at Two Peoples Bay we had been thinking about holding an event for the Esperance community, now that Potoroos were on their doorstep – and we finally managed it!!

The event commenced at 8:45 am with a short presentation by the Tjaltjraak rangers in lieu of a formal Welcome to Country which was unfortunately unable to go ahead due to illness. This was followed by a 3 minute video from the Threatened Species Commissioner Dr Fiona Fraser who gave a short reflection on her recent visit to Esperance and opened the event. The programme included 14 presentations, a mixture of in person, pre-recorded and on Zoom, a complex juggle that was brilliantly managed by Hannah Blampied from the Esperance Civic Centre (thank you Hannah – not sure how we'd have managed without you). Speakers included staff from DBCA and South Coast NRM, the Tjaltjraak rangers, Wongatha CAPS, Jennene Riggs from Riggs Australia and from a wide range of volunteer groups from both Esperance and Albany. It was fantastic to hear about all the inspiring conservation activities being undertaken by the Tjaltjraak rangers and the many enthusiastic volunteer groups in Esperance as well as to share the work of GPAG and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot with the Esperance community. The full programme with abstracts of all the talks is available for download on our website at the following link: <https://www.potoroo.org/events/kepa-kurl-community-conservation-forum>.



Above top: The advertisement for the Kepa Kurl Community Conservation Forum. Above middle: The ETNTAC video shown as part of the presentation in lieu of a Welcome to Country. Above bottom: The Threatened Species Commissioner opened the forum.



The forum was attended by about 40 enthusiastic participants and we were pleased to see lots of questions and discussion both after the individual talks and in the meal breaks. The Esperance Weekender supported the event with articles about the Potoroos and the forum before the event on March 17th and with a follow up article on the South Coast Threatened Fauna Recovery Project on Zooniverse on April 21st.

Left: The two articles in the Esperance Weekender about the Potoroos including advertising the forum, & the Zooniverse project.

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The wonderfully varied & tasty morning tea and lunch were catered by Café Louis. Photo: Jackie Courtenay.

GPAG were also delighted to support the launch of a collaborative art project by Esperance Community Arts at the forum. This giant art work (8m x 2m in size) of a Shearwater which will be created from plastic bottle tops sewn onto calico aims to raise awareness of the impact of marine plastics on seabirds.

The forum was followed by an informal social event at the Lucky Bay Brewery which included video highlights of a seafloor and marine habitat mapping project that the Tjaltjraak Rangers are involved in and tastings of culturally inspired food including dukkah and wattle seed ice-cream.



The delicious wattle seed ice-cream with quandong sauce shared at the social event at the Lucky Bay Brewery. Photo: Jackie Courtenay



The giant artwork of a Shearwater being created by Esperance Community Arts that was launched at the forum. Photo: Jane Mulcock.

A big thank you to everyone who helped with all the pre-event organisation, set up and pack down and logistics on the day. It all helped make the forum a very enjoyable and successful day and we've already had a request for a repeat next year!!! (Hmmm... we'll maybe think about it for 2025...).

The event was supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program through a Community Stewardship Grant to Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group and from the South Coast Enviro-Experiences Project supported by Lotterywest. The event was delivered in collaboration with Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot.

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GRANTS AND SUBMISSIONS

State NRM Large Grant: Investigating habitat requirements for new homes for Gilbert's Potoroo

As of January 17, 2023, contracting for our exciting new \$260,387 State NRM grant was finalised and the project is now underway. Gilbert's Potoroo is the world's rarest marsupial with an estimated population of only 100-120 individuals in four locations (Two Peoples Bay, the Waychinicup Enclosure, Bald Island and Middle Island) along the south coast of Western Australia. While these populations have proved their value for the Potoroos so far (as described in Tony Friends' report on pages 3 to 5 above), finding suitable new locations with potential for substantial population growth is vital to help ensure the Potoroo's long-term survival. This new project will use environmental DNA (eDNA) from truffle-like fungi spores in the soil to develop a robust method for surveying potential new habitat to determine whether there is enough food available for Potoroos. This will remove the need for inefficient and time-consuming manual fungi surveys

and will hopefully produce more reliable results as to the range of fungi species present. Combined with Traditional Ecological Knowledge about past Potoroo distributions, the project will develop a habitat analysis method that will be invaluable for assessing potential translocation sites. The project includes volunteering opportunities searching for fungi and collecting seeds for some plant/fungi association experiments, and a two-day conference in 2024 (our next South Coast Threatened Species Forum which will also celebrate 30 years since the Gilbert's Potoroo rediscovery!). The eDNA analyses will be carried out by Edith Cowan University PhD student Rebecca Quah who started her project on March 7th. We are delighted to have her on board and are looking forward to some exciting results of this work over the next two or three years.

Introducing PhD student Rebecca Quah

Greetings fellow potoroo fiends! My name is Rebecca (Bec) Quah and I am a wildlife ecologist in research and consulting with particular interests in vertebrate fauna, conservation translocations, ecological restorations and the use of molecular tools. As of March 2023, I've commenced a PhD at Edith Cowan University in collaboration with the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group (GPAG) and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. I will be using environmental DNA techniques to better understand the diet and habitat use of the Gilbert's potoroo (Ngilgyte, *Potorous gilbertii*) and design a strategy to efficiently identify suitable translocation sites. This portion of my study would not be possible without funding received from State NRM through GPAG. Prior to this, I undertook a Masters at the University of Western Australia where I incorporated genetic data into population models, run using high-performance computing in order to inform translocation decisions for the Shark Bay Mouse (Djoongari, *Pseudomys gouldii*). This study formed a part of the Dirk Hartog Island Ecological Restoration Project – Return to 1616.



Starting the PhD journey – Rebecca (Bec) Quah's first day March 7, 2023! Photo provided by Rebecca Quah.

In between my studies, I work at a Perth-based consultancy where we undertake fauna surveys across the most remote and beautiful parts of Western Australia. I also enjoy leading and participating in marine turtle monitoring programs seasonally. Having grown up in Singapore, the conservation and wildlife field was relatively unheard of. It was only when I moved to Perth with a friend at the age of 16, that I fell in love with Western Australia's biodiversity and never looked back. My passion for the natural environment extends beyond my work. In my free time, you're likely to find me in the ocean kitted in my scuba gear or out in the bush with my binoculars!

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MERCHANDISE



WATERCOLOUR CARDS: Quality hand-made cards featuring a picture of Gilbert's Potoroo from a watercolour by Jann van der Helder. Blank inside.
\$4 each or 5 for \$16.

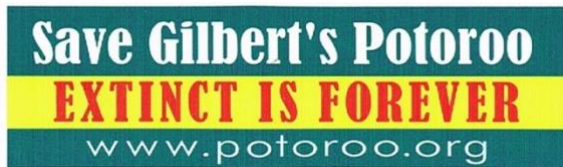


Printed by the Environmental Printing Company on 100% recycled paper using vegetable-based inks. Blank inside.
\$5 each or 5 for \$20.

JO HARRIS CARDS: Quality cards featuring a painting of Gilbert's Potoroo by Jo Harris based on a photograph by Dick Walker.



BLACK & WHITE CARDS: Quality cards featuring a pen and ink drawing of a Gilbert's Potoroo by Jackie Courtenay from a photograph by Katrin Witt. Printed by the Environmental Printing Company on 100% recycled paper using vegetable-based inks. Blank inside.
\$5 each or 5 for \$20.



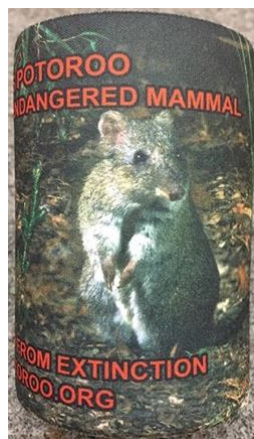
BUMPER STICKERS: FREE with other items



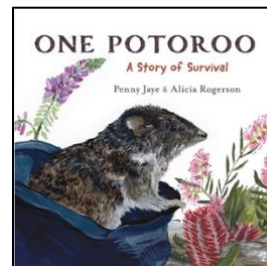
POSTCARDS: Featuring a photo of Gilbert's Potoroo by Dick Walker and information about the Potoroo on both the front and back
FREE with other items



TEATOWELS: Printed on 100% cotton with some key facts about Gilbert's Potoroo! Tea towel design by Sandy O'Doherty
\$10 each or 3 for \$25

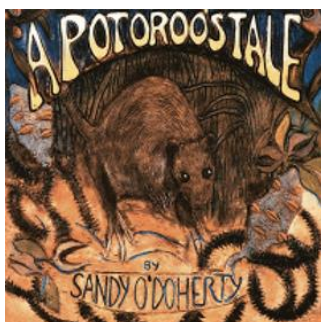


STUBBY HOLDERS: Designed by GPAG members featuring a photo of Gilbert's Potoroo by Dick Walker.
\$10 each or 2 for \$15

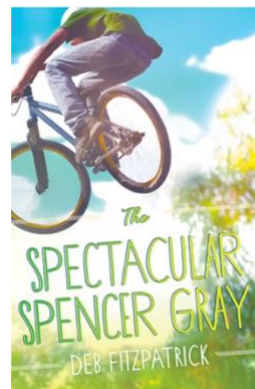


ONE POTROO: A STORY OF SURVIVAL: A heart-warming story of disaster and rescue of one Potoroo

caught in the Two Peoples Bay fire by Penny Jaye, with beautiful illustrations by Alicia Rogerson. 35% of the sale price goes to Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group.
\$25 each



A POTROO'S TALE: A delightful book written and beautifully illustrated by Albany artist Sandy O'Doherty. All profits from the sale of the book will go to the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group.
\$15 each



THE SPECTACULAR SPENCER GRAY: The award winning adventure story by Deb Fitzpatrick featuring Gilbert's Potoroo and the return of Spencer Gray in a spectacular adventure. 30% of the sale price of the book will go to Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group.
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Item	Cost/item	Quantity	Total Cost
Watercolour Card (ea)	\$4.00		
Watercolour Cards (5 pk)	\$16.00		
Jo Harris Card	\$5.00		
Jo Harris Cards (5 pk)	\$20.00		
B&W Potoroo Card	\$5.00		
B&W Potoroo Cards (5 pk)	\$20.00		
Postcards (ea)	FREE		
Bumper Stickers (ea)	FREE		
Tea towels (ea)	\$10.00		
Tea towels (3 pk)	\$25.00		
Stubby Holders (ea)	\$10.00		
Stubby Holders (2 pk)	\$15.00		
One Potoroo	\$25.00		
A Potoroo's Tale	\$15.00		
Spectacular Spencer Gray	\$15.00		
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		Postage & packing (<500g)*	\$10.00
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Privacy Policy: The information you have disclosed other than your name and contact details is restricted to committee members. No one outside the association is given access to your personal details without your permission.

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	Membership Accepted: YES/NO	Date Paid ____/____/____
		Register _____

DONATIONS

As a Nationally Registered Environmental Organisation the Gilbert's Potoroo Action Group Inc. offers tax deductible donation facilities. To claim **tax benefits**, your donation must be a **minimum of \$2** and made payable to the **GPAG Public Tax Deductible Donation Fund**. Tax deductible donations can also be made through our website www.potoroo.org.

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