



PILBARA ISLANDS NATURE RESERVES



Pilbara island nature reserves are a vital refuge for many species as they provide a safe haven from a variety of threats including:

Competition for food or habitat from non-indigenous species like house mice, black rats or Asian house gecko



Non-native species like weeds can overrun and eliminate native plants



Habitat alteration and disturbance from human activities including agriculture, industry and recreation



Pilbara islands reserves officers are mapping human use of the island nature reserves to determine which sites are popular with visitors and whether they correspond with threatened and migratory species habitats.

A combination of aerial monitoring, remote cameras, acoustic recordings, fauna trapping and opportunistic observations, flora survey and social surveying are used to gather information.

Previous survey efforts have been limited and for some islands there is no record of animals or plants occurring; an example being Whalebone Island in Exmouth Gulf. Parks and Wildlife is focused on improving knowledge of the islands.

Mapping the vegetation of the islands also records the presence and extent of weeds. During this process, two priority species previously unrecorded on the islands have been found, one of which is a significant extension of the species' previously known range.

Throughout the survey process partnerships were formed with external organisations to provide expertise in specialist fields. Geologists from Curtin University measured the island profiles and are looking at how the islands are formed. Archaeologists from UWA and the WA Museum are providing guidance in documenting the cultural history of the islands.

Increasing our knowledge of the islands allows us to track change over time, and make better-informed decisions on how to care for, and protect the area.

Flatback turtles were recorded nesting safely on Locker Island south of Onslow, and were later tracked as far north as Broome. In contrast, on Tent Island a flatback nest was found dug up, and the hatchlings killed by a fox. This adds to our knowledge of the distribution of non-indigenous species on the Pilbara islands.

Bird surveys have shown that around one million wedge-tailed shearwaters migrate to the islands each year from July onwards to lay an egg in their burrow in November. During the day they are out feeding and return to their burrows every evening.



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