

Australia to launch new strategy to save endangered native animals

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- From: Herald Sun
- July 12, 2015 9:45PM

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The Greater Bilby is on the list.

Source: Supplied

10 MAMMALS LISTED FOR PRIORITY

- Numbat
- Mala
- Mountain pygmy-possum
- Greater bilby
- Golden bandicoot
- Brush-tailed rabbit-rat
- Eastern bettong
- Western quoll
- Kangaroo Island dunnart
- Eastern barred bandicoot

Emergency intervention

- Leadbeater's possum
- Central rock-rat

Eight to be identified over the next 12 months.

AUSTRALIA will launch an ambitious plan to haul endangered animals back from the brink of extinction.

A strategy to save 20 declining native mammals such as the numbat, the greater bilby and the eastern barred bandicoot by 2020 will be launched in Melbourne this week.

Threatened species commissioner Gregory Andrews said the plan would help address Australia's unenviable record of having lost 29 native species since 1788.



The Mountain Pygmy Possum.

"We call our sporting teams after these animals, we put them on our coins but we haven't spent enough time saving them," Mr Andrews said.

"Our Environment Minister Greg Hunt has drawn a line in the sand here and this is the most ambitious project I've been involved in during my 23 years in public service."



The Greater Bilby.

The Victorian eastern barred bandicoot was thought to be extinct in the 1980s before the last wild family was found in an old car at the Hamilton tip.

Since then a Werribee Zoo breeding program stabilised their numbers but the strategy will boost their gene pool by breeding them with a Tasmanian population.



Western Quoll.

The plan also commits joint funding of almost \$2 million for their protection in the wild from foxes and feral cats and identifies pest-free regions such as French Island to establish new colonies.

“My grandfather had a saying to tell us kids to ‘stop bandicooting around’ in his shed — we’ve lost those sayings as these animals have disappeared and it’s our cultural heritage which is at stake,” Mr Andrews said.



The Mala.

Another project will be funded to build a wildlife corridor for critically endangered mountain pygmy possums at Mount Hotham.

The mala, golden bandicoot, brush-tailed rabbit-rat, eastern bettong, western quoll and the Kangaroo Island dunnart will also be a target, on top of emergency interventions already announced for the leadbeater's possum and central rock-rat.



The Numbat.

A remaining eight species will be identified over the next year.

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