

## Using Felixers to complete the West Island Cat Eradication Project

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In 2011, the li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers and Desert Wildlife Services instigated a cat control project on West Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, following reports that the introduction of four cats to the island in 1994 had virtually eliminated all four species of native mammals from the island. No small mammals were detected during 5 consecutive surveys of West Island between 2001 and 2010, whereas cat tracks were recorded throughout the 13,000 ha island.

After an annual Eradicat baiting program produced an 80% knockdown in the cat population by 2014, there was a resurgence in two species of native mammals (Grassland Melomys and Delicate Mouse), however continued baiting failed to remove the last few cats from West Island. In 2018 the Sea Rangers expanded their toolbox to include other control techniques to try to complete the cat eradication, including soft-jaw leghold trapping and deployment of Felixer Grooming Traps.

Two Felixers were set up on West Island in May 2018. After a four-week trial in photo-only mode, they were deployed in toxic mode from June to October. Many birds (primarily beach-stone curlews, chestnut rails and bar-shouldered doves) were photographed walking past the Felixers, but all were recognised as non-targets. Other non-target species detected include Brolgas, crows, cane-toads and a water rat. **No non-target species triggered the Felixers to fire during the four-month deployment in 2018.** Furthermore, the Felixer cameras recorded triple the number of birds that were captured by Reconyx motion-detector cameras set beside the Felixers.



**The Felixer sensor data indicated that a cat walked past a Grooming Trap (at a distance of 187cm) on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and triggered the Felixer to fire its toxic gel.** To the best of our knowledge this is the only time a cat has encountered a Felixer on West Island.



*Above: possibly the last cat remaining on West Island*

Tracking and cameras surveys indicated that one or two cats still remained on West Island by the end of October 2018. The next survey is scheduled for May 2019. It is intended to redeploy the Felixers in any areas where tracks are found during this survey. We believe Felixers will be the most efficient and effective method of completing the West Island cat eradication.