

# Currawinya National Park size doubled to help endangered bilbies, Queensland Government says

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-15/bilbies-currawinya-national-park-size-doubled/6547308>

By Tom Forbes 16 Jun 2015

**Photo:** The bilby is one of 14 threatened species living in the Currawinya National Park. (Department of Natural Resources - file photo)

**Map:** Cunnamulla 4490

**Photo:** The Queensland Government has spent \$5 million buying three neighbouring properties. (Supplied: Queensland Government)



A bilby-friendly national park in south-west Queensland will double in size after the State Government acquired three adjoining blocks.

The Currawinya National Park, south-west of Cunnamulla, was home to a captive bilby population that was destroyed by feral cats that breached the 25 square kilometre predator fence.

The bilby fence was built in 2003 and provided safe haven for 300 critically endangered marsupials, but flooding in late 2011 and early 2012 in the area damaged the fence.

Save the Bilby Fund chief executive officer Kevin Bradley said the cats had a catastrophic impact.

"We were absolutely devastated — there's been a lot of work going into building that fence," he said.

The bilby is one of 14 threatened species living in the Currawinya National Park.

The Queensland Government spent \$5 million buying three neighbouring properties that will be gazetted into the national park.

National Parks Minister Steven Miles said the properties were primarily used for sheep grazing.

"It adds about 200,000 hectares to the existing national park, making it one of our biggest," he said.

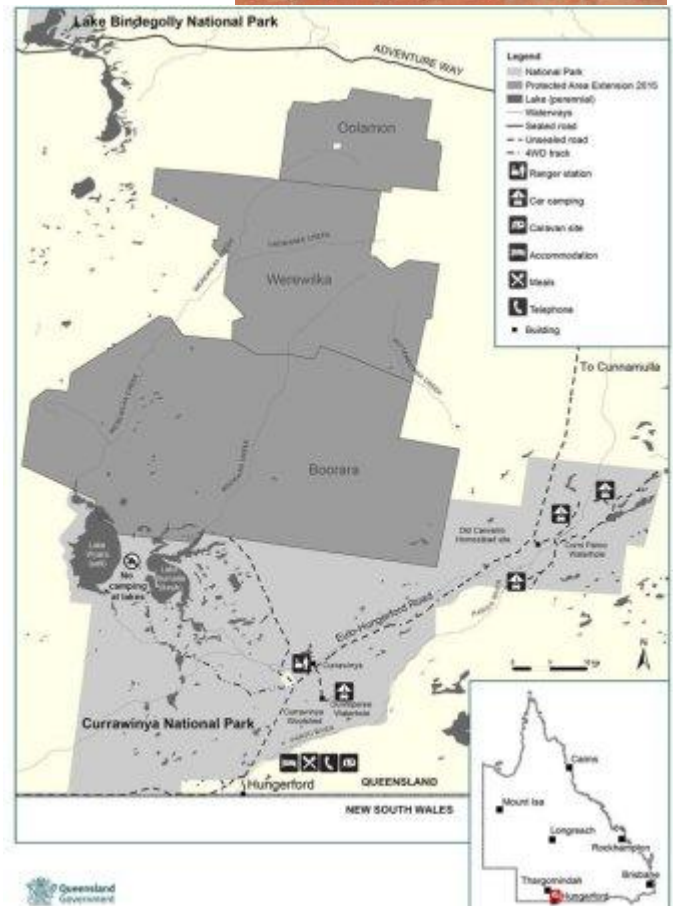
"It also tips us over a really important milestone — it takes us over 5 per cent of Queensland is now national park."

Dr Miles said \$2.7 million will be spent over the next five years managing the new park area.

The predator fence had also been fixed and animal parks, including Dreamworld on the Gold Coast, were breeding bilbies.

There are 75 bilbies ready to be released into the fenced area of the park, but not before the remaining population of feral cats is culled.

More than 30 cats have already been caught but it is estimated that six remain.



## Feral cats 'very difficult to catch'

Photo: (LtoR) Mr Bradley, Dr Miles and Mr Mucci, with a bilby bred at Dreamworld on the Gold Coast. (ABC News: Tom Forbes)

Mr Bradley said the feral pests were elusive.

"They are incredibly cryptic — very, very difficult to catch," he said.

"The lower the number of cats, the more difficult it is."

A conservation detector dog named Sophie has been brought in to sniff out the remaining cats.

Dog handler Dave Berman, from the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, said Sophie could also detect foxes.

"The dogs are very important to find those cats," he said.

"The ones that are remaining are the ones that haven't been able to trap or bait."

Mr Bradley said a cat-free range was critical to the species' survival.

"They're under extreme pressure mainly due to invasive species," he said.

"Bilbies we consider critically endangered purely because we haven't resolved a landscape control method for cats and foxes and so many other things that are causing so much pressure."

There is no timeframe on when the 75 bilbies will be released.

