

Question on Notice

No. 998

Asked on Wednesday, 12 October 2022

MR S O'CONNOR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF AND MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND YOUTH AFFAIRS (HON M SCANLON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the eradication of the North West Island mice infestation—

Will the Minister outline (a) what assessment has been undertaken on the impact this had on other species, including (i) birds (specifically Rails), (ii) turtles, (iii) other fauna and flora and (b) outline what ongoing biosecurity measures have been implemented to prevent further infestations?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

The North West Island common house mouse eradication campaign was implemented to maintain the natural integrity and support resilience of the Island's ecosystem, with a specific focus of removing the impact on the ground nesting wedge-tailed Shearwater and tree nesting Black Noddy bird populations.

In planning for the eradication, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) worked closely with relevant Commonwealth authorities to obtain approval to use the recommended mouse bait on the Island.

The possibility for adverse impacts on other species was considered. However, it was determined that the known impacts of the mouse not being controlled would have a far greater detrimental impact on the long-term sustainability of a range of species.

The use of baits was therefore approved on the condition that a whole-of-Island bird survey must be conducted every six months for a period of at least two years.

The monitoring did observe some of the anticipated impacts on the buff banded rail population. Accordingly, as was consistent with the authority to bait, QPWS translocated buff banded rails to North West Island from other islands.

The recent monitoring confirmed the successful eradication of the introduced house mouse. This monitoring also identified that the buff banded rail population is steadily increasing.

Additionally, the monitoring found that no impacts were detected on turtle or other flora and fauna populations. Long-term monitoring of nesting seabird populations to assess the benefits of mouse eradication will be ongoing.

QPWS biosecurity measures for North West Island and the other islands of the Capricornia Cays National Park include the “Be Pest Free!” campaign. This campaign educates park visitors and the broader public on the threats pests pose on the Great Barrier Reef Islands and what they can do to prevent carrying pests to these islands.

QPWS is working closely with tourism operators that transport campers and day visitors to the Capricornia Cays, and specifically North West Island to ensure they are meeting their biosecurity obligations under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*.

Additionally, QPWS and Gidarjil Land and Sea Country Rangers conduct routine monitoring and surveillance throughout the island to provide early detection of rodents so control measures can be quickly implemented before a population of mice can establish.

Consultation with relevant agencies, partnerships with Traditional Owners and making considered decisions to act and monitor management actions clearly demonstrates the ongoing commitment to dealing with threats to the values of important islands within the Great Barrier Reef.