

Arid Zone Monitoring

Species Profile

Goat

Capra hircus

Language names

Nanekwete, Nanikute, Nanikuta, Nanikurr

Introduced species: An invasive herbivore; competition and land degradation by unmanaged goats is listed as a key threatening process under national environmental law (the EPBC Act).



Image: Julie Burgher (Flickr)

Feral goats.



Image: © The State of Queensland (through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries)

Feral goats can overgraze plants and stop young plants from regenerating.



Image: CSIRO, CC BY 3.0 Wikimedia Commons

Feral goat browsing native vegetation.

Impacts

- Overgrazing plants and stopping young plants from regenerating
- Soil damage and erosion
- Competition with native animals for food, shelter and water
- Fouling waterholes
- Spreading weeds

Animal Description

Feral goats are usually smaller than domestic goats. Male feral goats have beards and curved/curly horns. The coat colour of goats varies-they may be white, brown, black or a mixture of colours.

Habitat

Goats are very versatile, they can live in many different habitats and eats many different plants, but they prefer semi-arid shrubland and woodland with rocky outcrops.



Image: WA Department of Primary Industries and Development

Feral goats.



Image: WA Department of Primary Industries and Development

Feral goats.



Image: WA Department of Primary Industries and Development

Feral goats.

Goat tracks

Goats have cleaved hooves, with prints that are approximately 55 x 25mm in size.



Image: Sarah Legge

Goat tracks.

Goat scat

Goat scats are solid dark brown oval shaped pellets.



Image: Sarah Legge

Goat scat.

Things to think about when surveying for goats

- Survey during good conditions (not too windy or straight after rain).
- Organise to do surveys at regular times every year – for example, before the wet or hot season (October) and in the early dry season or early cool time (April).
- Follow advice of experienced trackers - know how to tell goat tracks apart from other species before you go to survey.
- If you want to see changes over time, you will need to go back to the same areas to sample over several years. If you want to see if management actions

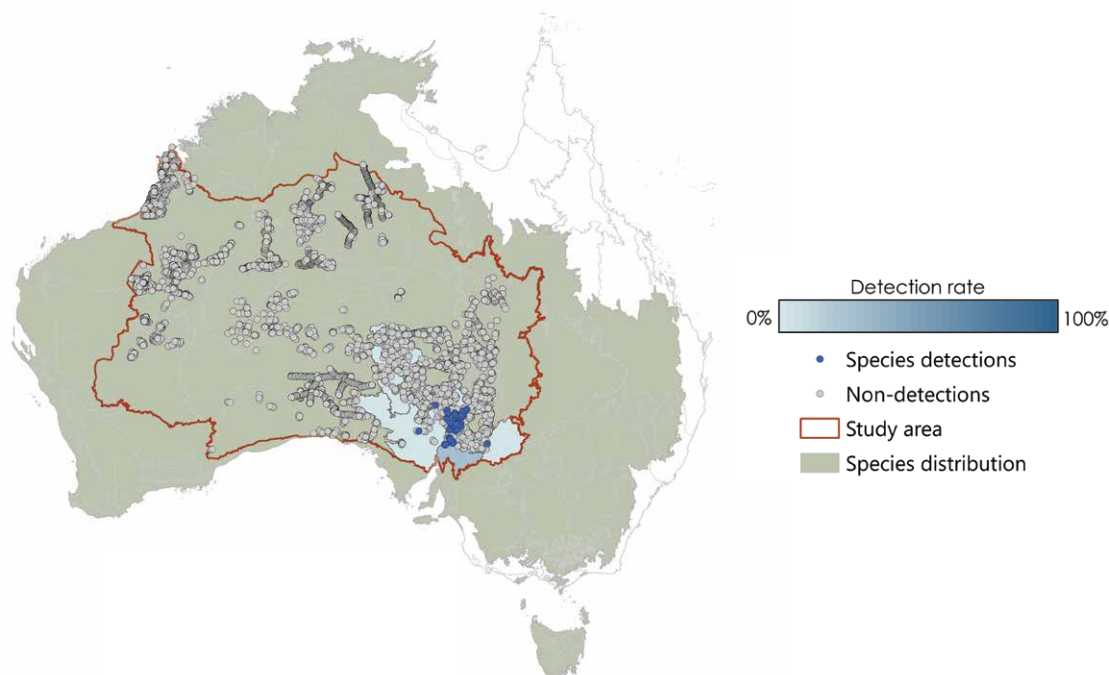
(culling or fire) are working, you need to sample many different sites, before and after the action. You might need help from a scientist to make the sampling design strong.

Arid Zone Monitoring project findings

Goat distribution and detection rates

Goats were introduced to Australia with the First Fleet and were taken to inland areas by early settlers, miners and construction workers as a source of meat and milk. They were allowed to roam freely, became feral and are now present in over 25% of the continent and some islands. There are around 2.3 million feral goats in Australia, mostly in semi-arid parts of WA, western NSW, southern SA and SW Qld.

The map shows the detections of goats in the AZM dataset. Goats have been detected in the south-eastern deserts, where the bioregions are shaded blue. Each blue dot is a survey site where goats were recorded. The grey dots show all the other sites that were surveyed, but where goats were not recorded. Goats were detected at less than 1% of all surveys in the AZM dataset. The information about the overall distribution in the map background is taken from Australian Faunal Directory (ABRS)¹. Note that although the range is shown to cover most of the continent, goats are rare in the tropics and through the central part of the deserts.



The maps above are based on data shared by data providers with the AZM project. The data are from track and sign surveys. This method is great for detecting species that live in sandy deserts, but not as good for species that prefer rocky habitats, or species with distributions that are mostly outside the central deserts. The method also works best for larger-bodied animals with tracks that are easily identified.

It is possible that extra surveys have been carried out over the past 40 years that have not yet been shared. If you see 'gaps' in the maps that you could fill by sharing your data, let us know.

Further information

Arid Zone Monitoring project:

<https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/projects/arid-zone-monitoring-surveys-for-vertebrates-across-arid-and-semi-arid-zones>

Centre for Invasive Species Solutions - Moral code of practice for the humane control of goats

<https://pestsmart.org.au/toolkit-resource/code-of-practice-feral-goats/#:~:text=Feral%20goat%20control%20techniques,during%20control%20or%20eradication%20programs>

References

¹ ABRS. Australian Faunal Directory. 2021; <https://biodiversity.org.au/afd/home>. Accessed June, 2021.



National Environmental Science Programme

This project received support from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

The Arid Zone Monitoring project is a collaboration between the NESP TSR Hub and over 30 Indigenous ranger groups and Indigenous organisations, 8 NGOs and NRM groups, 5 government agencies institutions, and many individual researchers and consultants. The project has gathered track and sign data from across Australia's deserts, using it to map the distributions of desert species and their threats. The national database includes almost 50,000 species presence records from over 5300 unique sites and almost 15,000 site visits, over the period from 1982 to 2020. The project area was defined by using IBRA subregional boundaries - the project boundary captures Australia's desert subregions where track and sign-based surveys are commonly used. The project showcases the collective work carried out by all groups working across the arid zone, and lays the groundwork for creating ongoing, national-scale monitoring for desert wildlife.

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