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Seeking citizen scientists to implement a Fox monitoring and control project

Western Port Biosphere Reserve has received funding from the Victorian Government Biodiversity On-ground Action – Community & Volunteer Action Grant program to coordinate a 2-year fox monitoring and control project in the coastal northern Western Port region.

Our aim is to abate the predation pressure by foxes on stock, small native fauna and ground dwelling shore birds.

Using methodologies established in previous Western Port Biosphere projects, photo-monitoring in the first year will assess the distribution and abundance of the Red Fox, which will determine the most effective areas to undertake control activities in the second year.

“Integral to the success of the project, landholder and other community member volunteers and community groups will be encouraged and trained to be actively involved in the implementation” said Cecelia Witton, Executive Officer.

Landholders and community groups will be empowered to build pest monitoring and management into routine farm/land management. Volunteers from the broader community will be trained to assist landholders and to undertake fauna identification.

Activities will include:

- One-on-one training for landholders and other volunteers in the deployment of and use of motion-sensing cameras supplied by the Biosphere.
- Monthly checks (change card and batteries) of 1 to 4 cameras (depending on size of property).
- Download photos and fauna identification. Workshop training will be provided in fauna identification, use of ExifPro (a free download) to tag photos and recording on the Atlas of Living Australia.
- Assist qualified fox control contractor with monitoring (2nd year only).

The extent of involvement will be tailored to suit individuals. Participants will be provided with support throughout the project.

In the long term, through coordination of biodiversity monitoring and fox control activities by citizen scientists, integrated with other stakeholder fox management, this project will contribute to a landscape scale map of all management activities, which will identify gaps in control, and determine a) the effectiveness of control techniques; b) predator/prey relationships and, c) the effectiveness of control activities on target species populations.

If you are interested in participating or wish to know more about this important project, please email admin@biosphere.org.au or telephone 03 5979 2167.