

RELEASE RESEARCH – SYSTEMS THINKING, COMMUNICATING

Greater Bilby and Plains-wanderer are part of a breeding program at The Sanctuary, which is a 110-hectare purpose-built conservation and breeding facility located at Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo, NSW. After successful breeding seasons within The Sanctuary for the Greater Bilby population, the Taronga team is excited to be returning this important ecological engineer back into the wild in NSW.

Selecting the right site is critical in ensuring the post-release success of these breeding programs and a lot of work goes into the research, selection, preparation and timing of each wild release to maximise the chances of these animals thriving in the wild.

Below are three possible release locations for Greater Bilby. Your task is to **research and select a location** you think would be the most suitable release site and **pitch your choice** to your own team of experts, just like the Wildlife Conservation & Recovery Team at Taronga.



1. Pilliga State Conservation Area, near Coonabarabran (Scrubland)



2. Mallee Cliffs National Park, near Mildura (Grassy Plains)



3. Sturt National Park, far north-west NSW (Semi-Arid)



GREATER BILBY – RELEASE RESEARCH



To select the most suitable wild release site for Greater Bilbies, the Taronga team require **systems thinking** to get the best understanding of all aspects of each site, and how each element interacts with and influences others, and what might happen post-release. To help you consider which of the three locations may be the most suitable, use the questions below to get your research started:

1. What does the Greater Bilby eat? Your site must be able to maintain the increasing dietary needs of the population as it increases each breeding season.
2. Which Greater Bilby food sources are available in each of the 3 sites?
3. Where and how do Greater Bilbies raise their offspring? Your chosen site must be able to sustain a growing population of breeding animals each year.
4. What threats does the Greater Bilby face in the wild? How will you manage or eliminate these from your chosen wild release site?
5. How will you monitor the Greater Bilby population after the release? Collecting and analysing data helps to measure success and learn more about the species.
6. Will releasing Greater Bilbies in your chosen release site improve the environment for other native plants and animals at your chosen location?

Following your detailed research of all aspects of each release site and deciding on your most suitable recommendation, you need to **communicate** your research and reasoning.

Prepare and present a 'pitch' to your own panel of wildlife recovery experts, just as Taronga's team do when proposing a new wild release location. It is important that you are able to explain why you have selected a particular site and why. Justify your reasons supporting your recommended site and why it is the most suitable location to give the Greater Bilbies the best chance to survive, thrive and reproduce!