Chinova Heap Leach
Carpentarian Antechinus
Management Plan
Annual Progress Update Report
EPBC 2016/7773
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1. Introduction

The Carpentarian Antechinus (*Pseudantechinus mimulus*) has been found to occur within the Selwyn Range, and there is potential for the species to be impacted by proposed activities associated with the Mt Dore Heap Leach Copper Project. This Carpentarian Antechinus Management Plan Annual Progress Report summarises the achievement of outcomes and monitoring of the performance measures outlined in the Carpentarian Antechinus Management Plan. For a comprehensive overview of the Mt Dore Heap Leach Project, please refer to the original Carpentarian Antechinus Management Plan (hereafter referred to as ‘the Plan’).

The main impacts to the Carpentarian Antechinus identified in the Plan are summarised as follows:

- Direct loss of individuals through clearing of known habitat during construction;
- Direct loss of 3.7 ha of mapped habitat because of the open pits;
- Feral cat activity potentially increasing because of the proposed action; and
- Impacts from uncontrolled bushfires.

1.1 Schedule of activities

The timing of activities for the Mt Dore Heap Leach Copper Project has changed compared to the original Plan. The original Plan had a schedule of activities as follows:

- Land clearing and site preparation – August 2017
- Open pit mining commences – November 2017
- Crusher, Heap Leach and Plant construction – February 2018
- First ore delivery – March 2018
- Heap Leach irrigation commences – April 2018
- First copper cathode production – May 2018
- Project completion – December 2022
- Rehabilitation commences January 2023.

To date, only rocky habitat has been removed from within the South Pit footprint. Prior to this occurring live trapping and relocation was undertaken by the University of the Sunshine Coast. The delays to the proposed schedule of activities have occurred due to additional test work being undertaken to optimise the Project. These may result in a change in the process and footprint of the Project. CRCM will advise once this has been confirmed as the definite future direction of the Project.
2. Potential Environmental Impacts and Management Measures

2.1 General measures

There is a lack of targeted survey data for the species from Queensland and the Northern Territory. It is not clear whether current gaps in the known occurrence of the species are accurate or reflect an absence of appropriate surveys. Chinova Resources Cloncurry Mines (CRCM) has committed to continuing joint research projects with Sunshine Coast University and MMG to support a defined project for two monthly monitoring for one year of Carpentarian Antechinus at known habitat locations in the Selwyn Ranges. The project aims to gain an understanding of variations in detectability and life cycle of the species. In addition, the Sunshine Coast University will be contracted to complete the trapping and removal of individuals from the proposed disturbance areas and to determine the statistical effectiveness of this approach. Chinova Resources has committed a budget of $42,000 to complete this work.

The proposed research will also conduct surveys across potential rocky habitats in the Southern Gulf, Desert Uplands, Einsleigh Uplands, Brigalow Belt, and Mitchell Grass Downs bioregions in Queensland, and adjacent areas in the Northern Territory. Surveys will use baited trail cameras to improve distribution data and assist in the development of a habitat model for the species. The results of this will be available at the completion of the project in the final report. It is expected that this will improve the level of knowledge of the Carpentarian Antechinus lifecycle and help inform future management plans.

2.2 Potential Impacts and Management Measures

The Multispecies Recovery Plan for the Carpentarian Antechinus, Butler’s Dunnart and the Northern Hopping-mouse (Woinarski, 2004) and the Carpentarian Antechinus Conservation Advice have been reviewed in developing the following assessments.

The proposed project has the potential to impact the Carpentarian Antechinus and includes a combination of direct and indirect impacts including:

- mortality of individuals
- habitat loss
- spread of feral predators, and
- changes to fire regime.

Only the sections that have proposed mitigation measures have been included in this annual progress report. Please refer to the original Plan for details regarding sections that are not discussed in this report.

2.2.1 Mortality from Land Clearing

Mortality of individuals will occur during land clearing and the species is unlikely to be able to outpace clearing activities or rapidly relocate to other suitable habitat adjacent to the proposed disturbance area. Mortality of individuals within disturbance areas is therefore considered to be an unavoidable impact. It is not possible to quantify the number of individuals which may be lost from the population because of the proposed disturbance.
However, the area of habitat loss will not exceed 4ha or 1.6% of habitat available within the project mining leases, suggesting that only a relatively small proportion of the local population will be potentially impacted (Figure 1). In relation to the total project mining lease area of 4,990.18ha, 251ha (5%) has been mapped as potential habitat.

2.2.2 Proposed Mitigation Measures

Trapping and relocation will be undertaken immediately prior to disturbance of suitable habitat where the Carpentarian Antechinus has been identified and known to occur. Individuals that are captured will provide an opportunity to gain a better understanding of their spatial ecology and translocation success. Relocation work will be undertaken by the Sunshine Coast University over a 14-day period using a minimum of 1,000 trap nights (expected success rate ~1%) during the currently known period of higher activity between May and July (Burnett, et al., 2014) Trapping effort will be dependent on the results of the camera trapping prior to disturbance and adjusted accordingly if required. Captured individuals will be relocated a minimum distance of 500 metres.

Camera trapping will also be undertaken in the removal area after trapping is completed to determine the success of the relocation program. The success of the program will be evaluated using an occupancy modelling power analysis approach. This will be an adaptive approach in that we will utilise camera trap data from the pre-removal phase of the animal translocation to determine the amount of trapping effort required to be 80% certain that lack of detections on trail cameras reflects that there are no individuals remaining at the site. Given the near impossibility of capturing every individual of any species, let alone a sparse and difficult to trap species such the Carpentarian Antechinus, it is unreasonable to expect that every individual will be trapped and removed.

2.2.3 Habitat Loss

Loss of habitat because of the proposed project would occur through direct clearing of vegetation and land modification during construction of the north and south pits and associated northern and southern waste rock dumps. An area of 3.7ha of potential habitat loss has been calculated based on the proposed disturbance areas (Figure 1).

2.2.4 Proposed Mitigation Measures

Adjustment of the position of both the northern and southern waste rock dumps has been approved by CRCM effectively reducing the original habitat loss of 5.5 ha by 1.8 ha. The north and south pit disturbance areas cannot be relocated due to the position of the orebody and therefore this disturbance is unavoidable. The total area of habitat loss is <2% of suitable available habitat on the Cloncurry Project mining leases.

The area of all disturbance including mapped Carpentarian Antechinus habitat will be monitored and reported through CRCM’s Permit to Disturb system.
Figure 1: Potential Carpentarian Antechinus Habitat Disturbance
Rehabilitation of waste rock dumps will include:

- Establishment of rocky outer batters for erosion resistance and habitat development for the Carpentarian Antechinus and Purple Necked Rock Wallaby.
- Placement of rock areas across a minimum of 20% of the waste rock dump upper surface by way of rock infiltration basins and regularly placed low shaped coarse rock dumps.
- Cleared vegetation will also be stockpiled for replacement during rehabilitation to provide habitat for invertebrate species.
- *Acacia shirleyi* (Lancewood) will be used in the seeding mix applied to the rehabilitated site.
- The existing Concurry Project Closure Plan includes revegetation criteria with the aim to:
  - establish a vegetation system that contains species tolerant to drought and fire conditions;
  - has demonstrated resilience and recovery to drought and/or fire conditions;
  - has demonstrated secondary recruitment and progression towards the analogue condition;
  - has a foliage projective cover >50% of the analogue sites;
  - has a species diversity >50% of the analogue sites.
- Camera trapping of the new habitat will be undertaken to demonstrate usage by the Carpentarian Antechinus.

It is estimated that the rehabilitated waste rock dumps will provide 10.6ha of potential new rocky habitat suitable for the species. Rehabilitation monitoring is likely to extend at least 5 years beyond the completion of rehabilitation to achieve all relevant completion criteria.

### 2.2.5 Proliferation of Feral Predators

Several exotic pest species are known to occur within and surrounding the Selwyn Range including feral pigs, dingos/wild dogs, and feral cats. CRCM has had existing feral animal monitoring and control procedures for pest species during the operation of Starra 276 and the development of Merlin, which, included appropriate waste management practises and actively trapping feral cats. These measures, which are inherent to CRCM mining activity, will reduce the risk of feral animal proliferation in these locations and may confer a net benefit to small vertebrates inhabiting the area. In the original Plan, feral pigs and dingos/wild dogs were considered unlikely to have a significant impact on the Carpentarian Antechinus and have been excluded from this report.

#### Feral Cats

Feral cats are a major predator of small native mammals and are a listed threatening process. High numbers of feral cats are likely to increase predatory pressure on small mammals of the Selwyn Range, including the Carpentarian Antechinus. The severity of this threat will vary, influenced by feral cat and alternative prey abundance (e.g., Common Rock-rats, small lizards, birds etc) and associated environmental factors such as rainfall. Feral cats can also benefit from human activity, most notably through an increase in prey or food associated with inappropriate disposal of food waste. Mine sites also provide shelter and hiding areas and can lead to an increase in feral cat numbers.
Proposed Mitigation Measures

CRCM has existing waste management practises (dump cages) to ensure food waste is disposed of appropriately, and as such it is not anticipated that feral cat abundance will substantially increase because of the proposed project. CRCM will undertake monitoring and control of feral cats to ensure any potential impacts are avoided or minimised near operations.

2.2.6 Changes to the Fire Regime

Inappropriate fire regimes are listed as a severe threat to the species (Woinarski, et al., 2014). There are currently no fire regimes for the proposed project area and bushfires are common throughout the summer with several occurring in the region since 2011. A 2013 study found the Carpentarian Antechinus at sites that had been burnt 6 months and approximately two years respectively, prior to the survey (Burnett, et al., 2014). These results provide some evidence that the species may tolerate infrequent fire regimes. The fuel load associated with the Carpentarian Antechinus habitat in the proposed project area is low which reduces the likelihood of severe fires. CRCM will develop a Bushfire Management Plan for the project. Key elements of the plan will include:

- actively managing increased fire risk to known habitat from dispersal of buffel grass in disturbance areas;
- use of fire breaks;
- identification and management of ignition sources;
- identification of fire risk areas; and
- bushfire management training.

Proposed Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the Bushfire Management Plan is considered adequate to manage this potential risk to the species.

3. Proposed Outcomes and Performance Measures

The following outcomes and associated performance measures are proposed to manage the impact to the Carpentarian Antechinus in relation to the potential impacts mentioned above.

3.1 Outcome 1: Mortality from Land Clearing

Direct impact to individuals of Carpentarian Antechinus will be limited to the minimum extent practicable by active trapping and removal of individuals from areas to be disturbed.

3.1.1 Performance Measures

- A minimum trapping effort of 1,000 Elliott Trap nights will be expected to capture ~10 individuals.
• Trapping effort will be guided by camera trapping results conducted immediately prior to disturbance.
• Camera trapping after removal will be used to identify any remaining individuals and to determine effectiveness of the removal campaign.
• Maintain records of the number of individuals trapped and removed.
• Records of capture (number) and release (location) to be maintained.

3.1.2 Purpose of Condition
To ensure all practicable efforts are made to effectively translocate affected individuals and to monitor their capture to improve the understanding of the effectiveness of current removal options.

3.1.3 Progress to Date
The primary focus throughout 2017/18 was the removal of rocky habitat in the South Pit proposed disturbance area for the Mt Dore Heap Leach Project. CRCM undertook camera trapping prior to the removal of rocky habitat being undertaken and data from this was provided to the University of the Sunshine Coast prior to them undertaking a live trapping and relocation program from the 19th to the 28th July 2017. The data provided by CRCM allowed them to focus on areas where the Carpentarian Antechinus were present. Trapping effort consisted of 538 trapping nights with the reduction in trapping effort being due to cold weather at the start of the program. However, the lower trap effort was mitigated by 24-hour activity after the first two days when low overnight temperatures only permitted daytime trapping.

As a result, they successfully trapped and relocated 14 individuals (6 females, 8 males) prior to clearing (9th to the 22nd August 2017) of the proposed South Pit disturbance area (Figure 2). This translates to a success rate of 2.6% and is above the ~1% that has been reported for other studies (Woinarski, et al., 2014). This is likely due to the camera trapping undertaken to identify locations where the Carpentarian Antechinus were present. All captured animals were translocated >500m from capture sites (Figure 3), with one animal moving back to its capture area in less than 24 hours after release (approximately 1.8km in 18hrs), and was released further away (Burnett pers comm). This animal was not detected again, and no other recaptures were recorded.

Prior to the live trapping and relocation program Carpentarian Antechinus were recorded on 22 of 25 camera traps (88%). Post live trapping and relocation they were recorded on 3 of 25 camera traps (12%), although this lower presence is likely due to the camera traps not being rebaited. Post clearing (9th to the 22nd August 2017) of rocky habitat within the proposed South Pit disturbance area 15 camera traps were deployed (28th August to the 16th October) at the three sites that had been cleared. Carpentarian Antechinus were recorded on 6 of the 15 camera traps (40%) and it is possible individuals have encroached from the surrounding suitable habitat due to an increase in available food sources (invertebrates), particularly termites that are a known food source for the species (Burnett pers comm). Chinova plan to undertake further live trapping and relocation prior to earthworks commencing for the construction of the North and South Pits, to allow occupancy modelling power analysis to be undertaken.
Figure 2: Carpentarian Antechinus Successful Trapping Locations
3.2 Outcome 2: Habitat Loss

Direct impact to identified Carpentarian Antechinus habitat will be limited to less than 1.6% or 4ha of the available mapped habitat measured within the Cloncurry Project mining lease (ML) areas.

3.2.1 Performance Measures

- Measured mapped Carpentarian Antechinus habitat within ML numbers 2454, 2566, 2688, 2689, 2690, 2691, 2692, 2693, 2694, 2732, 2733, 2734, 2736, 2737, 2738, 2745, 2746, 90043, 90061, 90215 & 90217.
- Measured disturbance to mapped Carpentarian Antechinus habitat within ML numbers 2454, 2566, 2688, 2689, 2690, 2691, 2692, 2693, 2694, 2732, 2733, 2734, 2736, 2737, 2738, 2745, 2746, 90043, 90061, 90215 & 90217.

3.2.2 Purpose of Condition

To ensure that the loss of identified Carpentarian Antechinus habitat will be effectively limited in relation to the proposed action.

3.2.3 Progress to Date

A total of 3.1ha of mapped Carpentarian Antechinus habitat has been disturbed on ML2690 and ML2691 during August 2017. This area is within the footprint for the proposed South Pit (Figure 1). Further disturbance to mapped Carpentarian Antechinus habitat will occur on ML2688 and ML2689 in the coming year. This will involve the removal of 0.6ha of rocky habitat.

3.3 Outcome 3: Feral Animals

Actively trap and remove feral cats from the project area during development and operational phases.

3.3.1 Performance Measures

- Maintain records of traps numbers, locations and success.
- Maintain record of feral cats identified in camera trapping locations.

3.3.2 Purpose of Condition

To effectively reduce the pressures of predation by feral cats in the project area.
Figure 3: Carpentarian Antechinus Relocation Sites
3.3.3 Progress to Date
Chinova has not begun actively trapping feral cats to date as staff are currently based at Osborne and are unable to check the traps daily. Once the project commences Chinova will begin trapping feral cats and maintain records of traps numbers, locations and success. Feral cats identified on camera traps are currently recorded in the comments section of the spreadsheet with all camera trap records.

3.4 Outcome 4: Altered Fire Regimes
A Bushfire Management Plan will be established before project activities commence to limit the impact of uncontrolled end of dry season fires on Carpentarian Antechinus habitat in the project area.

3.4.1 Performance Measures:
▪ Bushfire Management Plan developed and in place before development activity commences.
▪ Maintain records of bushfires, any burnt areas and dates of the fires within the project area.
▪ Maintain records of any controlled burns, the areas burnt and date within the Cloncurry Project mining lease areas.
▪ Where fire interacts with Carpentarian Antechinus habitat carry out camera trapping surveys and record individual survivals.

3.4.2 Purpose of Condition:
To effectively reduce the frequency and intensity of uncontrolled end of dry season fires which may cause stress to existing populations of the Carpentarian Antechinus and to identify impacts of fire on individuals in known habitat.

3.4.3 Progress to Date
A Bushfire Management Plan has been developed and is currently under review before being implemented prior to development activity commencing.

4. Surrogate Outcomes
A surrogate outcomes-based condition is one that specifies an outcome (or a level of performance to be achieved) for something which directly supports the protected matter.

4.1 Surrogate Outcome 1: Create Additional Habitat
Create rocky environments and associated micro-habitat with the aim of establishing suitable habitat for Carpentarian Antechinus on all waste dump slopes to encourage use of the area for foraging and shelter.
4.1.1 Performance Measures

▪ A minimum of 20% or 10.6 ha of the waste rock dump surface area will be covered with clean rocky material with a nominal size range of 0.25-1.0 metres to a minimum 2 metres depth.

▪ Cleared vegetation and soil will also be stockpiled for replacement during rehabilitation to provide initial habitat for invertebrate species.

▪ Acacia shirleyi (Lancewood) will be used in the seeding mix applied to the rehabilitated site.

▪ The revegetation criteria will be to:
  – establish vegetation systems that contains species tolerant to drought and fire conditions;
  – has demonstrated resilience and recovery to drought and/or fire conditions;
  – has demonstrated secondary recruitment and progression towards the analogue condition;
  – has a foliage projective cover >50% of the analogue sites;
  – has a species diversity >50% of the analogue sites.

▪ Camera trapping will identify Carpentarian Antechinus usage of the area.

4.1.2 Purpose of Condition

To effectively provide a net increase in potential habitat area for Carpentarian Antechinus as a beneficial outcome of the project.

4.1.3 Progress to Date

As the project has not commenced there has been no rehabilitation progress for this outcome and will remain so until rehabilitation undertaken.

4.2 Surrogate Outcome 2: Ongoing Research

Support a defined project for two monthly monitoring for one year of Carpentarian Antechinus at known habitat locations in the Selwyn Ranges to gain an understanding of variations in detectability and life cycle (joint project with Sunshine Coast University and MMG).

4.2.1 Performance Measures:

▪ Records of two monthly monitoring.

▪ Report on the findings.

4.2.2 Purpose of Condition:

To improve detection surveys and the level of knowledge of the Carpentarian Antechinus lifecycle to inform future management plans.
4.2.3 Progress to Date

A joint project with Sunshine Coast University and MMG commenced in late May 2018 for which Chinova has and will continue to provide support for one year. Upon completion, a report on the findings will be provided in relation to Chinova’s tenements.

5. Adaptive Management

An adaptive management system is key to achieving recognised best practice for achieving continual improvement. The Plan and associated actions will be reviewed on an annual basis commencing July 2018 and updated accordingly to adjust for any identified issues.

5.1 Environmental Monitoring

Environmental monitoring activities relevant to the Plan include recording:

- Land clearing activities approved by the Permit to Disturb system within the Project mining leases.
- The quantity of mapped Carpentarian Antechinus habitat impacted by the proposed action within the Project mining leases.
- The relative trapping effort in Elliot trap hours to relocate affected individuals of Carpentarian Antechinus.
- The number of relocated individuals and the release locations of Carpentarian Antechinus.
- Relevant tracking information for relocated individuals of Carpentarian Antechinus.
- The effort (trap hours), trap locations and numbers of feral cats removed from the Project mining leases.
- Bushfire impacts on the project mining leases including area burnt, date of burn and any impact to Carpentarian Antechinus habitat.
- Camera trapping of Carpentarian Antechinus habitat affected by bushfire to determine survival.
- Rehabilitation of waste rock dumps including the area of habitat developed for Carpentarian Antechinus.
- Bimonthly monitoring of Carpentarian Antechinus for one year in the Selwyn Ranges (joint project with Sunshine Coast University and MMG).

Incidents or non-compliance with conditions.

5.2 Record Keeping and Reporting

All records required to be kept by this Plan will be made publicly available on the Chinova Resources website [www.chinovaresources.com](http://www.chinovaresources.com)
A report summarising the achievement of outcomes and monitoring of the performance measures has been produced annually commencing in July 2018, along with a review of the Plan. The report and Plan update will be also made publicly available on the Chinova Resources website.

5.3 Independent Audit of Outcomes

An independent audit of outcomes and monitoring of the performance measures will be conducted every two years from project commencement (July 2017) with the reports made publicly available on the Chinova Resources website (July 2019 & 2021).

6. Conclusion

To date, only rocky habitat has been removed from within the South Pit footprint. Prior to this occurring live trapping and relocation was undertaken by the University of the Sunshine Coast. Delays to the proposed schedule of activities have occurred due to additional test work being undertaken to optimise the project.

CRCM undertook camera trapping prior to the removal of rocky habitat being undertaken and data from this was provided to the University of the Sunshine Coast prior to them undertaking a live trapping and relocation program from the 19th to the 28th July 2017. As a result, they successfully trapped and relocated 14 individuals (6 females, 8 males) prior to clearing of 3.1ha (9th to the 22nd August 2017) of the proposed South Pit disturbance area. This translates to a success rate of 2.6% and is above the ~1% that has been reported for other studies. All captured animals were translocated >500m from capture sites (Figure 3), with one animal moving back to its capture area in less than 24 hours after release and was released further away. Chinova plan to undertake further live trapping and relocation prior to earthworks commencing for the construction of the North and South Pits.

A total of 3.1ha of mapped Carpentarian Antechinus habitat was disturbed on ML2690 and ML2691 during August 2017. This area is within the footprint for the proposed South Pit. Further disturbance to 0.6ha of mapped Carpentarian Antechinus habitat will occur on ML2688 and ML2689 in the coming year.

Chinova has not begun actively trapping feral cats to date as staff are currently based at Osborne and are unable to check the traps daily. Once the project commences Chinova will begin trapping feral cats and maintain records of traps numbers, locations and success. Feral cats identified on camera traps are currently recorded in the comments section of the spreadsheet with all camera trap records.

A Bushfire Management Plan has been developed and is currently under review before being implemented prior to development activity commencing. A joint project with Sunshine Coast University and MMG commenced in late May 2018 for which Chinova has and will continue to provide support for one year. Upon completion, a report on the findings will be provided in relation to Chinova’s tenements.

Except for delays to the schedule of activities and potential change in the process and footprint of the Project, Chinova has made progress with the applicable proposed outcomes and performance measures and has provided and will continue to provide support for the ongoing research of the Carpentarian Antechinus.
7. References

