

The impact of private sanctuary networks on reintroduction programs

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Summary

The last two decades have seen a proliferation of privately run (including community-led) conservation management programs in selected reserves in both Australia and New Zealand. Many of these reserves have been termed ‘sanctuaries’ in recognition of the removal or control of exotic mammalian predators within them, making them ‘safe’ places for native wildlife. Bringing valued wildlife back to locations accessible to the public has been a strong motivation for these sanctuaries, in addition to restoring ecosystem processes and improving conservation status. In Australia, two large private sanctuary networks dominate the sector (Australian Wildlife Conservancy and Bush Heritage Australia; although there are several other private conservation agencies also), whereas in New Zealand there is a loose network of independent, mostly community-led sanctuaries. In both countries, sanctuaries are now key sites for wildlife reintroductions. In Australia, most translocations have been of rare mammals reintroduced into areas where they had become regionally extinct. In New Zealand, rare birds and reptiles have been the most common translocations to sanctuaries, including species returned to mainland sites after absences of many decades. Australia and New Zealand already have a long history of translocations to pest-free islands (Chapter 19), but in recent years, there have been more translocations to sanctuaries than to islands. The success of these reintroductions has been high so far in both countries, but requires sustained restriction of pest mammal populations within the sanctuaries. The current trends towards both enhanced competition and cooperation within the broad conservation sector, including sanctuaries, should lead to innovative and cost-effective management solutions, including for reintroduction practice.

Introduction

The continual increase in the number of species on threatened species lists in Australia and New Zealand (Hayward 2011; Hitchmough 2013) suggests current conservation practices have been unsuccessful and new strategies are required. The creation of private,

non-governmental conservation organisations has occurred to fill this need, while also satisfying the general public’s desire to be involved in active and successful conservation initiatives (Campbell-Hunt *et al.* 2010; Radford 2014). Privatisation is often seen as a strategy to improve efficiency and innovation, while