



### Rare marsupial runs for love (图)

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[ 摘要 ] 06 March 2007. An endangered mouse-like marsupial from central Australia has been found to run more than 30 kilometres in one day while in heat. Several marathon-running Julia Creek Dunnarts were clocked at the David Fleay Wildlife Park (DFWP) on the Gold Coast using odometers attached to running wheels in their enclosures.

[ 关键词 ] Wildlife:Animal Studies



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like marsupial from central Australia has been found to run more than 30 kilometres in one day while in heat. Several marathon-running Julia Creek Dunnarts were clocked at the David Fleay Wildlife Park (DFWP) on the Gold Coast using odometers attached to running wheels in their enclosures. Kate Pollock, a UQ Bachelor of Applied Science (Animal Studies) honours student, has been studying the reproductive cycle of 10 female dunnarts using 24-hour video surveillance and analysing their faeces and urine.

Julia Creek Dunnarts are rare carnivorous rodents that grow to about 20 centimetres long.

They were thought to be extinct until 1991 when they were rediscovered in the Mitchell grasslands of north-west Queensland and now live in 25 locations.

Miss Pollock has found that the dunnarts usually travel less than 10 kilometres a day but that increased to more than 30 when in heat with one individual spending nine hours running. More than half the animals studied had travelled the maximum distance.

Their average speed of between one and three kilometres an hour when not in heat peaked at 7.4 kilometres an hour when in oestrus.

Miss Pollock, from Camp Hill, said she believed the increase in the distance travelled and in energy levels in the wild was due to their desire to search for a male partner.

She said the aim of her research was to ensure the genetic viability of the population and to understand more about their reproductive patterns which could eventually boost wild populations.

She will soon travel to Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo to analyse the dunnarts' reproductive hormones to compare with her behavioural observations.

The dunnart research is a joint project for UQ's wildlife reproduction group under the School of Animal Studies at Gatton and DFWP.

UQ reproductive biologist Dr Steve Johnston and DFWP's Principal Conservation Officer Rosie Booth have been supervising the dunnart research.

