



MEDIA RELEASE: Australia's smallest, critically endangered fish finds a new home

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In a major milestone, national conservation not-for-profit Bush Heritage Australia has successfully translocated the critically endangered Red-finned Blue-eye fish into the wild in central west Queensland.

Bush Heritage freshwater ecologist Dr Pippa Kern last week released 27 fish from a captive-breeding program, supported by the Queensland Department of Environment and Science, into one naturally occurring artesian spring on Edgbaston Reserve, 140km north east of Longreach. To capture genetic diversity, a further 53 fish from wild populations in different natural springs were also translocated.

It is the first time captive bred Red-finned Blue-eyes have been released into one of Edgbaston's natural springs which are fed by water travelling up from the Great Artesian Basin.

When Bush Heritage first began to manage Edgbaston in 2008 there may have been as few as 500-1000 fish left in the wild. Thanks to ongoing efforts to establish translocated populations and to eradicate springs of feral *Gambusia* fish which out compete Red-finned Blue-eyes, the wild population is now sitting at 2000-3000 fish.

Dr Kern said it was heartening to see conservation efforts paying off for this diminutive and irreplaceable native species.

"The Red-finned Blue-eye may be Australia's tiniest freshwater fish but it is a hardy species, surviving in the arid zone in pretty extreme aquatic conditions. I'm confident that the new wild population will be able to thrive long into the future," said Dr Kern.

A Queensland Department of Environment and Science spokesperson said Bush Heritage received \$49,000 in a Community Sustainability Action grant to restore and protect habitat at Edgbaston Reserve for the Red-finned Blue-eye.

"Bush Heritage have been doing a fantastic job to protect this endangered species which is only found in artesian springs on Edgbaston Reserve," the department said.

"The release of animals from the captive breeding program will further help secure this endangered species in additional springs on Edgbaston Reserve."

Since purchasing the 8000-hectare Edgbaston Reserve in 2008, Bush Heritage has been working to eradicate springs of feral *Gambusia* (Mosquito fish), an introduced and invasive species that out compete Red-finned Blue-eye and may prey on their eggs. Springs have been fenced with protective barriers to prevent *Gambusia* from re-entering during times of flooding.

Three artificial springs were also constructed using bore water from the Great Artesian Basin to mimic conditions in the natural springs as much as possible. The captive populations have successfully bred in these artificial environments.

As well as the Red-finned Blue-eye, the group of springs at Edgbaston are home to more than two dozen species found nowhere else in the world including another critically endangered fish species, the Edgbaston Goby, 11 snail species, a small crustacean, a flatworm, a species of dragonfly and many plants.

Bush Heritage acknowledges the Iningai Traditional Owners of Edgbaston Reserve. Bush Heritage also pays its respects to the Bidjara people.

Red-finned Blue-eye quick facts

- First discovered by scientists in 1990
- Its scientific name is *Scaturiginichthys vermeilipinnis*
- Only the males have red fins and blue eyes. Females have translucent fins and are a silvery yellow-olive colour
- Listed as endangered under both [Australian](#) (EPBC) and [Queensland](#) (NCA) legislation
- Listed as critically endangered by the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN), and included in their report of the planet's 100 most endangered species

Download hi-res images of Dr Pippa Kern and the Red-finned Blue-eye at Edgbaston Reserve here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kckoyosp13wacae7/AABEhtOXLuB14aMWa-POOFy6a?dl=0>

Download video footage of Edgbaston Reserve and the Red-finned Blue-eye and an interview with Dr Pippa Kern here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9ev7glku4trqh3j/AAD36jbd0wLi-keINA9dGZpa?dl=0>