

Media Release

Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events

Minister for Outdoor Recreation



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DEEN MAAR ISLAND IS OFFICIALLY RABBIT-FREE

Deen Maar Island has officially been declared as rabbit-free, marking two years since the last rabbit was detected on the culturally and environmentally significant island in Victoria's south-west.

Minister for Environment Steve Dimopoulos confirmed that the island is thriving after the removal of the rabbits, supporting one of Australia's largest breeding colonies of Australian Fur Seals and hosting seabird populations, including Short-tailed Shearwaters, Little Penguins, Fairy Prions, and Common Diving Petrels.

European rabbits were first introduced in the mid-1800's to provide a food source for potential shipwreck survivors, but their presence caused serious damage – digging up cultural sites, causing widespread erosion, and reducing areas for burrowing seabirds such as Little Penguins to nest.

Rabbits significantly impacted the native plant species, including impacts on the threatened fern, Shore Spleenwort.

Deen Maar Island is flourishing once again, with penguins and sea birds reclaiming sites previously overrun by rabbit warrens and using the empty holes as nest sites.

The removal has ensured nesting habitats for seabird species remain on the island, improving their long-term breeding success and enhancing population resilience at a state-wide level.

The project was delivered in phases, including the use of calicivirus, aerial baiting, and monitoring and eradication trips. After the last rabbit was controlled in late October 2023, the project team undertook two years of monitoring, helping to protect the site's cultural heritage and native ecosystem.

The Deen Maar Island Rabbit Eradication Project was led by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action in partnership with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Environment Steve Dimopoulos

"This project has transformed the island into a thriving wildlife sanctuary – from seals basking along the shores to seabirds reclaiming their nesting grounds – delivering a remarkable win for both nature and cultural heritage."

"We know rabbits are tough to eradicate completely and we thank all partners for their role and dedication in making this project a success."

Quote attributable to Member for Western Victoria Jacinta Ermacora

"This achievement is a win for both culture and conservation. Removing rabbits from Deen Maar Island means we've protected an important cultural site and restored vital habitats for seabirds and native plants."