

What Is a Bilby?

Bilbies are **bandicoots**. They live in very hot, dry, **remote** parts of Australia. Bilbies live in **burrows**, dug into the ground—two metres deep! They only come out at night. Bilbies eat insects, spiders, seeds and fruits.

Bilbies have huge, furry ears and long tails. They're very cute, and very rare. Bilbies are in danger of becoming extinct.





Over the years, the bilby's home has shrunk.

Once, bilbies used to live over about three-quarters of Australia. Now, bilbies are only found in the wild in a few places. No-one knows how many bilbies survive today, but scientists think there might be only 600 to 700 bilbies left in Queensland.

Bilbies have become rare because animals that were **introduced** to Australia, like foxes and cats, kill them. Another introduced animal, the rabbit, eats bilby food and takes over their burrows.

Bilbies are in trouble, big trouble. They really need friends.



Peter and Frank

Peter McRae and Frank Manthey are big friends of bilbies. They work at the National Parks and Wildlife Centre at Charleville in Queensland. Peter is a **zoologist**, and Frank is a senior National Park Ranger.

Peter has been studying bilbies for more than 15 years. He travels to the far west of Queensland, out past Windorah, to study bilbies in the wild. He also successfully **breeds** bilbies at the Centre in Charleville. He says he feels like a “mum” to his 30 breeding bilbies.

Peter McRae has spent many years studying bilbies.





Frank Manthey is also a friend of the bilby.

Frank is an **outback** Queenslanders. He's lived in remote parts of Australia all his life. He's used to travelling and camping in the bush, and he knows a great deal about outback animals.

When he was younger, Frank was a kangaroo shooter. Then he decided that Australian animals needed protection, and he became a ranger. Now he works to save endangered Australian animals like the bilby.



Peter's Dream

When Peter first started studying bilbies, nobody had seen one for years. Peter and his team searched far western Queensland for months. They found no sign of bilbies.

Then, late one rainy night, Peter was driving over flat **plains** past Windorah. Suddenly, in his spotlight, he saw a little grey animal with long ears.

"I couldn't believe it. It was like seeing a **unicorn**, or the tooth fairy!" he said. "There were still bilbies!"

Peter spent hours looking for bilbies at night.





Peter was always on the lookout for bilby burrows.

Peter's team searched the area and found more bilbies—and bilby burrows. But there weren't very many.

Peter decided to trap some bilbies and take them back to Charleville to breed. Peter's dream was that, one day, he would be able to **release** bilbies into the wild again, and the bilby population would increase. But there was a problem with that dream . . .

