

# SHIELD-BACKED TRAPDOOR SPIDER

*(Idiosoma nigrum)*

## CONSERVATION PLAN

2008-2013



Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider. (Photo: *Barbara York Main*)

**\*Rowan Inglis**

\*Conservation Officer (Fauna), Department of Environment & Conservation, Yilgarn & Avon Mortlock Districts,  
PO Box 332, Merredin WA 6415



Department of  
Environment and Conservation



## **FOREWORD**

This species conservation plan has been developed by the Department of Environment and Conservation Western Australia (DEC) on behalf of the Avon Catchment Council.

Although this species is found outside the Avon River Basin (ARB), this plan relates to the management of the species within the ARB. The implementation of recommendations and associated costs contained within this plan do not reflect current funding capacity. The availability of funding will determine the capacity to implement.

Information in this Species Conservation Plan was accurate at April 2008. This plan will operate from May 2008 to May 2013 but will remain in force until withdrawn or replaced.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Meg Green (former Ecologist, DEC Wheatbelt Region) contributed significantly towards the compilation of the first draft for this conservation plan.

Professor Barbara York Main (University of Western Australia), Dr. Mark Harvey (Western Australian Museum), Mick Davis (WWF – Australia) and Monica Russel (Edith Cowan University) provided historical and current information regarding trapdoor spider biology and locations.

Paul Blechynden, David Jolliffe and Brett Beecham (DEC Wheatbelt staff) as well as Professor Barbara York-Main provided valuable advice and comments during the preparation of this conservation plan.

### **Citation**

**Avon Catchment Council (2007) Shield - backed Trapdoor Spider (*Idiosoma nigrum*) Conservation Plan No. ##. Avon Catchment Council, Western Australia.**

## CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. SHIELD-BACKED TRAPDOOR SPIDER.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 History and taxonomic relationships	4
2.2 Description	4
2.3 Distribution, Habitat and Movements	5
2.4 Biology and Ecology	7
2.5 Conservation Status	8
<b>3. HABITAT CRITICAL TO SURVIVAL AND IMPORTANT POPULATIONS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKERS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5. THREATS.....</b>	<b><u>11</u></b>
5.1 Lack of ecological resources to support viable populations	<u>12</u>
5.2 Impacts of introduced plants and animals	12
5.3 Inappropriate fire regimes	<u>13</u>
5.4 Impacts of competing resource use (Gravel extraction & mining)	13
5.5 Salinity/Altered Hydrology	<u>14</u>
<b>6. INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>7. AFFECTED PARTIES.....</b>	<b><u>15</u></b>
<b>8. INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>9. BENEFITS.....</b>	<b><u>16</u></b>
<b>10. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS.....</b>	<b><u>16</u></b>
<b>11. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA.....</b>	<b><u>17</u></b>
11.1 Conservation plan objective	<u>17</u>
11.2 Recovery Criteria	<u>17</u>
11.3 Evaluation	17

<b>12. CONSERVATION ACTIONS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
12.1 Establish a Mygalomorph Conservation Team	18
12.2 Determine the population characteristics of known populations & ongoing monitoring	<a href="#">19</a>
12.3 Undertake a threat assessment for each population	19
12.4. Address threats to specific populations	<a href="#">20</a>
12.5 Conduct surveys to identify new populations	<a href="#">21</a>
12.6 Promote public awareness	<a href="#">22</a>
<b>13. SUMMARY OF CONSERVATION ACTIONS.....</b>	<b><a href="#">23</a></b>
<b>14. REFERENCES .....</b>	<b><a href="#">24</a></b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>26</b>
A1 Summary of population land vesting, purpose and tenure (extant populations)	26
A2 Extant mygalomorph populations associated with mining tenements	<a href="#">28</a>

## SUMMARY

**Shield - backed Trapdoor Spider** *Idiosoma nigrum* Main 1952

**Family:** Idiopidae.

**NRM Regions:** Avon, Northern Agricultural Region, Rangelands, Swan.

**Current status of taxon:** Vulnerable.

**Description:** The Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider has a body length of approximately 14mm and a chelicerae length of approximately 4mm. The most distinguishing feature of this species is the dark brown to black colour of the abdomen and appendages, which sits in contrast to the yellow to grey abdominal underside (Figure 1). The dorsal side of the abdomen is heavily sclerotised and deeply grooved, forming a shield-like structure. The eyes are arranged in three rows with the two anterior rows possessing two eyes and the posterior row possessing four eyes in a transverse line (Main, 1952).

Males generally have longer legs than females, presumably because males exit their burrows in search of females to breed (Main, 1952).

**Breeding habitat:** Burrows in heavy clay soils in areas of open *Eucalyptus loxophleba*, *E. salmonophloia* and *E. capillosa* woodland, where *Acacia acuminata* forms a sparse understorey.

**Feeding habitat:** Ground litter surrounding burrows.

**Habitat critical for survival;** The habitat critical to survival of important populations of *I. nigrum* consist of open York gum (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*), Salmon gum (*E. salmonophloia*) and wheatbelt Wandoo (*E. capillosa*) woodland, where Jam (*Acacia acuminata*) forms a sparse understorey in heavy clay soils.

**Conservation plan objective:**

To maintain, and if possible enhance, the condition of *in situ* populations of *Idiosoma nigrum*.

**Recovery Criteria:**

**Criteria for success:**

The number of populations has increased and/or the number of mature individuals has increased by fifteen percent or more over the term of the plan.

**Criteria for failure:**

The number of populations has decreased and/or the number of mature individuals in the known populations has decreased by fifteen percent or more over the term of the plan.

**Conservation Actions:**

1. Establish a Mygalomorph Conservation Team
2. Determine the population characteristics of known populations & ongoing monitoring
3. Undertake a threat assessment for each population
4. Address threats to specific populations
5. Conduct surveys to identify new populations
6. Promote awareness

**Conservation Team:**

The formation of a Mygalomorph Conservation Team is recommended as part of this and other Mygalomorph conservation plans.

**Conservation plan time frame:**

This plan will be <sup>1</sup>implemented, updated and continually evaluated over a 5 year period from 2008-2013.

---

<sup>1</sup> The degree of implementation will depend on the availability of future funding and resources

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider (*Idiosoma nigrum*) belongs to the suborder Mygalomorphae, commonly known as “Trapdoor” and “Funnel-web” spiders. They are primarily terrestrial burrowing spiders which occasionally make tubular silk nests on tree trunks. Mygalomorphs are able to persist in small isolated areas due to their low dispersion powers, long life cycle and sedentary life style (Main, 1987a).

Mygalomorph spiders take several years to reach reproductive maturity, and females can live up to and exceeding twenty years. Mature males leave their burrows during moist conditions in search of females, and die shortly after mating (Main, 1985, Yen & Butcher, 1997). Females lay their eggs in a silk cocoon in the burrow, and after spending several months confined to the parent burrow, spiderlings emerge approximately one year after the parental mating (Main, 1982).

In areas that experience drought, mygalomorph spiderlings disperse from their mother’s nest during or following rainy weather, and establish a new burrow in rain-softened soil. During this process, juveniles are vulnerable to predation by birds, mammals, lizards, frogs and other arthropods (Main, 1985).

Predators of *I. nigrum* include other arthropods (e.g. Centipedes and Scorpions) which enter burrows, Goannas and Bandicoots which dig out burrows and Pompilid Wasps, some of which specialize in preying upon burrowing spiders (Main, 1985). A major threat to *I. nigrum* includes the loss or alteration of habitat due to their specialized habitat requirements, which may restrict them to microhabitats that have only subtle differences to adjacent ones. As a result, physical disturbance to these microhabitats can cause local extinction of populations (Main, 2002).

## **2. SHIELD-BACKED TRAPDOOR SPIDER ECOLOGY AND LIFE HISTORY**

### **2.1 History and taxonomic relationships**

The Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider (*Idiosoma nigrum*) was first identified by Barbara York Main in 1952. It is one of three species that belong to the genus *Idiosoma* which is endemic to south-western Western Australia (Main, 1985). This species is a product of the extensive radiation and adaptation to dry habitats in south-western Australia (Main, 1999). The species name *nigrum* is translated from Latin to mean 'black', referring to this species' dark and heavily sclerotised dorsal abdominal integument. The Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider has also been referred to as the Black Rugose Trapdoor Spider due to the deeply grooved nature of the abdomen (Australian Museum online).

### **2.2 Description**

The Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider has a body length of approximately 14mm and a chelicerae length of approximately 4mm. The most distinguishing feature of this species is the dark brown to black colour of the abdomen and appendages, which sits in contrast to the yellow to grey abdominal underside (Figure 1). The dorsal side of the abdomen is heavily sclerotised and deeply grooved, forming a shield-like structure. The eyes are arranged in three rows with the two anterior rows possessing two eyes and the posterior row possessing four eyes in a transverse line (Main, 1952).

Males generally have longer legs than females, presumably because males exit their burrows in search of females to breed (Main, 1952).

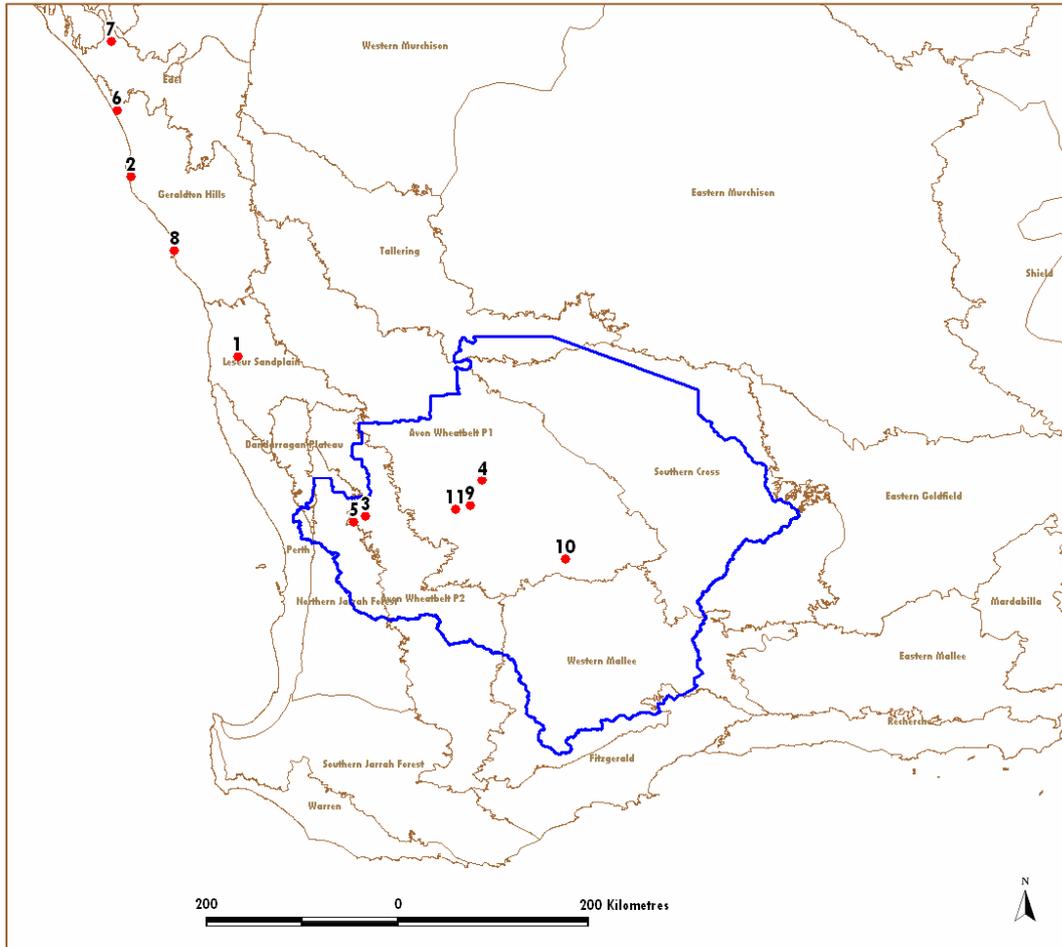


**Figure 1:** Photograph of *I. nigrum*. (Photograph: Barbara York Main)

### **2.3 Distribution, Habitat and Movements**

The Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider has been sighted throughout south-west Western Australia (exclusive of coastal and wet sclerophyll forest regions) since 1952. The species is currently known from 28 populations from Shark Bay in the north to Narembeen in the south.

The current distribution of *I. nigrum* is thought to extend from north of the Murchison River (Zuytdorp and Nanga Station Pastoral Lease) down through the northern and central wheatbelt of southern Western Australia (Main *et al*, 2000). This species has been sighted as far east as Paynes Find (Main, 1982), as far south as (29kms northeast of) Narembeen and as far west as Eneabba (CALM, 2006; WAM, 2006) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Locations of the sites *I. nigrum* have been sighted in south-west Western Australia since 1987. The red points represent the GPS localities of the sites, the blue line marks the Avon NRM Boundary, and the brown divisions show the different IBRA subregions. The numbers are ranked 1-11 from the least recent to the most recent records.

A natural history and demographic study undertaken by Barbara York Main over a ten year period found that there had been a population decline in *I. nigrum* (Main, 2003). This study indicated that possible causes of the decline included the impact of rabbits on the spider's habitat, as well as secondary salinity.

*I. nigrum* is highly adapted to an arid environment with features such as the heavily sclerotised abdomen for moisture conservation, and deep burrows to control temperature and humidity. As a result of this adaptation, morphological variations in the outer limits of this species' geographic range have developed. These variations reinforce the importance of conserving populations over the entire geographic range (Main, 2003).

Clearing of favourable habitat (such as low-lying woodland) over the last century has resulted in the confinement of this species mostly to bushland in nature reserves, on roadsides and in remnants on private property. Many of those suitable sites that still remain are under threat of secondary salinisation (Main, 2003).

## 2.4 Biology and Ecology

*I. nigrum* dig tubular burrows that are about 20-30cm in depth and are lined with silk (Main, 1992). These burrows are wider at the base and opening than in the centre, and the entrance chamber is cup-like. These spiders attach twigs, leaves and debris to the rim of the burrow typically, but not exclusively in a moustache configuration (See Figure 3). These twig lines act as sensory lines to assist with foraging (Main, 1952).



**Figure 3.** Typical burrow of Shield - backed Trapdoor Spider (Photo: R. Inglis / DEC)

This species is known to dig burrows in heavy clay soils in areas of open York gum (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*), Salmon gum (*E. salmonophloia*) and wheatbelt Wandoo (*E. capillosa*) woodland, where Jam (*Acacia acuminata*) forms a sparse understorey (Main 1987a, 1992). They have also been found to nest in granite soils (Main, 1992). These spiders require a permanent layer of ground litter for foraging, but this layer must be thin enough for young spiderlings to penetrate in order to establish their own burrows (Main 1987a, 1992).

Females can live up to and beyond twenty years, maturing at five years, whereas males are not as long lived (Main, 1985). Females remain in the same burrow throughout their entire lives, with males dispersing during the wet months in order to find mates and breed. It is possible that males of this species mate with many females then die soon after, although this has not been confirmed. Juvenile mortality is high, and occurs mainly during dispersal from the mother's nest (Main 1982, 1985).

## **2.5 Conservation Status**

The Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider (*I. nigrum*) is listed under the Western Australian *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* as Schedule 1 Fauna (fauna that is rare or likely to become extinct), and are ranked as Vulnerable under the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Red list criteria A2.

## **3. HABITAT CRITICAL TO SURVIVAL AND IMPORTANT POPULATIONS**

Habitat means the biophysical medium or media: (a) occupied (continuously, periodically or occasionally) by an organism or group of organisms; or (b) once occupied (continuously, periodically or occasionally) by an organism, or group of organisms, and into which organisms of that kind have the potential to be reintroduced (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*).

Habitat critical to survival and important populations of Shield-backed Trapdoor Spiders comprises:

- Areas currently occupied by the spiders;
- Areas not currently occupied by the spiders but adjacent to areas that are currently occupied by the spiders;
- Areas of suitable vegetation within the recorded range in which undiscovered spider populations may exist and; and
- Areas of suitable habitat previously occupied by *I. nigrum* but that are currently unoccupied.

The habitat critical to survival and important populations of *I. nigrum* consist of areas that support open York gum (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*), Salmon gum (*E. salmonophloia*) and wheatbelt Wandoo (*E. capillosa*) woodland, where Jam (*Acacia acuminata*) forms a sparse understorey in heavy clay soils.

#### **4. GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKERS**

The availability of accurate data of known *I. nigrum* populations and sites with a high prospect of supporting *I. nigrum* populations is essential to decision-making.

Section five provides details of current and potential threats to *I. nigrum*. Any ground disturbance works (clearing, firebreaks, road works involving roadside vegetation or changes to drainage, burning, drainage etc) in the immediate vicinity of known *I. nigrum* populations will require assessment. Proponents should demonstrate that the work will not have an impact on this species.

Ground disturbance or other operations which may have a direct or indirect impact on the habitat or hydrology of known *I. nigrum* population will require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to ensure that the species is not adversely affected. A pre-disturbance survey to determine the presence/absence of *I. nigrum* in habitat that may reasonably be expected to contain an *I. nigrum* population is encouraged (note: there is no statutory requirement for such a survey to be undertaken).

Encouraging landowners / managers to conserve populations occurring on their properties is critical to the protection of these populations. When a new population is identified on private property the land owner will be contacted in person by DEC staff to discuss the management needs of the *I. nigrum* populations as well as any concerns the owner may have. A letter will be provided to the land owner as a formal notification of the presence of the population and a request to advise DEC of any change in ownership.

Working closely with landowners will improve the capacity to identify and address any land use related threats.

Where the land manager is a local or state government authority, the letter will require the agency to implement measures to ensure that the population will not be adversely affected by land use. These measures will include advising DEC of any land use that may impact on the survival of the population.

The DEC provides advice on the location and protection of threatened species and communities to telecommunication, water and power providers to ensure that these areas are managed as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA). DEC will ensure this advice includes information on the relatively immobile nature of these fauna species.

The DEC is responsible for assessing notifications of intent to clear under the clearing of native vegetation provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1986. This process considers the potential impact of the proposed work on threatened fauna species.

DEC also provides advice to the Commissioner for Soil and Land Conservation in respect to notifications of intent to drain and the potential impact that these proposals may have on threatened species and other conservation values.

The sedentary nature of these species increases their vulnerability to disturbance. Therefore a Regulation 15 license (license to take fauna for educational or public purposes) is required if disturbance will occur in or immediately adjacent to these populations. Applications for this license are made through the Department of Environment and Conservation. Failure to obtain a license may result in a breach of the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950.

## **5. THREATS**

*I. nigrum* possess characteristics that make them more susceptible to threats than other wheatbelt fauna. These include poor dispersal capabilities, confinement to disjunct habitats and low fecundity. These characteristics require a similar management approach to the conservation actions undertaken for Declared Rare Flora.

The limited knowledge of the ecology of this species and the nature of individual populations restricts the capacity to conserve these species. The implementation of the conservation actions described in section 12 of this plan will address this knowledge gap and the threats to the survival of this species.

The main threatening processes (not necessarily in order of priority) are:

1. Lack of ecological resources to support viable populations,
2. Impacts of introduced plants and animals,
3. Inappropriate fire regimes,
4. Salinity/altered hydrology,
5. Impacts of competing land use (mining).

These threats singularly and collectively contribute towards reduced ecological viability of populations and their habitats.

## **5.1 Lack of ecological resources to support viable populations**

Lack of ecological resources to support viable populations relates to the:

- Availability of basic resources for survival & reproduction, where availability of food, shelter and access to mates limits population size. The survival of populations can be directly threatened when restricted gene flow and insufficient habitat are below the levels necessary to maintain a viable population.
- Restricted gene flow and insufficient habitat can increase a population's susceptibility to other threats. Example a small remnant may be totally consumed by fire providing no available habitat for the species to persist in before the affected habitat returns to suitable pre-fire condition.

Land clearing associated with agriculture, mining and infrastructure has resulted in habitat loss and fragmentation of habitat which in turn results in the lack of ecological resources available to support viable populations.

Habitat fragmentation reduces the capacity of the species to increase population size, restricts gene flow through preventing the movement of individuals and makes the population more susceptible to other disturbance events. It is likely that the highly fragmented landscape of the Western Australian wheatbelt, may account for the limited occurrence of this species.

## **5.2 Impacts of introduced plants and animals**

Introduced animal species have the capacity to cause local extinctions of *I. nigrum* populations. Grazing by livestock results in compaction of the soil and a reduction in leaf litter, which affects the ability of the spiders to burrow and forage. Livestock can also cause direct damage to burrows and their entrances (Main, 2001).

Grazing by rabbits causes a reduction in the ground cover that is necessary for the survival of this spider species. Rabbits may also disturb the soil profile in some spider habitats, and their diggings can directly destroy trapdoor spider burrows (Burbidge *et al.*, 1999).

Invasion by introduced plant species cause a change in the structure of vegetation communities, which in turn may affect the survival of *I. nigrum*.

### **5.3 Inappropriate fire regimes**

Fire represents a direct threat to *I. nigrum* as intense wildfires have the capacity to result in direct mortality to individuals. Fire also represents an indirect threat through the reduction in the ground litter required for reconstructing burrows and to support the litter-dependant invertebrate food source for *I. nigrum*.

The ecological functions of fire include: removing competition, making light / nutrients available, reduces levels of parasites, triggering seed release / germination and maintains balance and diversity of the various components of flora communities.

While fire regimes provide a number of important ecological functions, inappropriate fire regimes may threaten the survival of *I. nigrum* populations.

Inappropriate fire regimes relate to:

- Frequency      Fires that are too frequent or too infrequent
- Season          Fires occurring when a species is particularly vulnerable
- Intensity        Fires are too intense resulting in high mortality
- Spatial          Fires are too large resulting in no unburnt refuge areas

### **5.4. Impacts of competing resource use (Gravel extraction & mining)**

Mining and gravel extraction represents a threat to known *I. nigrum* populations either directly (destruction of habitat / burrows) or indirectly (nearby mining causing a change in hydrological cycles). Several extant populations of *I. nigrum* occur within or in close proximity to mining tenements and gravel pits (for full details see *Appendix 2*).

Areas subjected to mining and gravel extraction are sometimes used as waste disposal sites (official and unofficial). This practice constitutes a further threat through increased fire risk, creation of harbourage for invasive species and chemical contamination via disposal of pesticide and herbicide containers that may contain residues of contracted chemicals.

### **5.5 Salinity/Altered Hydrology**

Salinity and changes in hydrology (surface and ground water) are threats to *I. nigrum* due to the effect they have upon habitats. Both salinity and altered hydrology can cause changes in vegetation structure and soil composition, which can affect the ability of *I. nigrum* to forage, burrow and breed.

Inundation of the upper soil profile through flooding or rising ground water may result in burrows becoming waterlogged and unusable.

Events such as climate change and changes in the local hydrology of an area (resulting in a drying or excessive wetting of the habitat) must be considered as threats. The impact of surface and ground water management proposals on *I. nigrum* populations needs to be considered. Similarly it may be necessary to implement surface and or ground water management to conserve known populations threatened by altered hydrology.

## **6. INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS**

The Shield - backed Trapdoor Spider has not been listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

## **7. AFFECTED PARTIES**

The main parties likely to be affected by this species Conservation Plan are:

- Avon Catchment Council (ACC);
- Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC);
- Landowners/managers where *I. nigrum* populations are found on their property;
- Local Government Authorities;
- Mining companies (mining exploration and / or production activities which may potentially impact on *I. nigrum* populations); and
- Public utility agencies (e.g. Western Power, Westnet rail and Water Corporation) whose activities may potentially impact on *I. nigrum* populations.

## **8. INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

According to the Department of Indigenous Affairs Aboriginal Heritage site register, no registered sites of Aboriginal significance are recorded at or near populations / occurrences of *I. nigrum*. Where actions recommended by the plan have the potential to impact on Noongar cultural values, further consultation will be undertaken to ensure such impact is avoided. Opportunities for Noongar individuals / groups to be involved with implementing actions including cultural interpretation and awareness of *I. nigrum* will be considered.

The advice of (one or more of the following):

- The relevant NRM indigenous reference group (s)
- South West (Yamatji – Midwest ) Aboriginal Land and Sea Council, and/or
- Department of Indigenous Affairs, and/or
- Native title claimants
- Specific groups/individuals identified as having an interest

....will be sought to assist in the identification of Noongar cultural values for land occupied by threatened species, or groups with a cultural connection to land that is important for *I. nigrum* conservation. Continued liaison with the Noongar community will identify areas in which collaboration will assist implementation of conservation plans. Consultations with indigenous groups will be made through the ACC's Aboriginal NRM Coordinator.

## **9. BENEFITS**

The conservation actions carried out to protect the habitat of *I. nigrum* will contribute to the preservation of the biodiversity of these areas, and protection against further degradation. This will contribute to the protection of biodiversity in Western Australia.

As predators, occurrence of *I. nigrum* indicates the presence of a sufficient number of other invertebrates. Because they are at the apex of food pyramids, these spiders are good indicators of the general balance of communities, and can be used to assess the status of other invertebrates in their community (Main, 1987a).

## **10. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

The implementation of this Conservation Plan is not expected to cause adverse economic impacts. Section 4 (Guide for decision makers) describes the process for identifying and assessing work that may impact on threatened fauna species.

No adverse social impacts are expected to result from the implementation of this Conservation Plan. The plan provides potential social benefits in terms of awareness raising and community capacity building programs.

## **11. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA**

### **11.1 Conservation plan objective:**

To maintain, and if possible enhance, the condition of *in situ* populations of *Idiosoma nigrum*.

### **11.2 Recovery Criteria:**

#### **Criteria for success:**

The number of populations has increased and / or the number of mature individuals has increased by fifteen percent or more over the term of the plan.

#### **Criteria for failure:**

The number of populations has decreased and / or the number of mature individuals in the known population has decreased by fifteen percent or more over the term of the plan.

### **11.3 Evaluation**

The plan will be reviewed within five years of its implementation. The implementation of these conservation actions and any changes to these actions will be documented accordingly.

## **12. CONSERVATION ACTIONS**

The purpose of conservation actions is to provide operational guidelines for the implementation of on-ground actions. A number of conservation actions were commenced in 2006 as part of the ACC's 'Back from the Edge' program. This program has resulted in a number of significant successes including the discovery of 12 new populations of *I. nigrum* and an increase in the public's awareness of this species.

Conservation actions will provide the following on-ground management advantages:

- Allow for site-specific guidelines to be compiled for each population. This will provide a framework to ensure that operations and the activities of external agencies such as Westrail, Local government, and mining companies are undertaken in a manner that ensures *I. nigrum* populations and their habitats are not adversely affected;
- Provide a basis for prioritising the implementation of priority actions i.e. those populations that are under imminent threat.

**Note:** Permission is to be obtained from land managers before conservation actions are undertaken.

The following conservation actions are presented in order of descending priority, but this should not prevent the implementation of ‘lower’ priority actions where opportunities arise and funding is available. The indicative budget and timeframes included in each conservation action depends on the availability of resources.

### **12.1 Establish a Mygalomorph Conservation Team**

A Mygalomorph Conservation Team will be established with representatives from the Avon Catchment Council, community, government agencies and experts with a knowledge or interest in spider taxonomy, ecology and conservation. This team will focus on conservation efforts for *I. nigrum* as well as other threatened Mygalomorph spiders found in the Avon River basin. These species include:

- **Shield-backed Trapdoor Spider** (*Idiosoma nigrum*)
- Tree-stem Trapdoor Spider (*Aganippe castellum*)
- Minnivale Trapdoor Spider (*Teyl* sp.)
- Yorkrakine Trapdoor Spider (*Kwonkan eboracum*)

**Action:** Establish a Mygalomorph Conservation Team  
**Completion date:** 2007  
**Cost:** \$2,500/year

This action has also been recommended in the other Trapdoor spider conservation plans). The budgeted amount listed in this action is a total amount for all four species.

## **12.2 Determine the population characteristics of known populations & ongoing monitoring**

Ground work will be required in order to determine the population characteristics and confirm the continued existence of known *I. nigrum* populations. A search will be conducted at all known sites in the ACC NRM Region. Areas adjacent to the habitat of extant populations will also be surveyed in order to investigate whether these populations have dispersed out of their known area of occupancy.

On-ground monitoring should preferably be undertaken in the months following the first winter rains, when burrows are open and easier to locate. When it is not possible to survey at this time, consideration should be given to minimising the disturbance of burrows associated with on-ground monitoring activities.

The information obtained from the monitoring will be used to create and update *I. nigrum* distribution maps. Data is stored at the DEC Yilgarn District office in Merredin and the DEC Species and Communities Branch in Perth.

**Action:** Determine the size of known *I. nigrum* populations

**Completion date:** on-going

**Cost:** \$3,500 / year

## **12.3 Undertake a threat assessment for each population**

A threat / risk assessment for each population (including habitat health assessment) will be conducted during the population monitoring referred to in Section 12.2 of this plan.

The presence and significance of threats will be assessed, recorded and conservation actions recommended for each population. Threats considered will include the following (but not be limited to):

- introduced plants and animals;
- competing land use;
- pollution;
- inappropriate fire regimes; and
- salinity / waterlogging.

**Action:** Identify / confirm threats to each population

**Cost:** Incorporated into sections 12.2 and 12.3

#### **12.4 Address threats to specific populations**

Specific conservation actions are expected to be developed from the planned assessment of existing populations (conservation actions 12.2 and 12.3).

Conservation actions may include fencing to exclude stock and/or rabbits, rabbit control, weed control, revegetation (to provide habitat and connectivity between habitats/populations), fire management and management of competing resource use.

Where it is necessary to protect a population from physical disturbance, areas can be demarcated using Environmental Sensitive Area (ESA) markers similar to those markers used to demarcate Declared Rare Flora (DRF) populations.

The costs described below are nominal and relate to minor work associated with the demarcating populations and controlling grazing / weeds. Addressing the threat of salinity & altered hydrological processes may require action of a larger scale with greater costs.

**Action:** Undertake population specific conservation actions

**Completion date:** On-going

**Cost:** \$1,000 / year

## 12.5. Conduct surveys to identify new populations

Areas of potential habitat will be identified through a process to map the critical habitat.

The critical habitat mapping can be undertaken by a GIS desktop assessment by using the following GIS datasets:

- Geology and soil types;
- Presence of remnant vegetation;
- Beards vegetation association;
- Rainfall;
- Associated flora and /or fauna species; and
- Any other habitat specific information that may be relevant.

Those sites identified as having a high probability of supporting *I. nigrum* populations will be subject to a field survey to determine the presence of this species. Similarly other areas to be surveyed will include: sightings reported from the public or other groups and recommendations from experts.

A specific target will be set with regard to the number of new populations that are found. This target will be determined by the criteria (for e.g. number of new populations) that will be required to downgrade the current threatened conservation status of the Shield - backed Trapdoor Spider to a lower conservation status category.

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Conduct surveys to identify new populations</b>
<b>Completion date:</b>	ongoing
<b>Cost:</b>	\$2,000 / year

## 12.6 Promote public awareness

Knowledge of most invertebrates is generally limited, both in the scientific and public arenas. It is therefore necessary to promote awareness on the ecological importance of invertebrates. A public awareness has been initiated to inform the wider community about the importance of *I. nigrum* and other Trapdoor spiders. This campaign is expected to assist in the discovery of new populations with landowners providing information about possible populations on their properties.

This campaign will aim to improve the public's appreciation of these animals while also encouraging the reporting of sightings of these animals.

A brochure containing information and images of *I. nigrum* and its burrow has been mailed out to all landowners in the Avon River Basin, and a poster sent to all schools in the region to further improve the profile.

A one day "spider-blitz" was conducted in 2007 at East Yorkrakine Nature Reserve involving community members, research specialists and staff from DEC and WWF. The spider-blitz was successful in raising public awareness of these species while also obtaining valuable information on *Idiosoma nigrum*. Plans are underway to conduct another spider-blitz for *Teyl* sp. in 2008 and possibly other species / other locations in future years.

This action has also been recommended in three other trapdoor spider conservation plans. The budgeted amount listed in this action is a total amount for all four species and is not to be implemented four individual times.

**Action:** Promote public awareness

**Completion date:** on-going

**Cost:** \$500 / year

### 13.0 SUMMARY OF CONSERVATION ACTIONS

Action	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
12.1 Establish a Mygalomorph Conservation Team	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	<b>\$12,500</b>
12.2 Determine the population characteristics of known populations & ongoing monitoring	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	<b>\$17,500</b>
12.3 Undertake a threat assessment for each population	Included in above costs					
12.4 Address threats to specific populations	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$,1000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	<b>\$5,000</b>
12.5 Conduct surveys to identify new populations	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$,2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	<b>\$10,000</b>
12.6 Promote public awareness	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	<b>\$2,500</b>
Cost	<b>\$9,500</b>	<b>\$9,500</b>	<b>\$9,500</b>	<b>\$9,500</b>	<b>\$9,500</b>	<b>\$47,500</b>

## 14 REFERENCES

Australian Museum online. Black Rugose Trapdoor Spider Fact Sheet. Online at <http://www.amonline.net.au/factsheets/rugose.htm> accessed 15/06/2007

Burbidge, A., Harvey, M. & Main, B.Y. (1999) *Minnivale trapdoor spider interim recovery plan, 1998-2000*. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australia.

CALM (2006) *Records held in CALM's Threatened Fauna Database and Rare Fauna files*. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australia.

Clarke, G.M. & Spier-Ashcroft, F. (2003) *A Review of the Conservation Status of Selected Australian Non-marine Invertebrates*. Environment Australia, Canberra

Main, B.Y. (1952) Notes on the genus *Idiosoma*, a supposedly rare Western Australian trapdoor spider. *The West Australian Naturalist*, **3**: 130-136.

Main, B.Y. (1957) Biology of aganippine trapdoor spiders (Mygalomorphae: Ctenizidae). *Australian Journal of Zoology*, **5**: 402-473.

Main, B.Y. (1982) *Adaptations to arid habitats by mygalomorph spiders*. In: Evolution of the Flora and Fauna of Arid Australia, [eds. W.R. Barker & P.J.M. Greenslade]. Peacock Publications: Frewville, South Australia.

Main, B.Y. (1985) *Mygalomorphae*. In: Zoological Catalogue of Australia, Vol.3: Arachnida, [ed. D.W. Walton]. Australian Government Publishing Service: Canberra, Australia.

Main, B.Y. (1987a) *Persistence of Invertebrates in small areas: Case Studies of Trapdoor Spiders in Western Australia*. In: Nature Conservation: The Role of Remnants of Native Vegetation, [eds. D.A. Saunders *et al.*]. Surrey Beatty & Sons: Chipping Norton, Australia.

Main, B.Y. (1992) *The role of life history patterns and demography of mygalomorph trapdoor spiders fro assessing persistence in remnant habitats of the Western Australian Wheatbelt*. A report for the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Main, B.Y. (1999) *Biological anachronisms among trapdoor spiders reflect Australia's environmental changes since the Mesozoic*. In: The Other 99%: The Conservation and Biodiversity of Invertebrates, [eds. Winston Ponder & Daniel Lunney]. The Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales, Australia.

Main, B.Y. (2001) Historical ecology, responses to current ecological changes and conservation of Australian spiders. *Journal of Insect Conservation*, **5**: 9-25.

Main, B.Y. (2002) *Survey of Trapdoor Spiders Occurring in Avon Locations 1881, Lots 11 & 14, Including an Area for Proposed Relocation of the Voyager Quarry*. University of Western Australia: Perth, Australia.

Main, B.Y. (2003) Demography of the shield-back trapdoor spider *Idiosoma nigrum* Main in remnant vegetation of the Western Australian wheatbelt. *Records of the South Australian Museum Monograph Series*, **7**: 179-185.

WAM (2006) *Records held in the Western Australian Museum collections database*. Western Australian Museum, Perth.

Yen, A.L. & Butcher, R.J. (1997) *An overview of the conservation of non-marine invertebrates in Australia*. Environment Australia, Canberra.

**Appendix 1: Summary of *Idiosoma nigrum* extant populations**

<b>Pop. No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Shire</b>	<b>Vesting</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Most Recent Record Date</b>
1	Eneabba	Carnamah	Shire of Carnamah	Recreation and Greenbelt	Crown	23/11/1987
2	S of Kalbarri	Northampton		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	23/09/1989
3	Wongamine Nature Reserve	Toodyay	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	1/09/1990
4	Trayning	Trayning		Road reserve		1/07/1992
5	Toodyay	Toodyay	Commissioner of Police		Crown	1/01/1993
6	Zuytdorp	Northampton		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	11/01/1995
7	Nanga Pastoral Lease	Shark Bay			UCL (Former Leasehold)	19/01/1995
8	Sunset Beach	City of Geraldton	City of Geraldton	Foreshore Management and Recreation	Crown	9/09/1997
9	East Yorkrakine NR	Kellerberrin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	24/07/1989
10	NE of Narembeen	Narembeen		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	27/01/2003
11	Yorkrakine Rock	Tammin		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	31/12/1999
12	9km ENE of Manmanning	Dowerin		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	20/10/1984
13	King Rd, Minnivale	Dowerin	Shire of Dowerin	Road reserve		4/04/1984
14	Northam	Northam		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	5/06/1974
15	York	York		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	1/01/1974
16	2.5km NW of Westdale	Beverley		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	1/05/1954
17	Bakers Hill	Northam		Private Property	Freehold/Lease	
18	Namelcatchem NR	Dowerin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	21/11/2007
19	Durokoppin NR	Kellerberrin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	4/12/2007
20	Kodj Kodjin NR	Kellerberrin	Conservation Commission of WA	nature Reserve	Crown	1/11/2007
21	Billyacatting	Trayning	Water and Rivers Commission	water reserve	Crown	27/11/2007

<b>Pop. No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Shire</b>	<b>Vesting</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Most Recent Record Date</b>
22	Nth of Sanford Rocks NR	Westonia		Private Property	Freehold/ Lease	6/12/2007
23	Wongan Hills NR	Wongan - Ballidu	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	19/06/1952
24	Bungulla NR	Tammin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	6/11/2007
25	Walk walkin NR	Koorda	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	13/05/1940
26	Korrelocking	Wyalkatchem	Shire of Wyalkatchem	Aerodrome	Crown	20/07/1954
27	Kunnunoppin	Trayning	Shire of Trayning	water reserve	Crown	23/01/2007
28	North Beacon	Mt Marshall		Private Property	Freehold/ Lease	25/08/2005

**New populations discovered as part of the ACC "Back from the Edge" program**

<b>Pop. No</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Shire</b>	<b>Vesting</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Most Recent Record Date</b>
To be advised	Namelcatchem NR	Dowerin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	21/11/2007
To be advised	Durokoppin NR	Kellerberrin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	4/12/2007
To be advised	Kodj Kodjin NR	Kellerberrin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	1/11/2007
To be advised	Billyacatting	Trayning	Water and Rivers Commission	Water reserve	Crown	27/11/2007
To be advised	Nth of Sanford Rocks NR	Westonia		Private Property	Freehold/ Lease	6/12/2007
To be advised	Kunnunoppin	Trayning	Shire of Trayning	Water reserve	Crown	23/01/2007
To be advised	Badjaling NR	Quairading	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	13/03/2008
To be advised	Noorajin soak NR	Koorda	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	22/05/2008
To be advised	Manmanning NR	Dowerin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature Reserve	Crown	22/05/2008
To be advised	Manmanning Dam NR	Dowerin	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature reserve	Crown	22/05/2008
To be advised	Elphin NR	Wongan Hills	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature reserve	Crown	23/05/2008
To be advised	Fowler Gully NR	Wongan Hills	Conservation Commission of WA	Nature reserve	Crown	23/05/2008

**Appendix 2: Extant *Idiosoma nigrum* populations associated with mining tenements**

<b>POPULATION NUMBER</b>	<b>POPULATION NAME</b>	<b>MINING TENEMENTS</b>	<b>SHIRE</b>	<b>END DATE</b>
1	Eneabba	Unsurveyed, Exploration Licence (within)	Carnamah	31/12/2999
2	Kalbarri	Unsurveyed, Exploration Licence (within)	Northampton	26/07/2010
3	Wongamine Nature Reserve	Unsurveyed, Exploration Licence (within)	Toodyay	31/12/2999