

THE ROLE OF A HYPERCARNIVOROUS PREDATOR

Dingoes are often referred to as a *keystone species*. A keystone species is a species that exerts a large, stabilising influence throughout an ecological community, despite its relatively lower population size in comparison with other species present. Removing a keystone species from the landscape is said to have strong effects on diversity in animal communities and the composition of animals in those communities. In the western NSW region, where dingoes were heavily controlled and, to a degree, exterminated from within the dingo fence, 24 native mammal species have since become extinct. Some researchers suggested that feral animals and the rabbit plague were the most significant contributors to this extinction crisis. Ecologist Dan Lunney from the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water stated that the extinction process was largely attributed to sheep farming and sheep farming processes. That includes removing a keystone species.

Dingoes have direct effects on the daily business of nature. Their presence in some areas will cause prey species to reside elsewhere, and their eating habits may reduce the abundance or composition of the prey species