NATIVE ANIMAL ENGINEERS

REBUILDING AN ISLAND

With the removal of feral sheep and goats, plants are growing back, providing food and shelter. With the removal of feral cats, the island is safe for native animals. The Return to 1616 project has changed the island and ‘paved the way’ for the return of 13 native animal species over the next 10 years.

Reintroduction of native animals began with bare-wallabies in 2017. Each newly reintroduced animal is an "ecosystem engineer". Their daily activities such as hunting, eating, digging and producing droppings help to change the environment they live in.

Hunters
Carnivorous, top order predators, help to keep the numbers of other native animals in balance.

Excavators
These animals turn over and disturb soil when digging for food or excavating burrows. This helps to improve soil nutrients, vetchability and fertility by aerating and mixing leaf litter into the soil.

Gardeners
Vegetarian or herbivorous animals are the “gardeners” of the island, pruning back and trimming the plants they eat.

Insect controllers
Insecticivores act as nature’s "insecticide" by eating insects that live in leaf litter and soil, and on plants. They recycle insects in their droppings, and in doing so, help to fertilise the soil.

Farmers
Seed eaters are the "unintentional farmers" of the island. They spread plants around by eating their seed and ‘planting’ them in their nutrient rich droppings.