

Bankwest *Landscape* Conservation Visa Card Final Report

- 28th December 2008 -

Project Title: **Sandhill Dunnarts WA: Survey, Ecology and Conservation Biology**

Proponents: Glen Gaikhorst, Cathy Lambert and Keith Morris

The Sandhill Dunnart (*Sminthopsis psammophila*) is an endangered (ENB1+2ab+3ab) carnivorous marsupial known from under 100 specimens since being described in 1894. The species was thought to be extinct until 1969, when 5 animals were discovered in South Australia with a further ten animals caught in Western Australia in 1985.

Since 2000 we have been conducting field trips into the Great Victoria Desert (GVD) with the aim of locating populations and collecting information on their ecology and biology.

The Conservation Outcomes of this project were:

- To continue surveys in the GVD to look for SHD populations.

This funding enabled us to conduct two survey trips sampling 4 areas in the GVD. Two of these areas were in the PLNR, another was to the northeast of Mulga Rockholes on the eastern edge of the yellow/orange dunal zone where there were historical captures in 1985, and the other was about 20km east of here along the PNC road. No SHD's were caught in PLNR, even though the western edge of the reserve had some potentially suitable habitat. We have now trapped in Plumridge in both April (2007) and October (2008), with no luck on either occasion. Although most of the area near the 1985 Mulga Rockholes site was burnt in 1999 and is unsuitable for Sandhill Dunnarts, there were some small patches of habitat persisting. This is where we caught one juvenile male (29° 58.771' S / 124° 00.234' E). Two young females were also caught at the final location further east of here (30° 05.265' S / 124° 00.173' E and 30° 06.017' S / 124° 00.290' E).

- Look outside of the current distribution such as Plumridge Lakes Nature Reserve (PLNR) for other populations and to increase the current knowledge on the species distribution.

All sites other than the Mulga Rockholes area were new sites and not previously surveyed for SHD. One of these sites caught SHD's and therefore increased their current known range.

- To monitor populations long term to establish population size, habitat usage and density.

This funding has enabled us to increase the known distribution of SHD's. We will continue to conduct surveys into the GVD and surrounding areas to further clarify their range and monitor the existing population.

A report on the April 2007 trapping has been submitted to DEC under licence # SF005768, and will be followed by a report under licence # SF006210 in April 2009. The data for the whole project (2000-2008) will also be written up and submitted as a journal article, with a copy being forwarded to Keith Morris.