

ANNUAL REPORT 2005

Western Ringtail Possum Recovery Plan

**Written by Kim Williams
On behalf of the WRP Recovery Team**

Recovery Team Membership

The composition of the Ringtail recovery team has had some minor changes during the year associated with restructuring within CALM and the addition of new members to fill identified knowledge gaps.

Currently the team comprises:

Kim Williams	Chair, SW Region Nature Conservation Leader
Warwick Roe	SW Region Wildlife Officer
Peter Mawson	Species and Communities Branch, senior Zoologist
Keith Morris	Science Division
Adrian Wayne	Science Division
Paul de Tores	Science Division
Dave Mitchell	Swan Region Nature Conservation Leader
Brad Barton	Warren Region Nature Conservation Leader
Peter Collins	South Coast Region Conservation Officer
Barbara Jones	Possum Researcher
John Dell	Dept of Environment
John McKinney	Shire of Busselton Environment Officer
Beth Hastie	Bsn Shire Councillor and FAWNA rep
Kris Warren	Murdoch Uni Vet School

Summary

Ongoing landuse change and development issues on the lower Swan Coastal Plain particularly in the Bunbury to Dunsborough area have continued to occupy the team and/or many of its members. These generate considerable impact assessment and liaison work with both State and Federal Agencies. Significant time has been spent assisting Federal Dept of Env and Heritage staff gain a more complete understanding of these issues and possible solutions thru various workshops, field trips and meetings leading to the development of a DEH policy paper. (yet to be released)

Commenced rewrite and update of Recovery Plan with a contractor getting to the first draft stage and the team further developing the intent and direction of the plan. This should be completed by late June 2006. A major focus in the plan will be to improve our understanding and monitoring of geographically representative populations through the

development of standardised methodologies and strategies to minimise the impact of broad scale threats such as fire, habitat loss, disease, predation and interspecies competition.

Continuing translocation of possums displaced from urban development in the Bunbury to Dunsborough area were undertaken in 2005 to Leschenault Peninsula CP and Yalgorup NP. Further insight into possible causes of the previous population collapse on Leschenault was provided by confirmation of the role of predation by pythons.

Relationships with other agencies and organisations contributing to WRP conservation were enhanced during the year via partnerships with NRM groups; Geocatch and Leschenault Catchment Councils through national hotspot projects, community workshops and faunal corridor rehabilitation projects. The commencement of a joint CALM-Murdoch University project with participation from local wildlife carer groups in WRP health study was also a highlight for of the year.

Team members provided input relating to conservation requirements of WRP sites into the Capes Parks, Tuart Forest NP and Lane Poole Reserve management planning processes and regular operational input into the preparation of regional prescribed burn program to minimise impact on WRP and high quality habitat.

A significant improvement into the teams understanding of WRP ecology and conservation requirements in the jarrah and eastern forest zones was gained by the completion of a PhD by Adrian Wayne.

Late in 2005 the Minister announced CALM would head a multi agency investigation into the adequacy of and management of WRP habitat in the Busselton to Dunsborough area. This project is underway and will be reported on in the next annual report.

Progress with implementing recovery plan

Various actions were maintained during the year while the new Recovery Plan is being developed.

Major actions implemented

Negotiations with numerous development proponents continued thru 2005 by SW region and district staff but were made difficult with the departure of Blackwood District's Planning Officer Mark Pittavino in August requiring other staff to pick up the work load.

A monitoring program within the Tuart Forest NP recommenced for both species following concern arising from consultancy work associated with a mineral sands operation of a possible decline in the local WRP population.

Derelict and displaced animal translocation program recommenced to Leschenault Peninsula CP and Yalgorup NP.

A health screening program associated with Murdoch Uni established for WRP's held in the volunteer carer system in the Busselton area.

In partnership with Geocatch Catchment Council a number of community awareness raising workshops, "Peppies for Possums" tree planting schemes and other PR actions were completed.

Meeting Success or Failure criteria

The team has made significant progress in the community awareness and engagement actions and maintained a concerted effort in the landuse planning actions however securing the overall conservation of the species is still a number of years away.