

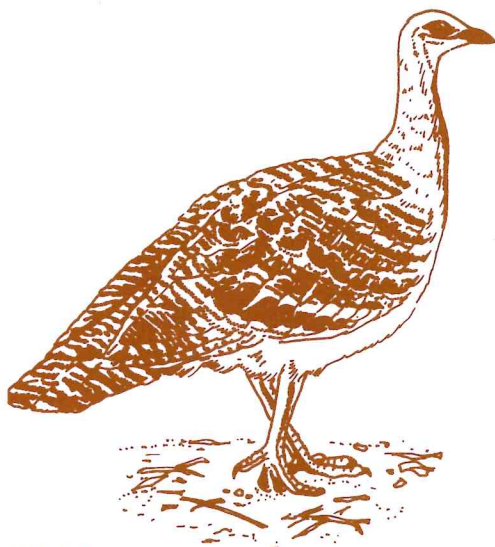
# LIBRARY

Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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## MALLEEFOWL

The malleefowl is one of the most fascinating birds found in the hills. In 1836 Roe discovered malleefowl nest mounds. He decided that these belonged to a bird local Aboriginal people called 'Gnow'. He described them as 'about the size of a barn door cock or large drake, with belly and throat speckled like a turkey, brown on black, black and white tail tipped white at extremity, and like a turkey hen's. Wings small and not adapted for flight. The male bird builds a large mound of soil and litter into which the eggs are laid by the female bird. The male then maintains the nest by raking litter on or off the centre of the mound thereby maintaining a fairly constant temperature inside the mound to incubate the eggs. Once the eggs hatch, the chicks must dig their way out of the mound'.



Malleefowl

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The Wongan Hills Nature Reserve is managed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Merredin District. Do not hesitate to contact the Department and Conservation and Land Management staff if you require any information or assistance.

### MERREDIN DISTRICT

Department of Conservation and Land Management  
13 Bates St / PO Box 332  
Merredin Western Australia 6415  
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Wongan Hills Tourist Information Centre  
PO Box 195  
Wongan Hills Western Australia 6603  
Ph (08) 9671 1157

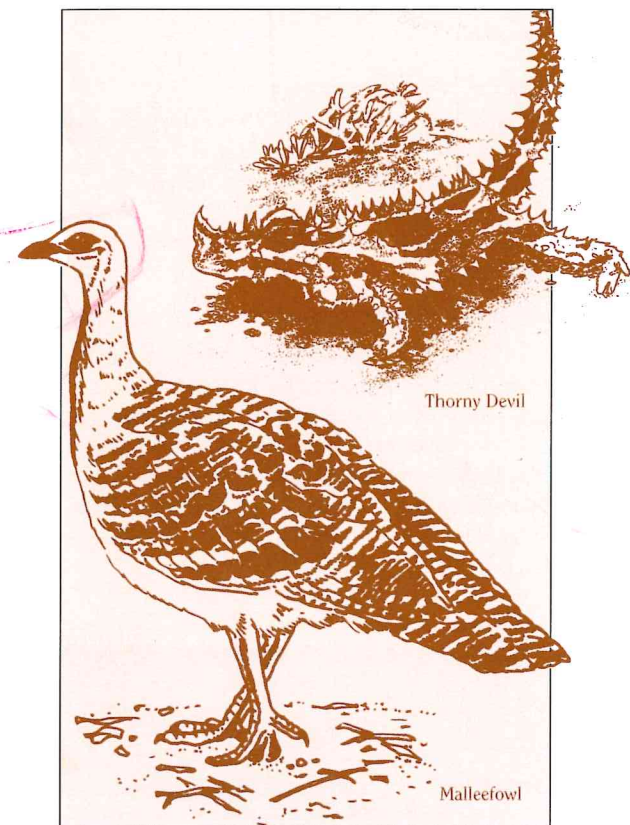
## REMEMBER

Be clean—take your rubbish with you  
Be cool—take plenty of water  
Be kind—protect animals and plants and don't light fires  
Be prepared—wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes  
Tread lightly—stay on walking track

[www.naturebase.net](http://www.naturebase.net)

## WONGAN HILLS

### Nature Reserve



Thorny Devil

Malleefowl

## VISITOR INFORMATION AND WALK TRAIL GUIDE

DEPARTMENT OF  
**Conservation**  
AND LAND MANAGEMENT  
*Conserving the nature of WA*

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Wongan Hills boasts one of the largest remaining regions of natural bushland in the wheatbelt. Within its 1,750 hectares is the 418 hectare Wongan Hills Nature Reserve.

Because the landscape of the hills is a complex of ridges dissected by steep gullies, the rugged ground is unsuitable for farming or grazing. As a result, it remains an island of natural vegetation surrounded by cleared farmland. The highest point of the reserve is Mt Matilda at 434 metres above sea level.

## HISTORY

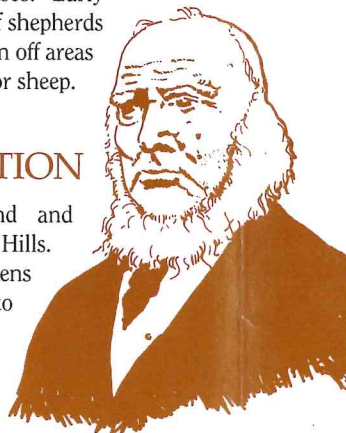
The early explorers recorded the Wongan Hills as 'Wangan Katta'. In the local Nyoongar Aboriginal dialect 'katta' means hills and 'wangan' is a derivative of a word meaning 'talk' or 'talking'. Wangan katta describes the 'talking hills' and refers to the sound of the wind through the trees.

The hills were named by Surveyor-General Roe in 1836 who also named the highest point Mt Matilda in honour of his wife. He also named Lake Hinds after Mr Hinds a director of the Western Australian Bank.

Early exploration resulted in the establishment of pastoral leases. The Benedictine monks from New Norcia held leases to the west of the hills from mid 1850s. In 1875 Charles Hennessy took up 2,000 hectares on the western side by which time the whole area was taken up with leases. Early pastoralists ran their sheep in the care of shepherds who besides tending the flock would burn off areas of country to encourage better grazing for sheep.

## SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION

In 1842 botanist James Drummond and naturalist John Gilbert visited Wongan Hills. Many of the plant and animal specimens collected by these men were new to science.



James Drummond

In September 1903 ornithologist Alexander Milligan made an exploratory journey to the Wongan Hills. His purpose was to visit at the same time of year that Gilbert visited during 1842. It was during this visit that Milligan commented on the absence of malleefowl.

## FLORA

Wongan Hills is an important area for nature conservation. The significance of the Wongan Hills is that it is not only floristically rich, but that it also contains an assembly of plants that does not occur anywhere else in the wheatbelt.

As early as the 1920s concern was being expressed about the diminishing area of native vegetation in the Wongan Hills locality because of clearing for cultivation and wildflower picking. It was not until 1975 that the Wongan Hills Nature Reserve was established as a reserve for the conservation of flora and fauna.

There are several vegetation habitats in the Wongan Hills area. The laterites caps support shrublands of mallee eucalypts. The scree slopes support open heathlands and scrublands of melaleuca and eucalypt species. The lower slopes are open shrublands of mostly acacia while the valleys support casuarina and melaleuca.

The flora of the Wongan Hills is extremely diverse with more than 250 species of flowering plants—an exceptionally high number of species for this area. Of greater importance is that 16 of these species are unique to the Wongan Hills. Similar concentrations of locally endemic species have been recorded at only a few other places in Western Australia including Mount Lesueur National Park, Stirling Range National Park and Fitzgerald National Park.

There are five species of gazetted rare flora in the Wongan Hills Nature Reserve and numerous species of priority flora.

## FAUNA

Except for insectivorous bats, there are few mammals in the Wongan Hills. This is in response to a combination of factors. Land clearing for agriculture has removed a number of vegetation communities that may have been an important habitat for mammals.

Other communities, such as sandplain vegetation, is now isolated from the Hills area, making it difficult for these animals

to meet seasonal changes in food supply.

The predation of small mammals by cats and foxes has had a dramatic impact.

Four species of frogs and 22 species of reptiles have been recorded in the area. From a conservation viewpoint the hills are important because they maintain an assembly of reptiles on laterite country which is not represented anywhere else in the central wheatbelt. Thorny devils can be observed here.

A high diversity of bird species occurs in the Wongan Hills because the area is located between the arid and south-west zones. The Field Naturalist Society survey in 1977 recorded 125 bird species here. This is very high in bird numbers for the wheatbelt. It includes 32 waterbirds and waders from nearby lakes. Some birds have become uncommon in the wheatbelt with clearing for agriculture. However, there are now birds that have become residents of the wheatbelt, attracted by farm water supplies and changes in vegetation cover.

Two rare spiders occur in the Wongan Hills—the Shieldback Trapdoor Spider and the Wongan Hills Wishbone Spider.



Fat-tailed Dunnart



## WONGAN HILLS WALK TRAILS

The Wongan Hills Walk Trails wind through the unique vegetation of the hills, past dramatic breakaways that provide picturesque views of the surrounding landscape.

The trails are suitable for people with a moderate level of fitness. However there are some uneven stretches that may be loose or slippery underfoot, and several steep inclines.

**BE PREPARED:** Go with at least one other person. Wear protective clothing and sturdy walking shoes. Take plenty of water.

### MT MATILDA TRAIL

The Mt Matilda Walk Trail is a five kilometre return trail. Allow a minimum of two hours for this walk.

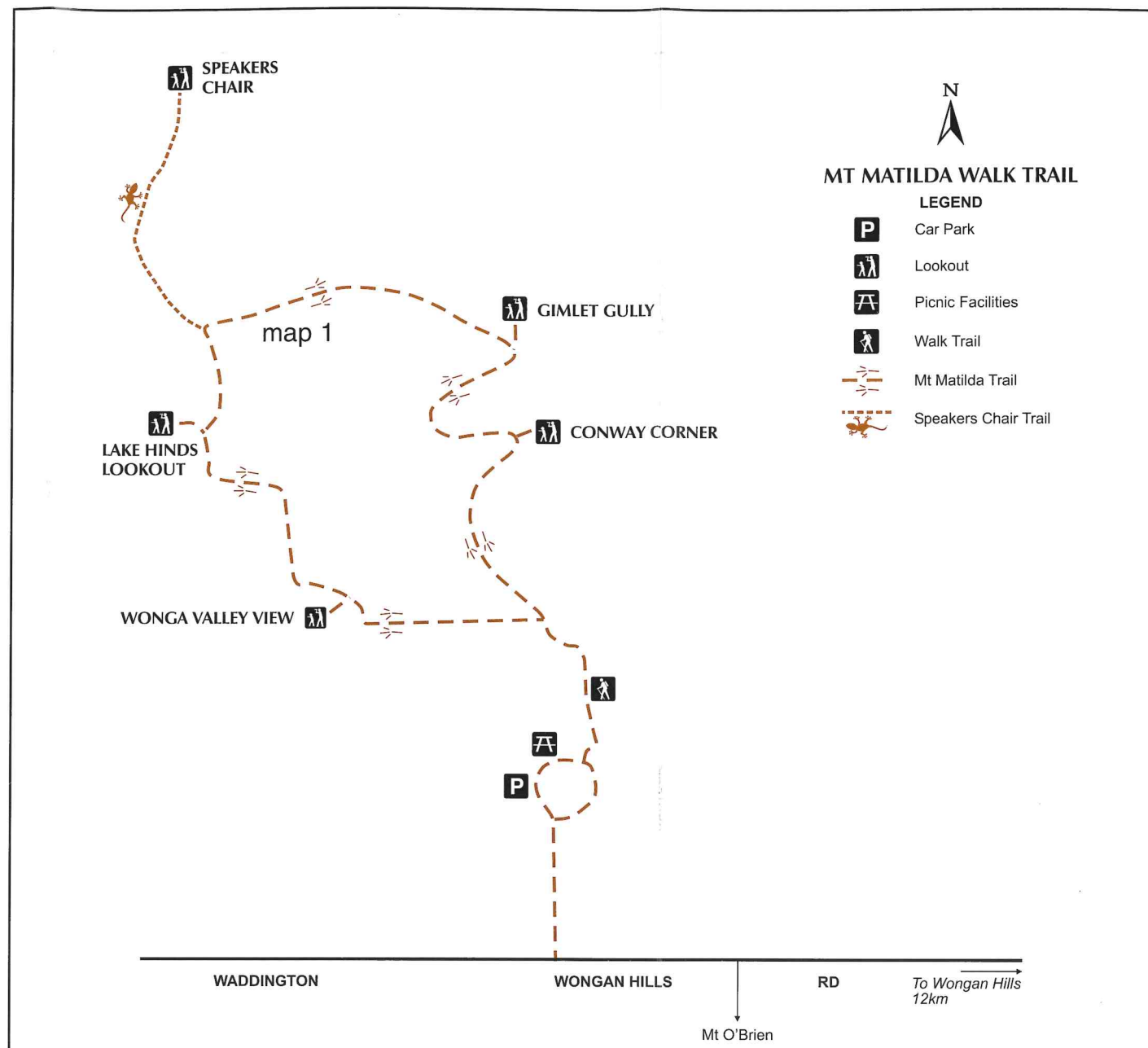
Follow the yellow triangular markers with malleefowl footprints.

There are four lookouts along the trail. A disused malleefowl mound can be seen along the Mt Matilda Walk Trail.

### SPEAKER'S CHAIR TRAIL

The Speaker's Chair Walk Trail starts at the halfway point along the Mt Matilda Trail. The Speaker's Chair is an overhanging rock on the breakaway at the end of the trail.

To complete both the Speaker's Chair and the Mt Matilda Trails allow at least three hours for the 7.5 kilometre trek.



## OTHER RESERVES

### FOWLER GULLY NATURE RESERVE

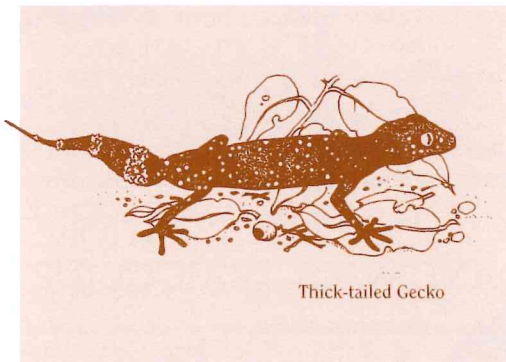
This is a 230 hectare reserve located west of the Wongan Hills township, about two kilometres south of the Waddington-Wongan Hills Road. The country has well-developed breakaways, shrubby vegetation and remnant stands of open woodland.

### ROGERS NATURE RESERVE

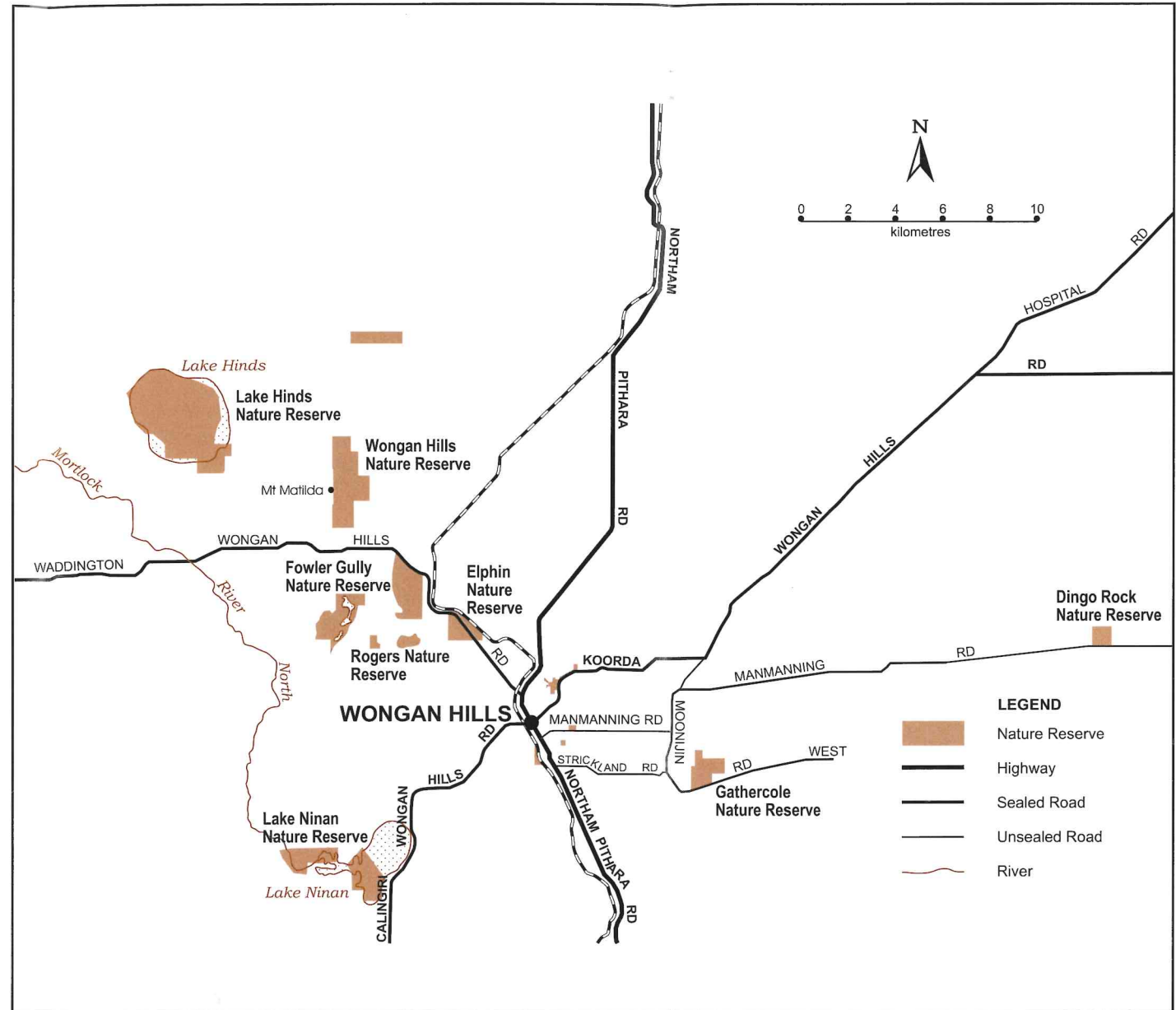
Located west of Wongan Hills township, this 341 hectare reserve is the second largest nature reserve in the Wongan Hills area. It has low, shrubby sandplain vegetation known as kwongan and is an excellent place to see wildflowers.

### ELPHIN NATURE RESERVE

This 198 hectare reserve is west of the Wongan Hills township and noted for its breakaway vegetation. The low, thicket flora is a great spot to find wildflowers. There are no access tracks into this reserve. A pistol club is in the boundaries of this reserve. Visitors need to keep clear when the red warning flags are flying.



Thick-tailed Gecko





### Western swamp tortoise (*Pseudemydura umbrina*)

The western swamp tortoise is the world's most endangered turtle or tortoise. It is only known to occur in Perth's Swan Valley, and its decline has been due to land clearing, drainage and predation by foxes.

There is a single remaining wild population of about 35 tortoises in the Ellen Brook Nature Reserve, near Upper Swan.

A Recovery Plan is under way, and research carried out at the University of WA, combined with a captive breeding program at Perth Zoo, has resulted in an increase in the number of captive tortoises from less than 20 to more than 100 in 1995. Reintroductions of captive bred tortoises began in 1994 and are continuing.

### Numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*)

WA's State faunal emblem, the numbat, lives on a staple diet of termites. It used to be widespread across southern arid and semi-arid parts of Australia, but now only survives in WA.

There are two naturally occurring populations, and one self-sustaining reintroduced population in south-west WA.

Once again, predation by foxes is high on the list of threats to the numbat, along with habitat destruction.

### Grand spider orchid (*Caladenia huegelii*)

This robust spider orchid grows to a height of 60 centimetres within sandy banksia, sheoak and jarrah woodlands between Perth and Yallingup. It flowers between August and September.

### Hinged dragon orchid (*Drakonorchis drakeoides*)

This orchid has unusual flowers with a hinged lip, giving it an insect-like quality. The flowers release a powerful pheromone that attracts male wasps to act as pollinators.

There are 12 populations of the hinged dragon orchid in the northern and western Wheatbelt. Together, they contain several hundred plants, but significant threats still exist in the form of rising salinity and habitat degradation.

CALM is preparing an Interim Recovery Plan for the species, and listing urgent recovery actions that are needed to ensure its survival in the wild.

### Sandpaper wattle (*Acacia denticulosa*)

This large, coarse shrub features spectacular rods of flowers that grow up to eight centimetres in length. The shrub itself grows to four metres and is confined to a few granite outcrops in the Beacon-Mt Churchman area. It flowers from August to November.

### Chuditch (*Dasyurus geoffroii*)

This fierce little predator really stands out because of the surprising white spots that fleck its brown coat.

It used to occupy more than 70 per cent of the continent—every mainland State as well as the Northern Territory—but is now restricted to the south-west of WA.

Damage to its habitat due to land clearing, grazing and frequent wildfire are partly responsible, along with competition for food, predation by cats and foxes, hunting and poisoning.

#### ADOPTIONS

Adopting an animal at Perth Zoo is a potent way to become part of a worldwide movement to save wildlife and protect the future of life on Earth.

Your adoption will be recognised with an official Adoption Certificate and a bumper sticker for your car.

Family/Individual: \$40

\$60 framed (including post and packaging)

Business/Club: \$150 framed (including post and packaging)

#### ZOO FRIENDS

Becoming a Zoo Friend entitles you to many benefits, including:

- ❖ Free entry to the Zoo for 12 months.
- ❖ Exclusive 'Behind the Scenes' events and members only opportunities
- ❖ 10 per cent discount on Zoo Shop merchandise
- ❖ A regular copy of Zoo's newsletter *Sanctuary*
- ❖ Free entry to associated zoos throughout Australia
- ❖ Car sticker

#### Individual Membership

Adult: \$50  
Child (9-15 years): \$40  
Under 8 (Numbat Club): \$24

#### Family Membership

(residing at same mailing address)

1st Adult: \$40  
Additional Adults: \$26  
Child (9-15 years): \$16  
Under 8 (Numbat Club): \$12

For details please contact the Perth Zoo Society on (09) 474 4166

# Recovering from the brink



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND LAND MANAGEMENT



PERTH ZOO  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA