

Rare birds survive wilderness wildfire

By Allan Burbidge

BRISTLEBIRDS are still singing well in the Nuyts Wilderness in Walpole-Nornalup National Park despite the extensive wildfire in March which burnt much of their habitat.

During 1999 and 2000, departmental staff and volunteers translocated 15 Western Bristlebirds from Two Peoples Bay to long-unburnt vegetation in Nuyts Wilderness as part of the recovery efforts for this threatened species.

Then, in March this year, an extensive wildfire burnt the release site.

Fortunately, some of the birds had already

dispersed several kilometres to the west, near where the fire was finally contained.

In September we carried out intensive monitoring of the site when myself and Neil Hamilton, from the department's Wildlife Research Centre, joined Isaac Hatch (Walpole District) and volunteer Ted Middleton to follow up earlier reports and map the occurrence of singing birds.

The result was extremely pleasing—we recorded five male and at least two female

birds. Even if there hadn't been a wildfire, this would have been a very encouraging result.

Most birds were in a buffer strip burnt three years ago, and one was in older vegetation. All were near the fire boundary.

It is fortunate that the fire was stopped where it was because if it had gone any further west, we may have lost all the bristlebirds in Nuyts.

Options for future action will be discussed at the next recovery team meeting planned for December.