



*Allan Burbidge (left) and Neil Hamilton with a King Quail.  
Photo by Ernie McLintock.*

# A bird in the hand . . .

by Tracy Peacock

**THE Department of Conservation and Land Management's Senior Research Scientist Allan Burbidge is using King Quails to discover the best way to attach a radio tracking harness as an aid for vital research on threatened West Australian bird species.**

By finding the right material for the harness from which a one-centimetre radio transmitter can be attached, it will help with further research on the western bristlebird and the noisy scrub-bird.

Since the beginning of the year, Allan and Technical Officer Neil Hamilton have tried hat elastic, surgical suture material and now elastic bands to fit the harness which is like

a back pack and is looped around the bird's wings.

Allan said the project's aim was to determine a suitable material for the harness so that they could be fitted to the western bristlebird and the noisy scrub-bird when they were translocated.

He said this was important because many birds did not call and they had no other way of locating them after release to find out what they did. Both species inhabit very dense vegetation and they are extremely difficult to see.

"The idea is that we want to be able to use radio tracking on threat-

ened birds safely and that the transmitters also come off within an appropriate time frame," Allan said.

With this in mind, he believes the elastic bands may prove to be the most satisfactory because they are made of a soft material that does not chafe the bird and they eventually disintegrate.

Allan said it was very important to find a material and method that posed minimal trauma to the bird.

The King Quails were chosen to test the harness and radio tracking device because they were easily available and were about the right size and live in dense vegetation on the ground.

Currently, three birds at Woodvale are being tested with the harness.



















