

# Park fire role to be studied

By GRANT WARDELL-JOHNSON

**CALM staff and volunteers worked together to survey the flora and fauna of Walpole-Nornalup National Park during December 1985.**

The survey will continue during 1986 to provide a picture of animal activity and abundance in relation to season, vegetation and seral age (age since being burnt) in the Hilltop section of the Park.

A management plan, now being prepared for the Park, will look at the role of fire, especially its effect on flora and fauna.

Fire is the main tool used to modify the habitat of an area to favour particular species or communities, and the deliberate exclusion of fire in a fire-prone environment is an important option in habitat modification.

Fire is also the most appropriate tool for fuel reduction purposes and, in some situations, conflict may arise between these two uses of fire.

It was felt a survey was required to explore the relationship between fire and the different species and communities in the Hilltop Block, the area of greatest pressure and interest.

Routine monitoring of

animal populations and habitats is an important part of park management, and can be compared with monitoring of prescribed burns or assessment of planting success in karri coupes.

Several national park rangers at Walpole, who took part in ecological studies at the Perup MPA, used the survey to practise their skills.

Eight amateur ornithologists with considerable experience with the birds of the district will continue to census during each season, and also introduce people with lesser experience to survey techniques.

A major aim in the first two weeks of the survey, which was largely carried out by Manjimup Research staff, was to get detailed information on the structure and floristics of the vegetation.

Work on the animals of the area included trapping, bird censusing and searching.

These activities will be followed up in each season.

However, vegetation

data has not been analysed and it is not appropriate to make any conclusions from a single season of trapping data.

A great many animals were caught, albeit if only a few species.

Although it is too early to gauge the importance of survey findings, success can be measured in the public's involvement and

the participation of the district staff.

Public involvement increases peoples' awareness and interest in their local parks, as well as providing the necessary information to researchers who are attempting to gain a year-round pattern of animal activity and abundance.

The value to research of the district's and volun-

teers' work lies in the follow-up trapping and bird census work to be done over three seasons.

In return, research aims to ensure that managers have the most up-to-date knowledge of the way in which the animals and environment interact to ensure that any operation done is for a purpose and that the purpose is clearly understood.

## BOB'S SEEN ALL THE CHANGES

**IN his 35 years with the Department, Ludlow mechanic Bob Symanski, has seen many changes.**

Among them, he says, is a much greater emphasis on safety.

"Fifteen, 20 years ago, no one even talked about safety," Bob says.

But perhaps the biggest change for Bob, who works on "anything from chainsaws to bulldozers" is in the equipment he has used and repaired in those 35 years.

Department at Margaret River in 1950 as a tree feller, he did it with a cross-cut saw and axe.

He plowed firebreaks with two horses and a grader, a job that could take up to a whole year to complete.

"Yes, there has been quite a bit of change, but it's been for the better, really," Bob said.

"There is more work to do but the work tends to be

as he went along, taking courses in mechanics on the way.

With four kids, Bob thinks Ludlow was a good place to raise a family.

Now that the family is raised and gone, Bob and his wife live in Busselton, where he plans to do odd mechanic jobs when he retires in five years.

"I've got something in my blood, I can't get away from fixing things," he