

TREE-RATS STUDY IN N-W

By **GORDON FRIEND**

WILDLIFE researchers from three States recently teamed up to study three species of tree-rat in a remote area of the Kimberley.

I joined Anne Kerle, Mike Fleming (N.T. Conservation Commission, Alice Springs), Cath Kemper (S.A. Museum) and Marie Senn (University of Adelaide) for three weeks in the Mitchell Plateau area where populations of the Brush-tailed Rabbit-rat, Golden-backed Tree-rat and Black-footed

Tree-rat occur.

Although these species had been recorded from the area in earlier surveys by CALM and WA Museum personnel, detailed information on the species' respective habitat preferences, nest sites and feeding and general behaviour in the wild was lacking.

The team located relatively large populations of the Brush-tailed and Golden-backed species, and four individuals (2 male, 2 female) of the latter species were fitted with radiocollars and tracked for about a week.

This provided valuable new information and showed that the Golden-backed Tree-rats in the study area were living in hollows in old *Eucalyptus miniata* trees, but feeding in fruiting trees along a scree slope bordering deciduous vine thicket.

The Brush-tailed species was most common in low open *Eucalyptus* woodland with a sparse to dense grassy understorey.

With knowledge of the Black-footed species' habitat preferences in the Top End of

the N.T., a small population of this species (listed as rare in W.A.) was also located at the Mitchell Plateau.

A sub-adult animal was nested in several hollow *E. miniata* trees and also *Livistona* palms, and frequently travelled large distances (500m) to feed on flowering *Eucalyptus tretrodonta* trees on a scree slope at the edge of the lateritic plateau.

Interestingly, the tall open-forest with a dense shrubby understorey preferred by the Black-footed Tree-rats, seems uncommon in the Kimberley.

Analysis of the habitat and diet data should enable us to more closely define the requirements of these species, and point to ways of conserving these fascinating, but uncommon, species.

SAFETY AWARDS

MANJIMUP and Walpole staff recently qualified for the Executive Directors personal Safety Awards.

On August 14, Dr Shea accompanied by Dianne Knight and Julie Anderson from Records, typist-receptionist Sharon Eccleston, Registrar Jim Adams, Como Administration Officer John Ireland, and Safety Officer Tom Wood flew to Walpole.

The award ceremony for the 36 personnel from Walpole took place in the Walpole Country Club.

Following the presentation of rechargeable torches, the local ladies provided a bountiful spread of food for lunch.

The award ceremony for the 125 Manjimup Personnel took place outside in the gardens of the District Office.

Again rechargeable torches were the award item. Following the ceremony all present enjoyed the hospitality arranged by Manjimup.

Both groups also received a Safety Achievement certificate from the Industrial Foundation for Accident Prevention — TOM WOOD.

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RETIREMENTS

Frank Townsend, Forester (Admin), Central Forest Region retired from the Bunbury office on September 2 after 26 years with CALM, all of which time was spent in the South