

Re-establishing rare mammal . . .

BANDICOOT BREEDING PROGRAMME

By **ANDREW BURBIDGE**

THE Golden Bandicoot, *Isoodon auratus*, is an endangered species that once had a widespread distribution across the western half of Australia.

Its distribution before the 1930s included the southern half of Western Australia, the whole of the Northern Territory, northern South Australia and possibly parts of Queensland and New South Wales.

It has now disappeared from almost all of its mainland range and is known only from a small part of the north Kimberley of Western Australia.

Fortunately it also occurs on two W.A. islands — Barrow Island (Pilbara) and Augustus Island (Kimberley).

It was an abundant animal in the western desert and was an important Aboriginal food item.

We have spoken to Pintupi Aborigines who remember eating Golden Bandicoots as recently as 15 to 20 years ago.

The Golden Bandicoot has been recognised as endangered by a number of authorities.

It is on the Official List of Australian Endangered Species, and is listed in the Red Data Book of IUCN.

As part of long-term planning for CALM's desert research we have targetted the Golden Bandicoot as a possible species for reintroduction to desert nature reserves.

The question then arises as to whether we should be reintroducing from Barrow Island, where the population has been isolated for around 8000 years and has been recognised as a separate subspecies, or from the mainland.

On the other hand the Kimberley population lives in an area of high rainfall and high humidity, very different from the climate in the desert.

In order to carry out work on genetics and water and temperature physiology it is necessary to establish a captive population of the mainland variety.

We do not believe that the species would survive in captivity in Perth and accordingly sought the help of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission who agreed to try and breed them in Alice Springs, within the original range of the species.

During the rainforest survey field teams were asked to keep alive any Golden Bandicoots they caught.

After capture the animals

travelled to the base camp at Mt Hart Station by helicopter, then by light aircraft to Derby and then by jet to Alice Springs via Darwin.

Unfortunately the shipment coincided with a strike by Ansett staff in the Northern Territory and the shipment was delayed in Darwin.

Fortunately this did not adversely affect the bandicoots.

Three animals, two females and a male, were successfully transported to Alice Springs and at last report they were doing well.

RANGERS VISIT PILBARA

By **PETER HUTCHISON**

ABORIGINAL Community Rangers from the Central Reserve community of Warakurna visited Hamersley Range National Park in June to meet the Park Rangers and inspect visitor facilities in the area.

The Community Rangers, Thomas Newberry and Reggie Smith, are employed by the Alice Springs based Ngaanyatjarra Council, and cover a vast area of central W.A. within

Docker River in the Northern Territory.

The construction of travellers rest areas is also being considered.

The rangers are responsible for investigating and reporting any interference or damage to Aboriginal sites within the Central Reserve, and reports of unauthorised exploration or mining can be investigated and relayed to the Ngaanyatjarra Council.

Communications and liaison between CALM and Aboriginal groups in the Goldfields region is expanding with communities east of Kalgoorlie expressing an interest in the Community