

# NATURALISTS HEAD NORTH

Digging for earthworms in a Kimberley rainforest or collecting Acacia seeds may seem a strange way to spend one's holidays. But for a group of amateur naturalists it was the chance of a lifetime!

Kevin Kenneally, a Herbarium senior botanist, and Kevin Coate, a tour operator specialising in natural history, have, through their affiliation with the WA Naturalist's Club arranged long-range field trips to the Kimberley for the past five years.

It's an innovative idea where voluntary assistants pay to participate in field trips to the remote region.

This year's two-week trip in June targetted the East Kimberley to gather data for a number of current CALM research projects.

These included the National Rainforest Conservation Program, comparison of the vegetation of Mirima National Park with Keep

By Vicki Hamley



Margaret Lissiman & Winsome Byrne collecting Acacia seeds at El Questro Station.

River National Park and a survey of the gorges in the northern Durack Ranges on El Questro Station including plant collections, bird

lists and natural history observations.

According to Kevin Kenneally, one of the many highlights was the collection

of an interesting Acacia at El Questro Station.

Seed from this species was collected and on return to Perth, sent to scientists in

South Africa and Switzerland who are conducting collaborative chemical and developmental studies with Bruce Maslin, a senior botanist at the Herbarium. These studies are contributing to the classification of Acacia.

The field trips are popular among naturalists who are more than happy to pay for the experience and they provide tremendous assistance, Kevin said.

These trips could not be mounted without the financial contribution of the naturalists, he added.

They allow naturalists to participate in research programs while sharing costs. In return they have the opportunity to see first hand some of the techniques used in biological data gathering.

Kevin said one of the most important aspects of the trips was that people become better informed about these areas and could make a positive contribution to the conservation debate.