



CALM researchers Gaeme Liddelow (left) and Per Christensen radio-collar a burrowing bettong, shortly before releasing it into the Gibson Desert. (See *Desert dreaming* on page three). Projects such as this will be among the concerns of the new WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit.

Photo by Ray Smith

## New threatened species unit

CALM's Threatened Species and Communities Unit (WATSCU) was officially launched at Julimar State forest on September 18.

### To coordinate and promote

WATSCU has been set up to coordinate and promote the conservation of threatened species and ecological communities.

The Unit consists of three scientists working half time and two full-time administrative support staff.

It will work closely with all CALM staff involved with threatened species and communities and with other organisations and the public.

It is headed by Andrew Burbidge, until recently CALM's director of research, whose involvement with threatened species goes back to 1963 when he began studies on the western swamp tortoise.

### Impressive credentials

He is a member of the Commonwealth government's Endangered Species Advisory Committee, a regional member of the Species Survival Commission of IUCN (The World Conservation Union), Chair of the Species Survival Commission's Australasian Marsupial and Monotreme Specialist

Group and a member of its Freshwater Turtle and Tortoise Specialist Group.

In WATSCU, Andrew will concentrate on threatened animals.

John Blyth will concentrate on threatened ecological communities.

Until recently John was a scientific adviser to CALM's director of nature conservation and was responsible for preparation of CALM's Draft Nature Conservation Strategy.

### Experienced biologist

John is an experienced conservation biologist with a background in freshwater ecology and is currently Chair of the Western Australian division of the

Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (RAOU).

Andrew Brown, who will be the Unit's expert on threatened plants, has a wealth of experience working with the State's flora.

### Ten years experience

He is co-author of *Western Australia's Endangered Flora* and *The Orchids of South-Western Australia* and has worked on flora conservation in CALM for more than 10 years.

The Unit's support staff are executive officer Hugh Clift (formerly CALM's senior librarian) and secretary Jill Pryde.

