

CALM welcomes cat man

AN expert from New Zealand recently visited Western Australia to pass on his knowledge on controlling feral cats.

He is Dick Veitch, from New Zealand's Department of Conservation.

He was invited to meet CALM predator researchers and to accompany CALM's Pilbara regional ecologist Peter Kendrick to the Montebello Islands, off the Pilbara coast.

Thirty-year involvement

Dick has worked with the New Zealand Wildlife Service and Department of Conservation for 30 years, having been involved with many habitat rehabilitation and threatened species

by Andrew
Burbidge

management programs.

New Zealand has many feral animals which have had a destructive effect on its native species, especially birds.

As part of their conservation programs, the New Zealand Department of Conservation has removed feral species such as cats, rats, stoats and Australian possums from islands, allowing the re-introduction of endangered species.

Flightless parrot

"One of our projects involved introducing the endangered kakapo (a

large flightless parrot) to the 2 000-hectare Little Barrier Island near Auckland, after eliminating feral cats," Dick said.

"The cat removal program on Little Barrier Island took three years, but the experience we gained will allow similar programs to finish much faster than this."

Funding provided

The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has provided CALM with funding to control cats on the Montebello Islands, off the Pilbara coast.

CALM plans to remove feral cats and black rats from the Montebellos and then reintroduce

golden bandicoots and spectacled hare-wallabies.

Both species occurred on the Montebellos until cats became established, probably from pearling luggers or shipwrecks, late last century.

CALM has a great deal of experience in controlling rats on islands, but little experience in cat control, so advice from someone like Dick Veitch, a world expert on the subject, is more than welcome.

Sponsored visit

His visit to the Montebellos was sponsored by Hadson Energy Pty Ltd, which operates a nearby offshore oil field.