



## She made Rod's day

A PLEASANT surprise awaited Perth District reserves officer Rod Martyn, above, while fox baiting recently at Twin Swamps Nature Reserve near Bullsbrook.

Rod and Agricultural Protection Board officer Fred Ramsden were driving through the reserve, placing baits when Rod spotted a rare western swamp tortoise ambling through the grass.

A much-excited Rod leapt out of the vehicle in great haste and grabbed the tortoise.

The western swamp tortoise has not been seen on the reserve in recent years and was thought to be extinct, or in very small numbers, in the area.

A vermin-proof fence around the 5 km boundary

was completed recently in preparation for the first release of captive-bred tortoises, probably some time in September.

Rod was the technical and supervising officer responsible for the overall fence construction program.

He said capturing the tortoise was a highlight of his involvement in the project.

"The wild population, which provides the genetic pool for captive-bred tortoises, is very small, so each new animal found increases the chances of the species' survival by adding to the available gene pool," Rod said.

Rod's find - an adult female - was a bonus, as there are only about 15 known adult females in

existence.

The tortoise was ultra sound scanned by Dr Gerald Kuchling of the University of Western Australia, and was found to have developing eggs.

Equipped with a miniature radio transmitter, she has been released back into Twin Swamps Nature Reserve.

Radio tracking later in the year will, it is hoped, locate and allow the first ever nest in the reserve to be studied.

The construction of the vermin-proof fence and release of the captive-bred tortoises at the reserve form part of a ten-year recovery plan for the species that CALM and the Western Swamp Tortoise Recovery Team is implementing.



Conservation and  
Land Management

RC

9 6 46