

# Four-wheel driving for fox-baiters finds favour

CALM research staff working in the jarrah rest on the fox-baiting program Operation Foxglove, must be self-reliant and equipped to work in isolated areas such as the more remote parts of the Pilbara.

Technical officers Kathy Himbeck, Frank Obbens and Cory Watts, along with national park ranger Kevin Lockyer and forest ranger Bruno Rikli recently learnt this when they attended an intensive, hands-on, four-wheel-drive training course run by CALM's accredited driving instructors Mark Humble and Alan Byrne of Dwellingup.

By the end of the course, the five had become confident enough to drive up greasy, muddy 15-degree slopes, not to mention deep ruts and washouts along the rough fire-breaks in the Murray River pine plantation.

All three were confident about their ability to handle any situation in which they might find themselves during research work.

"The main lessons we learnt were to assess the situation before committing to it, and to ask ourselves three questions," Kathy said.

- Am I capable?
- Is the vehicle capable?
- and do I really need to go there?"

Senior training officer Alan Byrne said they concentrated on stallout procedures and cadence braking, and he



Kathy Himbeck takes a closer look at an obstacle pointed out by Mark Humble on a steep slope in the Murray Valley Pine Plantation. Photo by Tammie Reid

encouraged them to look at ways to change the circumstances if things looked tricky.

"By this I mean changing the weight ratios of the loads, changing the tyre pressures

or altering the centre of gravity by moving the load height or distribution," Alan said.

"They all did well in their five-day theory and driving basics course last March, so

from now on it's on-the-job training as they go about their work."

Story and photo  
by Tammie Reid

