

Dryandra woylies 'emigrate' to northern forest

THE aim of restoring the jarrah forest's biological diversity by re-establishing populations of small native mammals that have become locally extinct has taken a major step with the reintroduction of woylies to the forest east of Dwellingup.

Late last month, CALM researcher Paul de Tores, technical officer Mike Dillon and consultants Kathy Himbeck, Louise Kuchel and Frank Obbens translocated 80 woylies into George and rare forest blocks and nearby private forest. They were helped by Dwellingup district operations officer Mike Tagliaferri and volunteer Suzanne Rosier.

The blocks are being baited as part of Operation Foxglove, a joint fox control initiative by CALM and Alcoa of Australia. These two blocks are baited between four and six times a year with dried meat baits containing the naturally-occur-

ring poison, 1080.

The woylie (*Bettongia penicillata*) — also known as the brush tailed bettong — is a small rat-kangaroo which was once widespread across southern Australia. Its range extended from Shark Bay, across southern South Australia and up into central western New South Wales.

It is now extinct throughout most of its former range and largely is extinct except for isolated wild populations at Dryandra and Tutanning in the western wheatbelt and Perup east of Manjimup. Populations also have been re-established at Batalling east of Collie and Boyagin near Brookton.

The animal is listed as endangered but work by CALM through the implementation of a recovery plan is being so successful that researchers believe the animal's status could be changed within two years.

The woylies being translocated have been gathered from Dryandra, where the population totals 6000 and is thriving following extensive fox baiting as part of a recovery plan for the State's faunal emblem, the numbat.

Paul and his team measured each of the animals and recorded data before releasing them in their new 'home'. Several of them had radio collars fitted so they can be tracked for further research.

The translocation not only will enable woylies to re-establish within the northern jarrah forest, it also is part of a research program involving the national Co-operative Research Centre for Vertebrate Bio-Control (CRC). This research is looking at the response of native fauna to different levels of fox control.

CALM has been monitoring existing native fauna including brushtail

possums, chuditch and quenda (southern brown bandicoots), as well as fox populations.

Monitoring will be extended to include the woylies. The results will help researchers determine the level of fox density reduction that is needed to enable native fauna populations to increase in abundance.

Operation Foxglove and the woylie translocation and monitoring is being funded by CALM, Alcoa of Australia, the Australian Nature Conservation Agency and the CRC.

CALM also plans to translocate woylies into the Julimar Conservation Park near Bindoon, where fox baiting has been undertaken for several years. Already, populations of chuditch and brushtail possums have been successfully re-established in the park. The department also will release more tammar wallabies into Batalling.



CALM volunteer Suzanne Rosier with a 1kg male woylie, which was trapped at Dryandra, fitted with a radio collar and released in the jarrah forest. Photo by Paul de Tores.



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