



A dalgite, similar to those which have been frequenting the Calvert Range. Photo by Babs & Bert Wells

Dalgite surprise for crew at Calvert Range

WOODVALE Science and Information staff made a chance discovery while on a trip to the Calvert Range—they found convincing evidence of the rare and endangered dalgite (or bilby) more commonly known as the 'rabbit-eared bandicoot.'

Principal research scientist Jack Kinnear said the discovery came about while checking results of the ground and aerial baiting of foxes and feral cats carried out last year.

"It was pleasing to find that our baiting had been highly successful; sightings were nil and other signs such as paw prints were few," Jack said.

"We attributed this to an

increased frequency of baiting, up from two to four baitings per year.

"The baiting is part of a project, funded by CRA Exploration Pty Ltd, that aims to promote a population recovery of the western desert black-flanked rock-wallabies.

"The short-term objective is to restore the population to a higher density, and then translocate a sufficient number of the rock-wallabies to a more accessible island safe haven near Karratha, where the population can be managed more cost-effectively.

"In the long-term, this population would serve as a source for their re-introduction to former desert

sites, should biological control of the fox be achieved."

The party that took part in the survey included senior technical officers Phil 'Red-line' Fuller and Mike Onus, with Aboriginal guide Rod Samson from the Jigalong Community.

"As for the dalgite/bilby/rabbit-eared bandicoot discovery, we sighted fresh tracks while looking for feral predator signs, and later, Mike Onus discovered some active burrows," Jack said.

"It's possible that the dalgites have increased as a result of our baitings, and it would be a nice bonus for the project if they continued to increase along with the rock-wallabies.

"We plan to extend our aerial baiting to provide more predator control beyond their area.

"All in all, it was a successful trip with few hassles. Even some formidable sand dunes were crossed with normal tyre pressures."

The Calvert Range lies east of the Durba Hills on the Canning Stock Route and, it seems, the range is attracting more remote-area tours every year. A conspicuous population of rock-wallabies would further enhance the appeal of this rocky desert oasis.

"We are quietly hopeful that we will make a significant contribution to achieving this goal," Jack said.





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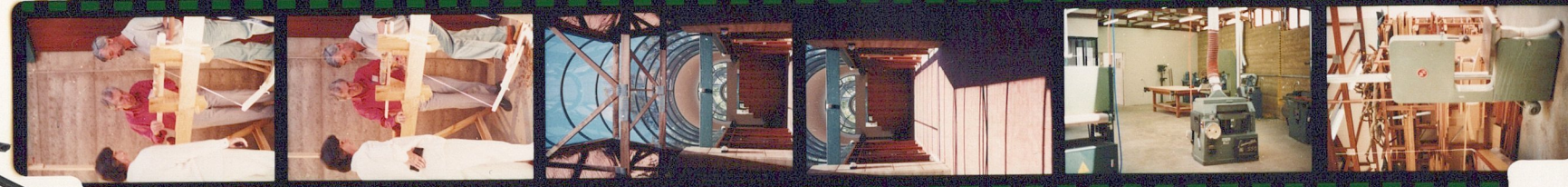
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