



Wall to wall foxes - no longer able to prey on Peron Peninsula wildlife.

Photo by Ray Smith

Foxes on the run

ON the morning of Wednesday 6 April, CALM wildlife officer Ray Smith began collecting dead foxes and cats from the first night of a three-day baiting program to determine the density of the feral animal population on Peron Peninsula.

Helping Ray with his grim task, were Science and Information Division's Neil Burrows, Manjimup Research Centre's Alex Robinson and Bruce Ward and Peron National Park maintenance worker Arthur (Pep) Pepper.

Little did they know that by the middle of the afternoon they would have evidence that the fox density

by David Gough

of the Peron Peninsula was twice that of anywhere else in the State.

The afternoon before, baits had been laid in a straight line 200 metres apart for 57 kilometres.

Ray said that 146 foxes and three cats were killed over a three-night period.

"This is an extraordinarily high density of foxes; seventy-nine foxes died the first night, with 37 and 30 on the following two nights, respectively," Ray said.

"There were some areas where the number of dead foxes was very high, notably around water points such as New Bore or Mon-

key Mia Bore, but away from these points, the distribution was more or less even.

"The unusually high density of foxes probably can be attributed to the high numbers of rabbits, on which foxes prey, so it is important that we keep an eye on rabbit numbers as the fox numbers decline."

The next step was aerial baiting with 1080 poison baits and when completed this will be followed by another density survey to ascertain the percentage reduction in fox population—but given the high numbers to start with, there is still expected to be a relatively high density remaining.

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