

Battling Fauna Conservation Course a winner

SIXTEEN weary but satisfied individuals headed home from the Battling Forest near Darkan recently, after surviving a week of trapping, spotlighting, and lectures on everything from numbats and bandicoots to frogs, bats, rodents, birds and exotic predators.

They were taking part in the latest Fauna Conservation Course, co-ordinated by Peter Orell from Wildlife Branch and Keith Morris from Science and Information Division.

Fauna management

The course is designed to give staff the knowledge and hands-on experience to plan and implement fauna management programs in their region, district or park.

John Skillen, then regional operations officer at Bunbury, Rob Brazell of Mornington District, and Keith Morris, originally developed it in 1992.

"The structure and scope of the course has

by Penny Walsh

changed in response to feedback and the evolving needs of the department," said Peter.

"The idea now is to build up a pool of experience within CALM to help implement *Western Shield*.

"The course also gives people a chance to meet and work with staff from other areas within the organisation."

The latest course brought together a district manager, a regional ecologist, foresters, operations officers, national park rangers and wages staff.

In the past, there have also been participants from mining companies and tour operators.

More than 90 people have completed the course since 1992.

More taking part

"We'll be looking to encourage more outside participation in the future—it helps offset the costs," said Peter.

The demand from inside CALM is also increasing, and if the response of the latest graduates is anything to go by, the course has a very bright future.

All agreed that their week in the forest was very useful, if a little exhausting.

The main complaints revolved around bites—of the tick and woylie variety.

Time consuming

In fact, the large woylie numbers made the course trapping and survey work more time-consuming than expected, which was good news from a nature conservation point of view, but bad news if you were the unlucky one who had to dip your hand into the traps.

Along with woylies, course participants came to grips with brushtail possums, quenda, chuditch and a range of small reptiles and frogs.

According to Peter, working with the animals is usually the part people

enjoy most, but lectures on the biology and management of major South-West fauna groups, the control of exotic predators, legislation and policy, and the implementation of *Western Shield* are just as important.

"The quality of the information is excellent and this course shows the benefits of a joint approach by the Science and Information and the Nature Conservation Divisions."

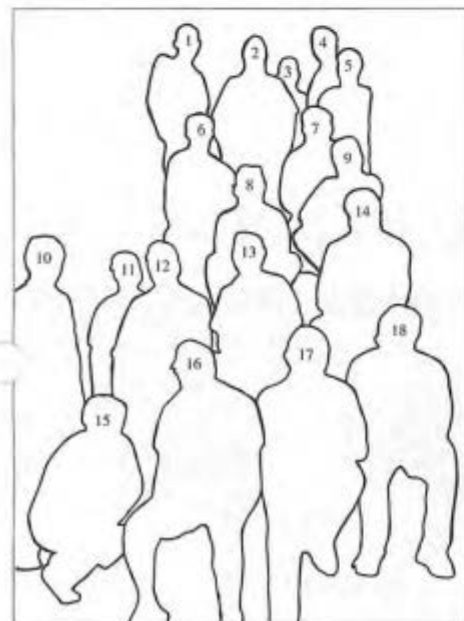
The focus between now

and the next course, in April 1998, will be on getting the package nationally accredited.

This will mean a feather in the cap of participants, and help with developing a consistent level of knowledge and experi-

ence throughout CALM.

"The feedback we get is always very good. Battling is a great venue and we get excellent support from Collie District. All we have to do now is refine the process," Peter said.



Fauna Conservation Course participants take a break to 'pose for Penny'. They are: 1. Ken Wheeler, 2. Martin Clarke, 3. Peter Orell, 4. Keith Morris, 5. Colleen Smith, 6. Doug Giles, 7. Des Plumb, 8. Clive Caddwell, 9. Scott Godley, 10. Brett Fitzgerald, 11. Caroline Brocx, 12. Barry Ashcroft, 13. Ann-Maree O'Callaghan, 14. Dennis McDonald, 15. Ban Tannock, 16. Geoff Passmore, 17. Klaus Tiedemann, 18. John Hanel. Photo by Penny Walsh



