

# WA's fauna conservation gets 'thumbs up'

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA** is leading the nation in native animal conservation according to world-renowned environmentalist Vincent Serventy, sometimes called the 'father of conservation in Australia'.

Returning to WA's shores recently for a short visit, Mr Serventy was 'pleasantly surprised' and 'extremely pleased' with his home State's drive to restore its natural biodiversity, particularly its relentless fight for wildlife recovery.

With more than 50 years spent in environmental work and, numerous national and international conservation awards and achievements, including a Member of the Order of Australia, he is more than a worthy assessor.

This long-serving President of the Wildlife Preservation Society's enthusiasm for CALM's wildlife recovery program *Western Shield*, and its semi-arid zone component *Project Eden*, cannot be underestimated.

His whirlwind visit to WA, saw him take in a tightly scheduled three-day tour of the magnificent natural attractions in the World Heritage-listed Shark Bay, in particular the fauna conservation work being done at Peron Peninsula under *Project Eden*. What he found and saw was beyond his expectations.

"It was exciting to see this work," he said. "Everything was as good as the literature and articles said."

"It's an excellent project run by very dedicated people who use a range of ingenious methods to control feral animals.

"The trapping runs, animal releases and breeding programs for hare wallabies and boodies on the peninsula are quite impressive.

"What staggered me most was the project's eradication of predators. They got rid of goats, rabbits and foxes and built a fence to stop them from coming back onto the peninsula.

## Barking dog device

"They use this marvelous barking dog device over the grid-way near the entry to the fence.

"What excited me most was the research into controlling feral cats. You can control foxes but cats have been much harder.

"I'm excited about this work as cats are much more choosy over baits."

"The whole thing is very



Above: A tourist feeds a dolphin at Monkey Mia, while world-renowned naturalist Vincent Serventy looks on with satisfaction. Below: Vincent Serventy. Photos by Kerry Berrington, courtesy Sunday Times

## by Mitzi Vance

impressive, including the way they (CALM) manage the dolphins at Monkey Mia," he said.

"The area now has so many eco-tourism attractions, which is the way to go."

"I understand tourists are staying longer in the area now to view the native wildlife conservation methods.

"I remember 50 years ago, there was only one pub and a couple of shops, now the place has almost everything conceivable—resorts, restaurants and shops."

Mr Serventy said the *Western Shield* project was 'massive', and as a West Australian-born, he was proud that WA was leading the nation.

"New South Wales has begun to implement an Eastern Shield project based on CALM's *Western Shield*.

"Although the *Western Shield* project is expensive—around the million dollar

mark—it's well received and needed," he said.

"It's the way to go—get everyone involved including private landholders—everyone should go green."

Mr Serventy's desire to achieve this and showcase CALM's wildlife recovery initiatives has made him determined for CALM to play a significant role in the Wildlife Preservation Society's Earth 2000 conference in Sydney.

Organised to stimulate worldwide interest in conserving wildlife, Mr Serventy believes this major international conference in Sydney will provide a conservation blueprint for the first years of the new millennium.

As organiser of the conference, he has invited CALM to participate and allocated the opening day for it to display and explain its *Western Shield* project.

"CALM's work on controlling feral animals is recognised in many parts of the world and

we hope from this conference other States will be encouraged to follow suit."

Talking with, and listening to Mr Serventy about his long-time dedication and love for the natural bushland of Australia, people feel his excitement and enthusiasm in working to bring native animals back from the brink of extinction.

His commitment continues undiminished.

It is as intense as it was forty years ago, when he tirelessly fought to protect his favourite native animal the numbat by campaigning against bauxite mining in Dryandra, in the Wheatbelt region.

His unrelenting letter-writing, lobbying and published book 'Dryandra' helped create Dryandra Nature Reserve, one of the only places in WA today where people can view numbats in the wild.

With more than 60 books published on wildlife, the environment and conservation, and



with his significant contribution to environmental education, CALM is indeed fortunate to have this important naturalist support and recognise the innovative conservation work being done in WA.

As Mr Serventy recently stated in a national article,

"Success is seldom easily won." "I enjoy a fight—you win, you lose, you regroup and fight again."

With this fighter on WA's side in the war against foxes and feral cats, we can be sure native mammals will be alive and in abundance well into the future.