

FAUNA COUNTING

by

P. N. Hewett

The recent announcement that ALWEST do not at present have plans to mine bauxite on the Boyagin Reserve or Dryandra State Forest co-incided with the release of Vincent Serventy's book "Dryandra - The Story of an Australian Forest", and there have been some interesting sidelights.

John Humphreys has had a marked increased in visitors to the Narrogin nursery - not to see the plants, but to complain that, having read Serventy's book, they called at the Tourist Bureau seeking road guides to get them to Dryandra. The Tourist Bureau had allegedly never heard of the place but did help the tourists find their way to Narrogin. However, when the tourists arrived at and travelled through the Dryandra forest they found absolutely nought, in lieu of the abundant numbats, woilee's and so on in Serventy's book. Their main complaint to John Humphreys has been along the lines

"What have you done with all the animals?"

Of course it is fairly widely known that most native mammals are nocturnal and the following account follows two nocturnal cruises in State Forest, accompanied by personnel from the Wildlife Management section of the Fisheries and Fauna Department.

DRYANDRA - January 19, 1971

On a calm clear night a spotlight traverse was conducted from 8.00 p.m. to midnight. The Fisheries and Fauna Department was represented by Andrew Burbidge, Trevor Evans and John Ingram, the Forests Department by John Robley and P. Hewett. We journeyed through both natural inland wandoo and planted mallet areas using a long wheel base Land Rover with trapdoor roof and pack rack and a 40 watt spotlight.

Animals seen were :-

Feral rabbit (<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>)	P.P. grassland	1
Tawny frogmouth (<i>Podargus strigoides</i>)	planted mallet	2
Brush tail Possum (<i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i>)	open wandoo	4
Tammar (<i>Macropus eugenii</i>)	open wandoo	4
Blackglove wallaby (<i>Macropus irma</i>)	arboretum	8
Grey Kangaroo (<i>Macropus fuliginosus</i>)	mainly in arboretum	16

KELMSCOTT - Russell Block

On the evening of February 25, a party comprising Andrew Burbidge, Trevor Evans, Norman McKenzie, Don Spriggins and P. Hewett conducted a similar spotlight traverse of virgin wandoo in the eastern part of Kelmscott Division. On this occasion the weather was cool and calm and two spotlights were used viz: a 40 watt quartz-halide and a 100 watt tungsten (it is probable that animals so illuminated are still suffering from sore eyes).

The route covered part perimeter and part of the internal portions of a spring 1970 aeroburn and animals seen were :

Feral cat	<i>Felis catus</i>	1
Feral rabbit	<i>O. cuniculus</i>	1
Marsupial mouse	<i>Sminthopsis</i> sp.	1
Tawny frogmouth	<i>P. strigoides</i>	2
Bats possibly	<i>Chalinolobus gouldii</i>	4
Grey Kangaroo	<i>M. fuliginosa</i>	21
Blackglove Wallaby	<i>M. irma</i>	35

When one considers the results of the traverses with respect to criticism of exotic plantations (at Dryandra) and aerial control burning (at Kelmscott) and their effects on flora and fauna, they suggest that current Departmental practice is not all bad.

In fact since most of Dryandra's animals were seen in the arboretum it seems that if Russell block had a bit of plantation the tally would have been even higher.