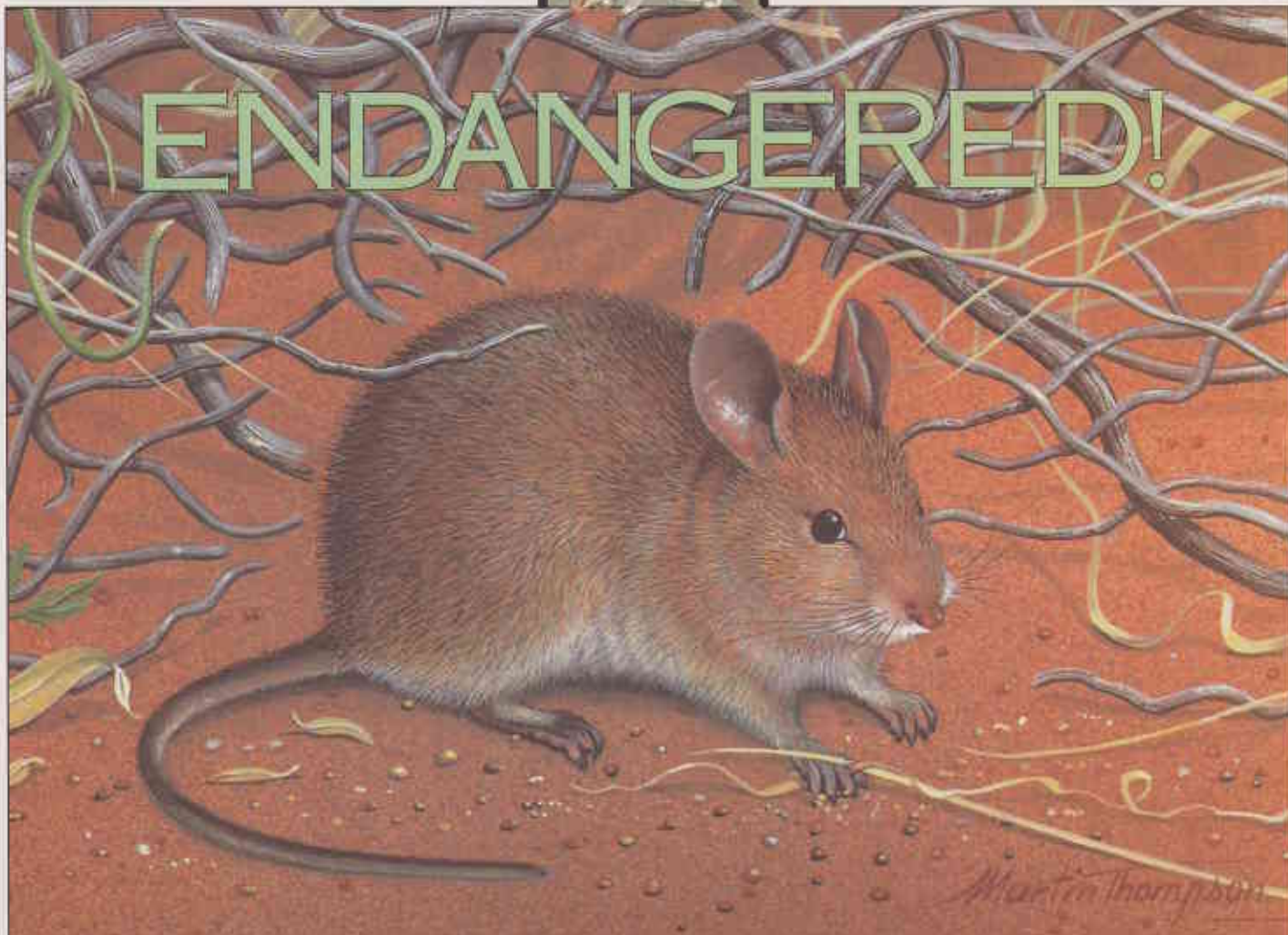




# ENDANGERED!



## THE GREATER STICK-NEST RAT

The greater stick-nest rat (*Leporillus conditor*) has been reintroduced into Western Australia after being extinct here for more than 60 years. This is part of a larger program to re-establish the species in its former range.

This attractive native rodent derives its name from the large nest of sticks it builds to protect itself from predators. These can measure up to 1 m high and 1.5 m wide and contain green vegetation as well as sticks and stones. Nests are added to or modified over generations and may be home for up to 10 animals.

Until recently, only one population (about 1000) of the greater stick-nest rat remained. It was on the Franklin Islands, in the Nuyts Archipelago off the far west coast of South Australia.

Greater stick-nest rats were once spread across central Western Australia to Shark Bay, and across South Australia into western New South Wales. They were last found on the Australian

mainland in the north-eastern Nullarbor Plain in the 1920s, and remnants of stick-nests made by either the greater or the now extinct lesser stick-nest rat can still be found in many parts of southern WA.

Their decline on the mainland is thought to be due to predation by foxes and feral cats, and loss of food sources with the introduction of rabbits and stock into their habitat. Stick-nest rats eat semi-succulent vegetation and depend on the foliage and fruits of perennial shrub species, rather than the seeds or grasses eaten by most native rodents, to see them through drought conditions. Unfortunately these species also form the diet of rabbits, sheep and cattle.

In South Australia, wildlife experts have established a breeding colony of stick-nest rats so that the species can be reintroduced into its former habitat. From this colony, staff from WA's Department of Conservation and

Land Management and the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service transferred 40 stick-nest rats onto Salutation Island in Freycinet Harbour, Shark Bay, in July 1990. The island is ecologically similar to the Franklin Islands in South Australia, and is free of predators and introduced fauna.

Two large stick-nests have since been found on Salutation Island, and the prognosis for the successful establishment of the species is good. Radio monitoring of the new colony shows that most of the rats fitted with radio collars have gained weight. At least one of the females has given birth and others appear to be pregnant.

Further monitoring of the population will be carried out in March 1991.

TANYIA MAXTED

# LANDSCOPE

VOLUME SIX NO. 1 - SPRING EDITION 1990



*In the central Kimberley, a screw-pine-surrounded creek - just one of the threatened areas in this fragile frontier. Turn to page 22.*



*Until 1984 more was known about what was underneath the Nullarbor than what was on top. But with such a vast area to study, where do we start? See page 16.*



*Public awareness and involvement is vital in the conservation of WA's rare and endangered flora. Page 49.*



*Ten WA mammal species have become extinct in the last 200 years. What can be done to ensure no more are lost forever? Page 28.*



*Forests protect our environment. They also provide timber. How do we strike a balance? Turn to page 35.*

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*Dolphins and whales are perhaps the best-known inhabitants of Western Australia's coastal waters. But this unique area is also home to an astonishing range of marine flora and fauna, from sea-turtles and coral reefs in the north to sea-grass banks and great white sharks in the south. See page 10.*

*Illustrated by Martin Thompson.*



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