

## QUOKKAS AND EASTER BILBIES - INDICATORS TO A SUCCESS STORY

Evidence of the success of the *Western Shield* program continues as the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) pursues its fox-baiting activities.

As fox predation is significantly reduced over broader areas, native animals that had formerly been threatened, or even thought to be extinct in a particular area, are being found.

One example is the new population of quokkas (*Setonix brachyurus*) found recently near a rehabilitated bauxite mine in the northern jarrah forest. The quokkas were found in an area that had been baited for fox control as part of *Operation Foxglove*, an initiative between CALM and Alcoa of Australia in the forest between Collie and Mundaring.

The discovery brought to three the number of new quokka colonies found in the forest around Jarrahdale in the past two years. The three new sites were all north of Jarrahdale between the Albany and South Western Highways, and represents a significant northern extension of the quokka's current known range on the mainland.

As public confidence in the *Western Shield* program increases, help to rebuild populations of threatened animal species is arriving. One example is a \$14,500 grant from the Australian Conservation Foundation to bring the bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*) back from the brink of extinction.

The grant will be used to maintain the bilby breeding populations at Shark Bay and Kanyana Native Fauna



Rehabilitation Centre in Gooseberry Hill.

The grant was part of the funds raised from the sale of chocolate Easter bilbies through Coles Supermarkets for the *Save the Bilby Fund*. The drive to replace the traditional European Easter bunny with an animal representative of Australia evidently struck a chord with parents and children alike, and the Easter bilby looks set to become part of Australia's folklore.

An important spinoff expected from this campaign is increased community and corporate interest in the animal itself, and with it further support for efforts to conserve the bilby and other threatened Australian animal species.

Meanwhile, Western Australia's nature conservation initiative—*Western Shield*—reached a further milestone over a recent two-month period when, for the first time, the whole of the south-

west native forests were baited for foxes.

CALM extended its fox-baiting program into all the forests, including major national parks such as the Shannon, D'Entrecasteaux and Leeuwin-Naturaliste. This brought the total area of conservation lands being targeted for fox control under *Western Shield* to 3.4 million hectares.

Corporate sponsorship by Cable Sands has funded the extension of the baiting program into areas such as the Shannon and the D'Entrecasteaux National Parks, the sunklands between Nannup and Busselton and the Donnelly catchment.

The intensive program saw aircraft, equipped with global positioning systems and computers, flying pre-determined flight lines, along which baits containing the naturally occurring toxin—1080—were dropped.

The computerised navigation system meant that

*Tony Passchier, Alcoa Mine Environmental Scientist and Antoinette Tomkinson of Curtin University with a six-month-old quokka at the most recently discovered quokka site.*

*Photo - Paul de Tores*

strategic bait-free buffers, some up to 500 metres wide, were left around non-targeted areas such as private property and constructed recreation sites in the forest areas. Smaller buffers were retained around major public roads.

Local communities were cautioned to be aware that 1080 is lethal to cats and dogs as well as foxes and there was no 'safe' period. They were encouraged to either leave household pets at home or at least muzzle them.

# LANDSCOPE

VOLUME THIRTEEN NUMBER 2, SUMMER 1997-1998



The waters off Western Australia's south coast are home to a rich diversity of marine plants and animals. Read about them on page 28.



Burnerbinmah Station, in WA's Murchison Region, fills an important gap in the State's flora and fauna reserve system. See page 42.



Was it created by a meteorite crashing to Earth, or more slowly over time? Find about Curiosity Swamp on page 50.



Imagine a commercially-owned and managed sanctuary in the hills east of Perth and you have 'Karakamia Sanctuary'. Find out how it was created on page 17.



The Western Blue Gum, a commercial variety of the Tasmanian bluegum, was developed for WA conditions, but tree breeders continue to improve the strain. See page 36.

## COVER

Is the forest red-tailed black-cockatoo rare or just rarely seen? Find out the answer to these questions on page 10.

Illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky



## FEATURES

<b>COUNTING COCKATOOS</b> IAN ABBOTT.....	10
<b>KARAKAMIA SANCTUARY</b> ANDRE SCHIMITZ & MARTIN COPLEY.....	17
<b>WATCHING THE GRASS GROW</b> GRAEME BEHN, CHRIS DONE & ADRIAN ALLEN.....	23
<b>WONDERS OF OUR SOUTHERN SEAS</b> JEREMY COLMAN.....	28
<b>BREEDING BETTER BLUEGUMS</b> LIZ BARBOUR.....	36
<b>MURCHISON HAVEN</b> SUE PATRICK.....	42
<b>CURIOSITY SWAMP</b> ALEX BEVAN.....	50

## REGULARS

<b>BUSH TELEGRAPH</b> .....	4
<b>ENDANGERED!</b> WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM.....	49
<b>URBAN ANTICS SEA GRASS</b> .....	54

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 Colour Separation by Colourbox Digital  
 Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print  
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Published by Dr S Shea, Executive Director  
 Department of Conservation and Land Management,  
 50 Hayman Road, Como, Western Australia