

## THE WELLINGTON WOYLIES RETURN!

Over the past few months, woylies have been progressively returned to the Wellington Forest between Collie and Dardanup.

A total of 75 woylies has been released since the beginning of the year, after being captured at Batalling Forest, about 30 kilometres east of Collie, where the population has increased dramatically as a result of fox-baiting.

Thirty-eight of the woylies were reintroduced into the area in June, when Premier Richard Court announced the official transfer to the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) of 3,000 hectares around Wellington Dam in the forest between Collie and Dardanup. Another 37 woylies were reintroduced in July.

The 3,000 hectares of formerly private property now form the core of the brand new 4,300-hectare Wellington National Park. The area is now included in the baiting program. The reintroduction of woylies to the area is a further step towards restoring the ecological balance that existed before the introduction of exotic predators.

Woylies once occurred throughout much of the State, including the central deserts and from Shark Bay to the South Coast. By 1990, however, only three natural populations were known to exist. These were at Dryandra Woodland near Narrogin, Tutanning Nature Reserve near Pingelly and the proposed Perup Nature Reserve in State forest east of Manjimup.

In 1996, following fox

control by CALM, and the reintroduction of woylies to some areas where they formerly occurred, the woylie species' status was changed under World Conservation Union (IUCN) guidelines. This was the first time a species had been removed from the list in Australia as a result of scientific research and conservation management.

Woylies are now widespread, following strategic reintroductions to areas such as Francois Peron National Park in the World Heritage listed Shark Bay area, the Valley of the Giants tingle forest north of Nornalup on the South Coast, and many parts of the jarrah forest, including the Hills Forest near Mundaring.



The major factor in the recovery of these native mammals has been the control, under CALM's Western Shield program, of introduced predators, mainly the European red fox. The same program has also led to two other species being removed from the State's threatened species list: the quenda or southern brown bandicoot, and the tammar wallaby.

Western Shield has attracted international



acclaim and is considered to be the single biggest wildlife conservation initiative undertaken in Australia.

Woylies are continuous breeders under suitable conditions, with females first breeding at six months of age and males at between nine and 12 months. Because they are such prolific breeders, they are an excellent 'indicator species'. If the woylie

population is thriving, then it is a good indication that the natural ecosystems that sustain the woylies' environment are also intact and healthy.

Another welcome outcome is that the woylies will provide an additional nature-based experience for visitors to the proposed national park and surrounding areas.

*Above: Five-year-old Claire Yates clutches a woylie that is about to be released into the forest. Around her are CALM's Collie District officers (left to right behind Claire) Chris Gilbert and Lisa Proctor, with Deddi Italiano and Anne Watts in front.*

*Photo - Paul Webster*

*Above Left: Woylie*

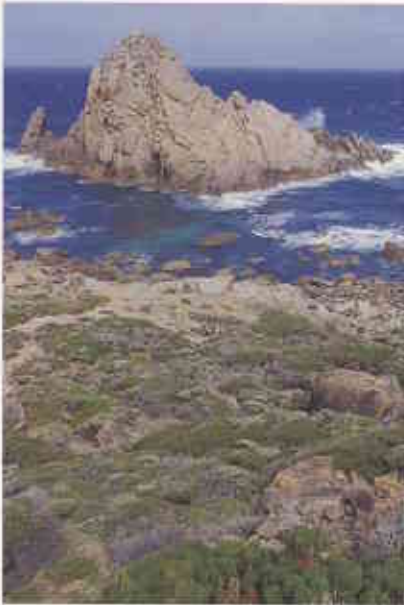
*Photo - Babs & Bert Wells/CALM*

Winner of the 1998 Alex Harris Medal for excellence in science and environment reporting.

# LANDSCOPE



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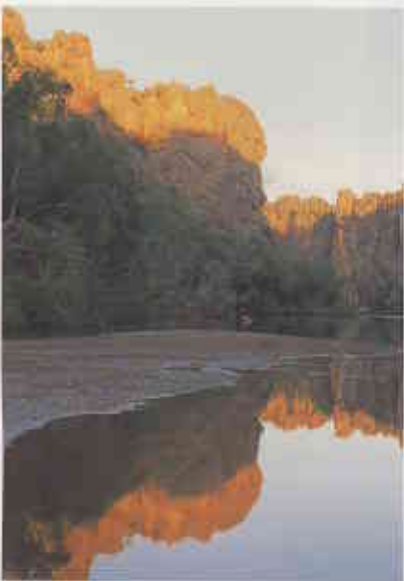
*Sugarloaf Rock is just one of the many features that make Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park the most visited park in WA. (See page 10.)*



*Premier Park: John Forrest National Park is Western Australia's oldest park, celebrating its centenary year. (See page 22.)*



*Pinnacle of Parks: These unusual formations make Nambung National Park well known the world over. (See page 36.)*



*Windjana Gorge National Park holds important clues to the evolution of fish. See 'Old Fossils' on page 28.*



*William Bay National Park displays a miniature version of karri forest flora. (See page 42.)*

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## COVER

*With 67 national parks spread across the State, park rangers are often the first contact that visitors have with the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). Apart from providing visitors with information and guidance, they perform a vital role in the day-to-day management of their local environment.*



*Cover illustration by Gooitzen van der Meer, Western Australian artist and a graphic designer with CALM.*

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