

ROCK-WALLABIES LEAP INTO WALYUNGA

A project to re-establish black-flanked rock-wallabies (*Petrogale lateralis lateralis*) in suitable parts of their former range is going ahead in leaps and bounds.

The species was once widely distributed across Western Australia, with dense populations in rocky areas, but became threatened with extinction in recent decades.

The last stronghold for the species in the south-west of WA is a cluster of reserves in the Wheatbelt between Kellerberrin and Quairading. Here, fox baiting has seen the populations at Mount Caroline Nature Reserve and Querekin Rock increase to a point where neighbouring farmers are finding it difficult to tolerate them

using their farm machinery as substitute rocks and their crops as hop-in cafes. These appealing 'trouble makers' are now part of a plan to re-establish the species in suitable parts of its former range under the Western Shield program.

Rock-wallabies were trapped at Mount Caroline Nature Reserve and Querekin Rock (private property) and delivered to their new homes in August 2002. Twenty-nine animals were released into Walyunga National Park to form an entirely new colony.

Twenty-one rock-wallabies were used to boost colonies established in 2001: nine at Avon Valley National Park (bringing the total number of rock-wallabies released in the Avon Valley between 2001 and 2002 to 97) and 12 at the Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Paruna Sanctuary.

Trapping and releasing the rock-wallabies was carried out by staff from the Department of Conservation and Land Management, volunteer Luke Stone and staff from the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. Local community members from various groups, including the Swan River Trust, Muchea Tree Farm and Bullsbrook Scouts, were recruited by Raffy Andreoli from the Chittering Landcare Centre to help carry rock-wallabies into the release site.

Translocations such as this help to improve the conservation status of the species and restore the original complement of mammal species found at the time of European settlement in areas now in national parks and nature reserves.

It is hoped that the new Avon Valley colonies will eventually merge to become one population, and that rock-wallabies will soon know every nook and cranny of the valley's rocky outcrops.

Right: Wendy Sanderson (right) and Karrie Louden (centre) from the Chittering Landcare Centre with the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Peter Orell (left) releasing black-flanked rock-wallabies into Walyunga National Park.

Below: Rock-wallabies have pronounced padding under their back paws that help them negotiate hard, rocky terrain.

Photos - Christine Freegard



BELATED THANKS

The Bush Telegraph article 'Investigation is worth its salt' in the Spring 2002 issue of *LANDSCOPE* omitted to acknowledge the contribution of a Netherlands couple who visited Western Australia in 1999 and made a significant private donation to help towards the purchase of the land at Mogumber where the western swamp tortoises (*Pseudemydura umbrina*) were translocated. We apologise to our 'Dutch Friends of Australian Nature' for this oversight.

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

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The first stage of a long-distance mountain bike trail, that will ultimately lead from Mundaring to Albany, is now open. See page 49.



Discover the underwater wilderness of the Geographe Bay, Leeuwin-Naturaliste, Hardy Inlet area, a potential marine conservation reserve, on page 18.



Little was known about the distribution of the dalgyte, or bilby, in the south-west forests until scientist Ian Abbott interviewed old timers. Turn to page 28.



Older piles of the Busselton Jetty are crowded with marine life, but it was not always so. How do marine animals gradually colonise the piles? See page 34.



The Stirling Range National Park experiences many extremes of weather, from snow falls to bushfires. Find out why on page 10.

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COVER

Quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*) is one of the most widespread plants in Australia. This small, upright tree is most easily recognised by its bright red fruits, which are edible and also contain a nutritious nut. It belongs to the same genus as the famous sandalwood, which was one of Western Australia's major exports in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Members of this genus are root parasites. Quandong grows in dense stands in some areas within the Woodman Point Regional Park (see story on page 42).

Cover illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky

