

FAUNA WARDENS' REPORTS - 1972

FAUNA DISTRICT 1—WYNDHAM

Warden—Geoff Hanley

Crocodile poaching has been cut to a minimum—mainly due to the assistance and co-operation of the Police Department.

Suspected crocodile poachers have been detected, stopped and searched at Fitzroy Crossing, Derby and Wyndham. Although no skins have been discovered, the persistent searching has undoubtedly acted as a deterrent.

Indications are that the 1972-73 finch season will be good. Gouldian Finches are abundant, as are Star and Long-tailed Finches. The restricted issue of trapper's licenses is a good thing—approximately 12 bird trappers operate in the area and there have been no complaints or evidence of illegal activity by these licensed trappers.

The "pinch" of the year was made in April when a smuggler was apprehended with some \$200,000 worth of birds in his possession.

FAUNA DISTRICT 2—ONSLow

Warden—Bob Dear

A great deal of time has been involved in policing the new policies and regulations relating to Red Kangaroos; especially with regard to the issue of damage tags.

From December 15, 1971, to April 15, 1972, I was engaged in Operation Ord Noah [See story S.W.A.N.S. Vol. 3, No. 1]; the weather was very hot and the job not without its dangers.

During May and June I was involved in the survey of the Kimberley Islands [See story S.W.A.N.S. Vol. 3, No. 2].

These two operations having taken up a large proportion of the year, it was hardly surprising that there was an accumulation of work waiting at the office. The job of reducing this backlog was not helped when on my first trip out to put up signs at the Millstream Fauna Reserve I contracted iritis caused by the dusty conditions. This necessitated my being flown to Port Hedland by the Flying Doctor and thence to Perth.

Patrols have been made to Mount Newman, Bulloo Downs, Prairie Downs, Mount Stuart, Dampier, Karratha, Wickham, Roebourne, Wittenoom and Pannawonica.

FAUNA DISTRICT 3—MOUNT MAGNET

Warden—Mike Mahoney

I have spent nine months in this district and have travelled some 31,000 miles.

Rainfall has been extremely poor in most areas of the district and local people are very concerned about the future. Most wildlife has been concentrated in areas of good rainfall such as the West Cue and Meekatharra areas. A wide range of

fauna has been sighted—and of particular interest are the following—Mallee Fowl, Red-backed Kingfishers, Bourke Parrots, Cockatiels, Red-plumed Pigeons and Diamond Doves.

There has been considerable liaison with Honorary Wardens and I have found them most helpful at all times.

A great deal of time has been spent on the implementation of the Red Kangaroo Management Programme. Altogether 22,000 damage tags have been issued. All professional shooters have been most co-operative and are happy with the present arrangements.

FAUNA DISTRICT 4—CARNARVON

Warden—John Neal

Much of the work in the Carnarvon district has been connected with the Red Kangaroo Management Programme—damage license inspections and chiller patrols. Seven thousand two hundred damage tags have been issued from this office.

The absence of summer rainfall and the concentrated nature of winter rainfall has meant a good season for most shooters. Professional shooters appear to have consolidated their operations this year and are now on a sound economic footing.

Seventeen damage licenses have been issued and I have had to refuse only one application. Generally, professional shooters and damage license shooters accept the present scheme and are complying with all the requirements. All shooters are more than willing to assist in any way with research.

During the first week in September I attended the R.A.O.U. survey at Peron Station, Shark Bay. The purpose of this exercise was to conduct a survey on birds and other fauna and compare results with previous surveys. Peron Station covers approximately 260,000 acres, and 48 members participated in the survey. By September 5th, 81 species of birds had been reported—a few not previously recorded for the area.

Due to other commitments no patrols have been made to Bernier and Dorre Islands. Fresh moves have been made by prominent citizens of Carnarvon to have Bernier Island established as a tourist resort. Increased tourist activity would, of course, affect the present populations of unique fauna on these islands.

During the latter part of the season, the Regional Vermin Control Board instituted a goat poisoning programme in the Murchison area. The result was many and varied reports of the poisoning of wildlife.

I have covered 27,000 miles in the departmental vehicle—19,000 miles of which were on unsurfaced roads.

FAUNA DISTRICT 5—GERALDTON

Warden—Peter Pennings

Geraldton is a new fauna centre and I was appointed to this position in May this year. Much of my time has been spent relieving the warden at Mount Magnet and it is impossible therefore to offer a full report.

I have made a number of kangaroo damage inspections, mainly in the Chapman Valley Shire.

Trips have also been made to the Abrolhos Islands with the dual purpose of introducing myself to the fishermen and exterminating feral cats on Rat and North Island and rabbits on Morley Island.

FAUNA DISTRICT 6—MOORA

Warden—Ian Cooke

Moora is a new fauna centre and the office has only recently been established. The warden's residence has not yet been built.

The majority of the work undertaken during the period under report has been concerned with kangaroo damage inspections and the issuing of licenses to control this problem. The main area affected is the Eneabba-Coorow District where large numbers of kangaroos have built up and are causing damage to crops.

The Dandaragan, Gingin and Toodyay areas have few problems. However, I am aware that illegal shooting is going on. Night patrols are carried out regularly and these have the effect of warning and frightening off those involved.

I spent a portion of the year relieving the warden at Wongan Hills.

FAUNA DISTRICT 7—WONGAN HILLS

Warden—Don Noble

I have spent nine months as warden of this district, travelled some 31,000 miles and covered half the State from the Metropolitan area to Ethel Creek Station north of Mount Magnet.

Duties have consisted mainly of farm and station inspections for kangaroo damage, the inspection of reserves, the checking of cage facilities for birds and animals, calling on Honorary Wardens, patrolling for illegal shooting, erecting signs and posters to inform the public and giving talks to clubs and societies.

I have issued 35 damage permits enabling each farmer or station owner to shoot between 10 and 300 Red or Grey Kangaroos; 1,120 tags have been issued.

Eleven prospective new reserves have been inspected and existing reserves have been surveyed for bird and animal numbers, gravel and sand pits, damage caused by the Dongara-Perth gas pipe line and the ever-present problem of people depositing rubbish.

Kangaroos are on the increase in this area, also Pink and Grey Galahs. Red-tailed Black Cockatoos and Wedge-tailed Eagles. Other species are holding their own.

FAUNA DISTRICT 9—PINGELLY

Warden—Les Moss

Activity has been concentrated mainly on the Grey Kangaroo Management Programme. Actual administration of the programme has presented no difficulty, the only problem being the lack of comprehension by farmers of the details of the programme.

It has become obvious that a close liaison between shooters, farmers and the district warden is essential to the success of the programme.

The duck shooting season was not successful due to poor seasonal conditions, but the introduction of a duck shooter's license was well received.

There has been very little illegal shooting in forests and reserves, although the restricted open season on the grey kangaroo has sparked off some shooting on private property.

The co-operation of the Police, Honorary Wardens and the public has been good and this plays an important part in the work of the district warden.

Thirty thousand miles were covered during the year.

FAUNA DISTRICT 11—BUSSELTON

Warden—Kevin Morrison

Activities in this district have increased particularly as a result of the implementation of the Grey Kangaroo Management Programme. The problem of kangaroos causing damage to property is adequately controlled under the present system, and 'kangaroo haters' have now turned their attentions to complaining about the dangers of kangaroos on the roads. This will be resolved by the introduction of part-time shooters to cull kangaroo populations, particularly in the Manjimup, Boyup Brook, Nannup, Bridgetown and Donnybrook Shires.

I have been inundated with applications for part-time shooter's licenses, 41 in all, and a total of 21 have been approved. I have had a continual flood of applications for damage licenses from farmers who wish to have a professional shooter to operate on their property. In the 12 months to September 1972, 175 damage licenses were issued for taking kangaroos, with a total of 5,867 tags issued.

Emus have increased in numbers, and unfortunately the Shires most troubled are those where emus are still protected (Boyup Brook and Manjimup). In the past twelve months at least 50 damage licenses were issued with approval to take emus listed on them.

There has been a surprising decrease in the number of complaints about possums causing damage and about Maned Geese (Wood Ducks) polluting dams. There has also been a noticeable decrease in the number of possums killed on the roads.

Wild ducks are breeding in large numbers in the coastal areas of my district, but a grim picture is

painted further inland with many districts 8-10 inches below their average annual rainfall.

There do not seem to be many 'wrong-doers' around, and interest among the local public is very good.

FAUNA DISTRICT 12—ALBANY

Warden—Dick Grayson

Exceptional seasonal conditions in the last three years may be responsible for the movement of different species from their normal range of habitat. Wild turkeys have appeared at Peaceful Bay; Mallee Fowl were reported nesting in jarrah forest country between Walpole and Rocky Gully; White Corellas and Galahs appear to be moving further southward and one lone Royal Spoonbill reached Albany; Crested Pigeons appear more common and emus are becoming more plentiful; large clutches of Black Duck have been recorded near Albany.

Grey Kangaroos have increased in forest and uncleared areas adjacent to farming land with a resultant increase in applications for damage licenses, and many complaints have been received of kangaroos creating a road hazard. The introduction of licensed shooters has not necessarily increased the number of grey kangaroos being taken, as in the past these animals would have been shot and the carcasses left in the paddocks.

In favour of the professional shooters is the fact that they are inclined to take the larger animals and include a high proportion of bucks, resulting in more young does being left to breed the following year—farmers are not so selective. All professional shooters in this district are reliable and efficient.

FAUNA DISTRICT 13—PERTH METRO AREA

Warden—Bob Marshall

From time to time, farms in the Metropolitan Area and some extending into rural areas have been inspected for damage caused by grey kangaroos. No problems have been encountered in this respect.

Recently there appears to have been an increase in the dealing and trapping of birds; there is no apparent reason for this upsurge of interest.

Pollution problems are increasing and several minor oil spillages occurred on Metropolitan beaches. Two serious spillages occurred, one affecting the Fremantle Harbour and extending upriver beyond the Claremont baths, and the other seriously affected a large portion of the beach at Woodman's Point. On both occasions the Fremantle Port Authority were able to disperse the oil without a great adverse effect on bird or marine life.

A large area of the upper reaches of the Canning River was polluted by reclamation work carried out at Riverton. This resulted in the death of large numbers of waterfowl. Many birds were analysed by the Waterfowl Research Branch but

I consider that the overall result was that once again the ecology fell victim to the bulldozer.

Whitford's townsite was taken by storm following the "positive identification" of a lion; this turned out to be a Great Dane dog. A Tasmanian Tiger roaming Glen Forrest also turned out to be a Great Dane. A Crab-eating Leopard Seal was stranded at Cable Station beach and was later sighted at Kwinana—they are very rare visitors to our coast. Also during the year I reported a flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos frequenting the Murray River south-east of Pinjarra; Warden Moss later reported their presence. I have not yet learnt the origin of the colony.

I have spent a good deal of time in a relieving capacity as the Supervising Warden is often on district inspections.

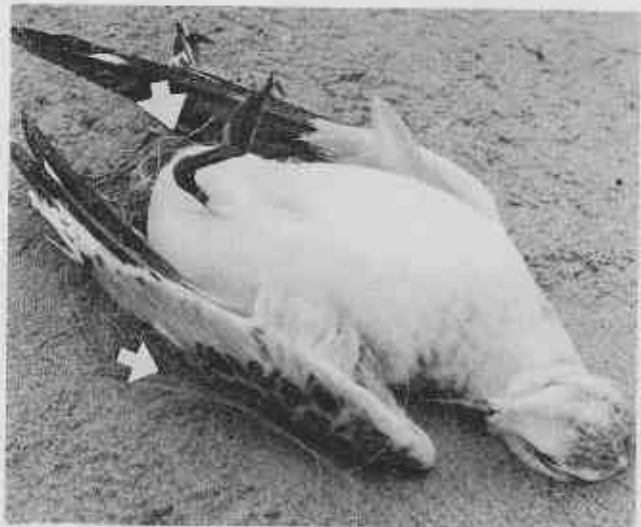
No reports are available for District 8 (Waroona) or District 14 (Manjimup) as no wardens have been appointed to those areas at present, nor for District 10 (Kalgoorlie) and District 15 (Esperance) where wardens are not yet permanently established. Major activities in the Kalgoorlie area have been concerned with kangaroo management, and in the Esperance area with assisting the Agriculture Protection Board in locating and destroying starlings.

SILVER GULLS TRAPPED

In November, two local newspaper reporters visiting Carnac Island discovered eight juvenile Silver Gulls which had become entangled in what appeared to be single strands of fine cotton.

Cotton-waste discharged from ships is a known danger to sea birds, as also is nylon fishing line. However, the origin of this particular material is unknown.

Six of the gulls were already dead, but the remaining two were released and apparently survived.



Juvenile Silver Gull. Arrows indicate cotton thread.