

MORE DUNNARTS FOUND

In recent months officers from the W.A. Museum and from the Fauna Research Branch of the Department have captured a number of small mammals which have rarely been recorded in Western Australia.

There are many mammals in Western Australia which have been recorded as "rare" which probably should be more accurately categorised as "seldom collected". As more and more fauna surveys are carried out these "rare" animals and especially the smaller marsupials, are turning up with increasing frequency. Although their range has undoubtedly decreased since the advent of the white man, indications are that many species have survived in pockets throughout the State and it is only their small size and the relative remoteness of their habitat which has led to their being classified as rare.

Two species of Dunnart have been collected this year. The first, the Hairy-footed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis hirtipes*) is classified by W. D. L. Ride in "Native Mammals of Australia" among "the rare ones", and only eight specimens were known up to 1967. The second, the White-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis granulipes*) is similarly classified by Ride, and between 1925 and 1965 only nine specimens had been collected.

Honorary Wardens and other readers certainly will have little knowledge of these two species and in the hope that further specimens will now be reported, we are publishing the following details which may assist in identification.

HAIRY-FOOTED DUNNART (*Sminthopsis hirtipes*)

Distribution :

Wide distribution in Western Australia from arid to coastal situations. Infrequently collected which may indicate rarity—but is more likely to indicate the lack of collecting in the areas it inhabits.



Hairy-footed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis hirtipes*)

Localities of Capture :

Elder Creek, Warburton Range Mission.
Canning Stock Route.
Djindirana Claypan, 53 miles north of Everard Junction.
Canning Stock Route, Well 29
Windularra 26°30'S, 126°6'E.
Neale Junction.
26 mile peg, Kalbarri road.

Measurements :

Total length—165 mm.
Tail length—92 mm.
Hind foot length—18 mm.
Ear length—19 mm.
Weight—19 g.

Tail is long and may be fat as in the Fat-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata*). White-cream fur underneath with brown fur on the back. The feet and tail are pale-cream colour. The pads of the feet are covered with furry bristles—which give the animal its name. Ears are very long.

Nothing is known concerning the natural history of this animal.

It appears likely that the Dunnart featured in S.W.A.N.S. Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 8 was in fact *S. hirtipes* and not *S. granulipes* as originally thought.



Hairy-footed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis hirtipes*)

WHITE-TAILED DUNNART (*Sminthopsis granulipes*)

Distribution

Confined to the inland periphery of the south west of Western Australia. Until this year there were only eight specimens collected. Recently, the survey activities of the Fisheries and Fauna Department and the W.A. Museum have obtained a further four.



White-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis granulipes*)

Localities of Capture

Bendering
 Lake Grace South
 30 miles east of Ravensthorpe
 Nungarin
 Tenterden, 7 miles west of Stirling Ranges
 Marvel Loch
 Kulin
 Kondinin
 16 miles north west of Moora
 15 miles west of Three Springs.

Measurements

Total length—142 mm
 Tail length—57 mm
 Hind foot length—15 mm
 Ear length—16 mm
 Weight—19 g.

The white-tailed Dunnart, like *S. hirtipes* and *S. crassicaudata* stores fat in its tail. It is one of the larger Dunnarts and is distinguished by numerous small granules on the pads of its feet. It has a light-grey fur over much of its body.

A.C.F. MEMBERSHIP EXCEEDS 7,500

Membership of the Australian Conservation Foundation has passed the 7,500 mark for the first time, stimulated, no doubt, by publicity resulting from the President's visit. At 30th April, total ACF Membership in all categories was 7,581, an increase of 225 since 30th November, 1972.

Totals of each category were 6,430 Ordinary Members, 786 Member Bodies, 207 Life Members, 81 National Sponsors, 46 Benefactors, 31 Library subscriptions and two single donations.

The ACF continues to seek new members. Readers interested in joining the ACF should contact Brigadier C. M. L. Elliott of 1 Mosman Terrace, Mosman Park—Telephone 31 3329. The annual membership fee is \$5 for Ordinary Members.

MINKE WHALE STRANDED AT CERVANTES

On 16th May a Minke whale was stranded at Cervantes. Fisheries Inspector K. Marshall investigated and found the animal to be alive but very weak. It had been badly mauled over most of the body, possibly by sharks, and the tail and dorsal fins were also badly damaged.

The animal was a juvenile female and measured ten feet in length.

Efforts were made to save the whale by dragging it into deeper water but these were unsuccessful because the whale kept returning to the shore.

Because of the damage to the fluke the whale would not have been able to swim, and therefore was humanely destroyed by departmental officers.