

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST CROCODILE RESERVE

On 4th May a new fauna sanctuary was created near Wyndham to protect the habitat of saltwater crocodiles.

The new reserve of 23,945 hectares encompasses about 20 miles of both banks of the east arm of the Ord River north-east of Wyndham. This area was originally recommended as a crocodile sanctuary by Dr. H. Robert Bustard of the Australian National University during his survey and report on the status of crocodiles in W.A. in 1969. It was as a result of Dr. Bustard's report that the saltwater crocodile was declared protected in April, 1970; the freshwater crocodile had been given protection some years earlier.

This is the first reserve for crocodiles in the whole of Australia and one of very few throughout the world. The area is excellent saltwater crocodile habitat and will hold a sizeable population of crocodiles.

Interviewed recently Dr. Bustard said that he was absolutely delighted with the action of the State Government in setting an example by creating this reserve. He hopes to visit the area later this year and assess populations.

Dr. Bustard will be visiting Western Australia on several occasions during the year in connection with his planned turtle and crocodile farms at One Arm Point and Kalumburu respectively. The turtle farming project suffered some setbacks during the first year of experimental work but with the appointment of a project manager (Mr. Mikael Capelle) and new insulated buildings to hold the breeding tanks, Dr. Bustard is now confident of success. The crocodile farm project will start this year with the capture of small crocodiles to form the initial breeding stock. Saltwater crocodiles return to the same nests each year and Dr. Bustard and his assistant Dr. Eric Vaszolyi will be checking with local natives to find the location of these nests.

Full details of these experimental farms and periodic reports will be given in future issues of S.W.A.N.S.

