

# GREAT VICTORIA AND GIBSON DESERT SURVEY

During 1975, staff from the W.A. Wildlife Research Centre, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, completed some biological survey work in the Great Victoria and Gibson Deserts. Staff from the W.A. Museum and the Peabody Museum, Yale University, also took part. Areas surveyed were:

1. The Queen Victoria Spring Nature Reserve
2. The Plumridge Lakes Area
3. The Neale Junction Area
4. The Baker Lake Area.

The first of these is a Class A Fauna and Flora reserve vested in the W.A. Wildlife Authority. The others are proposed reserves recommended by the Conservation Through Reserves Committee.

Recent excellent seasons in the Deserts have resulted in a great increase in small mammal numbers, and the team found certain species of rodent, e.g. the Desert Hopping Mouse (*Notomys alexis*), the Sandy Mouse (*Pseudomys hermannsburgensis*) and the introduced House Mouse to be particularly common in all areas. One interesting rodent was collected. This was the Brown Desert Mouse (*Pseudomys desertor*). Although this species has been previously collected in W.A. the W.A. Museum had no specimens of it.

The small marsupials collected were of special interest. The outstanding result of the trip was the specimen of the long-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis longicaudata*) collected in the Hann Breakaways south of Warburton. This is only the fifth time this species has ever been collected and the W.A. Museum had only one specimen of it. It is a particularly interesting specimen being the size of a small rat and having a tail over twice as long as the body. It is apparently adapted to living in rocky areas and the tail may be used to assist in balancing the animal when jumping. Other rarely collected species of marsupials which were found during the trip included Troughton's Dunnart, (*Sminthopsis murina ooldea*), the Hairy-footed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis hirtipes*), Ride's Ningai (*Ningai ridei*) one of the smallest of the marsupials and a red-eared Antechinus (*Antechinus macdonellensis*).

The leader of the trip, Dr. Andrew Burbidge, said that information gained during the trip would be made available to the Environmental Protection Authority to assist it in its evaluation of the Conservation Through Reserves Committee Report. The results of the expedition will be published shortly in an issue of the Wildlife Research Bulletin.



Ride's Ningai (*Ningai ridei*)

## APOLOGIES TO HONORARY WILDLIFE OFFICERS

At a recent meeting of the Southern Regional Conservation Council, an Honorary Wildlife Officer made mention that there is very little liaison between Honorary and Departmental Wildlife Officers.

Claims were made that if Wildlife Officers visited districts and Honorary Wildlife Officers more often, it would create better liaison and public relations, and problems could be discussed.

The Conservator of Wildlife agrees that the Department has not held any district conferences for some time and apologies are expressed to all Honorary Wildlife Officers.

It is, however, pointed out that all "active" Honorary Wildlife Officers are contacted from time to time by Wildlife Officers in the field and all Honorary Wildlife Officers complaints are investigated.

The situation has been brought about by the pressure on staff time and escalating costs. In W.A. there are 21 Departmental Wildlife Officers to service an area approximately 1/3 rd the size of Europe.

In the last few years public awareness of the need for conservation and environmental protection has increased at such a pace, that the Department's Fauna Branch has been hard pressed to cope with the additional work load and demands of the many groups and organisations involved.

The Department would like to continue its district meetings but financial restrictions make it impossible this year.

However, it is the very fact of conservation awareness and the neglect of it by the ever-increasing populous, that makes the Honorary Wildlife Officer a necessary public contact.

Therefore, under the present conditions, the Department would welcome any attempts by Honorary Wildlife Officers to make contact with district offices in regard to discussing problems or making reports.