

TUTTANNING FIELD DAY

On Friday 28th October, a large number of local residents attended the Field Day on the Tuttanning Fauna Reserve, east of Pingelly.

The Minister to Fisheries and Fauna, Mr. G. C. MacKinnon, M.L.A., attended together with the Director, Mr. A. J. Fraser, and the other members of the staff. Dr. A. R. Main, of the University of Western Australia, who has been conducting experiments on the reserve, attended and outlined the work being done. He was accompanied by Professor H. Waring and Dr. E. Hodgkin and a number of senior students. Dr. S. S. Davies of the Division of Wildlife Research, C.S.I.R.O. and Mr. E. Runceman M.L.A. attended. The head-master of the Pingelly Junior High School was able to accept our invitation and 15 students from that school attended.

The guests were welcomed to the Reserve by Mr. Fraser and he introduced the Minister, Mr. MacKinnon. Mr. MacKinnon paid tribute to the scientists present and to the growing ranks of amateurs present, who, he stated, were virtually experts in their own particular fields and contributed valuable information on our fauna and flora.

He referred to two men from the Eastern States whom he had recently met. These two men, business men, were on holidays and had made a special trip across the Nullabor to Albany especially to visit the Two People Bay Reserve that had created such World Wide interest. They had told him that they had not seen the Noisy Scrub-bird itself, the object of their visit, but had heard its call. This, they said, had made their trip worth while.

Fauna Conservationists were not just interested in preventing local animals and Birds being destroyed and many people, including farmers, had gained a wrong impression. The aim of conservation was to try to establish a balance of fauna, he said, and should the fauna become too great in number, then the conservationists did not object to them being cropped. A proper balance was the aim.

Dr. Main addressed the gathering and explained to the people present that although he and his colleagues did not spend a great amount of time on the reserve the material they collected, whilst there, provided work for many months in the laboratories at the University. The reserve was regularly visited by parties of students from the University.

A correct balance of plant life was essential to the diet of fauna and it was the aim of his work to establish how this

could best be done. He told the group that a section of the reserve had been burnt in November 1961 and that only now after five years, some of the plants were showing flowers. These plants would not seed until next year. He pointed that if this area were to be burnt now these plants would not be present and lost as a source of food for the animals and birds.

The regenerated plants, which later in the afternoon were inspected by the visitors, were only 15"-18" high and did not provide sufficient shelter and protection to the animals on the reserve. There was a 14 degree farenheit temperature difference between the regenerating area and the untouched sections. The animals would be too hot in summer and have no protection from the South East Winds in winter. Consequently they only feed on this particular area on rare occasions. This illustrated, he said, how unplanned burning of a reserve could render the area completely useless to animal life and could lead to the animals being forced to migrate across farm land to other bushed areas. If the reserves contained sufficient diversity in flora, the animals would not likely stray onto farmlands.

The visitors travelled in four-wheel drive vehicles to a Mallee Hen's nest and Dr. Main explained how the Mallee Fowls used the nest. A number of people including the Minister Mr. MacKinnon were very interested and Dr. Main answered questions for them.

A number of microscopes were on hand to enable the visitors to inspect slides made from material collected from the reserve. Mr. G.R. Pearman of the Botany Department of the University of Western Australia was on hand to explain them. Following afternoon tea, the President of the Pingelly Shire Council, Mr. I.A.C. Stewart, said how pleased he was that this reserve was proving to be so valuable to the scientists because of its diversity of plant life. He said that it was helping to put the town of Pingelly on the map and drawing attention to the district - something that was appreciated and was of value to the local people.