

A STUDY OF THE BETTONG!

Mr. J. Sampson of the Zoology Department, University of Western Australia, has submitted his progress report for 1968 in the study of the Bettong conducted on the Tuttanning Reserve. His study includes field and laboratory work, but, this report refers only to his field work.



During the 14 visits made to Tuttanning, Mr. Sampson marked a total of 39 animals, 25 males and 14 females. It was established that at least 80% of the females have joeys in pouch at any one time. Joeys have been born every month of the year, suggesting that there is no clear breeding season. Length of pouch life is about 3 months. This has been confirmed by one animal having 4 joeys taken to term in the one year. A growth curve has been produced, and joeys can now be aged during pouched life.

The condition of the animals is very constant. Throughout the year all animals maintained weight with no seasonal fluctuations evident. It has become apparent that there is some seasonal movement within the habitat occupied by the animal. Some evidence supports contention that animals move to laterite ridges in winter, but more data is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn. The males appear to range over an area of 100 acres, whereas the females range over an area of only half of the males requirements.

A population of approximately 50 animals live in the study area comprising about 150 acres of whitegum box country.