

CRESCENT NAIL-TAIL WALLABY

During June 1969 a report was received by the Department of sightings of what possibly could have been Crescent-tailed Wallabies. The observations were made by Mr. N. Tonkin and by Mr. A.C. Linto of the Agriculture Department, Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Tonkin first observed 3 of these marsupials about 2 years ago whilst rabbit trapping near Mungarrie Station about 8 miles north-east of Kalgoorlie. His attention was caught by the unusual white facial markings on the animals and by their small size. Mr. Tonkin reported that the animals stood between 2 and 3 feet high, were greyish in colour with a cream-brown front and paws, and had ears more rounded than elongated. Several months later he saw the animals again in the same area. However, the most recent sighting was made about 3 months ago when one was seen crossing the Kalgoorlie Road about 5 miles west from Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Linto reported a similar animal dead alongside the same road some 7 miles west of Kalgoorlie. This observation was made in the middle of June of this year. Unfortunately, investigation of the roadside area by Mr. K.D. Morrison, a Departmental Fauna Warden, revealed no carcass. Mr. Morrison was in Kalgoorlie enjoying his annual recreation leave at the time the report was received.

These observations of this marsupial are very encouraging. Mr. Tonkin and Mr. Linto both have assured the Department that if any further sightings are made or any dead animals located by them, they would report them and also forward either the skin or skull to the W.A. Museum for positive identification.

Ellis Troughton in his book "Furred Animals of Australia" records that the Crescent Nail-tail Wallaby once ranged in its distribution from south Western Australia to eastern and central South Australia. Now the animal is believed to be verging on extinction in the settled districts of the south-west of this State, once its stronghold. It is said to occur in isolated localities west of the lower part of the Great Southern Railway, and further east towards the Great Victoria Desert.

According to Wood Jones in 1924, who knew of no observations since 1894, (Reference - Ellis Troughton) this animal had probably vanished from South Australia. J.T. Tunney, the well-known collector, thought in 1921 that the animals had

disappeared from their most favoured haunts in Western Australia, and would inevitably become extinct under the advance of settlement and spread of the fox. One can only hope that the efforts of the various local authorities to conserve the remarkably interesting fauna will include special provision for saving representatives of this lovely species.