

ANTECHINUS APICALIS SURVEY

Mr W.H. Butler conducted on behalf of the Department a survey of the area in which the Dibbler (Antechinus apicalis) was re-discovered in April 1967. The survey was made during the period January 29 to February 4, 1970, and no Dibbler was caught.

A request to the Lands Department for a temporary reserve to protect the habitat in which the Dibbler was re-discovered was refused in January 1969, on the ground that there were already several reserves covering most of the area applied for. At that time the Lands Department was not asked to create a permanent reserve for fauna because of the lack of information to back up such a request. For this reason it was arranged for Mr Butler to carry out an initial survey of this area in the Cheynes Beach locality, in order to find out more about the animal's abundance and habitat preference.

The next step will be to start looking elsewhere for this animal. The Two Peoples Bay Reserve is considered to be a most unlikely area since it contains a very different type of habitat. Investigations will have to be made for areas that possibly contain similar floral arrays to those in the Cheynes Beach locality. Analysis shows that the Dibbler's preferred habitat has a floral composition that enables a nectar flow all year round. Some of the flow is copious and will support a large population of insects. This in turn allows insectivorous fauna, especially that which supplements its diet with nectar, to establish a good foothold. As a result, the area where the Dibbler was re-discovered is rich in small mammal species but because of its very limited size, the number of animals for each species is very low.

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