

WE live in Busselton Shire, on 140 acres of jarrah forest on the edge of the State Forest, which we purchased in 1994. A strip along the road which was cleared for grazing about 30 or 40 years ago has some regrowth and is, unfortunately, an excellent breeding ground for rabbits. The rest of the land, apart from having some of the large trees cut for fence posts (we can see the evidence on the forest floor) is still in its natural state. We have cleared about 3 acres for a garden and orchard, which we have had to rabbit-proof fence in order to grow anything!

The bird life is wonderful and we have identified over 70 different birds, many in the garden which is planted to encourage them. Apart from lots of kangaroos passing through each night to the farm across the road and back in the morning, there was little sign of other wildlife so I thought I would find out about how to get rid of feral animals. I knew that there were foxes around as I could see their footprints on the firebreaks, as well as occasional cat prints. These had to be feral as we are too far from other houses. With much help from Phil Williams at AgWA, I started on a fox eradication programme. I used 1080 eggs, burying them in the ground and marking where they were so I could check if or when they were taken. I started in 1996 and kept baiting whenever I saw fox footprints on my walks. If I found part of an empty egg shell it was a pretty good indication a fox had taken it.

In 1999 we joined LFW and were shown two quenda diggings, down by a winter stream on the property. These were the only ones we could find, but 1999 was my best year for the number of eggs taken by foxes. In 2000 we started to see quenda diggings on our walks, and they have been increasing ever since.

This year I found that something was digging under the side gate in the garden and thought it was rabbits getting in, so I set a trap which fortunately caught nothing. I then spread damp sand and, lo and behold, quenda footprints were seen! By the time all this was worked out the

MEMBER'S PAGE

AN EXCITING INVASION

Sue Seaman

parsley, pinks and carnations were eaten down to the ground. The access was blocked off, but they dug in again a bit further along. This was blocked off and that seemed to cure it - or so I thought! However, as I started to find more and more quenda diggings in the garden, I came to realise that many of them had not returned to the forest each night, but had taken up residence in the garden!

Over the next three months I moved 11 adult and three half-grown quendas to the bush outside the garden. We then had a few weeks free of any fresh diggings but then I found a mother and her three babies who were the size of mice and out of the pouch. I did not dare release her as I was sure she would run off and leave her babies, so I left them under a bush until it was dark. By this time her babies were back in the pouch and, being a softie, I let her stay in the garden until her babies were bigger.

As everyone knows, time passes quicker than you realise, and I thought it was time to return the mother and her grown babies to the bush. I caught one and returned it, but the second one I caught again had babies only mouse size and again they had come out of the pouch, so will be staying a little longer!

I have come to the conclusion that we will have quendas in the garden for ever, as we forget from time to time to shut the main gate and I think that is when one of the ex-residents finds it's way back. Actually it is rather nice having them around, so long as we keep the numbers down. We sometimes see them in the early evening dashing from cover to cover and it is a great incentive to be rigorous with the fox baiting.

Editor's Note: *Isn't it great that Sue has so many quendas on her property! Under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950, a licence is required for any capture or removal of wild fauna. It is best to exclude animals by fencing or barriers, wherever possible. If they must be relocated, keep them on your property as Sue has done. If any readers have similar 'problems' with quenda, please contact your nearest LFW or DCLM officer for advice and assistance.*

LEGLESS LIZARD

Robyn Soulier and son Phillip, of Yandanooka, spotted this creature last September in 'Banksia Corner', their dense sandplain bushland. It was about 30cm long and very slender, overall sandy beige, with a longitudinal pattern of blocks of black interspersed with reddish-brown. Once disturbed, it soon whipped off into dense cover.



DCLM Senior Zoologist Peter Mawson says that it is a Common Scaly-foot, *Pygopus lepidopodus*. This legless lizard is quite widespread in the south-west (except for high-rainfall forest) and easy to recognise by the blocks of colour in its three longitudinal stripes. "Dense sandplain with a heavy leaf litter, such as this, would be ideal for them" Peter said. "They forage through the top layer of sand and the leaf litter, searching for insects and spiders." Although legless lizards are not poisonous, they often mimic snake-like behaviour to try to deter predators. Unless you are an experienced zoologist, it's best not to handle any such animals. Admire, and photograph, from afar! photo R. Soulier