

FAUNA

COMMUNITY FAUNA SURVEY - LOWLANDS COASTAL RESERVE

Sylvia Leighton

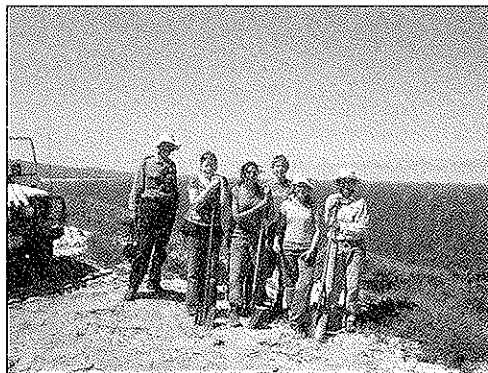
Honey possums, mardos, dunnarts, sand frogs, bardicks and bushrats, to list just a few!

What else would you want to be doing in early November other than getting up at 3.45am to go and do some fauna surveying when you are seven months pregnant? Actually I couldn't think of anything more pleasurable than being out in the bush seeing our native animals in the first light of the day. And so it was in early November that I went out to join the Youngs Siding Progress Association for the third fauna trapping survey session for this 12 month project.

It was in mid 2005 that *Land For Wildlife* agreed to help the Youngs Siding Community carry out a fauna survey in their local coastal reserve which is located half way between Albany and Denmark. *LFWers* Brad Kneebone and Jill Williamson own a property that adjoins the coastal reserve and took on the role of coordinating the project. There are also quite a few other *LFW* properties in the near vicinity and everybody was keen to survey this City of Albany coastal bush reserve which is very dear to their hearts.

Brad went ahead and applied for funding through Lotteries West to purchase the fauna survey equipment that was required. We were able to carry out the fauna survey under my DEC 'Fauna Survey for Scientific Purposes Licence' with me in the role of 'Chief Investigator' and we also gained approval for the project from the City of Albany and the DEC Animal Ethics Committee.

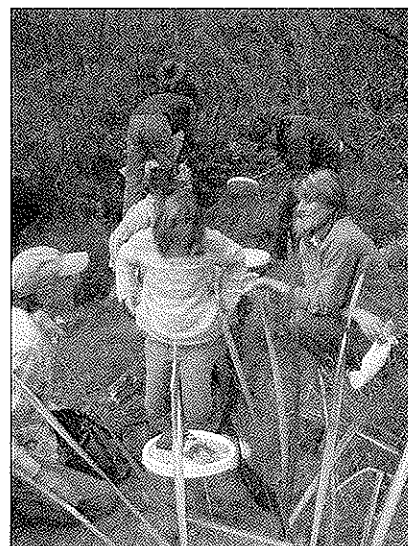
We agreed we would carry out four seasonal sessions of five day fauna surveys over a twelve month period in



The Albany TAFE 'digging in' team who installed most of the pit traps.



A typical 5am gathering of locals at Site 1.



Clearing the traps in the morning with local community members.

sites that represented the four major vegetation communities of the reserve. A large part of this project is community education so at each session the community members were invited to come along and assist. We have had all age groups out helping with setting and baiting the drop pit traps, cage and Elliott box traps and then helping to clear them in the mornings. We also had assistance from the local TAFE Diploma of Conservation and Land Management students.

The survey has so far revealed the following small mammals; honey possums, coastal dunnarts, yellow footed antechinus, western bush rats and feral mice. The two animals we were hoping to find and which are still missing are the western pygmy possum and the quenda. We have also recorded the sand frog, banjo frog, green tree frog and motorbike frog. The spring session revealed a nice array of reptiles - crown snake, dugite and bardick. We had the delightful pleasure of capturing one of the beautifully patterned legless lizards which grow to about 50cms in length, our local bobtail lizard and five different skink species which still need confirmation of their identification. The last group of animals that we have noted are the insects and we have all delighted in the array of spiders, beetles, centipedes, ants and various other spineless wonders. The WA Museum is helping with the spider identification but unfortunately the rest of the insects will not be given proper identification for this survey. The local Birds Australia group have also been visiting seasonally to do bird surveys throughout the reserve.

FAUNA

continued from page 14

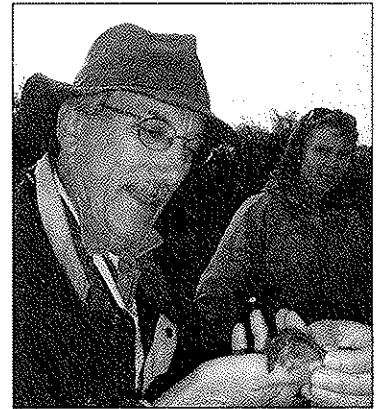
Fauna survey



*Watch out for the sharp teeth of the coastal dunnart, *Sminthopsis crassicaudata*.*



*A mardo, *Antechinus flavipes*.*



*Project coordinator, Brad Kneebone, with a honey possum, *Tarsipes rostratus*.*



*The large-eyed sand frog, *Heleioporus psammophilus*. (Note that frogs should not be touched by hand, because it would cause chemical contamination of frog skin by oily human sweat.)*



*The bardick, *Echiopsis curta*, often gets mistaken for a death adder, which does not occur in the Albany part of the South Coast region.*

There are no words to express the delight and pleasure all Australians of every age group feel when they actually see their local native animals up close out in the bush and

get their first experience of being able to touch some of these special little animals. To be able to provide this experience for local community is a privilege and the visual rewards

I get from the experience make the early morning rises well worth it.

Unfortunately there is clear evidence of some very healthy populations of feral cats and foxes in the Lowlands Coastal Reserve. Every morning reveals fresh tracks and scats from these formidable exotic predators. This will be the challenge for the local community to work in with the City of Albany to try and establish strategies to help reduce the numbers of these destructive animals in the future.

One more trapping session to go, then the results will be written up and recommendations submitted to the City of Albany.



SPIDER HUNTER

In late spring many predatory wasps can be seen carrying prey back to their nest. This striking orange and black insect is a ground wasp, probably of the genus *Cryptocheilus*. It digs a burrow in sandy ground by scratching it away with the forelegs and throwing it back between the hind legs. This one has caught a wolf spider which it has stung into immobility. It will stuff it into the burrow and then lay an egg on it. Keeping the spider alive but paralysed avoids the problem of the food decomposing while the wasp larva is developing.

Fiona Falconer