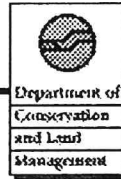


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# News

R E L E A S E



Department of  
Conservation  
and Land  
Management

31 March 1999

## Living with chuditch

The Department of Conservation and Land Management's nature conservation strategy, Western Shield — designed to bring WA's native animals back from the brink of extinction — is proving so successful that the Department is now having to issue information about how to live harmoniously with increasing numbers of once rare animals.

The distinctive spotted chuditch, for example, is being reported throughout the South West as well as at Herne Hill, Guilderton and around farms in the Wheatbelt

Keith Morris, head of CALMScience's Biodiversity Conservation Group, says the recovery of this carnivorous mammal is a fantastic success story.

"The increasing numbers are a great indicator of a recovering ecosystem, but the animal's carnivorous ways are causing concern in the community, particularly among chicken owners," he said.

Chuditch are fast and efficient predators, able to climb, dig and jump. They are mainly active at night and they eat small reptiles, birds, insects and small mammals. Some have been known to kill several chickens in a night.

Nevertheless, chuditch are still a threatened species, and injuring or killing one could lead to a \$10,000 fine.

"What we hope to do is alert people to the fact that more chuditch are going to be around, and that there are some simple steps to take that will make living with them much easier," Mr Morris said.

Chicken owners should keep chuditch in mind when they are building or refurbishing their chook sheds. CALM recommends following a design commissioned by the Tasmanian Threatened Species Network to combat marauding Tasmanian devils and quolls.

The walls of this shed need to be two metres or higher, with tightly fitting vertical palings or corrugated iron. The construction should be sturdy, with a roof of iron or wire mesh, and no gaps. A raised entry (1.75m) with tin around it, and a half-way perch, allow access for chooks, but not chuditch.

The built-in opening of the shed means that adult chooks can enter at anytime; there is no need to put them in at night. The structure should be on a secure floor or dug well into the ground. Mesh on the side, buried at least half-a-metre deep, will prevent foxes digging in.

"We don't recommend this shed for baby chickens, because they can't use the perch and will be vulnerable to birds of prey. Chicks require a fully enclosed chook house," Mr Morris said.

"If chuditch continue to be a problem, people should contact their local CALM office. Arrangements can be made to capture and relocate the animals, or place them in the captive breeding program at Perth Zoo."

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