



Government of Western Australia

Media Statements Contact

## Ministerial Media Statement

# MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

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24/2/98

1998 looks set to be a significant year for the recovery of native wildlife, with recent trapping programs in the State's South-West showing a marked increase in the number and diversity of native mammals.

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes said the most recent example was the trapping of a chuditch at Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park.

Mrs Edwardes said this was the first confirmed record of chuditch at Leschenault Peninsula for many years.

She said there were many positive signs of native animal recovery, highlighting the success the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) was having with its conservation initiative Western Shield.

Western Shield is the biggest wildlife conservation program ever conducted in Australia. It aims to bring our wildlife back from the brink of extinction by controlling introduced predators such as the European fox and feral cat.

"The recording of chuditch at Leschenault Peninsula demonstrates the importance of fox control to protect the native wildlife," Mrs Edwardes said.

Fox control began at Leschenault in 1991 to coincide with the release of western ringtail possums, which had been an enormous success with a population now well established.

Fox control had also led to dramatic increases in the number of brushtail possums and spotlighting surveys last year resulted in the Peninsula's first record of a brush-tailed phascogale (wambenger).

Mrs Edwardes said recent CALM trapping programs in the South-West from Dwellingup to Manjimup had also shown great results in regard to the recovery of several threatened fauna species as a direct result of fox control.

Under Operation Foxglove, a component of the research behind Western Shield and jointly supported by Environment Australia (through the Natural Heritage Trust), the Vertebrate Bio-Control Co-operative Research Centre (VB CRC) and Alcoa, CALM had extensively baited more than 500,000ha of the northern jarrah forest between Mundaring and Collie during the past four years.

"This has led to significant increases in native animal numbers," the Minister said.

"Woylies were translocated to several sites and have since increased in number and are

becoming widely spread in the northern jarrah forest.

"Chuditch and southern brown bandicoot (quenda) captures have also increased dramatically while Operation Foxglove trapping has resulted in the discovery of three quokka populations.

"Likewise, trapping recently carried out at St Johns Conservation Park and Milyeannup Nature Reserve near Nannup, in addition to Leschenault Peninsula, has resulted in the capture of a number of species.

"The most pleasing find was quenda populations in relatively open bushland rather than the dense swamp habitat in which the species has previously been caught."

Two quenda, one captured at the southern end of the Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park and the other from the northern end, were very encouraging as an indicator of the probable success of a quenda translocation program to the park 18 months ago.

The animals trapped last week were all 'new' which suggested that the translocated animals had successfully bred and their offspring spread five kilometres north and south.

This expansion of available habitat was also evident in other areas where regular fox-baiting had taken place, showing that controlling predators allows native fauna to move out of refuge areas into other suitable habitat.

The Minister said most areas trapped were baited at least four times a year as part of Western Shield with the next aerial baiting program scheduled for March/April. She said Cable Sands Pty Ltd sponsored baiting programs in the D'Entrecasteaux and Shannon National Parks and surrounding forest areas.

Fox-baiting under Western Shield would continue in all areas of CALM estate that were currently baited with unbaited buffers around established recreation sites, private property and towns.

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