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GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

August 25, 1998

**\$13,000 boost for bilbies**

Western Australia's innovative bilby captive breeding program is set for further success following a \$13,000 boost today from the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes said the donation - which was raised from the sale of chocolate Easter bilbies through Coles Supermarkets - highlighted the commitment of the private sector, the wider community and Government agencies to native animal conservation.

"The bilby, or rabbit-eared bandicoot, is one of a number of threatened native species whose populations have almost been destroyed by foxes and feral cats," Mrs Edwardes said.

"The co-operative effort and support of the ACF, which along with the Queensland Wildlife Preservation Society administers these raised funds, Coles Supermarkets and the people who bought the chocolate Easter bilbies have greatly helped in facilitating CALM's plans to secure the long-term future of the bilby."

Twenty bilbies have now been born under the program which has bases at the Kanyana Native Fauna Rehabilitation Centre in Gooseberry Hill and Peron Peninsula in Shark Bay.

A third site is soon to be established at the Dryandra Woodland in the Wheatbelt region.

Mrs Edwardes said the bilby captive breeding program was part of CALM's wildlife recovery project Western Shield, which aimed to protect native wildlife from introduced predators.

"Under Western Shield, CALM aims to control the threat of introduced predators and reintroduce species such as the chuditch, numbat and bilby into areas they once roamed before the introduction of foxes and cats," she said.

"The captive breeding stations at Kanyana Native Fauna Rehabilitation Centre near Perth and at Peron Peninsula in Shark Bay are vital to the success of the species' recovery plans.

"Bilbies have been at Kanyana for almost two years and at Shark Bay for about 18 months.

"Both programs are doing extremely well, with eight young born under the program at Peron and 12 at Kanyana.

"There is a total of 33 bilbies in the combined captive breeding programs.

"Both breeding facilities have been modelled on the species' natural environment in the wild."

Mrs Edwardes said the \$13,000 would be used to maintain the bilby breeding facilities at Shark Bay and Kanyana, and to fund searches for wild populations for translocation.

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