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## MEDIA STATEMENT

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

10/4/98

### More funds from chocolate bilbies

Conservation efforts to save the endangered native species the bilby will be boosted by the devouring of chocolate bush bilbies this Easter weekend.

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes said the many people who bought chocolate bilbies from Coles Supermarkets throughout Western Australia would be supporting efforts to save the bilby from extinction.

For the third consecutive year a percentage of the funds from the sale of chocolate Easter bilbies will be donated to bilby conservation programs.

"The funds raised during the past two years have helped the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) to fast-track its recovery plans for the bilby by establishing breeding facilities around the State," Mrs Edwardes said.

"Breeding programs are now in operation in Broome, Peron Peninsula in the Shark Bay region and at Kanyana Native Fauna Rehabilitation Centre in the hills of Perth.

"The breeding facilities were built to imitate as closely as possible the desert conditions in which bilbies roam in the wild.

"Funds were also used for expeditions to the Pilbara region to search and locate wild populations of bilbies as a source for breeding."

Mrs Edwardes said the breeding programs had already experienced success, with a number of bilbies born in captivity during the past year.

"Each of the three breeding facilities has made tremendous strides in the conservation of bilbies and the birth and survival of those born in captivity is testimony to this," she said.

"Once there is stable population base, it is planned to reintroduce the bilbies into areas where they once roamed."

The Minister said funds raised this year would assist CALM in the further development of its recovery program for bilbies and other endangered animals in the coming year.

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