

Chudich reintroduced to Mt Lindesay National Park in SW region

Tuesday, 27 April 1999

27/4/99

Aerial fox-baiting, under the wildlife recovery program Western Shield, has led to the reintroduction of 25 chuditch to Mt Lindesay National Park, 20km north of Denmark.

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes said the reintroduction was a first for the endangered species to this unique area of WA's South-West.

"Through Western Shield, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) is bringing native animals back from the brink of extinction by controlling the threat of foxes and feral cats," Mrs Edwardes said.

"Extensive aerial baiting using the naturally occurring poison 1080, on more than 3.5 million hectares of conservation lands, has been the key to achieving this control.

"The chuditch is one of a number of endangered species that has been reintroduced into areas where it was once commonly found before foxes and feral cats were introduced.

"Since the project began in 1996, native animal numbers have increased dramatically in South-West forests where successful fox control has been achieved."

Mrs Edwardes said the translocation would involve chuditch from a captive-breeding program run jointly by CALM and Perth Zoo.

"The majority of the release animals will be less than two years old, with a female bias to ensure larger aggressive males do not out-compete females for the more productive home ranges," she said.

"The release site contains a diverse range of habitats for the animals, with much of the vegetation in Mt Lindesay consisting of jarrah and marri forest with smaller areas of heath and woodland.

"This reintroduction follows the successful reintroduction of captive-bred chuditch to Lake Magenta Nature Reserve and Cape Arid National Park in 1998.

"These translocations are part of recovery plans for the species which aim to establish self-sustaining populations of chuditch outside the animal's current limited distribution."

Mrs Edwardes said the chuditch would be monitored after release through radio tracking and trapping.

The chuditch - *Dasyurus geoffroii* - is the largest carnivorous marsupial found in WA. It is easily recognised by its distinctive white spots on brown fur with a black brush tail. Males weigh an average of 1.3kg and females 0.9kg.

Once found through most of the southern half of mainland Australia, the chuditch is now confined to the South-West. The largest populations survive in the jarrah forest, with lower numbers in a few areas of remnant vegetation in the Wheatbelt.

Mrs Edwardes said much of Western Shield's success to date had been due to the co-operation and support of the community.

"Many private landowners and Land Conservation District Committees have helped with fox-baiting by laying baits on their own land, particularly where it is adjacent to conservation reserves," she said.



Cheryl Edwardes

"Likewise, the support and generous sponsorship of Alcoa Australia, Cable Sands Pty Ltd and Westralian Sands for the 'Operation Foxglove', 'Coastal Storm' and 'New Dawning' components of the program, have helped significantly."

Media contacts: Ministerial - Nicole Trigwell 9421 7777
CALM - Roger Armstrong 9725 4300