

ENVIRONMENT



*Brush-tailed Possum pictured during the night excursion to Julimar Forest in October 2024.
Photo Ross McDougal.*

Amazing to find the vulnerable brush-tailed possums in Julimar

Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance and Wheatbelt Avon Bird Group
Max Howard

A NIGHT survey of fauna in Julimar Forest was conducted on October 21 last year by members of both Julimar Conservation and Forest alliance (JCAFA) and the Wheatbelt Avon Bird Group (WABG).

Prior to darkness an excellent bird list was compiled by the group with 28 species being located.

A number of the endangered Carnaby's Cockatoos were spotted as well as a male feeding a female on six occasions.

On completion the female flew away and this behaviour means nesting was probably taking place on eggs at this time.

The male calls to the female who leaves the nest and flies to a nearby tree where the feeding takes place.

Our group was broken up into small teams covering different locations with some excellent observations.

Three Tawny Frogmouths, and two Boobook Owls were detected, along with the rare and endangered Woylie and Chuditch.

Even a Barking Gheko was observed on one of the tracks.

The birds mentioned above do a lot of their feeding in the surrounding farmland mainly for mice and rats so they are very helpful to our primary producers.

With the coming of the dawn they return to the forest for the sanctuary it provides.

However the most amazing find was

fifteen Brushtail Possums.

This Possum is classed as 'vulnerable' in Western Australia and numbers have been declining rapidly in the Wheatbelt Region, mainly through introduced predators such as the feral cat and fox.

Habitat loss also contributes to the decline as this species needs suitable hollows of old growth trees for protection during the day.

This is why places such as Julimar need the highest protection placed on it.

Both adult and young Possums still clinging to their parents were observed in the trees.

These sightings indicate successful breeding is taking place in the forest.

The Possum has a naked patch under its tail which grips the branches tightly; enabling a Possum to swing from its tail - as agile as primates.

Perhaps I can suggest Julimar may be the same as Goomalling town in past years, "the place of the Possum". Hopefully that will come to fruition in Julimar in future years if this remarkable forest is given the protection which it needs.

Over the past few months JCAFA has been monitoring fauna in the forest through cameras, moved regularly and placed at various locations.

These cameras have proved very successful in identifying other significant vulnerable species such as Tamar Wallaby, Brush-tailed Phascogale, and Quenda.

On the downside it also revealed introduced species such as feral pigs, wild cats, and foxes.