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NATIONAL PARKS AUTHORITY

TREASURY PLACE, MELBOURNE, VIC. 3002

HATTAH LAKES NATIONAL PARK

REPORT ON MAMMAL SURVEY, SUMMER 1968/69

Introduction

Previous surveys of the mammals of Hattah Lakes National Park have not led to very conclusive results.

The Fisheries and Wildlife Department granted a permit to live-trap small mammals at Hattah, over summer 1968/69.

The aims of this survey were -

1. to compile a list of mammals of Hattah Lakes National Park
2. to provide a simple index of population densities of such mammals.

Methods and Equipment.

Forty-nine large aluminium box-type traps were provided by the Forests Commission of Victoria, and ten of mixed sizes by National Parks Authority. Baits of honey, peanut butter, oatmeal, fruit, and combinations of these were used. Traps were set up both randomly and on a grid system, in representative kinds of habitat, for periods of time varying from one night to ten nights at each location. Traps were inspected daily.

Results

The only mammal species caught in the present programme was Mus musculus the house mouse.

Habitat	Trap Nights	Species	Catch	% Catch
Buloke and Grassland	202	House mouse	11	5.0
Grassland	61	"	2	3.3
Red Gum/Black Box Plains	74	"	0	0.0
House Yard	70	"	7	10.0
Mallee (Central Mallee Land System)	218	"	6	2.7
		Copper-tailed skink	1	
Total	<u>525</u>		<u>26</u>	<u>ave. 2.2 %</u>

Weather conditions and kinds of bait made no significant differences in numbers of captures. Sexes were in equal ratio. The skink was caught in humid, wet weather on peanut butter, and was released at point of capture.

Interpretation of Results

Probably there is no simple, single explanation for the failure to snare any native small mammals. Possible explanations may be :

1. Poor trap technique. Caged live baits such as insects could have been used in the traps. However, even tracks, scratches and faecal pellets of small mammals were extremely rarely seen - and even then, inconclusive. Month-old possum scratches were seen on gums, house mouse burrows only were observed; that was all.
2. Prolonged below average rainfall. Many native rodents can live virtually indefinitely without water though.

3. Introduced predators are common - cats, especially along the red gum flats (where no animals, not even house mice were taken) and foxes. It is problematical whether these animals are more efficient killers of small animals than the original native dasyurids which have been recorded from along the Murray River flats.
4. Introduced competitors such as rabbits, house mice. But there is plenty of vegetative ground cover, and no lack of seed of many kinds of grass. Goats and sheep do not cover all habitats.
5. Intrinsic factors (disease etc.) There is little evidence either for or against this theory.
6. Poisoning. The possibility that mammals have been poisoned during 1080 rabbit treatments should not be discounted. But mammals were not even found in the Mallee, where trails have not been laid.

Conclusion

I should like to express my thanks to Fisheries and Wildlife Department for permission to carry out this programme, and to Forests Commission for provision of traps.

Although no native mammals were captured in the traps, the programme was by no means a waste of time.

Geoff Edwards

c/o National Parks Authority

20/2/69

INTERIM MAMMAL LIST FOR HATTAH LAKES NATIONAL
PARK 1962/69

Indigenous Species

Mallee Black-faced Kangaroo Macropus major melanops

Common.

Red Kangaroo Macropus rufus syn. Megaleia rufa

Very rare.

Common Brush-tailed Possum Trichosurus vulpecula
vulpecula

Not uncommon around lakes.

South-western Pygmy Possum Cercarletus concinnus minor

Recorded once in house yard

Fat-tailed Smynthopsis Smynthopsis crassicaudata

Very rare.

Echidna Tachyglossus aculeatus aculeatus

Not infrequent

Mitchell's Hopping Mouse Notomys mitchelli.

Believed rare.

Introduced Species

Rabbit odd animals

Fox Widespread

Cat Common around lakes

Goat Flocks in mallee

Sheep Flocks at times

House mouse Common