

According to Swan's (1990) description of the requirements for this lizard, the course of the Paroo contains suitable habitat along most of its length and thus is likely to be inhabited by this dragon. Given its occurrence on the Paroo, it is also likely to occur further west along the Darling River towards the Paroo than is currently described by Swan (1990) (Fig. 3).

This information has been registered in the Atlas of New South Wales Wildlife database run by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (Ellis 1992) for future reference. Such computerization of fauna records by wildlife authorities and museums should make mapping of fauna distributions easier and more reliable.

## VIEWPOINT

### THE NEED FOR A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF PEST ANIMALS ON AUSTRALIA'S HERPETOFAUNA

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I am certain that if the review were undertaken the answer would be that we do not know the damage. For the past two and a half years, I have been managing a programme which is developing national guidelines for managing the environmental and agricultural damage due to Australia's major vertebrate pests. A major deficiency identified for the pest species that have been considered so far (rabbits, foxes, feral goats and feral horses) is the extremely poor information available on the economic or the environmental impact of pests, even for well studied species such as the rabbit. I suspect that a major cause for this is the past emphasis on controlling pest numbers rather than the damage pests cause.

Concerning reptiles, diet studies clearly show that foxes and cats take reptiles. The crucial question is what impact the level of predation by pests is having on the long-term viability of

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the various reptile populations. Some common urban species such as *Lampropholis delicata* seem quite capable of withstanding substantial predation by cats and other predators within the urban environment.

Similar to that found for other native vertebrates, I believe that the major impact on reptiles has been due to habitat modification. Clearing land for urban development, agriculture or other purposes or modifying it for grazing plus the impact of grazing in the pastoral lands are major factors. It is likely that the impact of exotic herbivores, such as feral goats and rabbits, as well as increased numbers of kangaroos, also have played a role in modifying habitat and hence influenced the suitability of the habitat for some reptile species. On the other hand some species undoubtedly have benefited from the presence of some pests, e.g., arid-zone goannas from the availability of rabbits. However, there are little data available to quantify the extent of impact, be it positive or negative. Longer term studies that assess the change in target reptile populations in response to manipulations of pest density are required to answer the question.

Copies of a recent publication I prepared on the principles and strategies for managing vertebrate pests which more fully outlines some of the above points are available on request.