

SHORT CONTRIBUTIONS

A NOTE ON THE LONGEVITY AND TERRITORIALITY OF *TRICHOSURUS VULPECULA* (KERR) IN THE WILD*

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During a live-trapping programme carried out in the Canberra area in 1957 (Dunnet 1964), a number of possums of the species *Trichosurus vulpecula* were taken and identified by means of tags attached to an ear, after which they were released. The tags and their method of attachment have been described by Dunnet (1956). During 1957, various trees were used as permanent trapping sites, a numbered metal tab being nailed to each tree and the position of the trees plotted on a map. These identical sites were used for a trapping study in 1963. On February 5 and 6, 1963, three possums which had been tagged previously were recaptured. The data for the recaptured animals are as follows:

- (1) *Female 98*.—First caught as a young adult on April 7, 1957, at Gungahlin Hill, was recaptured in the same area on August 21, 1957, when it was retagged in both ears with numbered aluminium tags bearing patterns of Scotchlite. It was recaptured at Gungahlin Hill on February 5, 1963 (5 yr 10 months after first capture), when the tag in the left ear was found to be intact and the Scotchlite to be in excellent condition. The tag was missing from the right ear. The animal was released at the recapture point.
- (2) *Female 108*.—First caught as an adult on June 7, 1957, at Gungahlin Hill, was recaptured there on July 19, 1957, when it was retagged in both ears. It was recaptured at Gungahlin Hill on October 18, 1957, and on February 6, 1963 (5 yr 8 months after first capture). The tag in the left ear was intact, and as in the previous case the Scotchlite was in excellent condition. There was no tag in the right ear. The animal was released at the recapture point.
- (3) *Female 112*.—When first caught as an adult on July 25, 1957, at Dam Hill, was tagged in both ears. It was recaptured at Dam Hill on August 28, 1957, September 20, 1957, and at the same place on February 5, 1963 (5 yr 7 months after first capture). The tag was present in the right ear, but that in the left was missing. The animal was released at the recapture point.

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The trapping results give valuable indication of longevity in the wild. As all three animals were adults when first caught, they were at least 6 years old when last captured.

Dunnet (1964) showed that breeding females remain for at least 18 months in restricted areas which they do not defend. Adult males are equally sedentary, but actively defend their territories. In spite of the fact that the females are apparently not active in the defence of their territories, the present results indicate that they are permanent residents in a limited area. Trapping will be continued to ascertain whether or not males are equally sedentary and long-lived.

References

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