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photo: Tom Leftwich



Fuel reduction fire

F Foresters at work

Fire can be a friend to forests.

Normally the seed of the karri tree, for example, cannot germinate when it falls on a carpet of dead karri leaves.

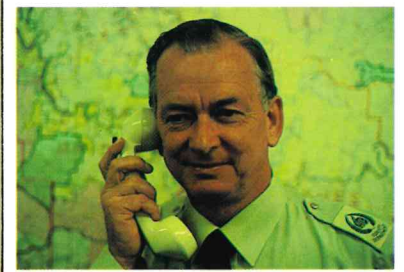
Nature overcame this problem by periodic fires. After a forest is burnt the karri trees shed their seed onto the ashbeds and germination follows in winter.

Foresters in Western Australia have learned to use fire. By planned and controlled burning all areas of the forest can be cleaned of dangerous dry underbush. Forest regrowth is assured and settlements and towns are protected.

Fire is used to regenerate thickets used by Tammars who would be forced to leave and become the prey of more aggressive animals and birds.

Native trees and plants have learned in nature to adapt successfully to fire and the mobility of forest animals plus their rapid breeding and other behavioural traits have enabled them too to cope with fire danger.

Further information on life in the forest can be obtained from the Information Branches of the Forests Department at Como, Bunbury or Manjimup.



Gordon Styles, a regional forester, has spent the last 35 summers of his life concerned with fire duties, seven of them as fire officer at Bunbury.

Gordon is hard put to describe his hobby. "I guess it is fires," he says. There is so much to learn about the behaviour of fire in the forest, and its control.

Fire guidance

The Bush Fires Act states that camp fires may be lit during restricted and prohibited burning times only under the following conditions:

- An area within a radius of 3m from the fire must be cleared of all inflammable material and the fire must be at least this distance from a log or stump.
- NOTE: many local authorities in the southwest totally prohibit camp fires including barbecues other than in areas specially set aside for this purpose.
- The fire must be completely extinguished by the application of water or earth before leaving.

Where such prohibitions do not apply, it is strongly recommended that fires be lit only in established barbecues or other fire places provided. Consider the use of a gas cooker or other portable type stoves.

Be especially careful in or near pine forests. Smoking is prohibited in pine forests between October 1 and May 31 while camping and cooking is prohibited in most pine plantations at all times.

No fires may be lit anywhere on a day for which the fire danger forecast for that locality is Extreme or Very High.

Please report any unattended fire that you see to the local Forests Department office or Shire Council.

If you wish to find out more about fire in our forests, we suggest you read SPECIAL FOCUS NO 1 – FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

This publication, which covers the history of forest fire, fire behaviour and control, and the effects of fire, is available for \$2.00 post paid from Forests Department, 50 Hayman Road, Como, 6152. (Phone (09) 367 6333).

For those interested in the historical aspects of forest and bush fires in Western Australia, we recommend "Fire and Hearth" by Sylvia D Hallam. This book, published in 1975 by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Affairs Canberra, should be ordered through a bookshop.