

Report on a visit to Barrow Island, 20-24 October 1975.

In December 1972, Dr. N. Marchant of the W.A. Herbarium visited Barrow Island and established a number of permanent sampling sites in areas of disturbance to monitor the regeneration of the vegetation.

A visit between the above dates by Dr. Marchant and myself allowed for the handover of this monitoring work to me, as well as for the collection of further data.

All seven pre-existing sites were visited and the vegetation changes recorded. One additional site was established in an undisturbed area as a control. Data from these studies will be processed in the near future to allow for a review of the programme of visits. Generally, the vegetation is regenerating well, though slowly. In areas of engineering disturbance (roads, gravel pits, well sites etc.) regeneration could be enhanced through the implementation of a seeding and/or planting programme.

In addition to the sampling, I was able to spend some time inspecting the oilfield development and to get an impression of the overall effects of this development on the island's wildlife. I was fortunate in this respect that my visit coincided with that of Dr. H. Bakker (this year's Research Grantee) who was studying the Hare Wallaby population.

Fauna was generally abundant, though no Rock Wallabies (*Petrogale penicillata*) were seen.

The fishing activity by some WAPET employees would appear to exceed a normal recreational level.

I have some reservations about the Environmental Management Programme being implemented by WAPET, on advice from Mr. H. Butler, Conservation Consultant. In view of the likely increase in development affected area associated with WAPET expansion plans, now would seem an appropriate time for some of these practices to be reviewed.

The area disturbed by road building (including digging of gravel pits, etc.) continues to increase, apparently in accordance with a policy to enhance road safety and oilfield serviceability. In some cases this is encouraged by Mr. Butler as it reduces the area of habitat permanently disturbed while increasing the area now under rehabilitation. It would seem preferable to discourage this engineering improvement style of development, to limit the impact of the oilfield development on the wildlife.

The means of disposal of solid waste and sewerage could be improved. At present solid wastes are disposed of through sanitary landfill in sandy areas and rocky gullies. I believe the use of some kind of incinerator is being contemplated, and this should be encouraged. Sewerage waste disposal currently is through septic tank percolation

with an overflow into the sea. The standard of treatment could be improved, possibly to include reuse of treated fluids to irrigate the lawn area which, I believe, is no longer irrigated due to some water supply problems.

Mr. Butler is planning to burn a large area of spinifex (*Triodia* spp) in the north-eastern portion of the island for the purposes of habitat management. I suggest the Department and/or the Wildlife Authority should seek to be consulted in this matter, and that the burning be allowed only as it accords with an overall Management Plan.



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# DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

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