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Department of Biodiversity,
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Dryandra is one of the most scenic areas in the wheatbelt, with its magnificent woodland of wandoo and powderbark, brown mallet plantations and the bushland thickets which shelter large numbers of native mammals and birds.

The wheatbelt is the most highly disturbed region of Western Australia. Extensive clearing of bushland for farming and the introduction of exotic plants, disease and predators such as the fox have severely depleted the native flora and fauna. Dryandra is the largest area of remnant vegetation or woodland in the western wheatbelt, and, as such, has outstanding nature conservation, education and recreation value.

Dryandra State Forest lies about 160km south-east of Perth on the western edge of the central southern wheatbelt. It consists of nine separate blocks totalling 23,500 ha. The surrounding land is cleared farmland.

THE ABORIGINES

The Aboriginal people (the Nyungar) made extensive use of this area. A walk trail, the Ochre Trail, goes past a pit where they once quarried ochre. It was highly valued for body decoration and rock art such as the hand paintings found in Bates Cave near Hyden to the east.

The Nyungar people found food in abundance in the Dryandra area. Wandoo woodlands were feeding grounds for wildlife, especially kangaroos and wallabies. Trees also provided nesting sites for birds and possums. Fire was used to flush game and for the regeneration of food plants. The men hunted larger animals, particularly kangaroos and emus, and the women and children dug for roots, collected fruits and seeds and caught smaller animals.

Their diet also included small marsupials, mice, snakes, goannas, parrots, and the grubs of some beetles and moths.

Hardwood from eucalypts was used for spears, boomerangs, axe handles and digging sticks. Cork-wood from the Christmas tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*) was used for shields, and selected stones for cutting edges and grinding stones.

FAUNA

Dryandra has populations of 14 species of ground-dwelling mammals. These include the small kangaroo-like woylie (*Bettongia penicillata*) and tammar (Macropus eugenii) and the unique numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*). The numbat is a small marsupial which feeds exclusively on termites and is the West Australian mammal emblem. The numbat and woylie are very rare with only a few known populations still remaining. Those who enjoy a quiet walk in the bush may be rewarded by a glimpse of the timid numbat, but the woylie won't be around. It sleeps during the day.

One hundred or so bird species have been recorded using the area. One of the most interesting is the mallee fowl (*Leipoa ocellata*). This 'incubator-bird' builds large mounds of leaf litter and soil over its eggs. The heat generated by the rotting vegetation is sufficient to hatch them.



Woylie
(*Bettongia penicillata*)



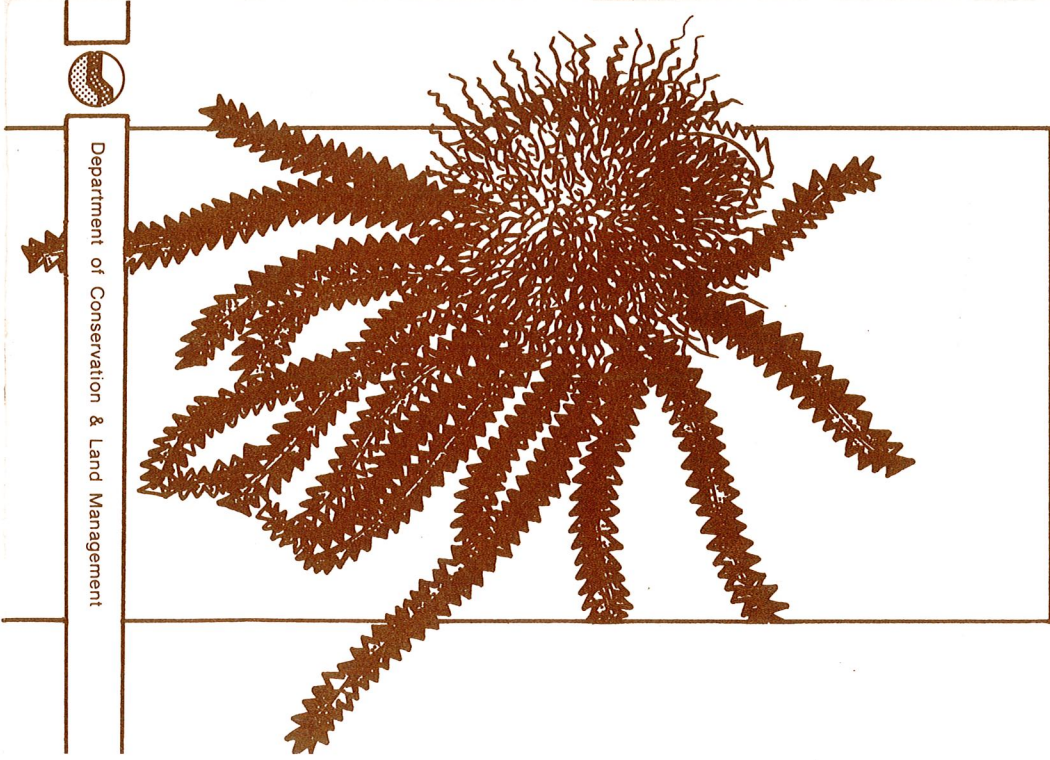
Brown Mallet
(*Eucalyptus astringens*)

MALLET

Areas of brown mallet (*Eucalyptus astringens*) occur naturally on breakaways where the laterite capping has tumbled to the valley below. Mallet has a straight trunk and erect branches. Its bark is smooth and brown or silver grey, with patches of unshed bark adhering to the trunk. The bark is rich in tannins and astringent in taste.

During the early years of settlement mallet bark was exported for tanning. With the large scale felling mallet became scarce and plantations were established to maintain the industry and conserve the species. Extensive plantations were established on the valley floors and slopes in Dryandra. However, the industry declined with the increased cost of labour and transport and the introduction of synthetic tannins, and mallet is no longer used commercially for tannin production.

The brown mallet plantations at Dryandra are now used as a source of wood for tool handles, fenceposts and firewood.



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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Mallee Fowl
(*Leipoa ocellata*)

DRYANDRA STATE FOREST

The plateaus also contain pockets of jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), often associated with kwongan (*Dryandra heath*). Isolated areas of marri (*Eucalyptus calophylla*), mallee (*Eucalyptus* species) and rock sheoak (*Allocasuarina huegelliana*) also occur.

Open woodland of wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo*) and powderbark (*Eucalyptus accedens*) predominate in Dryandra. The smooth, white-barked trees growing on the lower slopes are wandoo. Powderbark has larger fruits and thicker rounder buds, and grows on the higher, gravelly slopes and plateaus. Its bark is powdery to touch.

VEGETATION

