

# Workshop for the Herbarium volunteers

**VOLUNTEER** coordinator **Kevin Kenneally** welcomed 17 volunteers to a workshop held last month in the Herbarium.

Jan Gathe gave a short talk on her role as a consultant botanist employed to database the reference herbarium, with assistance from Francine Dowell and a team of volunteers.

Because the Herbarium manages the State flora collection, there is a great demand placed on it by CALM, other government departments, and the community in general.

To meet the need for native plant identification the Herbarium has a reference collection which is available to CALM staff members and the public.

Herbarium volunteers play a crucial role in helping to maintain both the content and accuracy of the reference collection.

Their work involves helping Jan to match reference herbarium specimens with vouchers in the State flora collection.

All specimens in the State collection are being databased so that each has a unique bar code number. Jan ensures that each

by Neville Marchant

reference herbarium specimen has the correct bar code number, so that any name changes made on the voucher specimen in the main collection can be easily applied to its duplicate in the reference herbarium.

The data processing is being done by Meriel Falconer and some 3 000 specimens have so far been processed.

The next speaker was David Coates, the program leader of the flora conservation program, which now includes the former plant diseases program.

## Research

David pointed out that most of his research covers rare and threatened flora and he is involved in rare flora surveys.

Public education about rare and threatened flora can be of great benefit, and enthusiastic volunteers can help speed the collection of data during rare flora surveys.

If CALM is to meet the challenge of managing the vast conservation estate of such a large State as Western Australia, while at the same time raising

public awareness, it will need all the support and help it can get from the community.

The volunteers were then taken on a tour of the Herbarium laboratory, where Vicki Hamley and Steve Carstairs demonstrated the technique of allozyme electrophoresis used for investigating genetic variation within and between plant populations and between taxa.

## Database

The final question and answer session was held in the reference herbarium and Alex Chapman was invited to attend and respond to questions about the structure and operation of the WAHerb database.

By volunteering their time and expertise, herbarium volunteers play a significant part in conserving the State's wildlife for future generations.

Here is an example of positive cooperation and interaction between members of the public and the government one in which the public is directly involved in work that helps promote an awareness of the need to protect and manage the conservation estate for the good of all.



Flora Conservation Program leader David Coates and volunteers look over the shoulder of laboratory manager Vicki Hamley as she demonstrates one of the processes for investigating genetic variation between plants. Photo by David Gough

# 'Rocks' head for Japan

by Ron Shepherd

**A COUPLE** of stromatolite rocks from Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve are taking a flight to Japan. They are destined for the Kanagana Museum of Natural History, just outside Tokyo.

This new Museum is to detail the "life history of Planet Earth", in which stromatolite growers (tiny micro-organisms) have played a large part. The large complex will open next year, and the stromatolites provided

under CALM permit will be a primary exhibit.

In the near future discussions will be held in regard to obtaining a living stromatolite from Hamelin Pool to be a focal point at the Museum.

Dr Malcolm Walter recently visited Shark Bay to collect the stromatolite rocks on behalf of the Museum.

Dr Walter was one of the principal scientists in

the Baas Becking Laboratories which conducted extensive research in Hamelin Pool during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Dr Walter's visit to the Bay coincided with that of a freelance journalist, Ms Michiko Suzuki, interested in the micro-organism's ability to use mucus to trap sediment and form stromatolites.

Ms Suzuki has used the stromatolite story in promotional brochures for 'Selbex', Japan's best-

selling stomach ulcer medicine! How's that for lateral thinking?

## Class act

**AUTUMN** classes organised by the University of Western Australia Extension Service and run by CALM staff are proving to be popular. These courses provide an opportunity for the public to learn about programs and areas that CALM staff are involved in.

Following the success of the Shark Bay Heritage course last year and an article in the summer edition of *LANDSCOPE*, the Autumn 1992 course was fully booked within the first two weeks of being

# Looking for birds

**CALM, WWF and the SA Department of Environment and Planning have initiated a new project aimed at tracking down the elusive Nullarbor**

shrubland, or occasionally in grassland with scattered acacia shrubs, which they need for shelter. They are quiet and shy, often hiding behind or under shrubs.

some small areas on the western margin of its range, but still occurs in some areas which have been grazed by domestic stock and rabbits for many years.