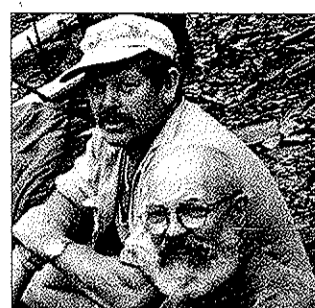




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- Award for Leigh Davis - page 3



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Ramsar lists more WA wetlands

THREE more of Western Australia's wetlands have been listed under the international Convention on Wetlands, commonly referred to as the Ramsar Convention.

The listings, which were officially confirmed on World Wetland Day—2 February—also included 12 additions to four existing Ramsar sites.

The new listings are the Becher Point wetlands near Rockingham, Lake Gore near Esperance and the Muir-Byenup complex east of Manjimup. The additions are to the Ord River Floodplain, the Peel-Yalgorup system, Jolabin Lake east of Narrogin, and the Vasse-Wonnerup system near Busselton.

The Convention on Wetlands is an international treaty that promotes the conservation of wetlands of international significance and the wise use of wetlands generally. The convention was first adopted in 1971 at a meeting in Ramsar, Iran.

It currently lists 1038 sites throughout the world covering

an area of more than 78 million hectares. Australia, one of the first signatories to the Convention, has 56 listed Ramsar wetlands of which 12 are in Western Australia.

CALM wetland specialist Jim Lane of CALMScience Division in Busselton (with advice and assistance from Wetlands International-Oceania), had undertaken a detailed nomination process to identify candidate wetlands.

This had involved consultation with key stakeholders and the preparation of the nomination document that contained details of the features of each of the nominated wetlands along with site maps.

The Commonwealth Government provided almost \$50,000 through the National Wetlands Program of the Natural Heritage Trust for the project.

All three of the areas being nominated are internationally significant and deserve their standing alongside other Ramsar sites both here and overseas.

Becher Point is distinctive in

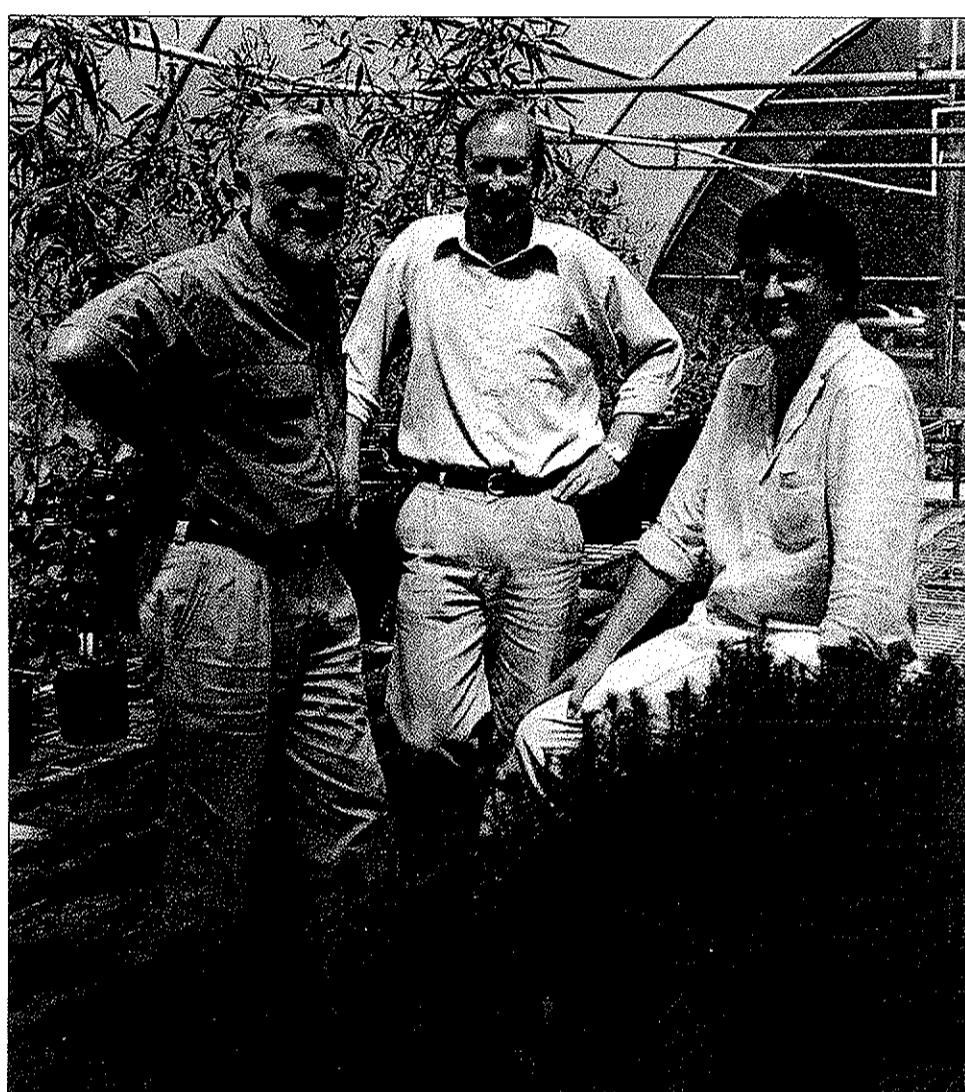
that it is one of the youngest wetland systems on the Swan Coastal Plain. These wetlands were formed only, during the past 4500 years and consequently have particular significance in terms of research interest in the evolution of wetlands.

Lake Gore is habitat for almost one-third of the world's population of hooded plovers and 10 per cent of the global population of banded stilts. It also is a drought refuge for many thousands of other waterbirds.

The Muir-Byenup system includes numerous lakes and swamps. This complex is also a natural diversity recovery catchment under the State Salinity Strategy.

As well as providing habitat for tens of thousands of waterbirds—more than 51,000 individual birds have been recorded in a single survey—it has almost 650 species of native plants, many of them rare.

WA now has more Ramsar-listed wetland sites than any other Australian State or Territory.



John Bartle, John McGrath and Richard Harper, "delighted to be part of a CRC chosen for such vital research". Photo by Verna Costello

Salinity research funded

CALM is part of the Co-operative Research Centre which was recently awarded \$22.5 million by the Commonwealth Government to investigate dry land salinity management during the next seven years.

Results of the research could lift the productivity of millions of hectares of WA land by 75 per cent.

Other members of the Research Centre include the University of Western Australia, Agriculture WA, NSW Agriculture and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

The funding is part of \$325 million allocated to 19 co-operative research projects across Australia to develop commercially viable ideas. Successful candidates were from industries ranging from medical companies to technological and agricultural organisations.

CALM's Executive Director,

Dr Wally Cox, said the expertise of CALMScience researchers had been recognised in a fiercely contested research prize.

"The commercial value of this research has been estimated at \$86 million a year using their research ideas to improve the use of the land," Dr Cox said.

"It shows the level of expertise at CALMScience is among the best in the country, and will give salinity research an exciting boost."

He said flow-on benefits of projects engineered by the team would lead to social and economic advantages for towns and communities affected by the impact of salinity.

"New field-tested, economically viable perennial crops will be required if we are to achieve the scale of planting (measured in millions of hectares) necessary to arrest salinity," he said.

Farming systems suitable for land already affected by salinity will be developed.

"There could be more than three million hectares of such land, and suitable plants and management systems could lift its productivity by 75 per cent," Dr Cox said.

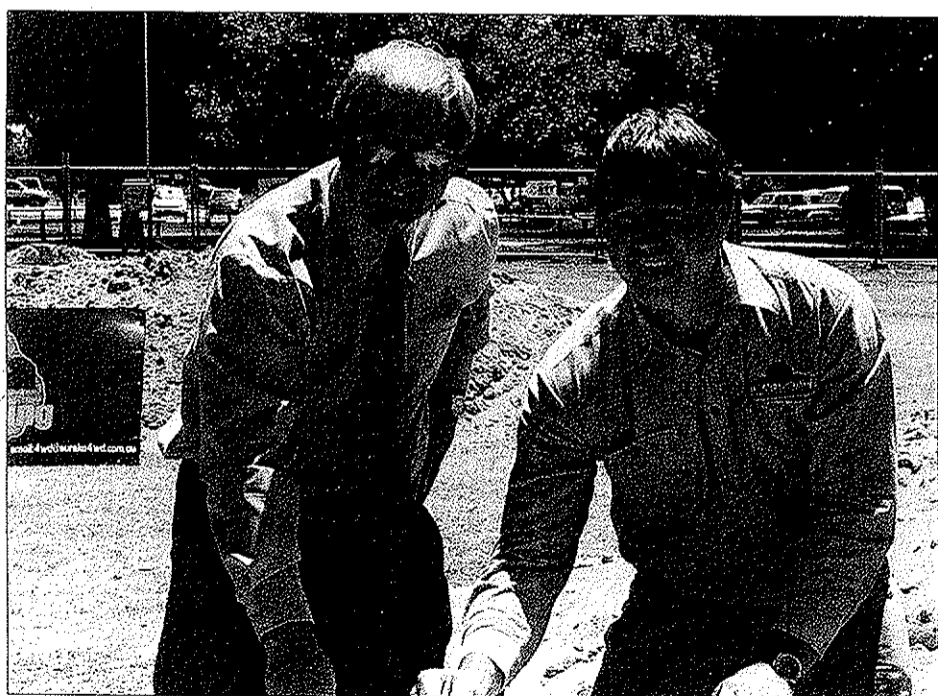
The CALMScience team members are Farm Forestry Unit manager, John Bartle; principal research scientist, Margaret Byrne; senior research scientist, Richard Harper and Forests and Tree Crops Group manager, John McGrath.

John Bartle said the aim of the Perth-based CRC was to develop farming systems that mimic natural ecosystems.

The team will:

- select suitable woody and herbaceous perennials;
- develop, test and demonstrate farming systems to reduce groundwater recharge;
- rehabilitate and use salt-affected land;
- develop options for farmers wanting to use the new farming systems;

continued page 2



CALM Director of Parks, Jim Sharp (left) and Track Care WA President Doug McKenzie prepare to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between CALM and Track Care WA. Photo by Ernie McLintock

MoU signed

FOUR-WHEEL drivers will be delighted with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding that will allow them access to CALM-managed lands and have more involvement in the management of its tracks.

The signatories to the MoU were CALM's Director of Parks, Jim Sharp and Track Care

WA President Doug McKenzie. (Track Care is the umbrella organisation for the State's recreational four-wheel drive associations.)

The signing was witnessed by Greg Bremner, President of the WA 4WD Association, and Jan Scudamore from Tread Lightly.

continued page 2

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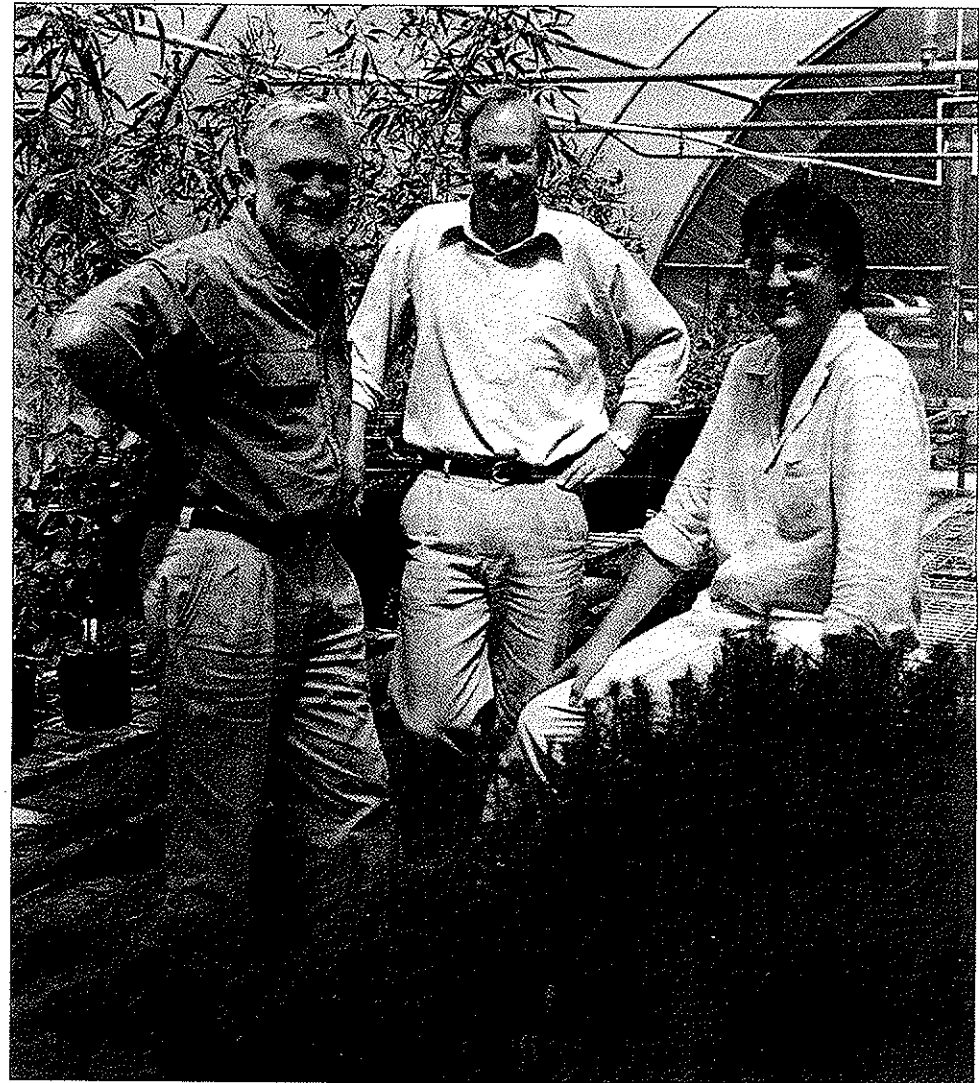
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