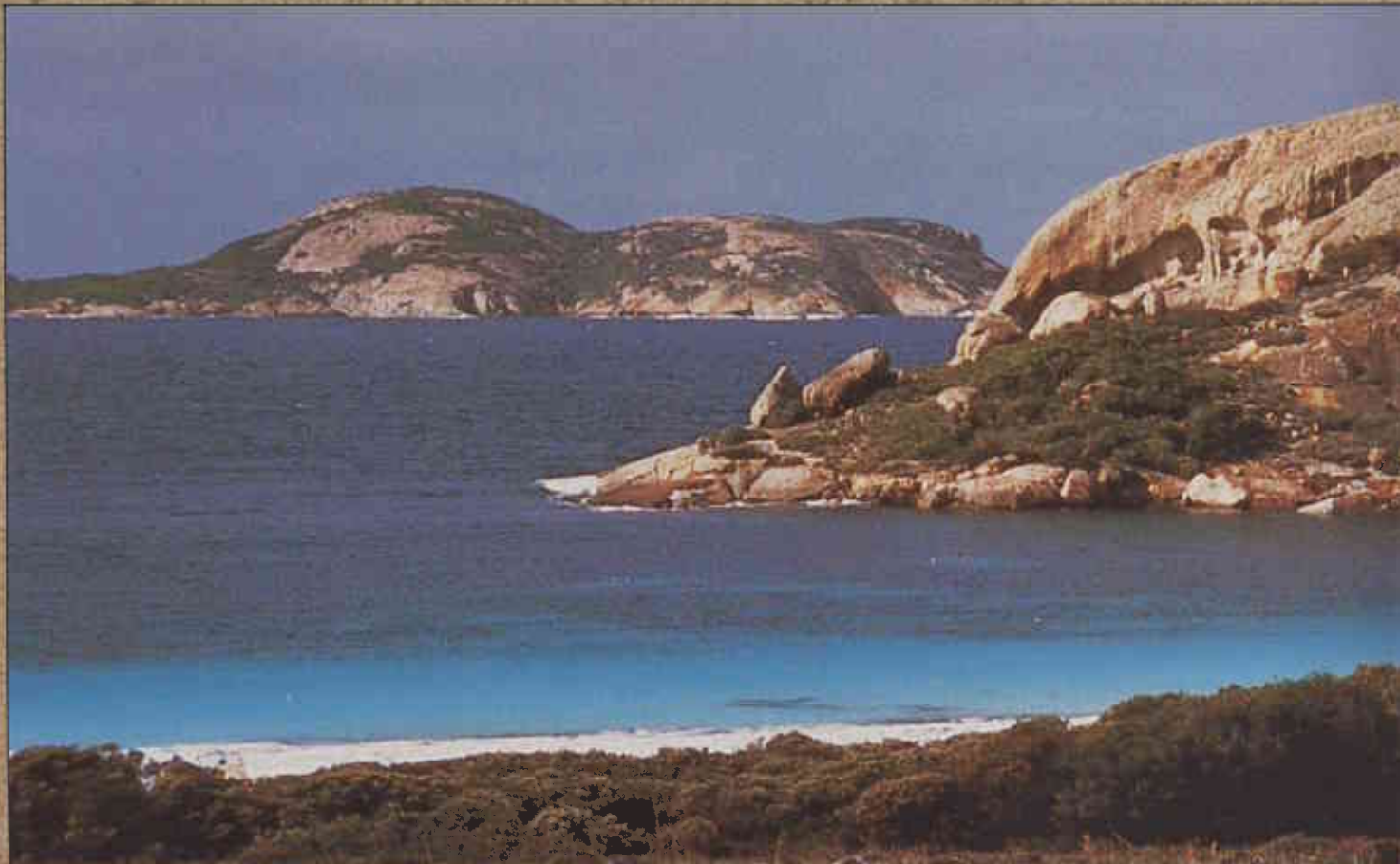


Nuyts in 1627, D'Entrecasteaux in 1792 and then Matthew Flinders visited the eastern south coast of Western Australia. All formed fairly similar opinions. On January 10, 1802 Flinders, moored near Cape Le Grand, wrote in his journal, '... sand and stone, with the slightest covering of vegetation ... a delightful harvest for the botanist; but to the herdsman and the cultivator it promised nothing'¹. Pastoralists proved Flinders wrong when sheep stations were established along the coast. However, with time, the values of our culture have changed; now most of the south coast is reserved. Scientists have recognised the importance of preserving the unique 'delightful harvest' and the whole community treasures the coast for its recreational wealth — beautiful beaches and coves of white sand, and sea abundant with fish. Recreation places much greater demands on the land. As soon as modern humanity enters an ecosystem, fast and large-scale changes follow. Some ecosystems are more robust than others. On the south coast human impact can disrupt a quite delicate balance. To live in harmony with our earth, we must treat it with care — especially the

FRAGILE South Coast

A photo essay by Cliff Winfield.



The dune at Cape Arid.



Until recently the land appears to have remained much as Flinders depicted it. 'Behind that cape was a high bank of sand which stretched from one bight nearly to the other'².



For fear of being hemmed into the Archipelago of the Recherche by rising wind and sea, Flinders ran for the coast and was fortunate enough to find a safe anchorage near Cape Le Grand. He named it aptly — Lucky Bay (below).

'On the following morning I sent the Master (Mr Thistle) to examine a small bay or cove lying two miles westward of Lucky Bay ... this little, but useful discovery was named Thistle's Cove'³. ...

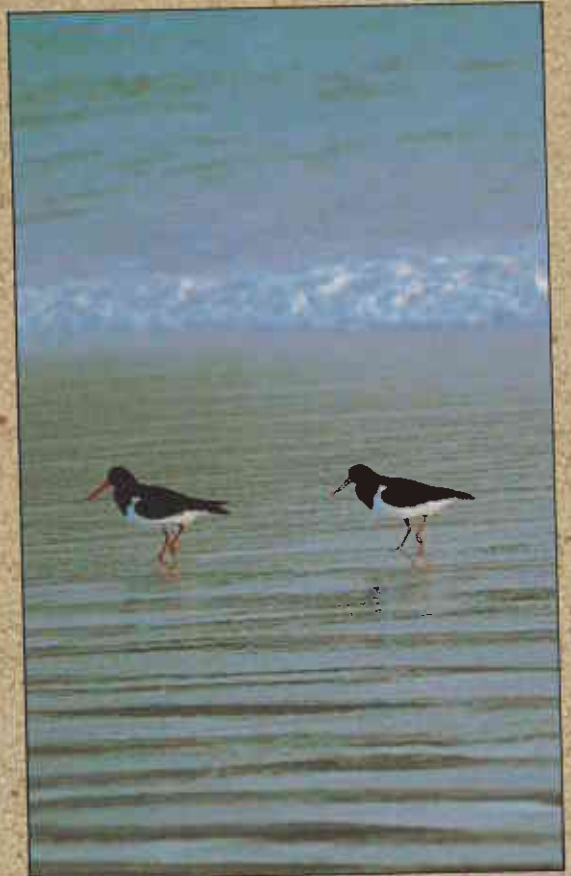




Red-capped Dotterel — *Charadrius ruficapilus*



Pacific Gull — *Larus pacificus*



Pied Oyster Catchers — *Haematopus longirostris*

Whilst moored near Cape Arid, Flinders filled his larder with Cape Barren Geese (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*), so tame they were slaughtered with sticks. The geese have been scarce since colonial days and are only now returning to the area. However, Pied Oyster Catchers (*Haematopus longirostris*), Pacific Gulls (*Larus pacificus*), and transient Red-capped Dotterels (*Charadrius ruficapilus*) are common to the seashore.

The 'delightful harvest' for Flinders' botanists has proven to be a treasure for modern scientists. Many of the plants of the south coast are unique.



Pimelea physodes — the Qualup bell.



Grevillea baxterii — Cape Arid grevillea — rare and endangered.



Leptospermum sericeum — thought extinct for a hundred years — is found around Lucky Bay and on the islands of the archipelago.



Hakea victoriae — exclusive to 'the Barrens'.

Kunzea baxterii — one of the commonest plants in cultivation in Perth's native gardens has a very restricted natural occurrence east of Esperance.

Flinders was to be proven wrong about the value of the south coast to herdsmen. In 1863 pastoral leases east of 121°E (halfway between what are now Esperance and Ravensthorpe) were granted in packages of up to 100,000 acres rent free for four years. This generous offer was availed by G. M. Lanarch who took up Middle Island offshore from Cape Arid; Andrew Dempster took up a similar run on Stokes Inlet⁴. The pioneers established sheep stations and the wool was shipped out to Albany from the bays sheltered by the archipelago. Before long the coast was almost totally leased.

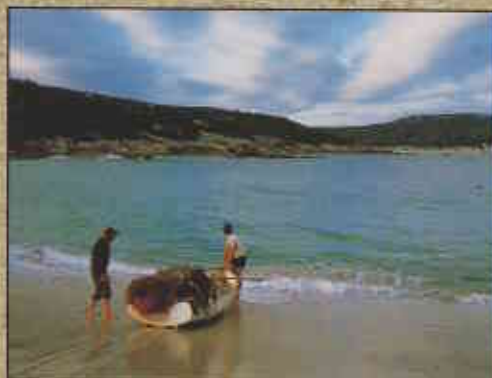
In 1872 the Stokes Inlet lease passed to Alex Moir. The remains of the Moir homestead and shearing shed are still standing, shaded by an enormous Moreton Bay fig (centrefold). They are vested in the National Trust⁵.







Since white settlement, fishing has been as much a part of the south coast as the rocks and sand. The traditional fishermen came to the coast from the sea; in the latter part of this century they began approaching over land. These activities have proliferated as amateur fishermen and sightseers use four-wheel-drive vehicles to extend their coastal access.





Skeletons of incinerated banksia.

With this proliferation of human activity has come an increase in problems. Associated with the visitors are three very destructive agents — dieback, erosion and wildfire.



Dieback along the track to Thomas Fishery in Cape Arid National Park.



West Mt Barren denuded by wildfire



Washed out wheel ruts.



The slipfaces of the stable dune at Cape Arid move a few metres east each winter and then back west in summer.



Coastal flora (*Arctotheca* sp).

Much of the coast from Cape Leeuwin to Eucla is now either national park or nature reserve, and is consequently under the control of the Department of Conservation and Land Management. With proper planning and management, and co-operation from the public, the degradation of the south coast can be halted and its values preserved for all time.

For information on south coast national parks and reserves contact the Department of Conservation & Land Management's Regional Office at 44 Serpentine Rd, Albany (phone: (098) 41 4088).

Red swamp banksia
(*Banksia occidentalis*).



References

1. Flinders, Matthew (1814), *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, London. G & W. Nicol, 81.
2. Ibid, 87, 88.
3. Ibid, 82.
4. Erickson, Rica (1978), *The Dempsters*, Perth, U.W.A Press, 81, 82.
5. Ibid, 148.

Queries about the Moir homestead should be addressed to the National Trust.



Redcoats (*Utricularia menziesii*) and moss on the granite hills.

Landscape

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Harmony of nature and civilization: mother and joey on the lawn in the morning light seem to symbolize . . .

The

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Cover — Looking west over Groper Bluff towards Cape Riche on the south coast of Western Australia.

No other national park reflects the changing attitudes to conservation and land management over the years than does Yanchep, 53 km north of Perth on the coastal plain, and one of the oldest of WA's parks. Established in 1903 for 'Protection and Preservation of Caves and Flora and for a Health and Recreation Pleasure Resort', Yanchep reveals a series of developments that are generally not contemplated in national parks being established today.

Entrance to the park immediately gives the visitor an impression of a garden. Graceful lemon-scented gums, planted by children as an Arbor Day tribute