

Landscape

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COVER

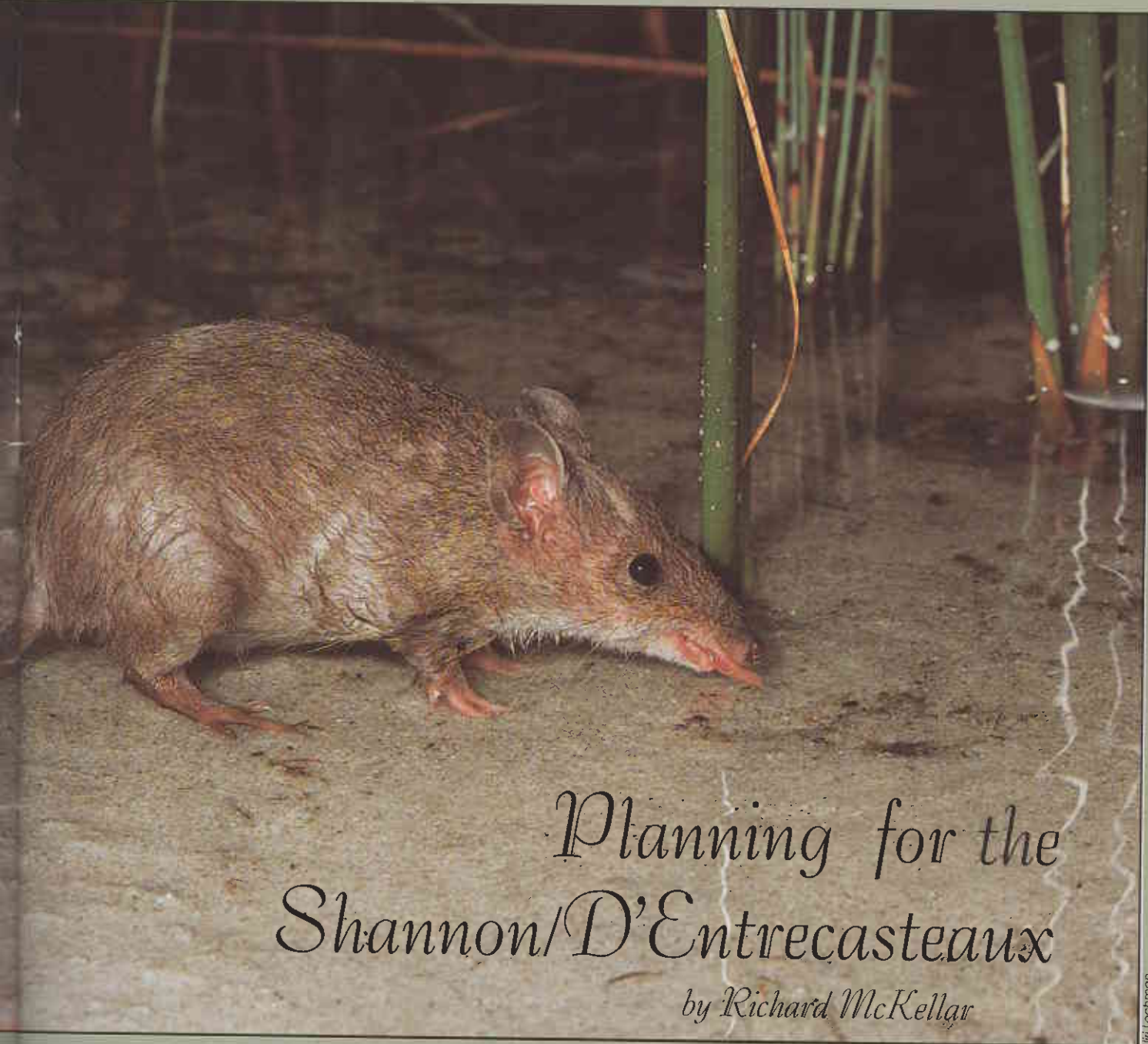
Moonrise on wheat stubble.
Cover photo by Cliff Winfield.



Southern Brown Bandicoot drinking Shannon Waters.

*The more outstanding a natural
environment, the greater the
number of its potential uses, the
more heated is the debate about its
management.*

*This principle holds true in
Western Australia as much as in
Queensland's Daintree Forest
and Tasmania's Farmhouse Creek.*



Planning for the Shannon/D'Entrecasteaux

by Richard McKellar

Jill Lochman

HOW should such public resources be managed? What is the proper role of land managers when there is no social consensus about an area's use?

Management agencies should provide decision-makers with a realistic assessment of various options and their social as well as technical implications. In addition, the management agency must foster communication between decision-makers and the people who will be affected by those decisions.

Analysing social implications and fostering communication

are very different from the more technical activities for which most land managers have been trained, and which they have practised. Foresters, zoologists, botanists and ecologist, for example, possess technical skills essential for the proper management of natural environments. When they become land managers, however, they also need to acquire and apply social skills.

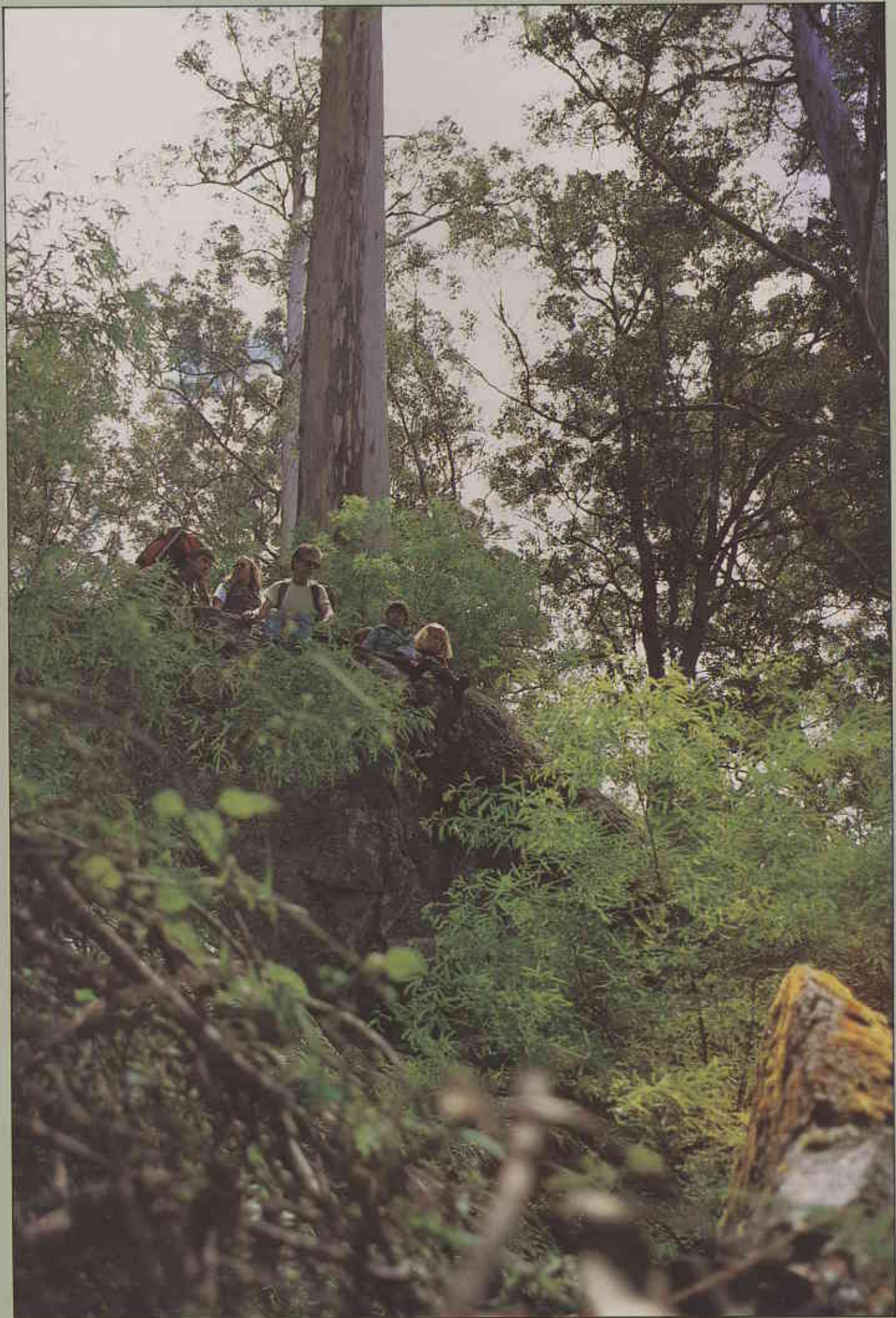
In the past year the Department of Conservation and Land Management has been taking positive steps towards achieving the two goals outlined above - seeking information on

the social implications of use and management decisions, and providing a means for decisions to be assessed by the public.

One of our major planning concerns recently has been the Shannon Basin and D'Entrecasteaux National Parks, two of the most outstanding natural environments of the south-west of the State.

The Shannon Basin has been a focus of conflict since the Conservation Through Reserves Committee recommended in 1974 that it be reserved for conservation.

The Shannon Basin was



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described by the Committee as being the river drainage basin best suited for conservation of a large area of essentially unmodified 'wet sclerophyl' forest (i.e. karri and karri associations). The Committee also noted that the Shannon River 'flows into Broke Inlet, one of the largest estuaries in the State which, because of its inaccessibility, is still in a fairly intact natural state'. Other features of the Basin include granite monadnocks, which host a variety of specialised plants and animals, and wetlands.

The recommendation delighted some sections of the environmental movement, but was opposed by logging, sawmilling and local worker and business interests, and sectors of the scientific community. The major reasons for opposition were the desire to maintain access to timber resources, the need to regenerate some sections of the forest and the fact that an excellent system of karri forest reserves was already in place.



Jiri Lochman

A male Spotted Pardalote, common throughout the Shannon Basin, collects material for a nest (above).

Bushwalkers explore the Shannon forest (left)

Fungi of the forest floor (right).

Canoeing, one of many forms of recreation which can co-exist with conservation (below)



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The Yellow-footed Antechinus (also called Mardo) occurs throughout the Shannon Basin

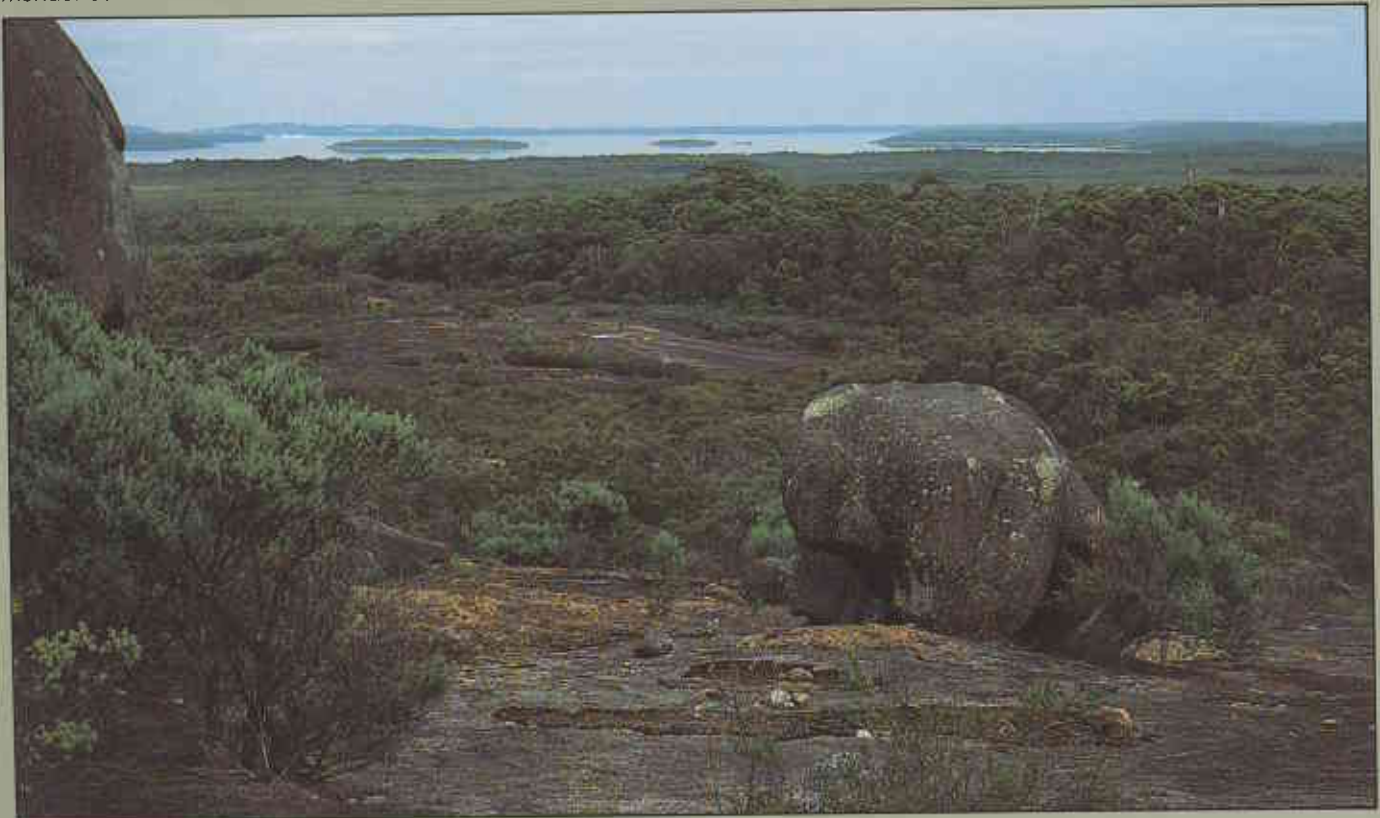
Weighing up various opinions, the Government decided in 1983 to manage the Basin 'as though it were National Park'. This meant that no further harvest of forest material was to be permitted; all but environmental groups were opposed to this outcome, and made their feelings well known through the media.

By contrast, the proposal to declare the coast adjoining the Shannon Basin as D'Entrecasteaux National Park received overwhelming approval from virtually every section of the local and state community.

The D'Entrecasteaux National Park proposal stemmed from a submission from the Institute of Foresters of Australia in 1972, and also was endorsed by the Conservation through Reserves Committee in 1974.

Stretching 130 km along the south coast, and up to 15 km inland, the Park is dominated by the meeting of sea and land. The long open beaches are a major

Broke Inlet, viewed from the south. In the foreground is a granite monadnock.



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A male Slender Tree Frog calling. These frogs live in the waters and streamside vegetation of the Shannon (right).



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A profusion of life on a granite monadnock — one of many microcommunities within the Shannon/D'Entrecasteaux (below).



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attraction. Many of the park's natural features have been created or exposed by the action of the sea on coastal areas, including extensive dune systems, limestone sea cliffs and the columnar basalt flows at Black Point. Other natural features include extensive wetlands, granite hills such as Mt Chudalup, and bullich, yate and karri forests.

Opposition to D'Entrecasteaux arose only when a strategy for management planning was released in 1984 which did not meet the expectations of either environmental or recreation interests. Apart from opposition to specific proposals for use of the park, complaints were made that

- there was little indication as to how decisions about various proposals had been reached;

- there was little indication of what information was available and used in decision-making; and, overall

- the public felt alienated from the decision-making process.

The public told the Government clearly that this was not good enough. To its credit, the Government listened.

A Draft Management Plan for the Shannon and D'Entrecasteaux was recently released; public submissions on its proposals are now being sought. There have been several important changes.

First, the major emphasis in the Draft Plan has been to explain how decisions were made. This was done in two ways:

- (a) a set of explicit decision criteria were established and described.



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Tiny wildflowers and fungi on a mossy sward (top left).

The walkway constructed to help visitors enjoy the Shannon (left).

These consisted of:

- legislation and policy,
- biological and geophysical opportunities and restrictions,
- considerations of equity, and
- management implications.

(b) each issue was worked through these criteria and a suggested option was described. It is hoped that a reader who disagrees with a proposal (for bushwalking, horseriding or other issues) will determine how it was arrived at and so attempt in his or her submission to show through logical argument why the decision should be altered.

Second, an Advisory Committee has been established that is composed of 12 members of the public, one CALM officer, and Mr Dave Evans, the local

M.L.A. While the committee was established so recently that it could not advise on the early stages of the draft plan, it will be in a position to provide both general and detailed public reaction to the draft and to advise on the final plan.

Third, public meetings have been held with various interest groups both during preparation of the draft plan and since its release. Significantly, CALM officers have resisted the temptation to convince members of the public that they should like or approve of provisions in the draft plan; the objective has been to explain the plan rather than to sell it.

These changes indicate a basic development in the attitude of the Department to the public. The Department is learning to be open and responsive. It is

seeking help from the public so that CALM managers can learn what the social views and implications are about various resource use and management options early in the planning and decision-making process. In this way it is hoped that fruitful discussions of resource management issues can take place.

Similar programs exist or are being started in other CALM regions. These include community workshops in the Mundaring District, public surveys in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National and 'Friends' groups in several parks. Volunteer groups are playing an increasingly vital role in various research programs.

Everyone who wishes to be involved will have an opportunity in the next few years to be so. ☺

This King's Skink, photographed on Shannon Island, is one of only a few lizard species known to care actively for its offspring.



Jiri Lochman