

# Portfolio

by Sveton Stewart



## MICHAEL MORCOMBE

Perth photographer Michael Morcombe must surely rate as one of Australia's most prolific wildlife and natural environment photographers. To date he has published 35 books. Just a few of his most popular include *Discover Australia's National Parks*, *Australia the Wild Continent*, *Australia's Marsupials*, and, more recently, the highly acclaimed *The Great Australian Birdfinder*.



How Do I Look? A Bush Thick Knee turns it on for Mike's lens (above).

The Splendid Tree Frog shows his spots (left).



A different face of Australia - the Snowy Mountains (above right).

Dunes of a small coastal lake near Two Peoples Bay (below right).



A reflective group of Banded Stilts (left).



Michael Morcombe's entry into professional photography was quick and easy. In the mid-sixties, not particularly happy as an art teacher in a number of metro schools, he decided to study zoology, but he was not to finish his first year. Halfway through, a publisher, impressed with this young amateur photographer's work asked him if he would be interested in doing some part-time photography around Australia for a book he was doing called *Wild Australia*. Michael jumped at the idea and soon found that he was attending fewer and fewer lectures and doing more and more books.

The step from being a self-taught keen amateur to a fully-fledged professional was, therefore, painless - a natural progression from a hobby to a career. He did not have to chase success as a photographer. His knowledge of wildlife and the natural environment, backed up by his skills as a photographer and writer made up a tidy package for any interested publisher.

But make no mistake, Michael Morcombe does not fit easily into the mould one envisages for a highly successful professional photographer. He lives in a comfortable two-storey home on a hillside in Armadale with his wife Irene and two cats. The couple have three daughters in their twenties, and one gets the impression his family is very important to him above all else.

He is a quiet private person. One can imagine him being uncomfortable at parties, and only really in his element when he is out in the country in his Landrover, accompanied by his family, taking pictures for another book. Over the years, he has garnered a mammoth collection of bird pictures, and with it a wealth of knowledge. He now tends to specialise in the subject, and is becoming more and more recognised as an authority.

His enthusiasm for birds can best be illustrated by his actions recently when told that someone was frequently seeing the rare Hooded Parrot near Darwin. Without hesitation he packed his bags and headed north.

Michael is unashamedly a camera buff, 'I love gadgetry: When I first started, my favourite cameras were a Monorail and a Mamiya 67. Now I use a Bronica and a range of 35 mm cameras which include Nikon and Canon gear'. His enjoyment of outdoor life and 'gadgetry', and the many opportunities this combination gives to be creative, is he says, one of his main reasons for him taking up photography

In fact, he describes photography as 'opportunistic'. Why? Simply, 'You can go out with one idea and come back with hundreds of others'.

What can we expect next from a man who has mastered photography, writing, and more recently the painting of birds to such quality that they have been published and even exhibited in a city gallery. 'Besides five or six projects in various stages, I would like to publish a concise bird identification handbook.'



# LANDSCOPE

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## Cover Photo

We've heard of wolves baying at the moon, but frogs? Obviously, this amphibian is not above displaying a little lunacy. Nor is the photographer, Jiri Lochman, who must have been moonstruck to get this superb shot.

## EDITORIAL

Every year at this time the subject of bush fires becomes a preoccupation with land managers. Steps must be taken to ready fire-fighters and their equipment; hazards must be identified and minimised; education programs for neighbours and visitors must be renewed. Fires are inevitable. The combination of hot, dry weather, inflammable fuels in the bush and ignition from lightning or careless people will see to it that almost every day over the next few months Conservation and Land Management Staff or Bush Fire Brigades will be fighting a bush fire somewhere in the State. Because of modern technology and efficient fire control practices, land managers these days can very largely determine the fire regime which is to be applied in a given area. For example, in most of the land CALM is responsible for, the policy is to try to keep fire out, pending a better understanding of ecological requirements. In a small proportion of the CALM estate (notably parts of the south-west forests), regular, controlled burning is done. The aim of this operation is to minimise the risk of serious wildfires in places where values are highest. The most important value to be considered in the South-West is human life. In this edition of *Landscape* readers are urged to recognise their individual responsibilities. Most importantly, these are to make their own houses safe from bush fires and to learn how to look after themselves and their families if a fire occurs. This dual approach by land managers and householders will help combat the worst consequences of one of nature's most dangerous and predictably-occurring events: the Australian summer bushfire.

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