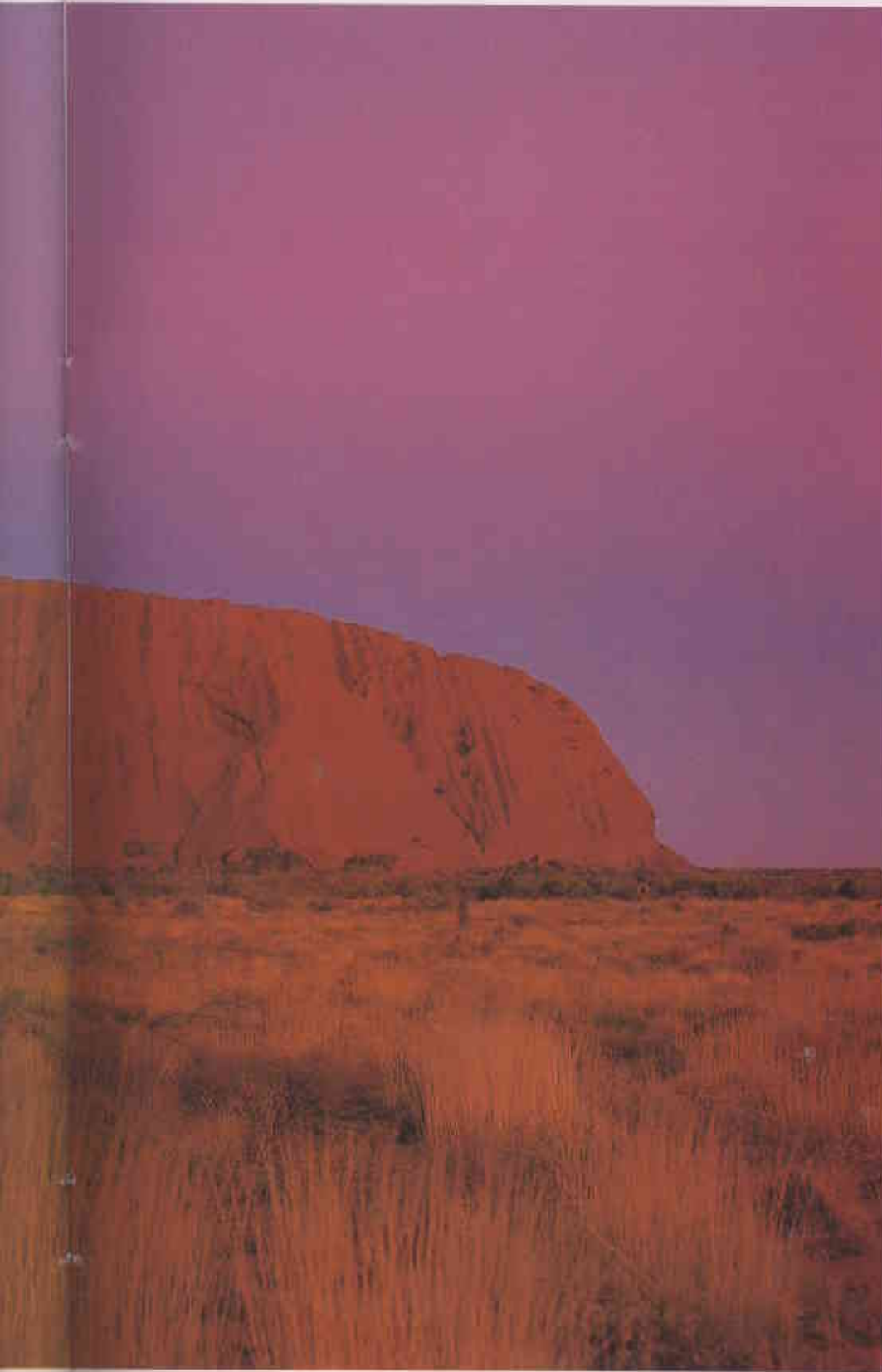


Jerry Loebman

DREAMING FOR THE



by Chris Haynes

Director of National Parks in W.A.

In the past 20 years Australia has been making national parks in places away from capital cities, especially in the north. This has meant going into country where Aboriginal people still have traditional ties to land, and it has opened up new questions about what a national park is, or should be.

The conception of Aboriginal people being involved in the running of national parks in Australia goes back only ten years or so, and many people are curious to know what will happen: who can go where, and under what conditions, what will be built, what sort of services will be available, who will be employed?

THE FUTURE



Mary Coltravy

These new national parks consist of three elements: the land, the traditional owners and the visitors. Much has been said about the threat that each of the elements pose for each other. Visitors may threaten land values; visitors may threaten Aboriginal values; Aboriginal people may threaten visitor values, and so on. Only the land itself seems to hold no threats, although, if we include crocodiles and snakes as land, then it, too, has taken its toll. Rather than look at threats, however, it is more useful to explore how each of the interests can be helpful to the others. First, the land itself is essential to both groups of people because it sustains the life of the traditional society and sustains the recreation of the visitors. Secondly, the presence of visitors is what, in the end, makes land into national park and attracts Government and other finance, not just for visitor services, but for management of the land.

Thirdly, the presence of traditional Aboriginal people makes the land 'come alive'. It allows park visitors

to see a richer country and gives them an insight into the culture of the land as it has been for thousands of years. It also provides a chance for Aboriginal people to be close to the country which matters to them; not the country of some other group and not the country which is now a town where often the only opportunity for Aborigines is to live as 'fringe dwellers'. Last, and not least, the land benefits immeasurably by the use of Aboriginal knowledge of such things as fire, and by the people being there in a spiritual sense.

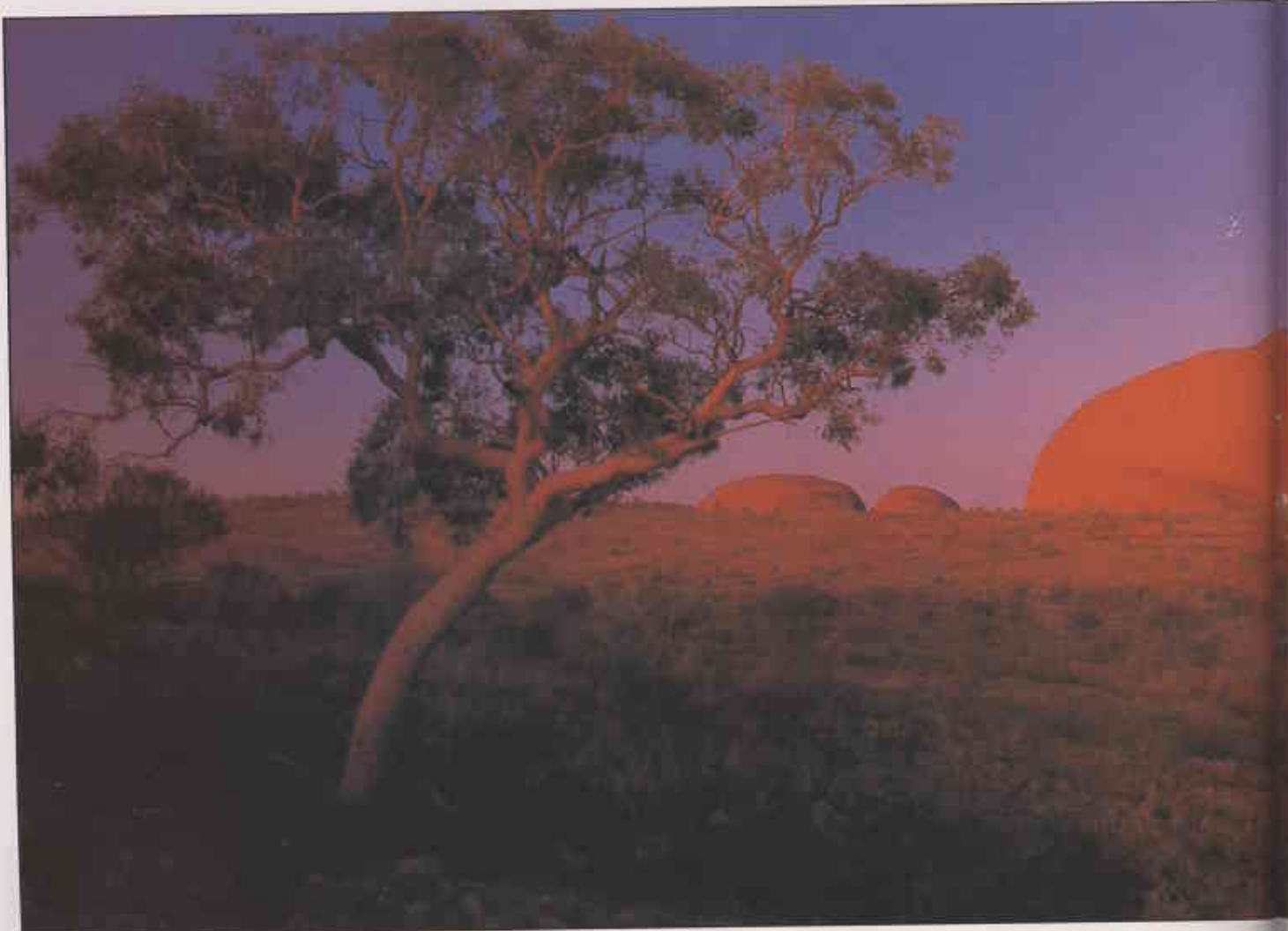
A prime example of the new national parks is Kakadu, where I acted as Superintendent for the first 12 months of its life, and with which I was associated for years after that. Kakadu was the first national park in Australia where it was seen that Aboriginal people could and should have a formal say in the management. This was first recognised during a Government inquiry (the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry, or Fox Commission)

which was set up to examine whether or not the uranium resources of the Alligator River area should be developed, and if so, how.

Kakadu National Park was first placed in the ownership of an Aboriginal land trust, which represents over 100 traditional owners and a further 200 Aboriginal people with other traditional associations with that land.

Before the park started, only about 20 of the traditional owners and their families were living in the park area, as they had done for most of their lives. Others were living in the nearby mission at Oenpelli or around townships such as Pine Creek or Katherine. Within the first year of the national park about 150 or so people returned to live either in the park or very close to it.

Since the start of Kakadu there have been arrangements made for Gurig National Park at Cobourg Peninsula and Uluru (Ayer's Rock, Mt Olga) National Park for the joint management of those areas. The powers of the traditional owners



The Olgas

vary, but in each case there is a way of seeing that they have a say over the issues that concern them. I think it is also true that discussion, compromise and common sense have been the pattern for sorting out differences, rather than the use of legal power. I am not saying that the law is unimportant, but rather that the arrangements have been made to work in a sensible way.

All these new parks have been attracting attention throughout the world because they include not only the traditional national park but also the traditional owners of the land as well. The basic purpose of a national park, however, remains unchanged. The most important task for national park managers is still to keep the land, and the living things it supports, conserved so that it can be enjoyed by future generations. That sounds like a simple enough task, but when managers actually start to manage they find it more complex. For a start, there is never enough money to do all that needs to be

done, so priorities have to be established.

A good example is fire. We want to use fire in a way which keeps all the natural things of a national park at their best forever. But how is this to be put into action? Someone in the end has to decide how and when individual fires should be set. This is a subject which has given white Australians real problems, and one where Aboriginal knowledge and tradition is really important. There are other issues that also affect national parks as a whole, such as getting rid of weeds and large numbers of feral animals like buffaloes, donkeys and cattle. One of the most crucial issues in the new national parks, however, is something that usually only affects a very small area of the park - visitors.

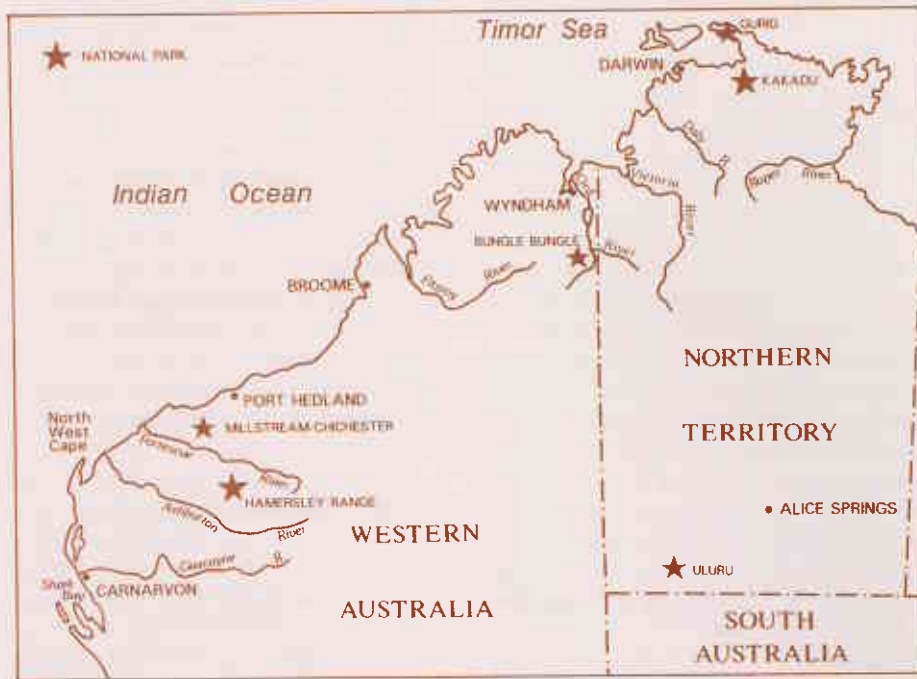
Visitors use about one per cent of a park's land area, or less, for the things they want to do. Most visitors, especially in the north of Australia stay in, or close to, their cars, and so they are always quite close to tracks. With the common

use of four wheel drive vehicles, however, it is very easy for people to create new tracks, and one of the real challenges for park management is to see that new and unnecessary tracks are controlled. Even when park visitors stay in a small area of a park they can still make a big impact on an area, both on the land itself and the lives of local people. All tourist areas have similar problems, as anyone who lives in Busselton will tell you when they can't buy bread because the shop has run out during the holidays.

In older national parks numbers of visitors are usually either the same from year to year, or are growing slowly. In some cases the numbers are actually growing fewer. In the north, though, it's a different story. Take Kakadu, again, as an example. In 1972, years before it was made a national park, there were only 20 000 visitor days (this equals the number of visitors multiplied by the number of days they spend there). In 1982 this had grown to about 180 000; and by the end of



Jiri Lochman



1987 the number may exceed 700 000: an average increase of 30% per year; and an increase of over 40% in 1987.

Kakadu has really turned out to be part of the tourist boom, and now Crocodile Dundee has spread its fame overseas as well! But other places have had a similar growth or will have soon. Numbers of visitors to national parks in the Kimberley are increasing at more than 10% a year. In some places the rate of growth is much more than this, and preliminary figures for 1987 indicate a much larger overall increase. Last year about 3 000 people went to Bungle Bungle. In 1984 the number was probably only about 500. In 1982 it was perhaps only ten or twenty. While 3 000 is a very small number compared to more than a 100 times that number for Kakadu, it is an increase of more than a 100 times the number of only four years before when Bungle Bungle was 'undiscovered'.

This growth can be put in quite simple terms: this year campers by the river need 100 paperbarks to camp under. Last year it was only 75, but next year it will be 130, and in only three years time we will need more than 200 paperbarks. By this time we have probably run out of space and people are crowding closer together or pushing into places where they should not be.

From both the points of view of the Aboriginal people and the park, there is the need to plan for where all of these people can be accom-

modated in the future, and it is necessary to think with some imagination about camping grounds, hotels and other provisions which will not disturb traditional lifestyles, and the land, any more than necessary.

In order to address these and other problems, management plans have been written for Kakadu (now a second one is in place), Uluru and Gurig. A plan is also being prepared for the recently proclaimed Bungle Bungle National Park. This park is not owned by an Aboriginal land trust, but the W.A. Government has made arrangements for traditional owners to take a significant part in the management of the Park including the preparation of the management plan, and for them to live and work in the area of the Park.

One major area of Aboriginal employment is as park rangers. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS), the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (SANPWS), the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory (CCNT) and the W.A. Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) have all put a lot of effort into the training of Aboriginal rangers in the more remote national parks under their control. This has been done at the expense of a number of other things, so it is a high priority.

So far, ANPWS has conducted four training courses at Kakadu, and is conducting further training at

Uluru. In addition, ANPWS has conducted one course in the Gammon Ranges with SANPWS, with another proceeding in the Coorong; and in 1986 one course was completed at Millstream-Chichester National Park in conjunction with CALM. As a result four Aboriginal rangers, Maitland Parker, John Parker, Bruce Woodley and Robert Cheedy, are now playing an important role in the management of Hamersley Range and Millstream-Chichester National Parks.

As it has turned out the two rangers at Millstream-Chichester, Bruce and Robert, now report to Noel Nannup as ranger-in-charge. Noel, who joined the Department in 1978, is one of several Aboriginal people who was recruited into the 'general' ranger workforce by the N.P.A., and is now one of the more senior rangers within CALM. And so Millstream-Chichester is, as far as we know, the first national park in Australia to have an all-Aboriginal staff.

The CCNT has undertaken training by a succession of short term courses in a number of national parks. All this has resulted in the training and employment of more than 30 Aboriginal men and women in full-time positions, and the employment of more than 100 in part-time or casual jobs. It has not been an easy task for the people involved in the training, or for the Aboriginal rangers, themselves. The rangers are subject to questions that normally would not be asked of their white Australian counterparts, and they have the difficult job of explaining the land and the national park in a way which does not give away secrets which are important to their community.

In looking at the three elements of the new national parks, it is clear that the links between the Aborigines and the land, and the tourists and the land, are well established. The links between tourists and Aborigines are not yet well established. There are real problems: both groups do have interests that they want to see expressed, and both groups are very often unfamiliar with each other. On the other hand, each group, often without realising it, has a lot to offer. It is our job, through planning and management, to see that the good values of each are brought out.



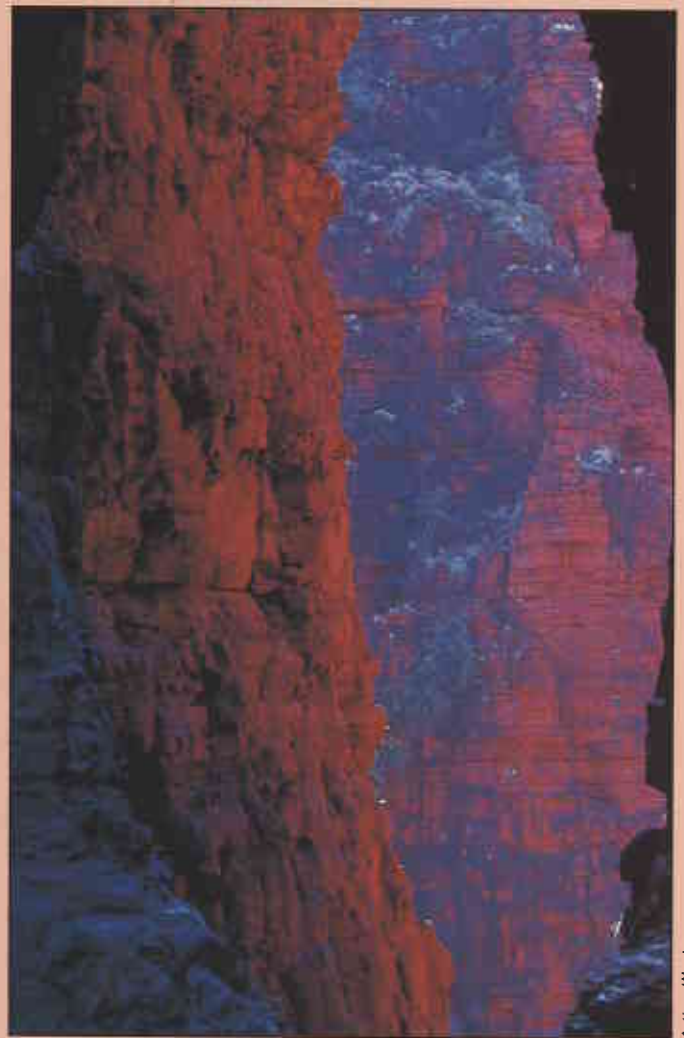
Aboriginal artwork from the Mitchell Plateau

In the beginning ...

The first national park in the world, called Yellowstone, was established in the United States of America in 1872. It was set aside to protect a very fine landscape, forests and wildlife, and as a place where all the people of America could come to see a natural area. In particular, it was designed to help preserve the buffalo, and thus the native Americans who depended upon them. The original park rangers were the cavalry! Americans were realising that the 'development' of their country was starting to destroy a lot of the very fine parts of their natural heritage.

From this beginning, more than 2000 national parks have now been made in more than 100 countries. The earliest national park in Australia, Royal National Park near Sydney, was made in 1879. Even today, more than 100 years later, much of this area still looks natural. Most of the 2 million people who go there each year use only a small part of its area, so you could say it is possible, even close to Sydney, to keep an area for the future and yet allow a lot of people to use it.

W.A.'s oldest national park is John Forrest. Reserved in 1898, its official name was 'Greenmount National Park', but most people simply called it 'the National Park'. Yanchep, in 1905, and Walpole-Nornalup, in 1910, were the next two parks to be dedicated. We now have 53 national parks and two marine parks.



Arthur Weston

Red Gorge, Hamersley Range National Park (top right).

Aboriginal rangers with the ANPWS (right).

A meeting of the Bungle Bungle National Park planning group (below).



Mary Colreavy



Mary Colreavy

LANDSCOPE

Volume 3 No. 2
Summer Edition/December 1987

| Contents | Page |
|--|------|
| Gulls by Catherine Meathrel | 3 |
| Magic Spot | 7 |
| Bush Telegraph | 8 |
| Sadwrap by Liana Christensen | 10 |
| Nostalgic Naturalist | 15 |
| W.A.'s Rainforests by N. McKenzie, K. Kenneally and C. Winfield | 16 |
| Portfolio — Michael Morcombe by Sweton Stewart | 23 |
| Local Heroes by Andrew Cribb | 26 |
| Urban Antics: Spiders by Liana Christensen | 34 |
| Fire: Good Servant; Poor Master by Colleen Henry-Hall and John Smart | 35 |
| The Shannon by Rae Burrows | 38 |
| Dreaming for the Future by Chris Haynes | 40 |
| Letters | 46 |

Executive Editor: Sweton Stewart
Editor: Liana Christensen
Designers: Trish Ryder/Louise Burch

All maps by Department of Conservation and Land Management
Mapping Section.

Offset plates by Photoilitho-PM.

Printed in Western Australia by Kaleidoscope

© All material copyright. No part of the contents of the publication may
be reproduced without the consent of the publishers.

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.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

One year's subscription (4 issues) — \$10
Special Offer: *Landscape Gold Star* — one year's
subscription plus one year's free entry to national parks
(excludes camping fees), plus free maps and brochures
— \$30

Back issues — \$2.50

For details please phone: 367 0437, 367 0439.



Published by Dr S. Shea, Executive Director, Department of
Conservation and Land Management, 50 Hayman Road, Como,
W.A. 6152.