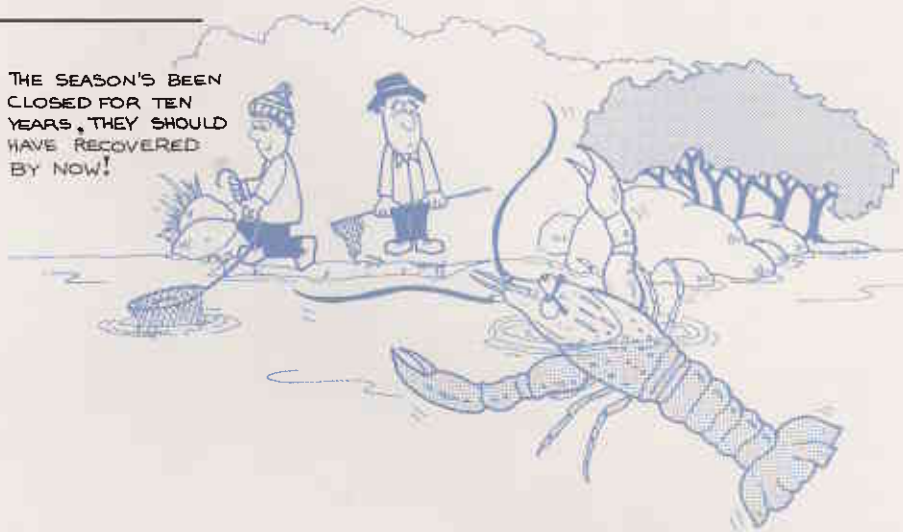

Urban Antics

Marron Glace

By Andrew Cribb

THE SEASON'S BEEN
CLOSED FOR TEN
YEARS, THEY SHOULD
HAVE RECOVERED
BY NOW!



Muttering darkly two shadowed figures stumbled through the evening bush, burdened like smugglers with boxes, poles and a variety of other unrecognisable implements.

An enthusiastic anthropologist might have noted that the figure at the rear end of this strange caravan was the most heavily laden. Bales of wire and netting, and several billy cans were slung across its back, in one hand swung a flickering gas lamp, in the other an enormous esky.

'Bill, Hey Billllll, wait up.'

The first figure was rapidly disappearing into a dense thicket of waterbush, loaded down with a pole, a torch and a strong whiff of something indescribable.

Recognise the scene? No? O.K., we'll run the next few frames.

As the first figure struggled through the dense undergrowth, showering its follower with the entire morning's rainfall, the second slipped, and careering down a muddy slope with a strangled yell, came to rest at the water's edge.

'Keep it down, Jim, you'll scare the little blighters off,' bellowed the first figure.

Here a series of foot-long shadows scurried away from the bank, barely creating a ripple in the dark, glistening water. This was a top secret spot. A spot visited once a year, and never more often.

Bill and Jim were members of a kind of secret society. A society so secret in fact, that the cells often consisted of only two people, or a small, family group.

The society's rituals often involved scraping something very dead off the side of the road, and carrying the remains long distances through the bush at nightfall.

There the participants would soak the rotten offering in the nearest river or dam, light a small, sacrificial fire, and pour the odd libation to celebrate life and the freedom of wild places.

The sites were usually State forest and national parks, and, you've guessed it, Bill and Jim were marroners. The secret society they belonged to had its own set of ethics, amongst which was preserving the marron breeding stock, and the preference for big rather than small.

In 1988, this age-old ritual is in danger of dying out, the end result of several dry seasons, and too many greedy people chasing too few marron.

Between 1976 and 1987, there was a dramatic fall, from 13 to 9, in the number of legal-sized marron caught per trip.

The season was closed completely during the summer of 1987/88 to give the marron population some chance of recovering. But whatever rules the government might introduce will mean little unless West Australians adopt a fundamentally less spoilt attitude.

Take a stroll along the shores of any dam or river during the marron season and see the litter of tiny pink shells left by the cacker catchers, busy scalping next year's legal-sized stock.

Wouldn't you rather snare half a dozen decent-sized marron, fresh out of the water, cook them in an old billy with the smell of woodsmoke in the air and the sun sinking over the tops of jarrah trees, serenaded by a chorus of banjo frogs, soothed by your chosen beverage, and come back next year, and the year after, to do the same thing?

P.S. A museum officer named McCulloch first recorded the use of the common name 'marron' in 1914. He postulated that it was derived from the French word 'marron' meaning chestnut, and drew the analogy with a hard, spiny shell containing white flesh.

Whoever heard of Sandgropers using French? If any readers have a more authentic source for the name write to the Editor, Landscape, 50 Hayman Road, Como, 6152

For licences or any other enquiries, phone Department of Fisheries (09) 325 5988.



LANDSCOPE

Volume 4, No.1
Spring Edition/September 1988

In W.A. the concept of marine conservation reserves was firmly established in 1984 when the CALM Act was passed, with provision for Marine Parks and Marine Nature Reserves, vested in the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority.

Since 1984 two major Marine Parks have been declared in W.A.: Marmion and Ningaloo.

This is a new field in W.A., and there are no local precedents to guide us in resolving the many management issues which have emerged.

A first consideration has been that fishing is already controlled under the Fisheries Act. It would be foolish for CALM to attempt to establish itself as a fisheries management agency. A policy decision has been made that any fisheries in Marine Parks will be regulated under the Fisheries Act.

A more philosophical problem has been that many citizens, although generally sympathetic to the conservation cause, are unaccustomed to the idea of having parks and reserves in the sea. The idea that the sea is a public common where anything and everything goes is still well entrenched in public attitudes. Yet there are many terrible examples around the world where coastal environments and their resources have been devastated by excessive and improper use. In W.A. we have not reached that point.

W.A. can be proud of its fisheries management record, based on the principle of sustainable use for posterity. Development of a marine parks and reserves system along our coast is another essential part of the overall objective. It is to be hoped, then, that our first initiatives in this direction will receive public support.

PINES



*How can less than four per cent of the State's area supply us with all our timber needs, and save the hardwood forests at the same time?
Details on page 28.*

WALL OF MOUTHS



It's a fish-eat-coral world, but what do the coral eat? Find out on page 32.



BORERS

Now you can be sure there are no borers in the door. Well, if they are there, at least you'll know what to call them after reading the article on page 42.

TROUBLED WATERS



Does the very word pollution make you feel powerless? Discover what you can do to help the wildlife victims on page 20.

FOREST RENEWAL



What is the connection between the poets' of the First World War and W.A.'s forests? Find out on page 56.



JEWEL OF THE KIMBERLEY

What do you mean frog? In my home I am a prince. After all, Prince Regent is the only mainland reserve where all of the original animal species remain. Meet the rest of them on **page 47**.

HILLS' BELLES



When Perth looks out its backdoor in spring the Hills are ablaze with colour. Your field guide to some of our glorious wildflowers starts on **page 4**.

ATTENTION ADULTS!

Sick of taking the anklebiters to the same old national parks and camping spots? Put them to work for you. If they enter the kids' competition on **page 63** they could win two beautiful books on all the best picnic and camping spots between Perth and Eucla.

GATHER NO MOSS



The trouble with lichen is that up until recently it wasn't protected flora. Now lichen and their relatives - mosses, liverworts and algae - have joined the rest of the State's flora. See **page 54**.

RIGHT ON TRACK



Is a high-tech wilderness trek a contradiction in terms? Find out how 4WDs and conservation can co-exist peacefully on **page 12**.

Cover Photo



Magpie Geese take off from the Ord River.

Photo: Richard Woldendorp.

CONTENTS

	Page
Hills' Belles <i>by John Marshall and Brian Tullis</i>	4
Right on Track <i>by Kylie Byfield</i>	12
Bush Telegraph	19
Troubled Waters <i>by Liana Christensen</i>	20
Urban Antics: Marron Glace <i>by Andrew Cribb</i>	27
Pines - The Soft Option <i>by Don Spriggins</i>	28
Wall of Mouths <i>by Barry Wilson</i>	32
Book Review: <i>Wild Places, Quiet Places</i>	40
More Boring Insects <i>by Ian Abbott</i>	42
Prince Regent: Jewel of the Kimberley <i>by Andrew Burbidge, Chris Done and Barry Wilson</i>	47
Gather No Moss <i>by David Coates</i>	54
Rebuilding the Cathedral <i>by Roger Underwood</i>	56
Endangered: Golden Bandicoot <i>by Andrew Burbidge</i>	61
Letters	62

Managing Editor: Sweton Stewart
Editor: Liana Christensen
Designer: Robyn Mundy
Production: Carlene Pearson/Karen Addison
Offset plates by The Colour Set
Printed in Western Australia by Kaleidoscope

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