



Cliff Winfield

# OF WHALE AND FRIEND...



**T**he four-day whale rescue at Augusta from September 29 to October 2 was a remarkable feat. The sight of volunteers working side by side, battling rough seas and strong winds throughout the day and night was enough to take some of the bitter chill out of those icy waters on the wind-swept southern coast.

It's reassuring, too, to know that thousands of West Australians will rally during a crisis, without thought for reward or recognition. They will do it because they are human - because they want to relieve the pain and suffering of another living being.

And that is just what happened at Augusta. An army of volunteers responded to the call for help when the alarm was raised late on Thursday, 29 September 1988:

a large pod of false killer whales had stranded on the coast.

In the three days that followed, those people experienced a gamut of emotions. First, there was compassion for the distressed animals being buffeted by the surf and despair for those who had already surrendered the fight for life and lay scattered, like so many discarded children's toys, along the beach.

Then there was the euphoria as volunteers, battling exhaustion and the disappointment of two failed release attempts, finally ushered the whales out to sea on Saturday afternoon.

But the euphoria again turned to despair on Sunday morning: a helicopter patrol had discovered another 24 whales stranded on the beach about 30 km east of Augusta.

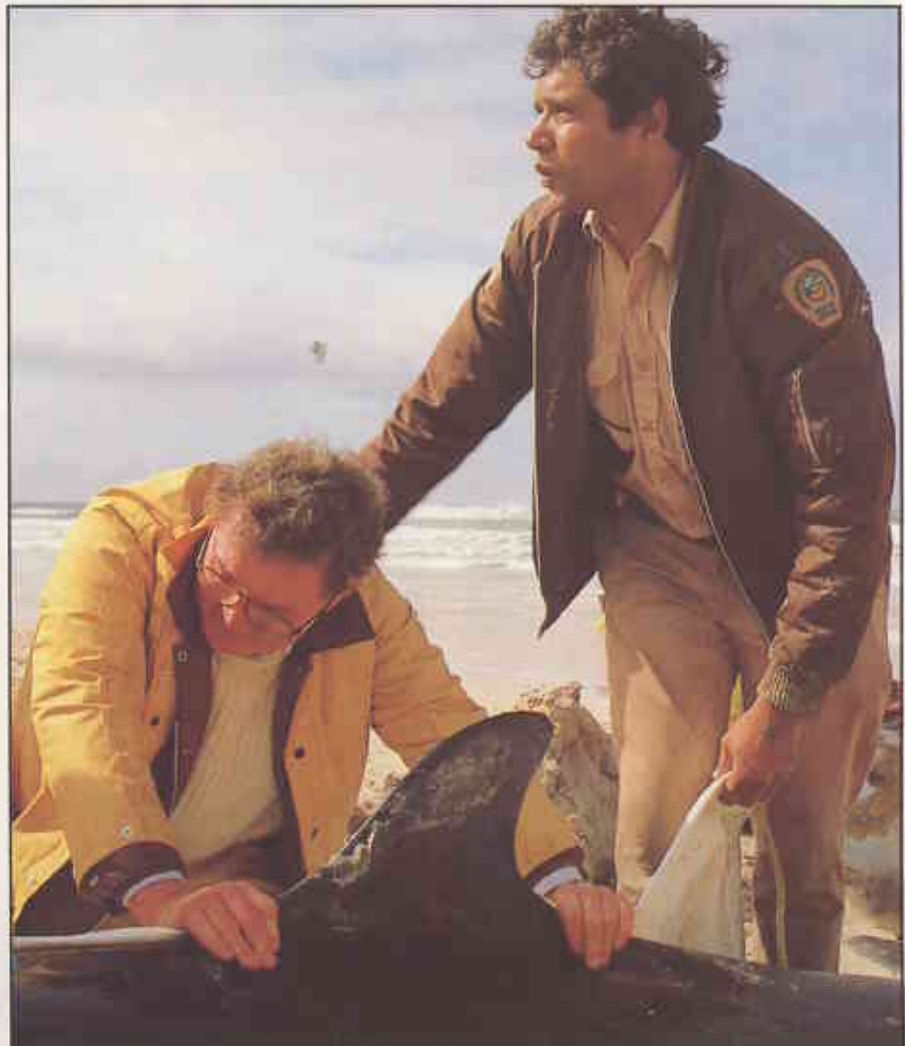
As night falls, a young volunteer braves the icy conditions in a bid to save the distressed whales (left).

Volunteers struggle to scoop the whale into the bucket of a front-end loader for transportation along the beach (below).

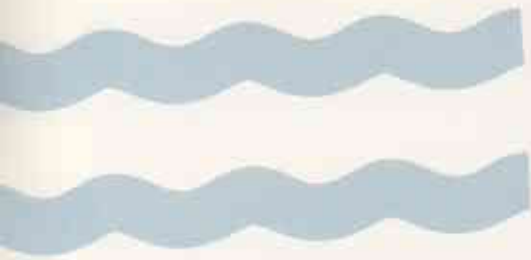
CALM's Executive Director Syd Shea and wildlife officer Trevor Walley (right).



Robert Karri-Davies



Robert Karri-Davies



Despite the bitterly cold conditions a volunteer maintains an all-night vigil to comfort and support the whales (right).

Volunteers rally to gently transfer a whale from a front-end loader to a truck which will carry the animal to the safe holding bay (below).



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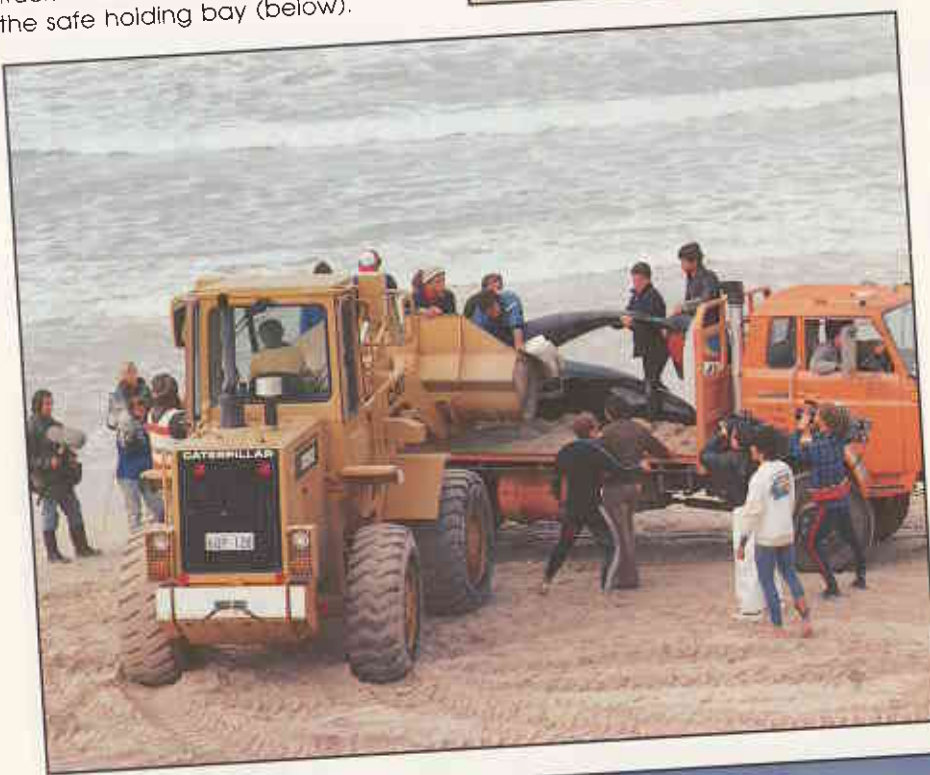
Nothing could be done to save them. The animals were suffering and there was no alternative to euthanasia. That was a difficult and heartbreaking decision for CALM officers, who had coordinated the entire rescue operation and worked tirelessly alongside the volunteers for several days and nights in a bid to save the whales.

But after the trials and tribulations, the despair and disappointment, there is room for cheers as well as tears.

Thirty-two whales were saved, but more than that, we saw how many caring people Western Australia has - people who will unselfishly and without complaint rally to help when they are needed.

And you - whale rescuers - put that beyond doubt during those few exhausting but so rewarding days on an isolated stretch of our State's stormy coast.

TEXT: Kylie Byfield



Jiri Lochman

Back in the water, the whales got plenty of loving attention (below left) while on the beach a helper comforts her new-found friend (below).



Jiri Lochman



Cliff Winfield

29 DEC 1988

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# LANDSCOPE

## EDITORIAL

It is difficult to remember a time when our daily news did not feature some environmental controversy. To people involved in environmental research and management, the popularity of 'the environment' is a mixed blessing.

Greater public consciousness of environmental issues has meant increased funding and, to some extent, greater prestige. But many scientists working on ecosystems are uncomfortable when their work is placed in the political spotlight.

The knowledge that a scientific observation that once would have been tucked away in a scientific journal to be read only by a few colleagues could become the centre-point of a political controversy is daunting.

Retaining objectivity in any research area is difficult. For those engaged in research on the natural environment it is even more difficult. Unlike the physical sciences in the natural sciences the truth is often camouflaged by interactions between factors which vary over time and space. When the results of this type of research are placed in the political arena, the mixture is often volatile and the truth a casualty.

To enable scientists to better seek the truth and communicate it, the scientific community has adopted what has been called "the scientific method". The scientific method is a code of conduct with rigid requirements. An offshoot of that code is a set of rules which scientists must follow, at least in reputable scientific journals, if they are to have their research published. Unfortunately, a byproduct of this is that scientific articles are not the easiest to read and are often plain boring.

Given that the environment has become a major political issue, it is important that those involved in the debate are fully informed. But scientists are faced with a dilemma. They need to popularise their work to reach a wider audience. On the other hand, they cannot afford to lose objectivity.

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## NATIVE CREATIONS

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*Nouvelle jardins, multiculturalism or laissez-faire; which garden fashion will you choose? Turn to page 22.*

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## WILD MARRON

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*Do our wild marron have a future or will local gourmets keep catching them to the point of extinction? Find out on page 4.*

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## KARRI MAGIC

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*What is really going on in the karri forest? On page 32 we take a look at the system of conservation reserves that have been established to preserve this awe-inspiring forest.*

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## STRANDED!

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*Relive the euphoria of the Augusta whale rescue on page 18.*

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## BACK TO BASICS

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*With today's massive land boom it's hard to imagine that the State once couldn't give land away fast enough. Now the government is buying back our valuable conservation areas. See page 43.*

## DESERT GEM

The Gibson Desert Nature Reserve covers over 1.8 million hectares. It is a desolate but subtly beautiful landscape. Read about this unique area and the management problems it presents on page 48.



## SNAKES & ADDERS



Slim and active snakes have emerged hungry from their winter hibernation. But they're not all venomous. See page 51 for tips on living with snakes.

## AFTER THE FOX



Foxes pose a major threat to native mammals and other fauna. Can we outfox them? See page 12.

## A SIGHT TO BEHOLD



'Its pouch can hold more than its belly can', goes the popular rhyme. Find out more about this awkward but graceful bird on page 39.

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### Cover Photograph

One of our natural wonders - the beaches of Hamelin Pool (Shark Bay) consist of billions of small shells.

Photo by Bill Bachman.



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