Cliff Winfield

Autumn Colours

by Roger Underwood

In autumn the leaves of the hardwood forests of North America and Western Europe "turn", and the forest becomes a vast canvas of red and gold. The sight is unforgettable.

There is nothing in an Australian eucalypt forest to equal it. Or is there?

Certainly, eucalypt foliage does not change to blazing colours, but colour changes do occur in the forest. They are more subtle, but still sufficiently beautiful to please and inspire.

Splashes of colour are sometimes associated with blossom, such as the red flowering gums near Peaceful Bay on W.A.'s south coast, or fruit like the scarlet pear of the fuchsia gum (*Eucalyptus forrestiana*) and the fluted horn mallee (*Eucalyptus stowardii*). But the best place to look for autumn colours in a eucalypt forest is in the bark.

Many eucalypts (like jarrah and marri) have rough, fibrous and persistent bark.

Roger Underwood

Early autumn salmon pink bark in the Boranup karri forest

Except when temporarily blackened by fire, there is no perceptible change in these trees over the seasons and the years. This feature, along with the ever-present olive foliage, gives such forests a feeling of timelessness.

From a visual perspective, the rough-barked eucalypts are the Australian equivalents of the evergreens of the northern hemisphere.

However, many other eucalypts have a "clean" bark, where the thin outer layers are shed annually. The outer bark changes colour as it matures and the new bark, disclosed after the old skin is shed, has a fresh hue.

To people living in the South-West, these changes are very familiar in species like karri and wandoo; further east, superb shades of colour are seen each year on the trunks of powderbark, gimlet and salmon gum.

Other Western Australian eucalypts with seasonal colour changes in the bark are the red flowered mallee (*Eucalyptus erythronema*), the brown mallet (*Eucalyptus astringens*) found on many CALM reserves in the Wheatbelt, and the gungurru (*Eucalyptus caesia*), which develops traces of red and pale green on its trunk and branches as the old bark is shed annually.

In wandoo country, around Helena, Julimar and Dryandra, the powderbark (*Eucalyptus accedens*) is most striking along the ironstone breakaways.

Each year, as the seasons change, the colour of the bark turns from a matt, powdery white to a brilliant salmon pink which is eventually replaced by the tree's new white skin.

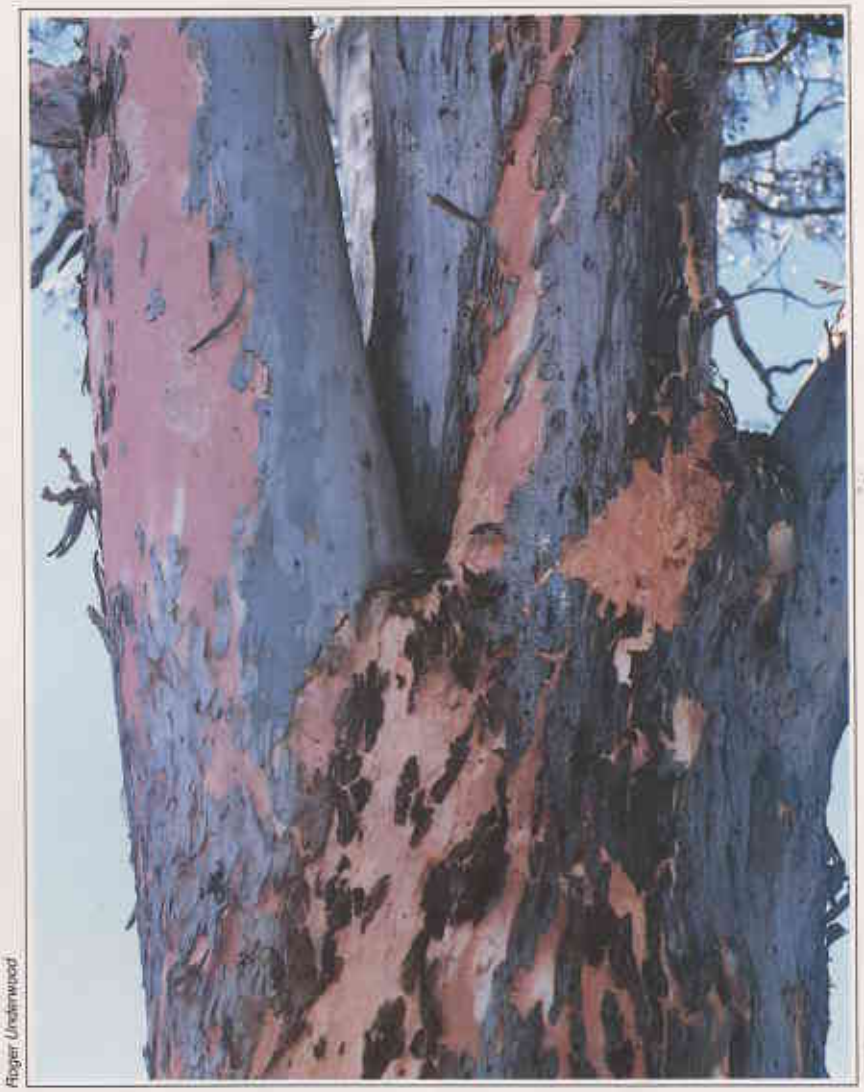
The bark of the gimlet tree is olive green through winter and spring and ripens to a deeply burnished bronze in late summer and autumn. The trunk and limbs, often fluted or twisted into a corkscrew, add to the beauty of this tree (a "gimlet", in former days, was a corkscrew-like tool used by leather workers and saddlers).

So, many of our Australian forest trees do have their autumn colours. The overall scene may not be as vivid and dramatic as that in the New England woodlands of the U.S.A., or the beech and oak forests of France.

But a scene is no less beautiful when it is more subtle.

Roger Underwood

Cliff Winfield



Roger Underwood

Eucalyptus crucis *in a wheatbelt reserve (top left).*
Autumn bronze on gimlet trees near Bruce Rock (top right).
The blush of evening on a powderbark at Dryandra (above).

LANDSCOPE

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EDITORIAL

A prerequisite for the successful management of land and wildlife is an understanding of the processes that drive ecosystems, and managers who can manipulate these processes.

In Western Australia, we are fortunate that we have a wealth of talent in different government agencies, tertiary institutions and private companies who can provide these research and management skills.

Of course, obtaining a perfect understanding of ecosystems and ways to manage them brings to mind the frog who wants to reach a creek, but can only jump half the distance every time.

But it is not the complexities of understanding or managing ecosystems which provide the greatest difficulty.

Social and political factors are far more difficult to accommodate.

All the scientific and managerial skills in the world are worth nothing if the community and, often more importantly, selected constituencies within the community do not support the management strategies.

Unfortunately, there is often an inverse relationship between a scientist's or manager's skills in his profession and his capacity to handle social and political factors in the community. This is not surprising, since most scientists and managers have received little training in basic communication skills, let alone community politics.

CALM is attempting to address this problem in a variety of ways. But the people who should know the most about how to obtain community support for public land management strategies are the public. *Landscope* readers are an important and influential constituency. If you have thoughts on this issue we would like to hear from you.

What a sterling idea! A new management plan for CALM's South Coast Region - page 28.

Are insects gradually eating away our jarrah forests? Turn to page 18.

What lies beneath the waters of Marmion Marine Park? See page 25.

COVER

A rose by any other name... Does its name detract from the beauty of the common eggfly (Hypolimnas bolina)? *Photograph - Jiri Lochman*

FEATURES

FIREWOOD - THE BURNING ISSUE
BY STEVE SLAVIN 4

KARRI FOR KEEPS
BY ROGER UNDERWOOD & BARNEY WHITE 6

OUT ON A LIMB
BY IAN ABBOTT 18

AUTUMN COLOURS
BY ROGER UNDERWOOD 22

DIVER'S DIARY
BY GREG POBAR 25

JEWEL OF THE SOUTH
BY JOHN WATSON 28

THE PRICE OF POPULARITY
BY CHRIS HAYNES 35

IN SEARCH OF...
BY BERT & BABS WELLS AND BRIAN HAY 40

IT'S A ... DOLPHIN !
BY ROSELYNN LANG 44

SWEET RETREAT
BY CAROLYN THOMSON & KIM WILLIAMS 46

PIECING TOGETHER THE REMNANTS
BY KEVIN KENNEALLY & NORM McKENZIE 50

REGULARS

PORTFOLIO KIM PERRIER 13

URBAN ANTICS 24

BUSH TELEGRAPH 33

ENDANGERED THE LESSER NODDY 53

LETTERS 54

SPECIALS

PHOTO COMPETITION 16

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