

JEWEL OF THE SOUTH



Robert Garvey

Western Australia's south coast region - with its unusual flora and fauna, rugged coastal cliffs and scenic national parks - is one of the State's brightest jewels. CALM's South Coast Regional Manager John Watson discusses the new draft management plan for the region and some of the issues it addresses.



STOKES INLET, ESPERANCE
Robert Garvey

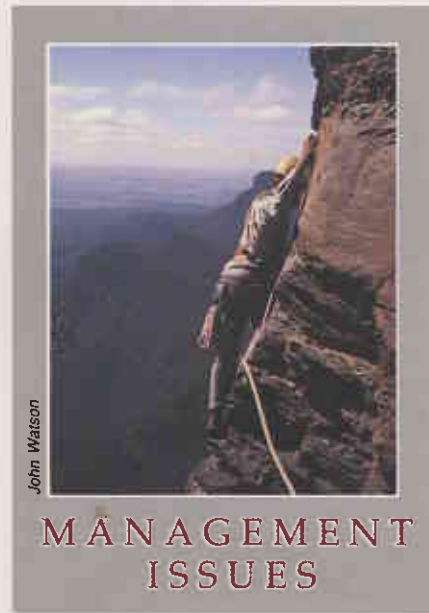
CALM's South Coast Region, stretching east from the Irwin Inlet near Walpole to the South Australian border and inland to the Johnston Lakes area and Southern Nullarbor, contains diverse landscapes and varied flora and fauna.

From the small patches of karri forest near Albany and Porongurup, the land takes on a new face in the low mallee woodlands and heaths of the Fitzgerald area, open salmon gum woodlands around the Ravensthorpe-Norseman area and the flat, featureless Nullarbor.

The region is fringed by an equally varied coastline featuring rocky granite headlands, sheltered sandy beaches and sheer limestone cliffs. An extensive sand dune system runs along the coast, while chains of dry salt lakes are found further inland. High mountain peaks, cave systems of international significance, rare flora and unusual fauna are among the region's other features.

It's hardly surprising, then, that protecting and conserving the region is a high priority. CALM already has management plans for the northern, central and southern forest regions and others are being drawn up for the remaining eight regions, including the south coast.

In their draft form, regional management plans are subject to public review for two months before being submitted to the State Government.



Many of the management issues identified in the draft South Coast Regional Plan are similar to those addressed in the three forest regional plans. But the South Coast Region's main drawcard - its diversity - poses some new questions when it comes to planning for and managing the area.

The region's terrain, including the State's main mountain peaks, attracts people who enjoy adventure activities such as

bushwalking, cave exploring, cave diving, rock climbing and hang gliding. Cave diving presents a unique management challenge. CALM has to protect and conserve the caves while at the same time helping to ensure the safety of cave divers.

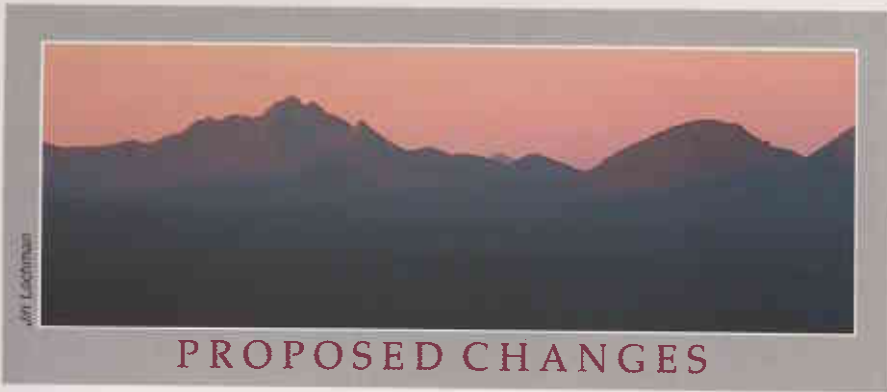
After a number of deaths and serious accidents in the region's national parks, mainly due to the potentially hazardous coastline, visitor safety is another vital issue.

The South Coast Regional Plan addresses this problem in detail as CALM staff, especially park rangers, are usually the first to be called when an accident occurs or someone goes missing. While the police have primary responsibility for search and rescue operations; CALM staff often have to take action while waiting for the other agencies to arrive.

Erosion in the region's hills and mountains is also cause for concern. About 20 000 people visit Bluff Knoll in the Stirling Range National Park each year and many footpaths are literally 'wearing out', creating a major erosion problem.

Dieback disease is probably the most serious environmental threat. The problem is already widespread in some parts of the region and careful planning is needed to prevent further spread.





PROPOSED CHANGES

As well as addressing these and other management issues, the draft South Coast Regional Plan also proposes some changes to the existing reserve system. This system includes major national parks such as Cape Arid, Cape Le Grand, Fitzgerald River, Stirling Range and Torndirrup and nature reserves such as Nuytsland (which runs along the Great Australian Bight), Dundas (near Norseman) and Two Peoples Bay, which is home to the Noisy Scrub Bird.

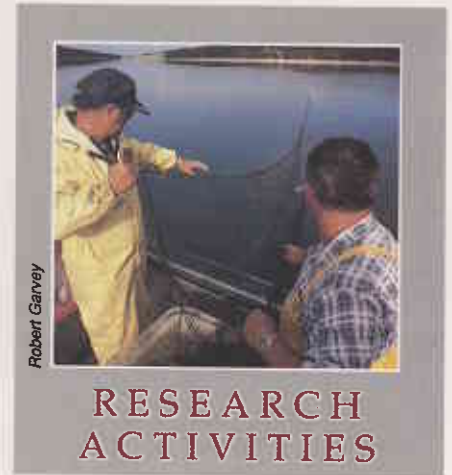
In some areas, national parks and nature reserves share a common boundary which bears no relation to landform or land use. An obvious example is the boundary

between Cape Arid National Park and the Nuytsland Nature Reserve. The draft plan suggests that the two areas be amalgamated into one national park.

A change of purpose has been suggested for other areas, such as the Frank Hann National Park. This, according to the draft plan, would be more appropriate as a nature reserve due to its low potential for recreational use.

The plan also recommends that some new areas, such as the Gull Rock area near Albany, be added to the region's reserves network. This area is already a Class 'A' National Park (unvested).

Surf and spray - the rugged coastline of Fitzgerald River National Park (below).



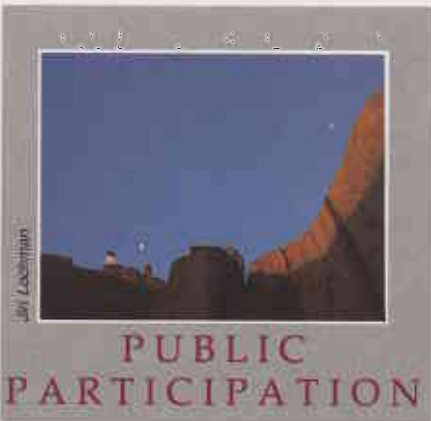
RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Staff from CALM, other government departments and research institutions, along with volunteers and academics, are undertaking research in the South Coast Region. The draft plan provides a brief overview of this research, which includes social research (archaeological, historical and visitor surveys), ecosystem studies (including research into specific species such as the Ground Parrot or groups of species such as banksias), silviculture research (tree establishment and growth), and fire research (impact upon species and technical research to improve the techniques used in control burns).



IMPLEMENTATION

The final chapter of the draft plan outlines how CALM proposes to implement the plan over the next decade. The plan, which provides a broad regional overview of various management issues, is the forerunner to the more detailed area management plans. One of the regional plan's important roles is to set priorities for the preparation of these detailed plans. The Fitzgerald River National Park management plan has been listed as a top priority, along with those for Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve and West Cape Howe National Park. These are followed by plans for the Stirling Range National Park and Cape Arid/Nuytsland area.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Anybody interested in the management of the South Coast Region can comment on the draft regional plan. It is, after all, a draft and can be amended or improved before being submitted to the Government. Copies of the plan can be purchased from: CALM's State Operations Headquarters, 50 Hayman Road, Como; any CALM Regional Office; CALM's Esperance District Office; and any local government centre or library in the South Coast Region.

Robert Garvey



Bluff Knoll, Stirling Range p. 30.

Stirling Range p. 31.

Stokes Inlet p. 31.

This page :

Tall Kangaroo Paw (Anigozanthos flavidus) (far left).

Natural Bridge, Torndirrup National Park (below left).

Sand dunes at Bremer Bay (left).

Sunset at Stokes Inlet (below).

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LANDSCOPE

VOLUME 4 NO 3 AUTUMN EDITION 1989

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. *Landscape* 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

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Managing Editor: Sweton Stewart

Editors: Kylie Byfield/Carolyn Thomson

Designers: Louise Burch/Robyn Mundy

Production: Karen Addison/Margaret Wilke

Advertising: Tim Langford-Smith ☎ (09) 389 8644

Colour Separations 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, Western Australia 6152.