



Cliff Winfield

THE PRICE OF POPULARITY

A myriad of images of rugged horizons, coastal gorges, serene beaches, towering forests, camping and challenge spring to mind at the mention of national parks. Not surprisingly, a growing number of people visit these areas

each year. But popularity has a price: with more visitors comes an increasing risk of environmental damage. Careful management is the key to preserving the parks and satisfying the public's demand for recreation areas. CALM is

confident that a new Parks Improvement Program - a \$5 million funding package to be spent in the next three years - will help to provide this management. CALM's Director of National Parks *Chris Haynes* discusses the program.

A philosophy of care

National parks are natural places, protected and preserved in their original state for the enjoyment of future generations. At the same time, today's generations must be allowed to enjoy them too. This is a philosophy and 'definition' which was accepted as other countries followed the lead of North America's great parks such as Yellowstone, Yosemite and Banff. CALM is committed to this philosophy: the parks are for the people, but while their protection must also be ensured.

Providing for recreational use without compromising conservation objectives is like walking a tightrope: it is a difficult task made even harder by rapid increases in visitor numbers. If use is favoured at the expense of long-term preservation, then there is resource decline. On the other hand, preservation at the expense of some current use can result in user dissatisfaction. Neither is acceptable.



Jiri Lochman



Chris Haynes

An outdoor classroom for young children at Yanchep (top) while a surveyor pegs a new road (above right).

Carparks (right) and information shelters (above) are provided by CALM.



Richard Hammond



Richard Hammond



Jiri Lochman

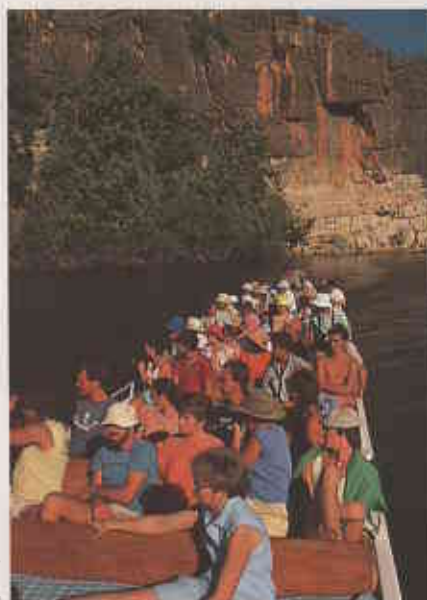
A tourist bus picks its way through the Pinnacles in Nambung National Park (above) while other visitors cruise through Geikie Gorge in the Kimberley (right).

Caring for native animals is all in a day's work for CALM's Park Rangers (far right).

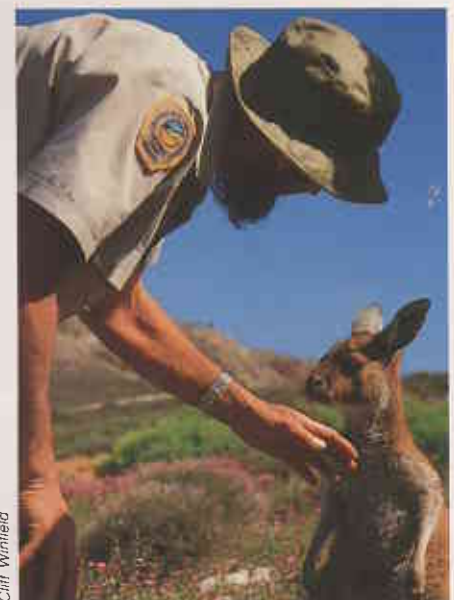
The good old days?

In the past, most national parks were remote from urban areas and did not come under intense visitor pressure. Families travelled great distances over rugged roads and tracks to visit a favourite camping, fishing or picnic spot. Even parks close to Perth, such as Serpentine Falls and Yanchep, were weekend excursion destinations. Visitor numbers were relatively stable and human activity was catered for by relatively modest works programs.

However, once remote and seasonally inaccessible parks such as Geikie Gorge, Cape Range or



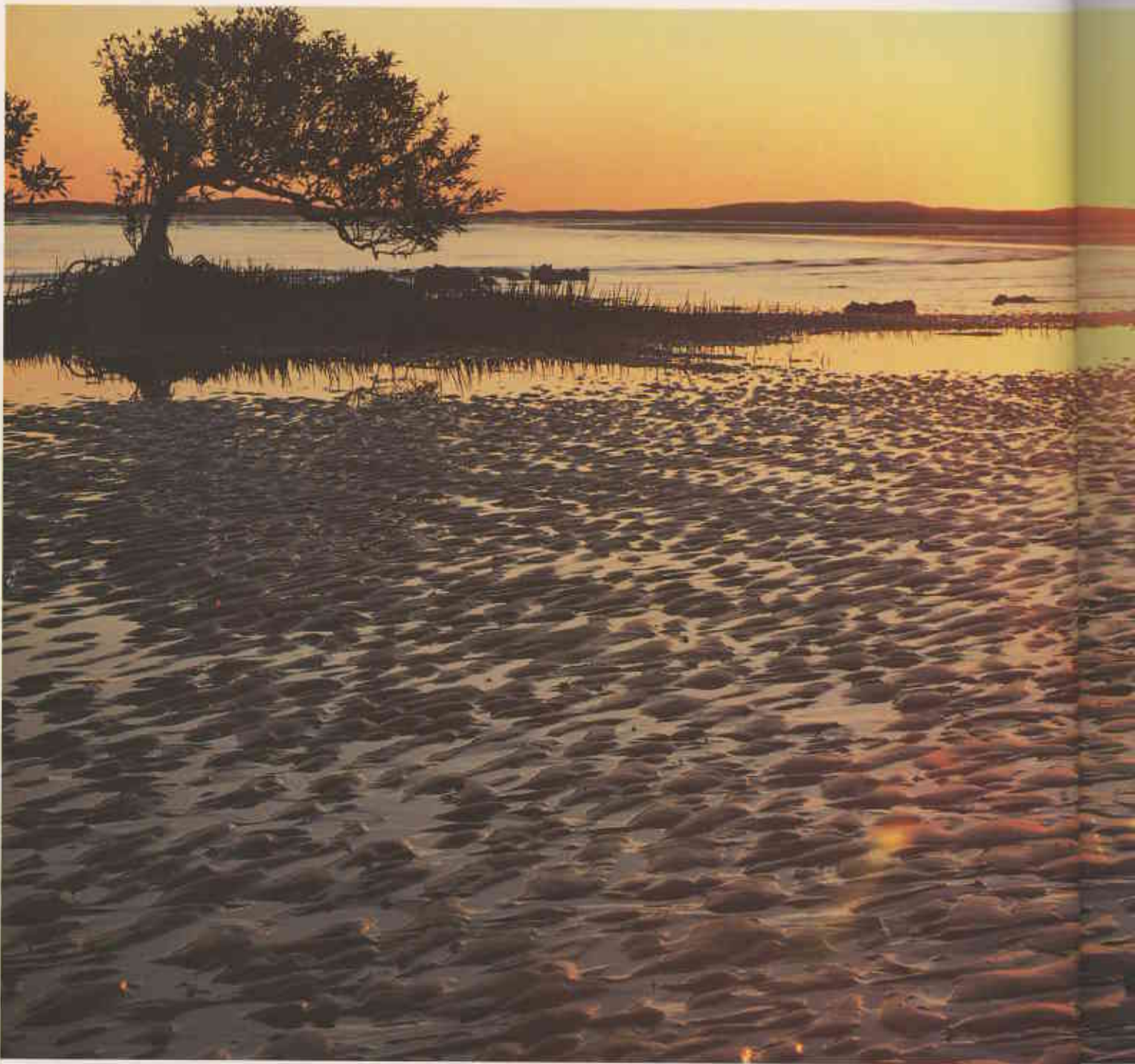
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Cape Arid have now become popular "discovery" destinations. Parks which were quite recently only visited on long weekends are now targeted for day trips. A rapid improvement in road systems in the 1980s has triggered a

corresponding growth in visitor numbers. For example, 42,000 people visited Nambung National Park in 1985. Two years later, numbers had risen to an estimated 105,000 - largely in response to road improvements.



Jiri Lochman

Just as the sun comes and goes, so too do the tides on the coast at Ningaloo Marine Park (above). These waters are home to this young Butterfly Cod (below).



G. Saueracker

The management challenge

The challenge now is to make sure that these increases do not threaten the stability of the parks. In a recent report, the Australian Academy of Science says bitter experience has taught national parks and conservation authorities throughout the world that nature reserves and national parks will not manage themselves. "They must be

managed or they will not stay that way," it said.

Soon, every major national park in W.A. will have a management plan. Plans for those areas with the greatest strain on their fragile resources have already been drawn up. Others will follow in order of priority. The success of these plans is measured by public acceptance and enjoyment of new developments, and, most



importantly, by the health of the natural resource which is protected. It is important that the parks are preserved in perpetuity for public enjoyment and inspiration.

As well as being properly protected, parks also need rejuvenating from time to time. There is a need for upgraded facilities, innovative plans, new walk trails and information

systems. Facilities and staff which were adequate in the 1960s cannot cope with current demands.

The \$5 million parks improvement program, which commenced in 1988, is evidence that this problem has been recognised. The three-year program will improve environmental management and upgrade amenities and services including information and education, parking, toilets, roads

and walk trails. A further \$500,000 each year will pay for extra field staff, who will speed up development of management plans and make 'on the ground' improvements.

This program is a major step toward ensuring that our national parks can be enjoyed by people today and preserved for the generations of tomorrow.

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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. *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

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  ICS	24
BUSH TELEGRAPH	33
ENDANGERED THE LESSER NODDY	53
LETTERS	54
SPECIALS	
PHOTO COMPETITION	16

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