

SEAL OF APPROVAL

IN the 1850s, sealers moved along the south coast of WA in sealing ships and long boats to hunt the islands in Flinders Bay, just off Augusta.

The New Zealand fur seals (*Arctocephalus forsteri*), which lazed on the islands' barren granite rock, were hunted to extinction in this area. This was not surprising. In 1942 each skin fetched 15 shillings at King George Sound, and two pounds and 25 shillings in London.

So, in 1982, when the first fur seals began to recolonise the Flinders Bay islands after



an absence of some 130 years, the few wildlife enthusiasts who knew about the phenomenon were understandably very excited.

The first to notice their reappearance were CALM Wildlife Officer Peter Lambert



Unlike the Australian sea-lion, the New Zealand fur seal does not like sandy beaches. It inhabits exposed rocky areas, usually well offshore, and avoids humans. There are believed to be 400 fur seals in WA and about 2000 in Australian waters. Photos-Ray Smith



Most fur seal breeding colonies are in New Zealand but it is hoped that they will one day recommence breeding in the Flinders Islands near Augusta.

and his close friend Ted Wright. They were diving in the area when they noticed three seals perched on one of the rocky islands.

Dr Nick Gales, one of Australia's experts on marine mammals, and Barry Hutchins of the WA Museum confirmed that the animals were, indeed, New Zealand fur seals, which, as their name suggests, range all the way to New Zealand

and the sub-Antarctic.

At that stage, the 34 islets off Cape Leeuwin where the seals were seen were classed as vacant Crown land, and CALM set about having them proclaimed as "A" class reserves for the Conservation of Fauna. This was formalised in 1986.

The discovery was so significant that the islands are monitored each year and a fur seal census taken.

CALM officers surveyed the islands early this year to establish whether the seals were breeding on the islands.

Rough conditions and dangerous swirling water around the islands made it difficult to disembark, but 10 adult fur-seals and one Australian sea-lion were spotted.

"The number of fur seals was very encouraging," said Peter Lambert.

"Ten is the highest number counted in four or five years.

"Even more encouraging was the fact that the seals were quiet and approachable, which indicates that they haven't been disturbed," he said.

Perhaps the New Zealand fur seal will one day show that it is well and truly re-established in the Flinders Island group, and recommence breeding in the area. We will continue to wait, watch, and keep hoping.

WANTED

RESEARCH scientists are seeking data for a study on the rare chuditch (*Dasyurus geoffroii*) or western native-cat.

About the size of a small house cat, it is the largest carnivorous marsupial in the State. Its brown fur is strikingly marked by scattered white spots over the head and back.

It was once widespread, but most populations declined dramatically after European settlement. Today, it is occasionally seen in jarrah forests, the southern Wheatbelt and mallee woodland east of the Wheatbelt.

Night-time bush visitors may catch a glimpse of one. If so they should contact CALM's Woodvale office on (09) 405 5161.

DISCOVER SHARK BAY

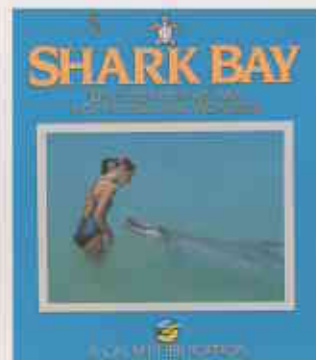
CALM has released a full-colour book about the natural wonders of Shark Bay.

Shark Bay is well known for the dolphins at Monkey Mia, but there are also a wealth of other exciting features in the region.

Written by Dr Barry Wilson, CALM's Director of Nature Conservation, the book documents the region's human history, geographical features and unusual flora and fauna.

It also features photographs from some of the State's best wildlife photographers.

The Shark Bay region is the sole habitat for a host of rare plants and animals, and some of the islands provide the last refuge for several mammals and birds facing extinction.



The Bay also supports a myriad of marine life, from whales, dolphins, dugongs, schools of manta rays and sharks to the smallest hermit crabs and molluscs.

The book, simply titled *Shark Bay*, retails from CALM offices, major newsagents, tourist bureaux, camping stores and RAC outlets for \$5.95.

LANDSCOPE

VOLUME 4 NO 4 WINTER EDITION 1989



Effluent disposal ponds from industry disfigure an idyllic strip of coastal land. But restoration work and a new conservation park are planned for the Leschenault Peninsula, near Bunbury. Turn to p.8.



Wood that was once only suitable for firewood can now be used to make high grade furniture. Find out how on p.24.



With spring approaching, the bush beckons...but without proper planning your walk could turn to disaster. See p.40.



A spectacular landscape, with an astounding array of plants and animals lies inland from Jurien Bay. Read about the Mt Lesueur area on p.28.



A population explosion of coral-eating snails threatens the unique reefs of Ningaloo Marine Park. How does CALM plan to counter their attack? See p.14.

COVER



In W.A.'s far north, Aboriginal rangers with ties to land now in national parks draw on the traditional wisdom of their people for use in Park management. Photo-Robert Garvey

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Managing Editor: Sweton Stewart
 Editor: Carolyn Thomson
 Designers: Craig Garratt/Robyn Mundy
 Production: Karen Addison/Margaret Wilke
 Advertising: Tim Langford-Smith ☎ (09) 389 8644 Fax: 389 8266
 Acknowledgements: Cartoon-Louise Burch, Illustrations-Ian Dickinson
 Coral illustration p. 20 - (from an original illustration by Jeff Kelly)
 © Australian Institute for Marine Science.
 Urban Antics Road Sign-Courtesy of Perth City Council
 Colour Separations by Gibbneys Graphics
 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