



ATTACK!

A rapid sequence of photographs captured a Swamp Harrier's unexpected attack on a Whistling Kite, depicting a rapid flurry of outstretched talons and thrashing wings.

The immature Whistling Kite, distinguished by its spotted plumage, was perched on a floating clump of grass when the Swamp Harrier, which had been circling overhead, dived.

Rather than attacking the kite, the harrier seemed intent on taking any food that the kite may have had. It circled around, wings still uplifted, examining the kite's talons.

After the initial shock, the kite, while watching the harrier intently, held its ground. The harrier, realising there was no food, departed.

The Swamp Harrier is found throughout Australia wherever there is suitable wetlands habitat, but is usually seen in the higher rainfall coastal areas.

The dark shape of the harrier usually sweeps low over the swamps, its distinctive white rump showing as it banks to circle. The prey consists of waterbirds and small mammals including rats. Carrion also attracts these birds, giving this opportunity for photography.

Lake-edge shallows with clumps of grass rising above the water provided a site where carrion could be left, easily visible to patrolling harriers, yet not accessible to cats or foxes.



A hide was built under a low shady tree at a distance at which a flying harrier would be sufficiently large in the photograph with a 350 mm focal length lens, or a standing bird with 500 mm. Many photographs of harriers and kites landing and feeding were taken over a period of several weeks.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
MICHAEL MORCOMBE

1. *The Swamp Harrier swoops down to attack.*
2. *The kite recoils in panic as the harrier attacks.*
3. *The wings held high; the harrier bullies the kite.*
4. *The harrier inspects the kite's talons to see if it has food to take.*
5. *The Swamp Harrier returns to its nest in reeds.*



LANDSCOPE

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Perth people were devastated when a fire tore through their favourite bushland retreat. But, with Spring, new life and colour is returning.



Rottneest isn't the only unspoilt island on Perth's doorstep- what about Penguin, Garden, Seal and Carnac Islands? They are steeped in history and provide a haven for some unique wildlife.



Algae has clogged the estuaries near Mandurah, killing fish and creating an eyesore. What is the solution?



Jarrah dieback- the word strikes fear into any forester's heart- but research is fuelling the fight against the killer fungus.



Explore the waterways of the South-West by canoe.

C O V E R

What's new in Kings Park this spring? Artist, Susan Tingay, couldn't resist this magnificent collection of spring orchids. From left- cowslip orchid (*Caladenia flava*), jug orchid (*Pterostylis recurva*), King spider orchid (*Caladenia huegelii*), donkey orchid (*Diuris longifolia*), rabbit orchid (*Caladenia menziesii*), and pink fairy orchid (*Caladenia latifolia*).

Back Cover: *Stimson's python* (*Morelia stimsoni*)
Photo-Jiri Lochman



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