THAR SHE BLOWS!

Whale-watching tours have provided an excellent platform to undertake research and photograph humpback whales on their southern migration down the WA coast.

The tours are based from Hillarys boat harbour and are run in Marmion Marine Park and adjacent State and Commonwealth waters.

Over 300 confirmed sightings of humpback whales were recorded by Underwater World, one of the tour operators.

Individual whales have been identified from photographs showing the patterns on the underside of the tail flukes and on their backs.

One whale seen in Shark Bay last July while migrating north was photographed twice in the waters between Rottnest and Hillarys, during a three day period in October. This gives an indication of the time spent in this area by some whales.

At least 50 individuals have been identified this season, including one very conspicuous whale with no tail flukes.

This animal has been seen in the same area in previous years in a pod of four to six whales. For this whale to continually travel such vast distances without any flukes is a major feat.

An estimated population of 2000 humpback whales migrate along the WA coast each year.

They feed on the large concentrations of krill (zoo plankton) in Antarctic waters during summer, then move north from March to April to mate and calve in the warmer waters of the North-West.

When they migrate south from August to December they



follow the coastal reefs and bays at a more leisurely pace, especially the females and newborn calves.

A catalogue of identified animals is being maintained at the WA Museum by John Bannister, with various people and organisations contributing to it.

Analysis of the data is continuing and should shed some more light on this mysterious creature.





One whale (above) travels thousands of kilometres each year with no tail flukes. It is thought that the other whales in the pod may help to support it by swimming close to it.

This whale - identified by its distinctive markings - was photographed first at Shark Bay (left), then near Perth (below).
Photos- Chris Burton

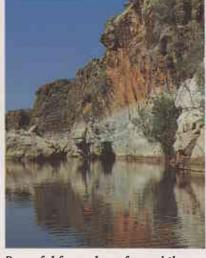


LANDSCOPE

VOLUME 5 NO 2 SUMMER EDITION 1989/1990



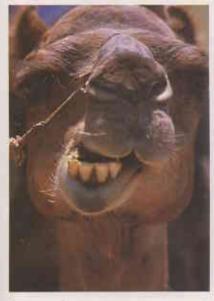
Dolphins, whales and seals frequently strand along the WA coast. Find out who helps them and what they do on p. 10.



Powerful forces have formed the rocks and land surface of WA over billions of years. See p. 48.



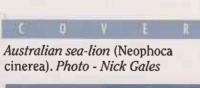
Explore the fascinating subterranean worlds deep beneath the earth on p. 28.



Why are the thousands of feral camels that roam inland Australia the scourge of the desert? Turn to p. 22.



Inlets and rivers, towering karri and tingle forests, rugged coastline and remote wilderness areas -Walpole-Nornalup National Park has it all. See p. 15.





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Managing Editor: Ron Kawalilak
Editor: Carolyn Thomson
Designers: Louise Burch/Robyn Mundy
Production: Karen Addison/Margaret Wilke
Maps: Project Mapping, CALM
Advertising: Tim Langford-Smith (09) 389 8644 Fax: 389 8266
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.