

## 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

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*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.*



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



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



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

## C O V E R

*Australian sea-lion (Neophoca cinerea). Photo - Nick Gales*



## F E A T U R E S

### SHORE SURVIVORS

NICK GALES, DOUG COUGHRAN & CAROLYN THOMSON ..... 10

### WALPOLE-NORNALUP... AN ANCIENT LAND

GRANT WARDELL-JOHNSON & VANESSA SMITH ..... 15

### DESERT BIGFOOT

ANDREW BURBIDGE ..... 22

### LIVING LIMESTONE

JOHN WATSON, BARBARA YORK-MAIN & BILL HUMPHREYS .... 28

### UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERIES OF VERTICORDIA

ELIZABETH GEORGE ..... 35

### SHOOTING FROM THE STARS

RAY BAILEY ..... 39

### PHOTO ESSAY

RAINBOW DESERT ..... 42

### BLAZING COMPUTERS

JUDI BECK ..... 46

### ROCKS OF AGES

GEOFFREY SHAW ..... 48

## R E G U L A R S

IN PERSPECTIVE ..... 4

BUSH TELEGRAPH ..... 6

### ENDANGERED

WALPOLE WAX ..... 27

URBAN ANTICS ..... 54

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