

SPAWNING NEW RESEARCH

Scientists have observed the spawn mass of the marine snail *Drupella* for the first time.

This major breakthrough may help scientists understand the causes of the *Drupella* outbreak on Ningaloo Reef (LANDSCOPE, Winter 1989).

Drupella numbers on Ningaloo Reef have increased from about 100-200 snails per kilometre of reef a decade ago to the present 1-2 million per kilometre.

Little is known about the life-history of *Drupella*, but the early stages of the snail's life cycle have undoubtedly played

a significant role in its massive increase and spread along the reef.

CALM (with assistance from the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service) is researching the reproductive biology and early life-history of *Drupella*.

Researchers are maintaining stocks of *Drupella* at the University of Western Australia's Marine Laboratory, and monitoring their reproductive activities.

The captive *Drupella* spawned in April. The spawn mass was made up of 44



A spawning *Drupella* (above).
Photo - Stephanie Turner

opaque capsules attached to the side of the aquarium.

Within each capsule, which are three to four millimetres in size, there are probably between 250-300 small creamy-white eggs.

CALM scientist Stephanie Turner said that these eggs had since hatched, producing several thousand planktonic larvae.

Scientists will examine and measure further spawn masses, in particular, any located *in situ* on the reef.

In the natural habitat, it is likely that female *Drupella* attach their capsules to the base of the coral on which they feed.

BOOK REVIEW

Canning Stock Route: a Traveller's Guide for a Journey Through History is a comprehensive guide to the beauty and hardship of the desert wilderness. The guide, written by four-wheel-drive operators Ronele and Eric Gard, is a fitting tribute to the earliest pioneers who traversed the area. Cattle from the East Kimberley had red water fever, a disease transmitted by ticks, and could not be



driven through the disease-free West Kimberley and Pilbara, so in 1906 an eight-man team led by Surveyor Alfred Canning set out to survey a proposed inland stock route to Halls Creek. Thirty-one men, 70 camels and two wagons returned to sink 48 wells along the route in 1908-10. The route was last used by cattle drovers in 1958. The 1900-kilometre journey through red sand dune country from Halls Creek to Wiluna is now popular with

four-wheel-drive enthusiasts. The route has many interesting historical features and natural landforms. At Durba Gorge soft couch covers the floor of the valley, which is dotted with

beautiful large, white gums. Lake Disappointment, called Gumbubindil by the Mardu Aborigines, is an immense salt lake named by explorer Frank Hann in 1897. The book details the area's fascinating history and outlines everything

you need to know about preparing an expedition up the Stock Route, from choosing your travelling companions to overcoming emergencies. It also gives a step-by-step guide to the Route and documents the area's natural history - the wealth of animals and plants that you can see on your journey. The guide can be purchased for \$29.95 only by writing to the authors at 80 Glenelg Avenue, Wembley Downs.

MAKING A FEAST OF A BEAST



On a recent trip to the Kimberley, photographers Jiri and Marie Lochman spotted this Mitchell's Water Monitor (*Varanus mitchelli*) satisfying his appetite. The victim is a Gilbert's Water Dragon (*Gemmatophora gilberti*), almost the size of the captor himself.



LANDSCOPE

VOLUME FIVE No. 4 - WINTER EDITION 1990



Each weekend, hundreds of novice scuba divers take the plunge. Get the most out of your diving on page 10.



How do birds fly? How do some reach speeds of over 80 kilometres per hour? Learn about avian aerodynamics on page 28.



A very different landscape replaces what was once a thriving timber industry. Rediscover Cannington in the 1850s. See page 42.



Western Australia grows some rare and stunning native spider orchids. Their alluring nature will delight the reader on page 34.



Seaweed! Delicate and beautiful, or slimy and smelly? Decide for yourself on page 20.

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COVER

Back in the early 1970s, Western Australia proclaimed the numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*) as its State emblem which may have saved its life. With the help of scientists and new techniques, these delightful creatures are now fighting back against extinction. See page 15.

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 'Chip Off The Old Block' - Yeon Hee Kim
 Colour Separation by Prepress
 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.