



# ENDANGERED!



In Western Australia, the ground parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*) now occurs only in small areas of Fitzgerald River National Park and Cape Arid National Park. Another subspecies is found in south-eastern Australia.

The ground parrot once occurred in coastal heaths from Augusta to Cape Arid. It has disappeared from much of its former range because of clearing of native vegetation, altered fire regimes and, possibly, predation by foxes and cats.

Whereas other parrots live in trees and nest in tree hollows, the ground parrot nests on the ground and lives in heathlands. It spends most of its time walking around quietly, foraging for seeds and small fruits of shrubs and herbaceous plants. It spends only two brief periods each day flying short distances and calling to other birds: for about half an hour just before

sunrise and a similar period just after sunset.

The ground parrot appears to be closely related to the endangered night parrot of central Australia. Because of its unobtrusive habits, the Western Australian subspecies has never been photographed in the wild. Radio-tracking has shown that it is not nocturnal, as was once thought.

Dieback may be a future threat to the bird's habitat. In the Fitzgerald River and Cape Arid areas, ground parrots only inhabit heaths not burnt for at least 15 years - in marked contrast to the situation in eastern Australia, where pre-fire population levels are re-established after five to 10 years.

Wildfires started by lightning recently burnt much of the Fitzgerald River National Park, but firefighters

were able to protect most ground parrot habitats. Part of the habitat of one population was burnt, but this will provide opportunities for monitoring the effect of fire on ground parrot numbers and habitat use.

CALM researchers will also try to relocate any populations which may still exist west of Albany. Here, rainfall is higher and the heath probably grows faster, so heaths should become suitable for ground parrots sooner after a fire.

ALLAN BURBIDGE

# LANDSCOPE

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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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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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