

BUGS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GARDEN

Bugs, bats and birds around metropolitan Perth are keeping eager schoolchildren and conservation-minded volunteers on their toes.

Members of Perth Wildlife Watch - a World Wide Fund For Nature (Australia) project supported by the WA Gould League, WA Naturalists Club, and the Kings Park Board - spend their spare time searching in suburban gardens, parks and bushland for populations of common and elusive fauna which still share our suburbs. Results of population studies from the two-year project will give an insight into where wildlife live around the city, and how they are coping with the spread of suburbia and consequent loss of habitat.

Coordinator Boyd Wykes runs Wildlife Watch activities from the Kings Park Education Centre. With the help of volunteers and groups of schoolchildren, he regularly traps reptiles in Kings Park as part of a ground fauna project - legless lizards, bearded dragon lizards, beetles and scorpions

*The spider-hunting wasp
Cryptodeilus tuberculatus.
Photo - Otto Gleich*



are among those found in his carefully set pit traps. Other Perth Wildlife Watch activities include training primary school students as Earth Caretakers, mist-netting for bats and banding birds.

Suburban bird species of interest to watchers have included parrots and cockatoos, fairy-wrens, willy wagtails, frogmouths and honeyeaters.

Boyd believes that conservation begins at home, and that Western Australians need to care for their own backyard wildlife before they look at wider conservation issues.

'Perth's original wildlife has been vastly reduced by too-frequent fires, introduced plants and animals, pesticide use, and a totally inappropriate concept of landscaping,' he said. Green deserts of lawn and European plants maintained by pesticides are far more common in Perth than well-managed gardens, parks and reserves of local plants, with the small and larger animals that can live there. Our spreading suburbia has an almost complete lack of ground-foraging mammals such as bandicoots, and birds such as fairy-wrens.'



Boyd said he and fellow wildlife watchers had been surprised by the richness of reptiles remaining in Kings Park, despite the number of introduced plants and frequent fires there. Hundreds of logs have been put back into burnt sections of the park by volunteers to ensure a quicker return of animals to these areas. However, Boyd said that any more fires in the

*A wolf spider, family Lycosidae,
genus Lycosa.
Photo - Otto Gleich*

park in the next few years would be disastrous for wildlife.

When the project finishes in May 1991, a wildlife diary will be published with weekly notes on what to look for, based on Perth Wildlife Watch findings, with space for the public to continue making notes for their own gardens.

DONKEY ORCHID RESEARCH CONTINUES

Artificial pollination trials on the Canning Vale population of Purdie's donkey orchid (*Diuris purdiei*) - one of four endangered donkey orchids in Western Australia - were undertaken in spring.

The orchid is found in seven sites on the Swan Coastal Plain at Pinjarra, Armadale, Canning Vale, Harvey and Anketell.

Developers of the Canning Vale site, Winthrop Joint Venture for Livingston Estate, entered an agreement with CALM in May 1989 to fund a research program on the donkey orchid, allowing the four-hectare site containing the orchids to remain undeveloped for three years.

The program will help establish a management plan for the entire species to ensure its survival in the wild.

In conjunction with CALM senior research scientist David

Coates, botanist Dinky Goble-Garratt has been studying the Canning Vale population.

She said that pollinator activity had been low during flowering, which began in late September and continued for four weeks.

*Photo - Courtesy Mary Martin
and Associates*



LANDSCOPE

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In the central Kimberley, a screw-pine-surrounded creek - just one of the threatened areas in this fragile frontier. Turn to page 22.



Until 1984 more was known about what was underneath the Nullarbor than what was on top. But with such a vast area to study, where do we start? See page 16.



Public awareness and involvement is vital in the conservation of WA's rare and endangered flora. Page 49.



Ten WA mammal species have become extinct in the last 200 years. What can be done to ensure no more are lost forever? Page 28.



Forests protect our environment. They also provide timber. How do we strike a balance? Turn to page 35.

F E A T U R E S

A RANGE OF REEFS
BARRY WILSON 10

SCOUTING THE TREELESS
PLAIN
NORM MCKENZIE 16

THE FRAGILE FRONTIER
CAROLYN THOMSON, CHRIS DONE AND ALLEN GROSSE .. 22

THE DISAPPEARING MAMMALS
ANDREW BURBIDGE AND TONY FRIEND 28

FORESTS FOR THE FUTURE
SYD SHEA AND ROGER UNDERWOOD 35

VANDALS IN A VULNERABLE
LAND
JACK KINNEAR, DENNIS KING AND KEITH MORRIS 44

GROWING IN A WILD STATE
DAVID COATES AND NEVILLE MARCHANT 49

R E G U L A R S

IN PERSPECTIVE 4

BUSH TELEGRAPH 6

ENDANGERED
THE BINDOON STARBUSH 21

URBAN ANTICS 54

S P E C I A L S

KIDS AND TREES
ARBOR DAY 1990 POSTER COMPETITION 26

C O V E R

Dolphins and whales are perhaps the best-known inhabitants of Western Australia's coastal waters. But this unique area is also home to an astonishing range of marine flora and fauna, from sea-turtles and coral reefs in the north to sea-grass banks and great white sharks in the south. See page 10.

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