



*turning
the
tide*



*Eight bottlenose dolphins
are once again enjoying
freedom, after becoming
trapped in a shallow lake
near Mandurah.*





THE dolphins, from a pod that inhabits Peel Inlet, had swum up the Serpentine River into Lake Goegrup. They probably became trapped when the tide receded, after they entered the lake on a high tide while chasing fish.

Canoeists in the area alerted the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) during the Queen's Birthday long weekend. Wildlife Officer Lyle Gilbert found eight dolphins swimming strongly in a pocket of deeper water, but the rest of the lake was so shallow that they were unable to leave it without help. Two more had already died after becoming trapped in the lake and the same fate was likely to befall the eight still alive.

The next day, rescuers swung into action. At about 11 am a human chain of CALM staff and Greenpeace volunteers herded the dolphins into a shallow part of the lake, where they were easily captured by hand. Each dolphin was temporarily tagged, numbered, measured and sexed. They were all adult males, ranging from four to eight years of age.

The dolphins were next transferred to vehicles in specially made slings and taken to a control point, where veterinarian Nick Gales checked their condition and took blood samples. The samples were later analysed to see if the animals were dehydrated or had abnormal levels of hormones or enzymes in their



The dolphins were loaded onto a truck and given a thorough medical check before their release.

Photo - Robert Garvey ▲▲

Children had a chance to participate in active conservation, while CALM officers made sure they weren't injured.

Photo - Robert Garvey ▲▲

The dolphins were freeze-branded (a painless process) to make them easy to identify in the wild.

Photo - Robert Garvey ▲

CALM's consultant vet takes a blood sample from a major vein in the tail.

Photo - Robert Garvey ◀



blood due to stress. The Goegrup dolphins were later found to be in good health and showed only moderate stress.

CALM wildlife officers also freeze-branded the animals by immersing a brand in liquid nitrogen and holding it against the dolphins' skin - a painless process. The marks should remain for over 20 years, making it possible to identify any animals that are resighted or restranded, giving valuable information on how long they survive and whether they are behaving in a normal way.

After being branded, the dolphins were moved overland and, by 6 pm that evening, had been released into the Mandurah Estuary. They were in good condition and seemed to have handled their ordeal well, swimming off strongly. The dolphins appeared to rejoice at their new-found freedom, leaping and frolicking playfully as they moved down the estuary. Rescuers were optimistic that they would survive.

The next day, three more dolphins were found trapped along nearby rivers, probably as a result of the same high tide. One animal along the Murray River was caught and released into the estuary by wildlife officers.

Well-meaning onlookers carried the other two dolphins in the Serpentine River across a sandbar to freedom. However, damage can be done if members of the public take action without CALM supervision. Handling a dolphin the wrong



way can cause it distress, and even damage the tissue or internal organs. During supervised rescues, great care is taken to carry the animals gently in a sling, clear of any snags, as they could become vulnerable to infection if the skin is broken.

And many people don't realise that dolphins, which can weigh up to 180 kilograms, are powerful animals - the rescuers themselves could have been hit by the animal's tail, or bitten.

However, all turned out well, and the original pod of eight dolphins, now highly visible with their new brands, have since been seen feeding and frolicking in the Murray River and Peel Inlet. □

CALM staff and volunteers held the rescued dolphins in the water so as to release the whole pod at once.

Photo - Jiri Lochman ▲◀

Volunteers helped to keep the animals wet and comfortable.

Photo - Robert Garvey ▲▲

There were smiles all round as the pod swam free in the Mandurah estuary.

Photo - Robert Garvey ▲



LANDSCOPE

VOLUME SIX NO. 1 - SPRING EDITION 1990



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.

Illustrated by Martin Thompson.



Managing Editor: Ron Kawalikak

Editor: Ray Bailey

Designers: Louise Burch/Robyn Mundy/Stacey Strickland

Production: Sandra Mitchell

Advertising: Estelle de San Miguel ☎ (09) 389 8644 Fax: 389 8296

Illustrations: Martin Thompson, Yeon Hee Kim

Colour Separation by Prepress Services

Printed in Western Australia by Kaleidoscope

© ISSN 0815-4465 All material copyright No part of the contents of the publication may be reproduced without the consent of the publishers

Published by Dr S Shea, Executive Director
Department of Conservation and Land Management,
50 Hayman Road, Como, Western Australia 6152.