



Clockwise from the top: well-camouflaged fairy tern chicks; adult bird; fairy tern eggs.
Photos - Doug Coughran

A TERN FOR THE WORSE?

Along the Western Australian coast fairy tern eggs are being illegally taken and eaten.

Fairy terns nest in small colonies of usually less than 100 on sandy or rocky beaches on islands, shores and lagoons. They readily desert their nests when people walk over the site.

There are relatively few breeding colonies in the Perth-Mandurah area and it is important to educate members of the public on the importance of protecting the fairy tern populations. Officers from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) will step up patrols of the colonies during the next breeding season in an attempt to combat the problem of egg theft.

Fairy terns migrate to the north-west coast in winter and return to the South West in the spring to breed. Birds living further north have more sedentary habits. The terns have white backs and upper wings, a black crown and an orange beak, and hunt in shallow waters close to shore.

They also have some entertaining mating habits. A male bird that is courting follows a group of birds, carrying a fish in his bill. Should a female crouch in front of him, he raises his head, tail and wings, turns his head rhythmically from side to side, and mounts her. As he dismounts, the female seizes the fish and flies off.

The fairy tern and the little tern are the smallest terns found in Australian waters.

NOISY SCRUB-BIRD PAINTING FOR HRH PRINCE PHILIP

A painting of the rare noisy scrub-bird was presented to His Royal Highness the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, as a gift from the Government and people of Western Australia, during his visit to the IUCN Conference held in Perth in November.

Prince Philip played a key role in saving the area now known as Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve - the habitat of the noisy scrub-bird - and he subsequently chose to sponsor the noisy scrub-bird when he became a member of the Rare Bird Club of the International Council for Bird Preservation.

Mount Barker artist Carol O'Connor spent 400 painstaking hours in painting the bird. Although she has no formal training, Carol has been exhibiting work since 1979,

her speciality being wildlife art.

The work involved consultation with Alan Danks, the biologist who oversees the Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, and a face-to-face meeting with the noisy scrub-bird itself.

Carol was able to study the bird's habitat before beginning work on the painting and was able to see birds at close range while they were in temporary captivity during a translocation program last year. The result is an accurate, life-size portrait of the bird in its favoured dense habitat.

A full-size reproduction of the painting and the story of the noisy scrub-bird appear in the visitors' information display at Two Peoples Bay, just east of Albany.

Although thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered



in December 1961, the scrub-bird's numbers have steadily increased as a result of a habitat management plan and a translocation program by

CALM. About 600 birds are now spread along some 30 km of coastline in and near the reserve.



Visitors from around Australia are discovering what those who live nearby already know - D'Entrecasteaux...C'est Magnifique. Turn to page 10.



Seabirds nest on Pelsaert Island in the Houtman Abrolhos by the million. See page 17.

LANDSCOPE

VOLUME SIX NO. 3 - AUTUMN EDITION 1991



There's more to invertebrates than slugs, maggots and spiders. Turn to page 28 to find out just why invertebrates are so important.



What has happened to Fitzgerald River National Park since the 1989 wildfire? See page 34.



Explore the Dampier Archipelago, a group of rocky islands with a violent past and a wealth of wildlife. Turn to page 48.

F E A T U R E S

D'ENTRECASTEAUX - C'EST MAGNIFIQUE! CLIFF WINFIELD	10
A MILLION SEABIRDS ANDREW BURBIDGE AND PHIL FULLER	17
ABROLHOS - DIVER DOWN JIM STODDART	24
SPINELESS WONDERS JOHN BLYTH AND IAN ABBOTT	28
FITZGERALD REBORN STEVE HOPPER	34
WANJARRI IAN KEALLEY	39
LANDSCAPING FOR WILDLIFE ROBERT POWELL	43
ISLANDS IN THE SUN CAROLYN THOMSON	48
R E G U L A R S	
IN PERSPECTIVE	4
BUSH TELEGRAPH	5
ENDANGERED THE GOULDIAN FINCH	53
URBAN ANTICS	54

C O V E R

Invertebrates play an important role in the ecosystem of WA's jarrah forest. Earthworms, termites and ants fragment leaf litter and mix organic matter. Some soil and litter invertebrates stimulate plant growth. Soil insects such as larval beetles feed on roots, stimulating the plants' growth rate. Our cover illustration is Philippa Nikulinsky's impression of this process at work in the jarrah forest.



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