

## OUR KIMBERLEY CARNIVORES

Crocodiles might not have the same cuteness appeal as a lot of WA's wildlife, but they are still in need of protection and the task of protecting them is just as demanding.

Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) officers in the Kimberley monitor the wild populations of freshwater and saltwater crocodiles and are involved in regulating the commercial farming industry. If population numbers drop, a percentage of one-metre-long crocodiles from breeding farms in Wyndham, Broome or Fremantle will be returned to the wild.

In 1986, a survey by researchers Andrew Burbidge and Harry Messell produced an estimate of 2 500 wild



saltwater crocodiles in the Kimberley. This compares with 50 000 to 60 000 in the Northern Territory. While saltwater numbers are low, there are high populations of freshwater crocodiles - numbers at Fitzroy River are estimated to be 13 500, Lake Argyle 25 000 and Lake Kununurra 10 000. Both species are on

CALM's specially protected wildlife list. Of the two, only the saltwater crocodile poses a threat to human life.

CALM Kimberley regional manager Chris Done said work associated with crocodiles is a major part of the region's role. This role includes capturing and relocating freshwater crocodiles from Lake Argyle

*Crocodiles are best admired from a safe distance.  
Photo - Jiri Lochman*

spillway, where they become trapped and could slowly starve to death.

CALM officers also monitor the collection of eggs and hatchlings for the State's three crocodile farms. No wildlife is removed from protected areas (nature reserves and national parks), but is instead taken from crocodile management areas. (There are three "crocodile" zones - one in which CALM attempts to remove the reptile as it poses a threat to human life, one in which crocodiles can be taken for breeding farms, and crocodile protection areas where they remain undisturbed.)

Eggs and hatchlings may only be removed by crocodile farmers from half of the active nests found in an area.

Chris Done said that hatchlings had a better chance of survival in a breeding farm - 80 to 90 per cent, compared with only about 1-2 per cent in the wild.

Earlier this year CALM took over supervision of the care of animals at the Wyndham Crocodile Farm after a report of high mortality rates among crocodile hatchlings there.

## BEYOND OUR BACKYARDS

City dwellers are being enticed away from their TV sets and cluttered suburbs to explore the forests on the city's edges as part of the Department of Conservation and Land Management's (CALM) *Let's Go Bush* environmental education program.

The explore-the-outdoors program is one of many school holiday activities organised by CALM throughout Western Australia. Activities range from a night-time spotlighting tour of Kalamunda National Park to breakfast with the birds, and provide families with a fun way of learning about their natural environment rather than sitting at home reading books or watching TV documentaries.

During autumn, about 750 adults and children converged

on Fred Jacoby Park near Mundaring to experience one of the program's 16 activities: "A Forest Affair". Visitors watched timber sawing, log-hauling and fire-suppression demonstrations, and were able to look at several craft and educational displays. Some took advantage of the free barbecue facilities in the park, while others availed themselves of the free bushman's tucker on offer - johnny cakes and billy tea.

The first *Let's Go Bush* program was held in the forests bordering the Perth metropolitan area in October 1990 and almost all of the 10 activities trialled sold out.

Feedback from participants in this year's program was enthusiastic: most participants wanted more activities more often.



*Barry Rhodes, storeman at CALM's Mundaring office, demonstrates the art of making authentic billy tea.  
Photo - David Gough*

Other holiday programs are run by CALM at Yanchep National Park, Mundaring, Walpole-Nornalup National Park and Serpentine National Park, with additional programs in the South West aimed at school children and holidaying visitors.

# LANDSCOPE

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Cloud-capped Bluff Knoll, majestically brooding sentinel of the Stirling Range. Does it hold a secret in its stony heart - perhaps the answer to the missing mammal mystery? See story on page 9.



A western swamp tortoise (*Pseudemys umbrina*). Could this be one of the last to be photographed? Not if CALM's ten-year recovery plan succeeds. See page 28 for details.



Mulga and fire - at best an uneasy relationship - sometimes symbiotic, sometimes disastrous. Find out when and where on page 20.



The Kimberley's rugged grandeur is deceptively fragile. Additional reserves managed by CALM help protect the region's delicate, complex and diverse ecosystems. See page 35.



An uncommon dragon, *Caimaniops amphibolurioides* inhabits mulga shrubs. Many other dragon lizards prefer harsher habitats such as rock-piles and salt lake/beds. See page 51.

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## COVER

Central netted dragon (*Ctenophorus inermis*), one of the more than 60 species of dragon lizard that inhabit the arid and semi-arid parts of Australia. The acute eyesight and swiftness of dragon lizards are essential in order to avoid predators and to capture food. See page 51.

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