

URBAN ANTICS!



Tabby or not Tabby

Faster than a speeding ... more powerful than ... able to leap long distances at a single bound. Look up in the ... Is it a plane? Is it a bird? No it's a cat.

Yes, there is probably no finer urban antic than your cat... purr-fect in every way.

The neighbours have a cat called Mog, a loving, cuddly fur-ball, that provides continual entertainment and companionship for his adopted family, day in and day out.

This particular day, Mog had been forced (because of a huge lunch) to spend an hour in front of the lounge room fire, pretending to be a Persian rug on a Persian rug.

Suddenly, as if by some alien command, Mog sprang to his feet, meowed and rubbed his body on the nearest human leg, which resulted in an open door. For a while he stood there, his yellow baleful eyes with their reptilian-like pupils staring into space. Then he was off, the world was at his feet, it was time to be a real cat.

Within three hours Mog had returned at least six times with the gory remnants of two wattle birds, a dove, a small bobtailed skink, half a rat and a live traumatised frog. Mog's owners weren't too put out; they scooped up the trophies and despatched them as though it was a daily event, and I think it was.

There are about three million pet

cats and probably an equal number of feral cats in Australia. So you can imagine the number of animals being destroyed, particularly where unwanted kittens have been dumped by uncaring owners and left to go wild.

Scientists believe cats evolved from a small weasel-like animal called Miacis, which lived more than 50 million years ago. Members of the cat family first appeared about 40 million years ago, and the domestic cat of today is a direct descendant of an African wildcat that the Egyptians tamed - possibly as early as 3500 BC.

The Egyptians, Romans and Greeks valued cats for their ability to control rodents, with the cat eventually becoming a sacred animal in Egypt. Artists of the Orient admired the beauty and mystery of the cat, whilst those in Europe considered cats a symbol of evil.

Domestic cats share many characteristics of their wild relatives; lions, tigers and leopards. They are meat

eaters, skillful hunters that move swiftly and quietly on padded feet.

The unique wildlife of the Australian continent evolved without cats.

Regrettably, they must now be regarded as an established and significant member of the

Australian mammal fauna.

To help maintain populations of our rare and unique fauna, there is a need for cats to be registered and for all but licensed breeders' animals to be desexed. A further need is for research into the control of feral cats.

JOHN HUNTER

DID YOU KNOW?

- Cats have the same basic skeleton and internal organs as human beings.
- Unlike many animals, a cat walks by moving the front and rear legs on one side of its body at the same time and then the legs on the other side. Hence it seems to glide.
- When a cat falls, it whips its tail and twists its body, always landing on its feet.

LANDSCOPE

VOLUME EIGHT NO. 1 SPRING ISSUE 1992



Small and shy and quite unlike their exotic, urban cousins, high climbing rodents live throughout the Kimberley. See page 10.



Once it was a traditional battleground for Aboriginal people. Today the competition is between sailboarders while families of picnickers look on. See page 23.



The various groups of Aboriginal people around the Swan River lived in harmony with the seasons. See page 28.



His name is connected with plants and places around Australia. He was interested in everything from Aboriginal customs to the size of trees. Read about A Man of Science on page 16.



Learn about the incredible variety of orchids in the Stirling Range. See page 36.

FEATURES

RATS OF THE TREE TOPS
GORDON FRIEND, CATH KEMPER AND ANNE KERLE 10

CUNNINGHAM: A MAN OF SCIENCE
SUZANNE CURRY 16

MATILDA BAY RESERVE
JACQUELINE PONTRÉ 23

HUNTERS AND GATHERERS
PETER BINDON AND TREVOR WALLEY 28

ORCHIDS OF THE STIRLING RANGE
ANDREW BROWN 36

KANGAROO HILLS TIMBER RESERVE
ANDY CHAPMAN AND ROB THOMAS 43

LERPS, BUGS AND GUM-LEAVES
JANET FARR 50

REGULARS

IN PERSPECTIVE 4

BUSH TELEGRAPH 6

ENDANGERED SANDHILL DUNNART 22

URBAN ANTICS 54

SPECIALS

ARBOR DAY POSTER COMPETITION 47

COVER

The many coloured orchid (*Caledonia polychroma*) is well named. Aside from the rich pinks there are clumps of lemon yellow and pure white. The orchid is found in the low areas of the Stirling Range, preferring wandoo and sheoak woodlands. While most years its vibrant flowers can be seen, it flowers best after fire. The illustration is by Phillipa Nikulinsky.



Managing Editor: Ron Kawaliak
Editor: David Gough
Contributing Editors: Verna Costello, Helenka Johnson, Tanyia Maxted, Carolyn Thomson
Scientific and technical advice: Andrew Burbidge, Roger Underwood
Design and production: Sue Marais
Finished art: Gooitzen van der Meer
Advertising: Estelle de San Miguel ☎ (09) 389 8644 Fax: 389 8296
Illustration: Sandra Mitchell
Colour Separation by Prepress Services
Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print
© 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.