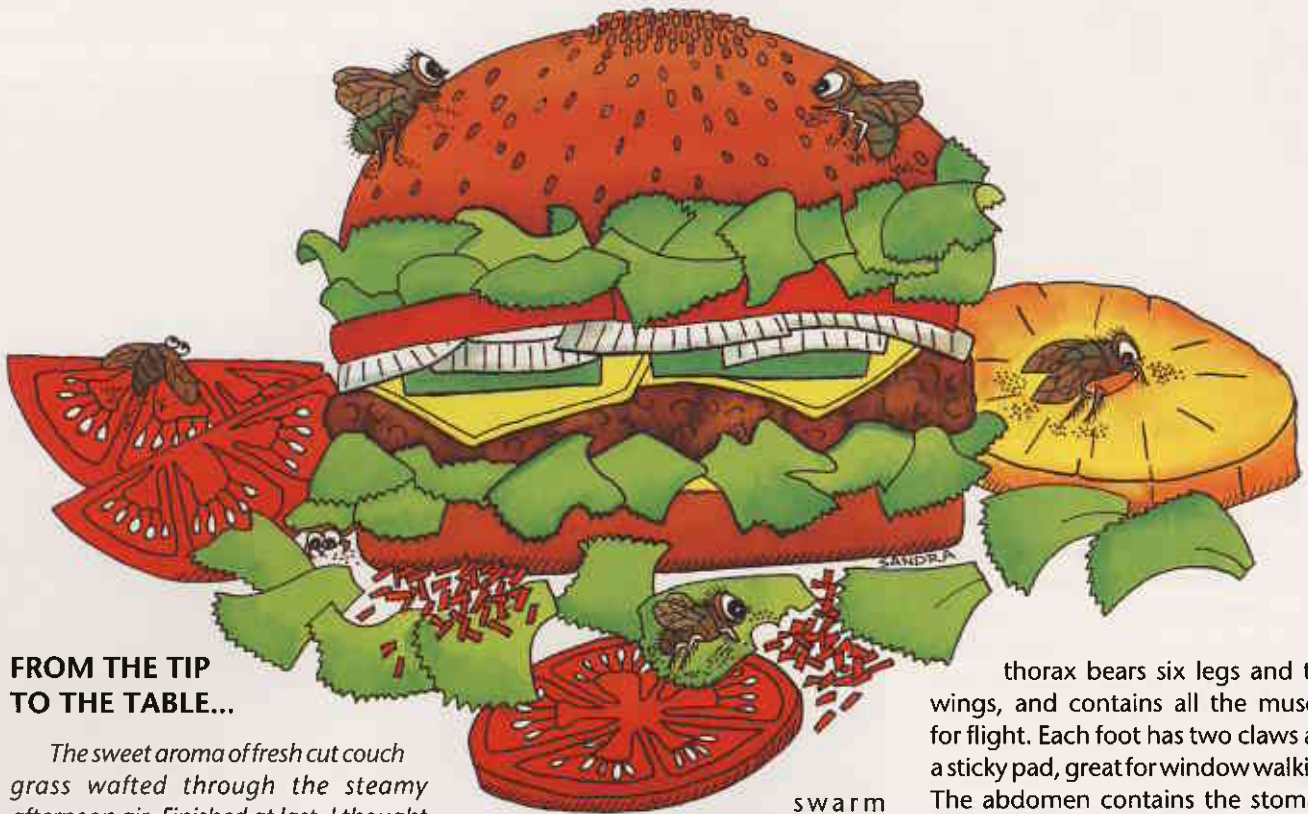


# URBAN ANTICS!



## FROM THE TIP TO THE TABLE...

*The sweet aroma of fresh cut couch grass wafted through the steamy afternoon air. Finished at last, I thought and drew a deep breath. . . AAAGH!!!*

*A small, grey, ugly, scaly, spiky and known-to-be-filthy, germ-bag of a fly went right down my throat. My eyes watered and my stomach rolled. Yuk!!! I was so upset, I didn't know whether to spit or buy a new hat.*

Flies, like some other insects and spiders, are not my favourite creatures, but like it or not, we're stuck with more than 100 000 species worldwide and up to 8 000 in WA. The Diptera, or true flies, are one of the largest orders of insects with a few having no wings, but all the others having a single pair of wings. Most other winged insects have two pairs.

In our west coast urban neck-of-the-woods, we are bewitched, bothered or bewildered by about nine varieties of fly each summer; when their breeding and activity are at a peak. The little pest that prefers to live inside our homes and run across our dinner plates is the common house fly. The other two frequent intruders are the 'brown bomber' blowfly and the greenbottle blowfly.

Outside the sanctity of our homes, we are fair game for bush flies. These are the persistent little grey devils that

swarm around your eyes, nose and mouth, and are responsible for vigorous arm waving, hysterical clapping and the occasional self abusive smack on the nose. Worst of all are the blighters that stab with their mouth parts and suck blood. These are the sand flies, stable fly and the mosquitoes and march flies.

Other, lesser-known flies, found around the garden and worthy of observation, are the fruit flies and hover flies. While the fruit fly does not cause us any direct pain, it sure knows how to ruin a good peach. Hover flies, on the other hand, are beautifully coloured (bright orange, white and yellow) and they hover, apparently motionless, in front of flowers and foliage looking for nectar.

Most flies are similar in their activities, habits and anatomy. Like all adult insects, their bodies are made up of three parts - the head, the thorax and the abdomen. On the head are the eyes. Between them are the antennae, which are sensitive to touch, smell and, in some species, sound. The mouth is either a tubelike pump for spewing out solvents and retrieving liquids, or a sharp proboscis part, for stabbing flesh and sucking blood. The

thorax bears six legs and two wings, and contains all the muscles for flight. Each foot has two claws and a sticky pad, great for window walking. The abdomen contains the stomach and reproductive organs.

Because they and their larvae (maggots) eat smelly, rotten material like dung, dead animals and general refuse, we must assume that they carry deadly germs. But, like all the creatures on Earth, even flies have some good points. They pollinate plants, prey on a wide range of other pest insects, devour animal carcasses and provide me with the fattest little wrigglers that ever graced a good fishing hook!

## JOHN HUNTER

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The *mpdas fly* of South America is the largest fly in the world. It measures 7.6 cm in length and the same from one wing tip to the other. Midges are the smallest flies at only 1.5 mm length.
- A fly has compound eyes, each having about 4 000 hexagonal (six-sided) lenses that point in different directions and work independently.
- A house fly's wings beat around 200 times a second and it travels at an average speed of 7.2 km/h. Midges' wings beat about 1 000 times a second.

# LANDSCOPE

VOLUME TEN, NO. 2 SUMMER ISSUE 1993-94



The galah is just one of the many bird species that visit our urban and suburban gardens. 'Birds in the Garden' shows us how we can attract more.



In spring, the Wongan Hills are ablaze with wildflowers, but this 'island' sanctuary is also a home to a wide variety of animals. See page 21.



Yanchep National Park is having a facelift. Our story on page 28 examines the history and rebirth of one of Perth's closest and most visited national parks.



Banksia gardneri var. brevidentata is one of a number of plants named in honour of Charles Gardner. See 'Gardner's World' on page 41.



The Pinnacles is one of several destinations for licensed tours operating in WA's national parks. See 'Travel Companions'.

## FEATURES

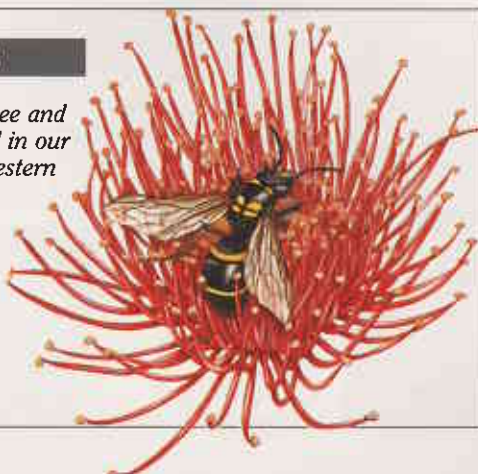
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## COVER

*Hyleoides zonalis* is a solitary bee and one of the native bees described in our story about the 'real' bees of Western Australia on page 17. The illustration is by Philippa Nikulinsky.



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