



ENDANGERED!



THE LANCELIN ISLAND SKINK

Lancelin Island is small; its sandy dunes and limestone outcrops total a mere 7.6 hectares. This is the sole place that the Lancelin Island skink (*Ctenotus lancelini*) is known to occur, making it particularly vulnerable to disturbance or extinction.

First collected in 1961 by Julian Ford, the species was initially considered to be a subspecies of the red-legged skink (*Ctenotus labillardieri*). Later work by Glenn Storr of the Western Australian Museum recognised that its distinctive colouring, larger size and different habits were sufficient to raise it to the status of a distinct species.

The upper body surface is pale brown with darker speckling, and the legs are yellow with blackish-brown streaks or spots. During the breeding season, the undersurface is

a vibrant yellow, quite a stunning contrast to the subdued tones of the dorsal colouring. The body length, excluding the tail, is about eight centimetres. Little is known about its ecology, but like other *Ctenotus*, it is probably insectivorous and shelters in shallow burrows or under rocks.

During 1991 and 1992, amateur herpetologists Robert Browne-Cooper and Brad Maryan, and CALM staff, searched the island for the species, but were dismayed to find only one individual. Earlier visitors reported the skink to be abundant, suggesting that there had been a dramatic decline in the population.

Urgent action was required. CALM requested Commonwealth funds to support a study to establish the size of the population, its biology, and the causes for its decline. Changes to the island's vegetation, due to weed

invasion and perhaps predation by seagulls, were thought to be two possible reasons, but there is no evidence for either explanation.

Wildlife consultant Barbara Jones has now begun a study of the Lancelin Island skink to resolve some of these questions. This has already resulted in the capture of more than 25 individuals, and the collection of data on their breeding biology and distribution within the island's various habitats. The study will help to develop suitable management strategies to ensure the Lancelin Island skink continues to be a unique feature of the reptile fauna of Lancelin Island and Western Australia.

**David Pearson and
Barbara Jones
Photo - Brad Maryan**

LANDSCOPE

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The Pinnacles, in Nambung National Park, is one of the most photographed landscapes in the world. But there is another side to Nambung. See page 41.

The hidden caves and tunnels of Cape Range National Park harbour several animals found nowhere else. Turn to page 22 to find out about these bizarre cave dwellers.



The characteristics that made WA inhospitable to the first Europeans are now helping us create new industries that can also repair the environment. See page 47.



Perth has at least 70 species of skinks, geckoes and other reptiles. Find out how to attract these fascinating creatures to your garden on page 28.



Devastation caused by the recent NSW bushfires has fuelled debate on the practice of prescribed burning. How do managers fight fire with fire? See page 35.

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COVER

The bobtail (*Tiliqua rugosa*) is sometimes incorrectly called the 'bobtail goanna' but is actually a very large skink. They are common around Perth and often seen in gardens. During hot weather they can be seen basking on footpaths, verges or roadways. See our story 'Reptiles in the Garden' on Page 30. *The illustration is by Philippa Nikulinsky.*



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