

## OSPREY MAKES A MEAL OF IT

This osprey feasting on a huge fish held up traffic on a boat ramp at Hillarys Boat Harbour for up to 45 minutes, while boat owners patiently queued up to use the ramp on the right.

"The bird attracted close attention from nearby people and at one stage hooked its talons into the fish and tried to move it," said CALM Administration Officer Stephanie Crawford, who spotted it one weekend.

"However, once it realised that the fish (believed to be a sweep) was too heavy to lift from the ground the osprey refused to budge."

"CALM staff at Hillarys believe it is the same bird that has been seen at the boat ramp for the past three years."

Fish are the staple diet of ospreys, which are found around most of the Australian coast. They frequent offshore islands and coastal areas, occasionally moving inland up rivers and on lakes.

Around Perth, ospreys breed in early spring. Their nests are built with sticks and driftwood and are usually lined with seaweed. They may be seen at Rottne Island.

The same nest can be used by generations of birds and may grow to two metres tall. In fact, early seafaring explorers thought they must have been built by a bird the size of an Andean condor. Mature adults have a wingspan of 1.5 metres.

Although they are often incorrectly referred to as sea eagles, the osprey is in fact a hawk.

Although ospreys are fairly common in northern Australia and moderately common in the South West, the species has declined in South Australia and no longer breeds in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales.



Above and right: A lucky osprey feasts on a "whopper" fish on a ramp at Hillarys, holding up boat traffic.  
Photo – Stephanie Crawford

This decline may be attributed to pollutants causing breeding failures and deaths, and habitat destruction such as removal of large nest trees. It is good to see this individual living in harmony with humans.



# LANDSCOPE

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The golden whistler is a common forest bird. 'Forest Focus' (on page 10) discusses a five-year study into the effects of timber harvesting on forest birds, insects and mammals.



The 10th Light Horse Memorial Trail is one of two walktrails in Neerabup National Park. The story on page 22 takes you inside this little-known park in Perth's northern suburbs.



In the closing days of 1991, heavy downpours of rain flooded Rowles Lagoon in WA's Goldfields; and so began an unusual year of floods, frogs, flowers and fires (see page 42).



Aboriginal people of the northern deserts call the black-headed python 'warrurungkalpa', which roughly translates as 'grinder or crusher of rock wallabies'. See the story on page 17.



Radio collars are fitted to feral cats to help scientists track their movements. 'Hunting the Hunter', on page 36, focuses on research into the habits of these supreme desert hunters.

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The majestic and graceful whale shark visits the north-west of Western Australia each year and is fast becoming a major tourist attraction. What does the future hold for the world's largest fish? See page 28.



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