

LOOKOUT TOWERS MAKE A COMEBACK

Lookout towers are making a comeback as part of the fire surveillance effort in the forests of the South West and the hills around Perth this summer.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management is halfway through an extensive program to upgrade its tower network, which stretches from north of Perth to Walpole on the south coast.

These towers, coupled with rapid-response spotter aircraft, will significantly reduce the time taken to detect a fire and mobilise suppression crews.

CALM Fire Manager Rick Sneeuwjagt said towers were being reintroduced into the Department's fire management system as they were more reliable and cost-effective than having aircraft continually circling the forest in the fire season.

"Tower staff will alert spotter planes at the first sight of smoke," he said.

"The planes, Western Australian-built Eagles, have the latest navigation technology including global positioning systems that enable them to pin-point fires more accurately and provide intelligence on fire behaviour.

"This information can be relayed to fire fighting crews, thereby improving response time, minimising the risk of fires developing into major events and improving fire crew safety."

The planes will be based at Dwellingup, Bunbury and Manjimup but also will work out of Mundaring, Collie, Nannup and Walpole.

The towers are dotted throughout CALM's three forest regions—Swan, Central and Southern.

In Swan Region, a tower in the Gnangara pine plantations has been replaced by a new tower in Walyunga National Park. This tower will be coupled with existing towers at Pinjar

and Wabling to provide complete coverage of the pine plantations north of Wanneroo.

Another new tower, at Bickley, provides excellent surveillance of the jarrah forest between Mundaring and Jarrahdale.

An existing tower at Mt Solus also will be staffed to cover the jarrah forest between Jarrahdale and Dwellingup.

In the Central Forest Region, Stewart tower near Kirup in the Blackwood Valley, Mowen east of Margaret River, and Mt William north-east of Harvey, have been upgraded. Work also is planned for Mungalup tower near Collie, and Carlotta east of Nannup.

Towers being upgraded in the Southern Region are Diamond Tree near Manjimup, Mt Frankland near Walpole, and Beard east of Quinipup.

Fire towers are more cost effective than aircraft and will help CALM improve its fire fighting ability this fire season. Photos - Ross Mead



LANDSCOPE

VOLUME TEN NO. 2 SUMMER ISSUE 1994-95



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.

FEATURES

FOREST FOCUS
CAROLYN THOMSON, BRENT JOHNSON & MIKE CRAIG ... 10

PYTHONS: MASTERS OF THE WAITING GAME
DAVID PEARSON 17

NEERABUP NATIONAL PARK
DAVID GOUGH & RON SHIMMON 22

A WHALE OF A SHARK
CAROLYN THOMSON & JOHN STEVENS 28

HUNTING THE HUNTER
NEIL BURROWS & PER CHRISTENSEN 36

FLOODS, FROGS, FLOWERS AND FIRES
ANDY CHAPMAN 42

THE WESTERN BLUE GUMS ARE HERE
LIZ BARBOUR & TREVOR BUTCHER 49

REGULARS

IN PERSPECTIVE 4

BUSH TELEGRAPH 6

ENDANGERED THE WHICHER BRACHYSEMAS 35

URBAN ANTICS 54

COVER

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.



The illustration is by Danka Pradzynski.

Managing Editor: Ron Kawallak
Editor: David Gough
Contributing Editors: Ray Bailey, Kate Hooper, Carolyn Thomson
Scientific and technical advice: Ian Abbott, Andrew Burbidge, Paul Jones
Design and production: Maria Duthie, Sue Marais
Finished art: Sue Marais, Gooitzen van der Meer
Illustration: Gooitzen van der Meer
Cartography: Promaco Geodraft
Marketing: Estelle de San Miguel ☎ (09) 334 0296 Fax: 334 0489
Subscription enquiries: ☎ (09) 334 0481
 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.