BUSHTELEGRAPH

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.

CALMFire 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.

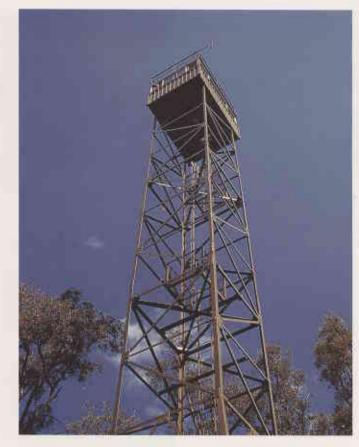
In Swan Region, a tower in the Gnangara pine plantations has been replaced by a new tower in Walyunga National Park. This tower will be coupled with existing towers at Pinjar and Wabling to provide complete coverage of the pine plantations north of Wanneroo.

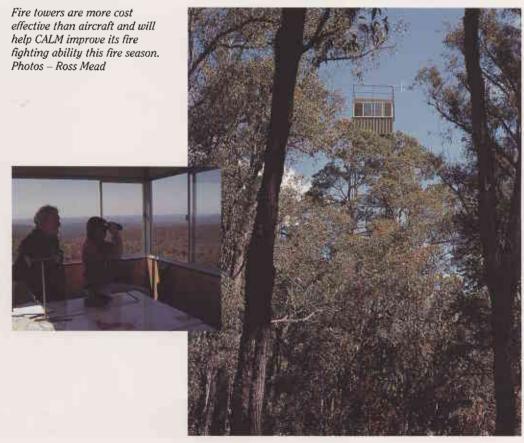
Another new tower, at Bickley, provides excellent surveillance of the jarrah forest between Mundaring and larrahdale.

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

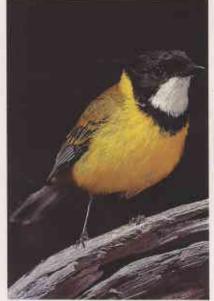
In the Central Forest Region, Stewart tower near Kirup in the Blackwood Valley, Mowen east of Margaret River, and Mt William north-east of Harvey, have been upgraded. Work also is planned for Mungalup tower near Collie, and Carlotta east of Nannup.

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





8 LANDSCOPE



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.



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.

LANDSCOPE

VOLUME TEN NO. 2 SUMMER ISSUE 1994-95



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).



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.

The illustration is by Danka Pradzynski.



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