

PROTECTING PENGUINS

One of Australia's biggest mining companies—Western Mining Corporation—has weighed in to help conserve the little (or fairy) penguins, sea lions and seagrasses that inhabit Perth's coast.

Western Mining is giving \$120 000 to the Department of Conservation and Land Management to build a research and management centre on Penguin Island that will become a regional research base for important marine, island and coastal research.

"The proposed Western Mining Research and Management Centre is a vital part of CALM's plan to create a unique nature-based tourism project on Penguin Island, while also protecting the island environment," CALM Marine Operations Manager Peter Dans said.

"Because of its natural attraction and close proximity to the metropolitan area, Penguin Island attracts up to 70 000 visitors each year, including many from interstate and overseas."

Penguin Island supports the largest breeding population of little penguins on the west coast of Australia. About 50 other bird species also breed and roost on the islands off Rockingham, including migratory species covered by international treaties. The Australian sealion uses nearby Seal Island to rest between fishing trips.

CALM and academic institutions have ongoing research projects based on Penguin Island and its plants and animals. Research into the status of the penguin population on the island is already under way. Further research projects will focus on detecting any impacts of tourism on the island's wildlife and landscapes.



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The proposed research and management centre will provide the staff accommodation and work areas essential to manage the island environment as well as becoming a field base for visiting research staff.

The centre's construction will allow CALM to remove three makeshift asbestos cement buildings, remnants of past uses of the island. The areas occupied by these buildings will be rehabilitated, providing additional habitat for the wild penguin population.

The architecture of the new facility reflects the natural contours and colour of the island, and composting waste systems and solar power will be used.

Because of the fragile nature of Penguin Island and the surrounding Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, no heavy equipment can be used on the island or transported across the shallow seagrass beds that



surround it. As a result, the centre will be built from materials which can be easily moved by hand.

The Western Mining Research and Management Centre is part of a series of developments on Penguin Island aimed at improving management of the island. A new composting toilet block, a raised boardwalk and grassed picnic area have already been established.

Top: Artistic impression of the proposed Western Mining Research & Management Centre on Penguin Island.

Above: The Executive General Manager of Western Mining's WA Operations Andrew Michelmore with CALM's Terry Goodlich and a little penguin. Photo - Jeremy Dunnette

LANDSCOPE

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Flower arrangements featuring eucalyptus foliage are becoming popular with florists. Find out why on page 35.



Unseen for more than 100 years and believed to have been extinct, Gilbert's potoroo turned up quite unexpectedly. See page 28.



Salinity is a problem in the State's south-west, but farmers, communities and government agencies are working to find solutions. See page 39.



A giant dragonfly lives in the south-west of Western Australia. You can find out more about this ancient relict of the jarrah forest in 'Western Petalura' on page 52.



The thick-billed grasswren is one of several animals that may be reintroduced to Shark Bay as part of an ambitious project. See 'Return to Eden' on page 22.

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COVER

The stunning royal robe (*Scaevola striata*) is one of a host of fabulous fanflowers found in Western Australia. Suzanne Curry discusses this and other species in the family Goodeniaceae on page 10.

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