



ENDANGERED



WESTERN BRISTLEBIRD

Generally shy and elusive, much more often heard than seen, the western bristlebird (*Dasyornis longirostris*) is restricted to the south coast of Western Australia. Often, it is only seen as a brown blur, about the size of a grey shrike-thrush, as it moves quickly between the shrubs. Occasionally, it comes out into the open, or perches on top of a bush to sing, and at these times, an attractive silvery-white flecking can be seen on the breast and shoulders, with a rufous patch in the wing.

The western bristlebird is one of the most endangered birds in Australia. In recognition of this, CALM has recently begun a research and management program, funded largely by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA).

Recent surveys have shown that

the western bristlebird now occurs only between Two Peoples Bay and the Fitzgerald River National Park. Historically, it was known also to occur west of Albany, probably along to Cape Leeuwin, and in patches north to about Perth. Only about 450 pairs are known, with about half of these being at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve.

The bird's biology is poorly known, but it inhabits moderately dense heaths, up to 1.5 metres high, which usually include some shrubs that are broad and dense. Sedges are normally a conspicuous component

of the habitat. The birds feed on the ground, searching for seeds and small insects. As they are so secretive, nests are difficult to find, but it is known that normally two eggs are laid in late winter or early spring. Nothing is known about incubation or feeding the chicks.

Reasons for their decline are not well understood, but clearing for agriculture has had some impact, and altered fire regimes are thought to have been an important factor. In some circumstances, the birds can move into an area as soon as four years after a fire, but it can take as long as 14 years for the birds to return. At Two Peoples Bay, they still inhabit areas unburnt for at least 50 years. Part of the current research program is aimed at learning more about the birds' response to fire.

BY ALLAN BURBIDGE

Photo — Simon Nevill

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.

The illustration is by Philippa Nikulinsky.



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