

the ecologically fragile area could be irrevocably damaged by too many visitors. But even the best-kept secret will out, and more and more people are seeking information on how to gain access to the caves.

In response, and with a view to protecting important fossil deposits and Aboriginal cultural sites, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) is helping the Mimbi Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) to secure land tenure over the area.

West Kimberley District Manager Allen Grosse says that when this matter is resolved, it is intended that CALM and MAC will enter into an agreement to manage the area as the Mimbi Caves Conservation Park.

Apart from the important fossil fish deposits in this part of the Kimberley, the most predominant physical feature of the area is the extensive

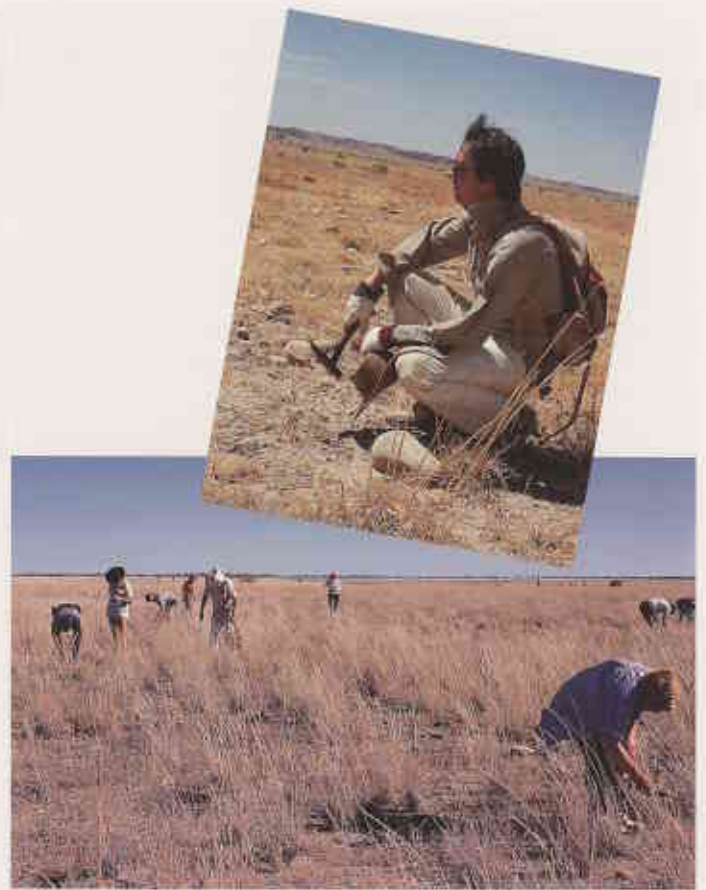
labyrinth of caves, tunnels and narrow gorges that pass through the Lawford Range.

"Many of these features are easily accessible. Several caves have permanent, fresh-water pools. The cave system is believed to be among the largest in Australia," Allen said.

Obviously, the fossil history and geological importance of this area demands that the area be managed with a high degree of sensitivity, so the management plan will include steps to be taken to minimise any negative visitor-impact on the area.

Above right: *John Long searching for Gogo fish fossils east of Fitzroy Crossing, near Mimbi Caves.*

Right: *Volunteer helpers searching for fish fossils in the valleys around the ancient Devonian Reef.*  
Photos - John Long.



## THE MALLEE MUNCHER

A prototype mallee harvester, developed by CALM senior technical officer Tim Birmingham, is attracting keen interest among farmers interested in oil mallees as a viable cash crop for the lucrative eucalyptus oil industry.

Tim developed the harvester, known as "the mallee muncher", by modifying an old wheat harvester in CALM's Dwellingup workshop.

This, in conjunction with a still developed by Phil Scott from the Department of Agriculture, has been used at oil mallee field days to demonstrate how more than 200 litres of eucalyptus oil can be extracted from about 10 tonnes of mallee leaf material. Batches of this oil have been given to several large

international companies for early market development.

In 1993, CALM's Vegetation and Tree Planting Advisory Service (VATPAS), in association with interested farmers and the Department of Agriculture, embarked on large-scale plantings as a beginning to the establishment of 5 000 hectares in each of six centres (or planting cells) at Canna, Woodanilling, Naremben, Kalannie, Wickpin, and Esperance.

Also in 1993, more than 200 000 oil mallee seedlings were planted, increasing to more than a million seedlings in 1994, with nearly three million seedlings expected to be planted by the end of the 1995 planting season.

The seedlings are offered



Photo - John Bartle

to the farmers in the planting cells as part of a share-farming contract with CALM.

All plantings are integrated into the farming system, where they will provide the maximum landcare benefit as well as a possible income from the sale of eucalyptus oil, should the industry develop.

As well as the large-scale

plantings, more than 30 oil mallee species trials and 12 genetic improvement trials have been established throughout the Wheatbelt to further our knowledge on species selection and planting layouts. These plantings will also provide a workbase for further tree breeding to increase vigour and oil content.

# LANDSCOPE

VOLUME ELEVEN NO. 1 SPRING ISSUE 1995



The threatened Wyalkatchem foxglove is being given a helping hand by scientists from CALM and Kings Park and Botanic Garden (see page 17).



This nesting pair of splendid fairy-wrens is one of the many 'Birds of the Stirling Range' (see page 36).



WA Goldfields timbers are fast becoming recognised as prime materials for producing world-class musical instruments. See 'Musical Timbers' on page 48.



A new CALM book, Dive & Snorkel Sites in Western Australia, will encourage novice divers and snorkellers to explore the rich and diverse coastline of WA. See 'Secrets of the Sea' on page 10.



The common rock-rat, photographed here in the Kimberley, has recently been recorded in the Kennedy Range National Park. See page 28 for a profile of this wonderful wilderness area.

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## COVER

The brilliant purple flowers of the twining fringed lily (*Thysanotus patersonii*) entwined around the burnt stem of a slender banksia (*B. attenuata*). See 'After the Burn' on page 21.

Illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky



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 Colour Separation by Prepress Services  
 Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print

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Published by Dr s Shea, Executive Director  
Department of Conservation and Land Management,  
50 Hayman Road, Como, Western Australia 6152.