

BIRDS RECOLONISE HERDSMAN

In recent years, rufous whistlers and grey fantails have taken up residence at Herdsman Lake. These birds were not present in 1980–81, when Peter Curry of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union carried out a bird survey of the lake and its surroundings.

These two species are widespread in the South West, and would certainly have been present at Herdsman Lake before the area was developed. So why did these birds disappear; and why have they returned?

Very likely they disappeared as a result of the loss of habitat when the area was cleared for agriculture and urban development. The widespread spraying to eradicate Argentine ants in the 1960s may also have been partly responsible for the disappearance of these insectivorous birds.

The part of the lake to which rufous whistlers and grey fantails have returned is on the north-east shore, along Jon Sanders Drive. This area has been revegetated with flooded gum, freshwater paperbark and coojong, which used to grow



naturally at Herdsman Lake, and are important for the abundance of their associated insects, on which the birds feed. Several other species of bush bird, including western gerygones, inland thornbills and brown honeyeaters, are also now much more common around the lake than they were in 1980–81.

It is very likely that rufous whistlers and grey fantails came

from populations in Bold Park, the nearest substantial area of bushland, four kilometres south-east of Herdsman Lake. Since small bush birds such as these need cover and do not fly across wide areas of open sky, it is likely that their transit was possible only because of a fortuitous corridor provided by remnants of vegetation between the park and the lake. This corridor comprises

bushland immediately north of Bold Park in conjunction with vegetation in Wembley Downs Golf Course, the Churchlands Campus of Edith Cowan University and along the outlet drain from Herdsman Lake.

This example reminds us that birds will often decline or disappear as a result of changes made to the environment by humans. But it also teaches us that urban bushlands can provide populations from which birds may spread to restored areas, if there is a suitable corridor of habitat in between. We can help birds in our urban environment by retaining urban bushlands, restoring degraded habitats and creating linking corridors.



Top left: *Rufous whistler with young nesting again at Herdsman Lake.*

Top right: *Brown honeyeater alighting on a corn banksia. These delightful birds are now more common around the lake.*

Photos – Babs & Bert Wells/CALM

Left: *The boardwalk at Herdsman Lake allows visitors access to the lake while minimising damage to the wetland habitat.*

Photo – Kevin Kerneally



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Thanks largely to CALM's fox-control programs, the recovery of the woylie has been so swift that the species has now been taken off the threatened fauna list (see page 10).



This killer whale, photographed at Ningaloo, is one of 36 marine mammals living off the WA coastline. Read about them on page 16.



LANDSCOPE Expeditioners made some interesting discoveries during last year's expedition to Queen Victoria Spring. Read all about them on page 23.



Spring flowers thrive on a moss carpet—one of the range of attractions on offer in the Porongurup National Park (see page 28).



The rose mallee is just one species benefiting from action by recovery teams working together for conservation (see page 36).

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COVER

A new book, Broome and Beyond, takes an in-depth look at the plants, such as this *Pittosporum molluccanum*, people and cultures of the Dampier Peninsula, in Western Australia's Kimberley Region. The story on page 48 takes a brief glimpse into this exciting new book.

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