

*THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM*

*Our failure to distinguish between natural and abnormal changes in ecosystems has often resulted in large amounts of resources being wasted in attempts to stop the unstoppable. For example, programs to stop natural areas burning by 'banning' fire and attempts to enhance 'popular' native animals by killing native predators in Australia and North America have cost millions of dollars and failed dismally.*

*Our penchant for focusing on natural disturbances to ecosystems—perhaps because they are often the more dramatic—has also been a major factor contributing to our neglect of key damaging processes that are often insidious but cause massive abnormal changes that are potentially irreversible.*

*For more than 100 years, the cause of salination has been known. But it was not until the 1970s that catchment clearing bans were imposed on selected water supplying catchments. It is only in the last few years that the rate of increase in salination has been questioned and the full economic and ecological impact of rising saline water tables recognised (see 'Halt the Salt!' on page 10).*

*Similarly, it is only in the last 20 years that the devastating decline in our native fauna has been linked to the explosion in populations of introduced foxes and cats (see 'Masterly Marauders', LANDSCOPE Summer 1992-93).*

*In the last 100 years, we have wrought major changes on Western Australian ecosystems, which have been shaped by natural processes for two-and-a-half billion years. But I am optimistic that we will be able to stabilise and eventually reverse these changes. Unlike many problems the world faces, we know the cause, we know the cure. Also, farmers and rural communities are applying the same innovative skills they used to create one of the most productive agricultural areas of the world—from a region with soils and climate that was not considered by many as being very prospective—to land care and conservation.*

*While individual and community action supported by government grants are essential, massive resources will be required even to stop salination increasing. It is unlikely that we can afford the replanting with perennial vegetation on the scale required unless we use wealth-creating crops that also restore the hydrological balance.*

*The task is massive. But it is not an impossible dream that we will see, within fifty years, the restoration of the hydrological balance, the return of the complete suite of native animals, and increased wealth and employment generated from traditional agriculture and new perennial crops.*

*Peggy Shea*

The Publisher

**VOLUNTEERS, THE LIFEblood OF CONSERVATION**

The size of Western Australia's conservation estate is a staggering 20 million hectares—more than 70 per cent of the size of New Zealand and about 50 per cent of the size of Japan. But if one looks at the number of CALM staff involved in the management and administration of these lands and waters—only about 1200—the question arises: How can so few, spread thinly across Western Australia, look after them? Dedication and enthusiasm are only part of the answer. There must be something more, and there is. Collectively, it is the CALM volunteers who play such a

crucial role every year in helping the Department carry out an astonishing array of programs right across the conservation estate.

The volunteer program in itself is an enormous undertaking. For example, in 1996, more than 1500

*CALM staff member Mal Graham (left) with Geoff Burrow, and Geoff's daughters Gail Burrow (left front) and Kerry Burton, also grandchildren Samuel (seated on Kerry's lap) and Naomi Sargent.*

*Photo - R. Perey of Guildford Photographics*



people volunteered for more than 80 projects. The individual hours varied from just one to more than 1000. The total number of hours contributed was almost 70 000, which is the equivalent of 9 600 people days. This doesn't include the hours given by volunteer members of advisory committees, or from the 170 wildlife carers registered with CALM who do not record their hours.

Last year, the Department received 800 new volunteer registrations. Overall, their contribution increased 34 per cent over the previous year's level.

The people who so generously give their time and energy come from all walks of life—students, retired people, those with full time jobs and those who work only part time, unemployed people and those who work in the home.

The activities include help in wildlife management and research, forest research, information services, wildflower management, visitor surveys, participation in park planning and management, coastal rehabilitation, erosion control, historical research and work experience.

In recognition of volunteers' outstanding contribution, Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes recently presented six awards for Volunteer of the Year as well as four Outstanding Service Certificates. Volunteer of the Year recipients were:

Right: CALM Executive Director Dr Syd Shea (left) with volunteers David Pike, Jo Stone and Geoff Burrow, Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes, and Volunteers Coordinator Terry Hales.

Photo – R. Perey of Guildford Photographics



Left: Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes (centre) after presenting awards to CALM volunteers with Executive Director Dr Syd Shea (left). The volunteers are Ron Cameron, Suzanne Rosier, Kay Cameron, Hazel Williams and Brian Best. At right rear is Volunteers Coordinator Terry Hales.

Photo – R. Perey of Guildford Photographics

- ① **Visitor Services (Recreation) category:**  
Ron and Kaye Cameron, and David Pike
- ① **Visitor Services (Information and Interpretation) category:**  
Hazel Williams and Jo Stone
- ① **Wildlife Research and Management category:**  
Suzanne Rosier and Warren Richards
- ① **Outstanding Service Certificate:**  
John Angus, Brian Best, Geoff Burrow and Anna Vitenbergs

In selecting those to receive the awards, several factors were taken into account. The number of hours was only one of these. Others were the contribution to solving difficult problems, the pioneering aspects of a particular program, and the diligence and enthusiasm with which tasks were approached and carried out.

It should be emphasised that such awards do not imply that one person's contribution is more important than that of another. Smaller contributions are just as important because they bring people into contact with the lands and waters that make up the conservation

estate, as well as the plants and animals that exist in it. There's a continuous learning experience involved that doesn't stop with an individual volunteer. Each has his or her sphere of influence, so that a body of knowledge about WA's plants and animals expands further into the community. With such knowledge comes understanding and support for the vital work needed to care for this vast conservation estate.

Anyone wishing to register as a CALM volunteer may telephone Volunteers Coordinator Terry Hales on (08) 9334 0251 for further information.



# LANDSCOPE

VOLUME THIRTEEN NUMBER 1, SPRING 1997



*The threat from below . . . How can we defeat our greatest environmental enemy? Read about salinity and what we can do about it on p. 10.*



*Dryandra, one of the last refuges of the native wildlife. Now you can experience this woodland wonderland for yourself. Find out how on p. 36.*



*Europeans brought alien plants and animals to WA's rangelands, which have since become degraded. What can be done? See p. 42.*



*One of the best aids to plant conservation is completely invisible. See our plant DNA story on p. 18.*



*How old is the Stirling Range? Read about this stunning area in our story on p. 48.*

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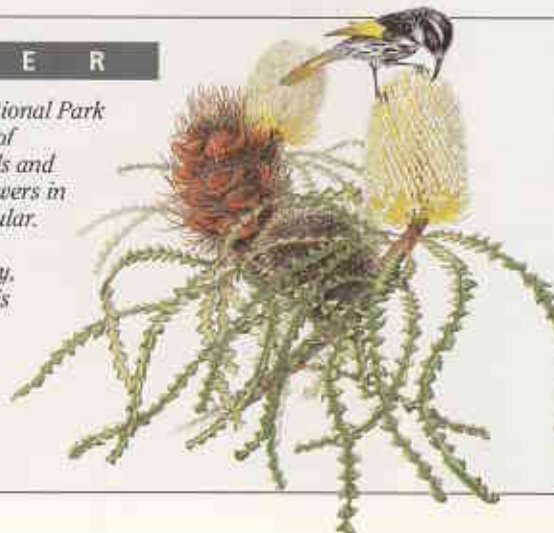
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## COVER

*The Fitzgerald River National Park boasts a startling array of habitats, mammals, birds and other species. Its wildflowers in spring are often spectacular. Our story on p. 28 is a fascinating tale of variety, beauty, and threat in this aged land.*

*Illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky*



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