



# ENDANGERED!



## WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM

Until a few years ago, the ringtail possums that occur in the south-west of Western Australia were thought to be the same species as the common ringtail of eastern Australia. Now, they are recognised as a separate species, the western ringtail possum (*Pseudocheirus occidentalis*). In common with most medium-sized Australian mammals, they have declined in abundance and distribution, and are now listed as threatened.

Western ringtails once had a patchy distribution from near Geraldton to the edge of the Nullarbor Plain. By 1990, they occurred only in the far south-west, mostly near the coast from near Bunbury to the Waychinicup National Park east of Albany. The only inland populations remaining were in the Perup and adjacent forest blocks, and in the lower Collie River valley. Near the coast, they

inhabit peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) woodland, where they often build 'dreys' (nests in the canopy). Elsewhere, they shelter in tree hollows, hollow logs or even in dense vegetation on the ground. Interestingly, ringtails are common within Busselton and Albany townships, where they may live in house roof spaces.

Research by the Western Australian Museum and the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) has shown that predation by foxes is a major threat. Since 1991, western ringtails have been translocated to areas where foxes have been controlled under CALM's *Western Shield* feral predator control

program. The first translocation, to Leschenault Conservation Park at Bunbury, has been very successful. Other translocations, still being monitored, have been to Yalgorup National Park, Lane-Poole Conservation Park and Karakamia Sanctuary near Gidgegannup (see story in this issue).

Another significant problem for western ringtails is clearing of their habitat for urban development, particularly between Bunbury and Augusta and near Albany. CALM is working with planning authorities and local councils to minimise the impact of clearing on the possums. In some cases, ringtails whose habitat has been destroyed have been successfully translocated. Wildlife carers are also helping the recovery of this species by caring for derelict ringtails from urban areas and preparing them for release back into the wild.

**By Andrew Burbidge**

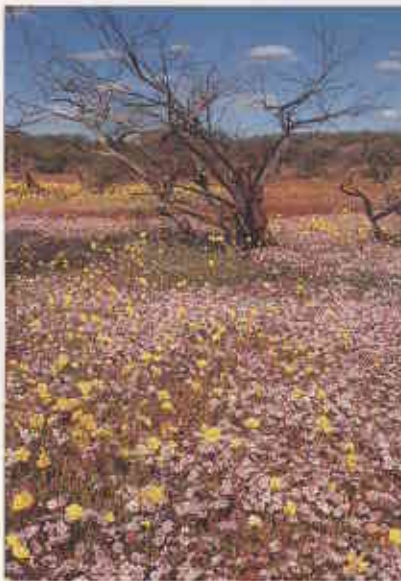
Photo - Babs & Bert Wells/CALM

# LANDSCOPE

VOLUME THIRTEEN NUMBER 2, SUMMER 1997-1998



The waters off Western Australia's south coast are home to a rich diversity of marine plants and animals. Read about them on page 28.



Burnerbinmah Station, in WA's Murchison Region, fills an important gap in the State's flora and fauna reserve system. See page 42.



Was it created by a meteorite crashing to Earth, or more slowly over time? Find about Curiosity Swamp on page 50.



Imagine a commercially-owned and managed sanctuary in the hills east of Perth and you have 'Karakamia Sanctuary'. Find out how it was created on page 17.



The Western Blue Gum, a commercial variety of the Tasmanian bluegum, was developed for WA conditions, but tree breeders continue to improve the strain. See page 36.

## COVER

Is the forest red-tailed black-cockatoo rare or just rarely seen? Find out the answer to these questions on page 10.

Illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky



## FEATURES

<b>COUNTING COCKATOOS</b> IAN ABBOTT.....	10
<b>KARAKAMIA SANCTUARY</b> ANDRE SCHIMITZ & MARTIN COPLEY.....	17
<b>WATCHING THE GRASS GROW</b> GRAEME BEHN, CHRIS DONE & ADRIAN ALLEN.....	23
<b>WONDERS OF OUR SOUTHERN SEAS</b> JEREMY COLMAN.....	28
<b>BREEDING BETTER BLUEGUMS</b> LIZ BARBOUR.....	36
<b>MURCHISON HAVEN</b> SUE PATRICK.....	42
<b>CURIOSITY SWAMP</b> ALEX BEVAN.....	50

## REGULARS

<b>BUSH TELEGRAPH</b> .....	4
<b>ENDANGERED!</b> WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM.....	49
<b>URBAN ANTICS SEA GRASS</b> .....	54

**Executive Editor:** Ron Kawalilak  
**Managing Editor:** Ray Bailey  
**Editor:** David Gough  
**Story Editors:** Mandy Clews, Verna Costello, Carolyn Thomson, Mitzi Vance, Penny Walsh  
**Scientific/technical advice:** Andrew Burbidge, Ian Abbott, Paul Jones and staff of CALM's Science & Information Division  
**Design and production:** Maria Duthie, Sue Marais  
**Finished art:** Colourbox Digital  
**Illustration:** Gooitzen van der Meer  
**Cartography:** Promaco Geodraft  
**Marketing:** Estelle de San Miguel ☎ (08) 9334 0296 Fax: (08) 9334 0498  
**Subscription enquiries:** ☎ (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437  
 Colour Separation by Colourbox Digital  
 Printed in Western Australia by Lamb Print  
 ISSN 0815-4465 All material copyright. No part of the contents of the publication may be reproduced without the consent of the publishers  
 Visit **LANDSCOPE** online on our award-winning Internet site **NatureBase** at <http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/>



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