

PILBARA PLANTS FOR PERPETUITY

CALM WA Herbarium's mission to add to existing knowledge of the flora of Western Australia has received a significant boost with the donation from Robe River Iron Associates of a databased and mounted collection of Pilbara plant specimens. Equally important, the collection contains a number of species that are new to science, and many plants are recorded from new locations.

Because the flora of WA is so rich and there is still much to be documented, it is often very difficult to correctly identify specimens. The best chance for identification is when a specimen is pressed, dried and mounted onto sheets, which are labelled with details of the precise location and a description of the specimen plant's habitat. This information can then be captured



*Left: CALM Herbarium Senior Principal Research Scientist Dr Neville Marchant (left) and Robe River Iron Associates' General Manager, Finance and Administration, Daryl Calvin (centre) with botanist Malcolm Trudgen at the hand-over ceremony of more than 5,000 Pilbara plant specimens.*

*Below: Myfanwy (left) and Melinda helped their father botanist Malcolm Trudgen (seated) with specimen collection and preparation. Behind Mr Trudgen is Consultant Ecologist Dr Nick Casson, who wrote environmental impact reports on the locations where the plants were collected.*

*Photos – Verna Costello*

electronically and added to CALM corporate databases. The information gathered makes future identification easier and adds to general knowledge of plant habitat and locations.

When specimens are lodged with the State

collection in CALM's WA Herbarium, their identity can be checked against current knowledge and corrected where necessary. Such authenticating of specimens is essential if there is to be any real meaning in environmental

impact statements or descriptions of locations where flora might be removed to allow for mining or other enterprises.

In the past, a number of companies, and some Government agencies, have commissioned detailed biological surveys, and many plant specimens were collected. However, the specimens were often wrongly identified and then discarded, so the correct name couldn't be applied later. The Robe River Iron Associates' donation has set a new standard in documentation of survey work undertaken by mining companies. The company financed the processing of botanist Malcolm Trudgen's excellent collection of plant specimens. The collection comprises 5,000 sheets of plant specimens with detailed notes of their habitat. All the specimens are databased and, when incorporated into the State collection, will add considerably to the available information about Pilbara plants.



Winner of the 1998 Alex Harris Medal for excellence in science and environment reporting.

# LANDSCOPE



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In 'Photographing a Temperate Wonderland' (page 10), photographers Sue Morrison and Ann Storrie share their experiences.



In 'Those Spotted Things' (page 22), we see how fox-baiting and captive breeding continues to swell populations of this popular native mammal.



Many farmers and landowners are turning to plantation pine for a variety of good reasons. Five of them tell us why. See 'A Crop of Forests' on page 38.



Snakes. You either love them or hate them, but how do we live with them? See story on page 45.



As habitat changes, so do species populations. But just when does a species become threatened? See 'Healing the Land' on page 49.

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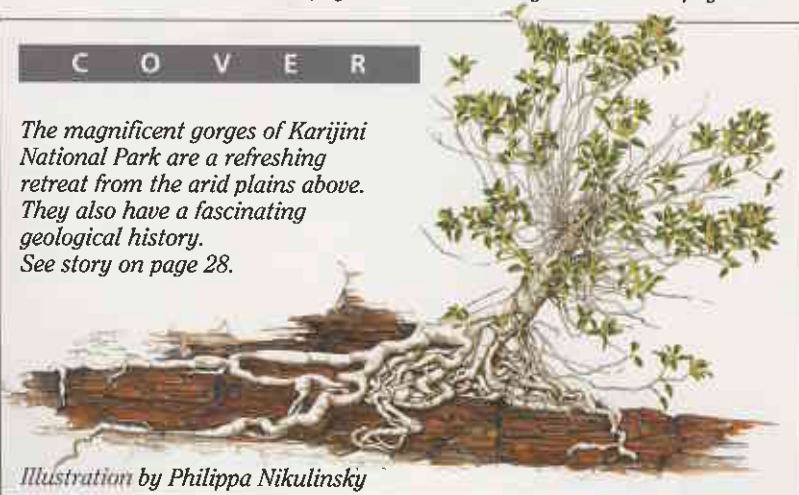


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