

*When I was a young, idealistic public servant working on forest research at Dwellingup more than 30 years ago, I became secretary of the local Aboriginal association in Pinjarra. In that capacity, I had the bright idea that the association could augment its minuscule funds by developing a business linking the beautiful wildflowers of the region with their culture. The project was a crashing failure, and I have no difficulty confessing now that it was primarily because of my 'bull at a gate' approach, which was totally incompatible with the gentle natures of the Aboriginal people I was working with. But the idea then and now was a good one.*

*This issue of LANDSCOPE describes some of the work that CALM has been doing with Aboriginal people of the Ngaanyatjarra community, which I believe, because of the excellent consultative work that has been done between the Ngaanyatjarra elders and CALM people, has every chance of becoming a model for integration of conservation, Aboriginal culture and the creation of employment opportunities for indigenous people. I have been very privileged to visit the Ngaanyatjarra people at Warburton, and on another occasion have camped with the Ngaanyatjarra elders on a station out at Kalgoorlie, when they were embarking on their tour of CALM's nature-based tourism facilities.*

*Over the camp fire, a softly spoken Ngaanyatjarra elder told me how he remembered the native animals that used to occur on his lands. He put Aboriginal names to them, told me how important they were in the Dreaming stories and even described their particular tracks. This conversation, more than any scientific papers I have read, bought home to me the significance of the devastation we have caused to native fauna across Australia. When you listen to someone who has seen the desert ecosystems with their full complement of animals and understand how significant these animals were to Aboriginal people, you really begin to appreciate what we have lost.*

*But we now know what caused the devastation—the introduction of the cat and the fox. We also now have the technology to eradicate foxes and feral cats from vast areas of land relatively cheaply. CALM is now baiting 3.5 million hectares of land to primarily eradicate foxes in the south-west, and we are seeing a remarkable recovery of native animals occurring. Recent advances in bait technology have demonstrated that we now can control feral cats in the drier regions of the State. So it is possible, if the Ngaanyatjarra people are happy with the proposal, over a period of years, to bring back, across millions of hectares, a large proportion (unfortunately some animals are extinct) of the original suite of animals that existed on Ngaanyatjarra lands.*

*The significance of this to conservation is obvious, but it also could provide a very significant addition to employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, both by their participation in the project and because these unique native animals, particularly when they are linked to Aboriginal culture, provide a world class tourism attraction. The burgeoning success of CALM's Aboriginal Tourist and Heritage Unit, led by Senior Aboriginal Heritage Officer Noel Nannup, has demonstrated the huge opportunities for employment of Aboriginal people in the tourism industry.*

*The re-introduction of native animals on to Aboriginal lands will only occur if the close and positive consultation between CALM and the Ngaanyatjarra people is maintained—fortunately I and many other people in Government have learnt that 'bull at a gate' type approach won't work. The project will only be successful if we integrate the needs of Aboriginal people with our conservation objectives, modern science and technology, and practical land management and conservation, with wealth and employment creation.*

*Roy A. Allen*  
The Publisher

## ABORIGINAL ELDERS ON TOUR

A tour of nature-based tourism sites and conservation areas by the Ngaanyatjarra community's elders has highlighted the continuing development of collaborative management agreements between CALM and the Ngaanyatjarra Council for the Gibson Desert Nature Reserve and for the establishment of an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) in the Central Ranges region.

CALM Goldfields Regional Nature Conservation Leader Rob Thomas said the rich biodiversity of the Central Ranges was one of the State's priority areas for conservation.

"Most of the Ranges' conservation values have been maintained, largely because of the land management undertaken over the years by the Ngaanyatjarra people and their in-depth knowledge of the area's wildlife," Mr Thomas said.

The aim of the trip was to expose the elders to a range of nature-based and cultural tourism experiences, so they could discover for themselves

potential uses in the Ngaanyatjarra lands.

The group visited Mulka's Cave, Wave Rock, Dryandra State Forest, Yanchep and Francois Peron National Parks, Monkey Mia and a number of tourism development sites within the Shark Bay World Heritage Area.

The party experienced, first hand, the successful integration of conservation, land management, tourism and employment at a number of these sites. They also learnt about product development and site design, and the management—with appropriate sensitivity—of tourism in culturally significant sites.

The group also visited captive breeding enclosures, which form an integral component of CALM's Western Shield project. The Elders recognised the animals, and described how they had been caught for food before disappearing from Ngaanyatjarra lands—many within the elders' own lifetimes—because of predation by foxes and cats, so the results of introduced





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

# LANDSCOPE

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How many seals or sea lions are there around WA's coasts? See 'A Tale of Two Seals' on page 42.



"What I wasn't prepared for was the magic of the experience." See 'Desert Impressions' on page 35 for the story of a LANDSCOPE Expedition.



The malleefowl has declined to 46 per cent of its former range. Read about the combined effort to save it on page 17.



Enjoy the WA environment—and don't get hurt! See 'Balancing Act' on page 23.



Traditional owners are working with CALM and other agencies to manage the land. See page 10.

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The white-breasted sea-eagle is one of the many natural attractions of the mid-west. See page 28 for a story on one of the region's most famous places—beautiful Kalbarri National Park.



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