

LOOKING BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

The success of LANDSCOPE in the 16 years of its existence has been largely due to the calibre of our contributing writers, photographers and artists. Their talent, knowledge and enthusiasm has provided us with an abundance of fascinating and beautiful stories - more than 450 to date. In that tradition, the contributors to this issue of your conservation journal take us from slippery indicators of ecosystem health, to minute and tireless workers found throughout Western Australia, to scientific innovation, to spectacular land and marine conservation reserves in our remote north, and more.

By any standard, Philippa Nikulinsky is one of Australia's premier natural history artists and illustrators. Best known for her botanical work, her ability to capture Western Australia's wildlife with her drawings and paintings is equally delightful and inspiring. Check out her cover illustration of a motorbike frog and the photograph on page 12, and ask yourself whether it is the artist's or the camera's eye that has captured this animal best. It is good that we have both.

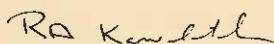
The decline of frog populations in various parts of the world has been a worrying indicator about the health of our ecosystems. Is the cause environmental contamination, global warming, or something else? In 'In Pursuit of the Frog Fungus', Ken Aplin and Peter Kirkpatrick of the WA Museum's Alcoa Frog Watch program examine the possible role of a new kind of fungus that infects and potentially kills frogs.

There may be between 700 and 800 different ant species in Western Australia (and as many as 20 different species of ant in your backyard) and they too are necessary to the health of many native ecosystems. In 'The Great Australian Ant', Brian Heterick explores the fascinating array of forms, behaviour and adaptations found in these helpful agents of land management.

For LANDSCOPE regular Tony Friend, Principal Research Scientist with CALMScience, the fight to save our native fauna demands a combination of technical skill, creativity, physical fitness and, occasionally, a sense of humor. In 'Tools of the Trade', Tony writes about the range of technologies that have been adapted to biodiversity conservation work in WA.

No issue of LANDSCOPE would be complete without an in depth look at some of spectacular and special areas in the State. In 'Parks of the Plateau', CALM's Kimberley Regional Manager Chris Done takes us to four new conservation reserves in and around the Mitchell Plateau that give greater protection to this scenic, biologically important and remote part of the Kimberley. And in 'Range to Reef', CALM's Exmouth District Manager Doug Meyers looks at the challenges we face in conserving the environmental heritage of Ningaloo Marine Park and adjoining Cape Range National Park more than a decade after the first formal management plan for the area was put in place.

Enjoy the autumn and we'll see you in winter.



Executive Editor

BRISTLEBIRD MAGIC SHOW



You need to trick them into doing what you want them to do. They're difficult to catch, and you need patience getting them into the padded cells! They're western bristlebirds—one of WA's most threatened native birds.

Catching them for a translocation from Albany to Walpole was a mammoth effort involving CALM staff and volunteers from Perth, Albany and Walpole. Special effects were used to tantalise the birds into nets.

"It's like a magic show. You have to trick them into entering," CALM Regional Nature Conservation Program leader Alan Danks said.

"Once you've attracted them with carefully selected calls, you use a specially constructed mist net to trap them. To begin with, we missed more than we caught, but the technique is improving!"

There are two populations of western bristlebird, one near Albany in the Two Peoples Bay to Mount Manypeaks area and the other at Fitzgerald River National Park. The species inhabits dense near-coastal heaths, eats insects and seeds and is one of a suite of heath and scrub birds on the south coast.

It is endangered because of clearing and too-

frequent fire, as the bird inhabits long-unburnt areas of old vegetation. Because it is a poor flyer it cannot cover long distances to find new territory.

CALM senior research scientist Allan Burbidge is leading the recovery effort for the western bristlebird.

"We decided that translocation was the wisest way of ensuring a safe future for them. The program is funded by Environment Australia and CALM, and supported by the considerable efforts of volunteers," Allan said.

Last year, Allan's team moved eight birds from Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve to Nuyts Wilderness in the Walpole-Nornalup National Park. This year, another seven were released there.

"We know at least half of them have persisted from last year because we've heard their distinctive calls. This is an excellent result. We're hoping they will breed and establish a new colony," he said.

CALM staff and volunteers drove to Walpole, then walked along bush tracks for an hour before releasing the birds from padded boxes, used to protect the birds from injury and stress.

Close-up of bristlebird.
Photo - Neil Hamilton



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

LANDSCOPE

VOLUME SIXTEEN, NUMBER 3, AUTUMN 2001

FEATURES

IN PURSUIT OF THE FROG FUNGUS
KEN APLIN AND PETER KIRKPATRICK.....10

RANGE TO REEF
DOUG MYERS.....17

THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN ANT
BRIAN HETERICK.....23

AWASH WITH COLOUR
SUE PATRICK.....28

RAIL AGAINST TIME
GEORGE DUXBURY.....37

TOOLS OF THE TRADE
TONY FRIEND.....41

PARKS OF THE PLATEAU
CHRIS DONE.....48

REGULARS

BUSH TELEGRAPH.....4

ENDANGERED
GREEN HILL THOMASIA.....36

URBAN ANTICS
A PRIMITIVE THYSANURAN.....54

Executive Editor: Ron Kawailak
Editors: David Gough and Carolyn Thomson-Dans
Bush Telegraph Editor: Verna Costello
Advertising copy and editorial assistance: Caris Bailey
Scientific/technical advice: Andrew Burbidge, Chris Simpson, Paul Jones and staff of CALMScience Division
Design and production: Tiffany Aberin, Maria Duthie, Gooitzen van der Meer
Illustration: Gooitzen van der Meer
Cartography: Promacco 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.
 Please do not send unsolicited material to LANDSCOPE, but feel free to telephone the Editor.
 Visit NatureBase at <http://www.naturebase.net>

Published by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington, Western Australia

DEPARTMENT OF Conservation AND LAND MANAGEMENT
Conserving the nature of WA



Armed with sketch pad, pencils, pens and paints, an intrepid group of artists set off on a brand new LANDSCOPE expedition. See 'Awash with Colour' on page 28.



Most of us only know of the exotic pest ants that invade our kitchens. But what of the great Australian ants? See page 23.



Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park lie side by side in our north-west corner. Read about how they are managed on page 17.



Four more conservation reserves now offer greater protection to areas in and around the Mitchell Plateau. See 'Parks of the Plateau' on page 48.



Scientists continue to develop ways to locate, track and trap animals for research. See 'Tools of the Trade' on page 41.

COVER

For many years, the decline of frogs in various parts of the world has puzzled conservationists. A breakthrough came in 1996 when scientists isolated a new kind of fungus that infects and may kill frogs. Western Australian research now under way is beginning to answer some initial questions about the fungus and its impact on our unique frogs. See 'In Pursuit of the Frog Fungus' on page 10.

Cover illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky

