

FOUR YEARS ON AND MALLEEFOWL ARE STILL THRIVING



The success of conservation initiative Project Eden in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area has been further affirmed with the discovery of the first active malleefowl mounds on Peron Peninsula. Since November 2000, three active mounds have been discovered by staff from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) based at Denham. All three mounds were discovered while staff were radio-tracking bilbies, another threatened species released into Francois Peron National Park as part of Project Eden. The project, part of CALM's State-wide fauna recovery program Western Shield, focuses on restoring the range of native animals once found in the Shark Bay area before the onslaught of introduced foxes and feral cats.



Malleefowl were among the first species reintroduced into Francois Peron National Park. Groups of malleefowl, hatched from eggs at the Peron Endangered Species Breeding Centre, were released in 1997 and 1998. CALM officers and members of the North Central Malleefowl Preservation Group collected eggs for incubation at the breeding centre in 1996 and 1997. The mounds from which eggs were collected were on conservation reserves

and private property in the Wubin-Dalwallinu, Canna, Morawa and Mingenew districts. Eggs were also collected from mounds at Kalbarri National Park and Nanga Station, south of Denham, and provided a more local contribution to the founder stock. At least half of the eggs were left in each mound so there would be little or no impact on the reproductive success of resident malleefowl populations.

In the 12 months before the mounds were

discovered, there were several sightings of immature malleefowl that did not have leg-bands, indicating that released birds were successfully building mounds and raising chicks. Mounds contain up to five cubic metres of soil as well as vegetation to incubate the eggs. The discovery of active mounds confirms released malleefowl are breeding and malleefowl are being reproduced to expand further the population on Peron Peninsula.

Malleefowl were once widespread across much of southern Australia, but declined throughout their former range and are no longer found in some areas. Young malleefowl, emerging from the mound after hatching, are extremely vulnerable to predation by feral cats and foxes during the first few months of life. However, control of feral animals on Peron Peninsula has virtually eliminated foxes from the peninsula, and numbers of feral cats have been reduced to a low enough level to allow several species of threatened animals to be released into the national park.

The Peron Endangered Species Breeding Centre also breeds other native animals such as mala, banded hare-wallaby, western barred-bandicoot and bilby for reintroduction to Peron Peninsula and other WA sites.

It is part-funded by the Commonwealth Government through Environment Australia.

Two views of a malleefowl on its mound.
Photos - Babs & Bert Wells/CALM

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LANDSCOPE



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Western Australian botanists are taking part in a global plan to store seed from 10 per cent of the world's flora by 2010. See page 23.



Discover the rich bird life and tranquillity of the Canning River Regional Park on page 17.



Mushrooms the size of a dinner plate can appear within 48 hours of a fire in the karri forest. Read about forest fungi on page 48.



The Pilbara's numerous islands are rich in history, wildflowers and wildlife, with prolific marine life in the surrounding waters. See page 34.



Many of WA's threatened marsupials can be seen in the south-west for the first time in decades. Read about their return to Dryandra Forest on page 10.

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COVER

Paradoxically, the stinging tentacles of sea anemones—a group of carnivorous invertebrates that sometimes resemble colourful flowers—can also provide a safe haven for many underwater creatures. Anemonefish gain immunity to the stinging cells and live primarily in sea anemone tentacles. Other animals, such as crabs, carry a protective anemone on their backs. Turn to page 28.

Cover illustration by Ellen Hickman



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