



ENDANGERED!



Subterranean animals of North West Cape

Cape Range and nearby limestones contain numerous caves and other subterranean features, which harbour a wide range of specialised animals. These animals are both troglobitic (terrestrial cave-dwelling) and stygobitic (groundwater dwelling).

In all, 14 species of subterranean animals from North West Cape have been declared as threatened under the Wildlife Conservation Act. They include two species of fish—the blind gudgeon (*Milyeringa veritas*) and blind cave eel (*Ophisternon candidum*), three species of millipede, five species of schizomids (bizarre spider-like animals), one species of pseudoscorpion and three species of crustacean. Three additional species are on the Department of Conservation and Land Management Fauna Priority List—the Cape Range blind cockroach (*Nocticola flabella*), a blind shrimp and a schizomid.

Two ecological communities from

North West Cape have been informally listed as threatened and ranked as critically endangered—the Camerons Cave Troglotic Community and the Cape Range Remipede Community (Bundera Sinkhole). Several of the threatened animals occur only in one of these two communities.

Possibly the most interesting species is the Cape Range remipede (*Lasionectes exleyi*). The crustacean Subclass Remipedia contains very few species, and the Cape Range remipede is the only one known from the southern hemisphere. It is a primitive crustacean and inhabits a particular layer in a thermo-halocline in Bundera Sinkhole on the western coastal plain of the peninsula.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management has recently

completed interim recovery plans for the conservation of the ecological communities and the species that form them. They were prepared with the support of a grant from the Natural Heritage Trust and overseen by the North West Cape Karst Management Advisory Committee. The committee has members from the Shire of Exmouth, the Department of Defence, the Western Australian Speleological Group (Exmouth), the Western Australian Museum, the Water and Rivers Commission and the Department. The recovery plans will guide the conservation of these unique animals and the communities they form.

Posters have been produced to help people understand more about the communities and what is needed to conserve them.

The posters can be downloaded from the NatureBase website at http://www.naturebase.net/plants_animals/critical_communities.html.

by Andrew Burbidge

Photo Douglas Elford

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

LANDSCOPE



VOLUME SEVENTEEN, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2001

F E A T U R E S

GEOLOGY AND LANDFORMS OF THE SOUTH-WEST

TONY FRIEND, CLARE ANTHONY & NEIL THOMAS10

NUMBATS FOREVER

TONY FRIEND.....17

LESCHENAULTIAS

LEIGE SAGE.....23

BAY OF DELIGHTS

BRAD BARTON & CAROLYN THOMPSON-DANS.....28

WATCHING OVER OUR OCEANS

JENNIE CARY.....35

HISTORY FROM THE CAVES

JOE DORTSH & CHARLES DORTSH.....40

SAVING THREATENED COMMUNITIES

SHEILA HAMILTON-BROWN & SALLY BLACK.....49

R E G U L A R S

BUSH TELEGRAPH.....4

ENDANGERED

SUBTERRANEAN ANIMALS OF NORTH-WEST CAPE.....48

URBAN ANTICS

SNAKE TREK.....54

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DEPARTMENT OF
Conservation
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
Conserving the nature of WA



Within 40 years, the numbat has risen from near extinction to endangered with 10 populations in WA and interstate. See 'Numbats Forever' (page 17).



The forces that shaped the geology and landforms of the south-west began more than 3,500 million years ago. Read the fascinating story on page 10.



The Marine Community Monitoring Program is a new and ambitious program to involve the community in keeping our oceans clean. See page 35.



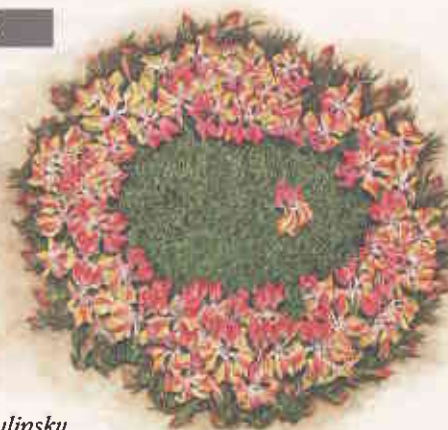
Shark Bay Marine Park provides spectacular opportunities for divers and snorkellers. No wonder it is called Bay of Delights. See page 23.



The history of Aboriginal occupation in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste region spans 50,000 years. Find out more in 'History from the Caves' (page 40).

C O V E R

Leschenaultias are some of the most widely known and recognisable plants in Western Australia. They have fantastic horticultural value and provide glorious floral displays. The wreath leschenaultia is a favourite with visitors during our wildflower season. See page 23.



Cover illustration by Philippa Nikulinsky