

# Wild

## with delight

by Brent Barrett

The lack of photographs of the western ground parrot has always hampered efforts to raise public awareness of this elusive, critically endangered bird, and to understand the plumage difference between the eastern and western subspecies. On 5 October 2005 this all changed.

Following two years of intensive research (see 'The secret life of the western ground parrot', *LANDSCOPE*, Spring 2005), the western ground parrot recovery project's knowledge curve was rising exponentially. We had collated and analysed the entire call repertoire of this subpopulation; retrieved more than 80 western ground parrot feathers from various abandoned nests belonging to other small birds; and



made the first recordings of three new, previously-unknown calls. Two of these calls related directly to a nesting event; one was an adult calling a chick, and the other was made by the chick responding to the adult.

Despite these great advances, my last field season was drawing to a close and I was beginning to pack down our field-based operations for the last time, feeling disheartened by the fact that we had not actually located a western ground parrot nest. Then it happened.

After two years of working on this species, I took the first-ever photographs of a wild adult in full plumage, bathed in a radiant glow emitted from its feathers under the afternoon sun. Through the lens of my camera, I observed the bird calling in all its emotive splendour. There I was, looking a gift bird in the beak, so to speak, and clicking away, frame after frame. The bird moved through the vegetation with such astonishing speed and ease it was often instantly lost and would then appear in a completely different location. The event was the

culmination of two months of hard work and unwavering dedication from my team. The bird was photographed in an area known to have produced at least one chick in the recent breeding season. In a bizarre twist, it is quite possible that it was the parent of the chick that last year became the first wild unrestrained western ground parrot ever to be photographed.

The entire experience lasted for an hour, and was a poignant send off to a team that had been rising every morning at 4.20 am to a freezing cold and often soaking start to the day—an amazing moment to commemorate my time with the project.



**Above and left** The first-ever photographs of an adult western ground parrot in the wild.

Photos – Brent Barrett



Brent Barrett was the project leader of the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Western Ground Parrot Recovery Project for two years. Brent recently returned to New Zealand.



- 44 Microcosm in the ocean meadows  
Seagrass meadows contain an amazing array of life forms, from microscopic plants and animals to rock lobsters and marine turtles.
- 50 Rockingham Lakes Regional Park  
With some unusual residents, this regional park provides an urban sanctuary.
- 59 Cockatoos in crisis  
A program aiming to protect WA's black-cockatoos is Caring for Cockatoos.

## Regulars

- 9 Endangered  
Wongan cactus
- 30 Feature park  
Walyunga National Park
- 39 Bookmarks  
*The Colours of Western Australia*  
*Coral Reefs – Nature's Wonders*  
*Western Australian Exploration*
- 62 Urban antics  
Osprey

### *Publishing credits*

**Executive editor** Caris Bailey  
**Editors** Rhianna King, David Gough.  
**Contributing editor** Carolyn Thomson-Dans.  
**Scientific/technical advice**  
 Keith Morris, Chris Simpson, Robert Powell, Bruce Maslin, Michael Bodsworth, Val English.  
**Design and production** Maria Duthie, Natalie Jolakoski, Tiffany Taylor, Gooitzen van der Meer.  
**Illustration** Gooitzen van der Meer.  
**Cartography** Promaco Geodraft.  
**Marketing** Estelle de San Miguel  
*Phone* (08) 9334 0296 *Fax* (08) 9334 0432.  
**Subscription enquiries**  
*Phone* (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437.  
**Prepress and printing** Lamb Print, Western Australia.  
 © 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, but feel free to contact the editors.

Visit NatureBase at [www.naturebase.net](http://www.naturebase.net)

Published by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, 17 Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington, Western Australia.

