

Volunteer News



Department of Conservation and Land Management



October 1990

Often heard but rarely seen

What's shy and elusive, yet vocal, aggressive and fast moving? It's the endangered noisy scrub bird - a rare and fascinating bird that was for so long thought to be extinct.

Remaining undiscovered for more than 72 years, the NSB (as it is affectionately known) now boasts a healthy population of over 500 within Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve on the South Coast - thanks primarily to the work of some dedicated and energetic scientists and volunteers.

A scientific program managed for the past five years by CALM reserves manager Alan Danks has monitored numbers and translocated some of birds to other areas, to re-establish the NSB where it was once known to occur.

BREEDING SEASON

The program is run annually during June and July at the onset of the bird's breeding season. Over the years the program has involved the indispensable help of many volunteers who assist in capturing birds, complete a population census and care for these birds in aviaries before their release.

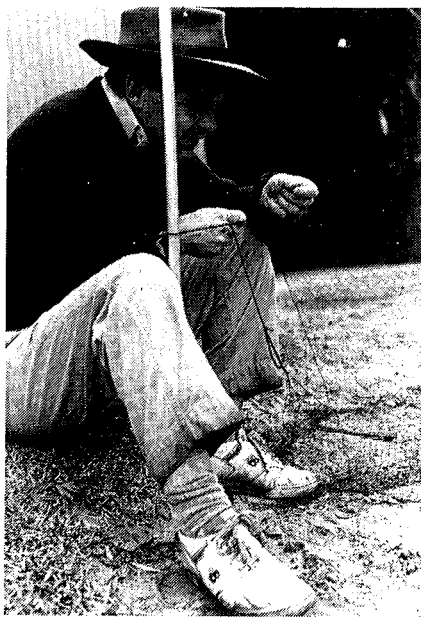
In previous years the program has caught up to 20 individual birds. This year only 11 birds were caught: nine males and two females. This contrasts with other years where the ratio of male to female was around 1:1.

Alan Danks is philosophical about the lack of success in capturing females this year.

"You can never be too sure when dealing with the NSB," Alan said. "Their behaviour is always unpredictable. Severe weather conditions affected the program this year, but we managed to catch a reasonable number of males. Hopefully we can build up female numbers next year."

Alan is determined to assess the factors that caused the shortfall in numbers.

"We had lots of trouble capturing female birds. Our normal capture technique was not working. Perhaps



CALM Volunteer coordinator Colin Ingram carefully constructs a delicate mist net.

environmental conditions were not right, or perhaps we have just been lucky in other years," he said.

CALM technical officer Ian Wheeler, from Manjimup Research, whose appetite is notorious among fellow volunteers, has been involved with the program for several years and is now a valuable assistant to Alan.

Ian's efforts confirm suspicions that the 30 birds translocated to Nuyts in 1986 and 1987 would be hard to find. Despite hearing several males in 1989, no evidence

by
Colin Ingram

was found of the birds in 1990.

The program has been successful in establishing healthy populations of NSB

at Mount Many Peaks, and small populations at Mount Taylor and Quarum Nature Reserve are showing promise.

Another major triumph has come out of this year's program. For the first time NSB were radio tracked with the help of Jim Rolfe, a technical officer from Woodvale Research, who used similar transmitter mounting techniques as those used for the endangered ground parrot. With the assistance of volunteers Darren Murphy, Justine Morris and Alison True, Alan and Jim attempted to radio track a small number of captured birds. Three male birds had small transmitters glued to their backs. Once released, it was the task of the three volunteers to follow the birds through thick coastal scrub with a heavy receiver in hand and an antenna held high above their head.

GOALS ACHIEVED

Two main objectives were set for the pilot study: firstly to see if birds could safely have the transmitters mounted on them and retain them in the thick scrub for a period exceeding three days, and secondly to determine if they could track them once released.

In addition, valuable information about the behaviour of the male NSB was gained. It was found that newly released birds interact almost immediately with males in established territories. Established males actively force the intruders out, but the intruders set up territories in nearby areas.

I would like to thank volunteers Wayne Cherington, Brian Utley, Dave Morcombe, Darren Murphy, Bill Cuming, Justine Morris, Mary Jane Crawford, Alison True, Otto Mueller, Martin Cake, Tony Bush and Joan Bush and CALM staff Ian Wheeler, Mark True, Alan Burbidge, Alan Rose, Jim Rolfe and Dave Wilson. □

Canning River volunteers

The Canning River Regional Park's 16-strong volunteer team is up and running following its June launch by Minister for the Environment, Bob Pearce.

Canning River Regional Park is jointly managed by CALM and the City of Canning, and the two bodies have been developing a volunteer program over the past few months.

The volunteers have elected Stephen Faulds as co-ordinator and established a group program., which includes a series of guided and mapped-out walks.

Future programs will include interpretative pamphlets with experts providing advice on local history, flora and bird life, and tours of the Adenia Lagoon Nature Trail.

Group members have all undertaken CALM training in area history, the natural environment, the influence of urban development, and interpretation skills.

The team aims to provide a wide range of park information, collect ecological data, and liaise with the broader community.

Specific sites of interest for the group include Woodloe's Homestead, Kent Street Weir, and Mason's Landing.

The group will meet regularly. Anyone interested should contact Geoff Moor on 451 0606.

- Nick Packer

John Forrest National Park Visitor Survey

A rainy day in the Park

Volunteers braved wet weather to help with a visitor survey for John Forrest National Park recently.

"Doshing" wet weather gear, volunteers from the "Happy Wanderers", a Mundaring over-50's bushwalking group, assisted in a person-to-person visitor survey over a weekend. The eldest volunteer was in her late seventies.

The task was carried out in a professional manner and a terrific job was done. Without volunteer help, the surveying would have been much more difficult.

Despite the inclement weather, the volunteers said they found enjoyment and interest from the exercise. The proprietor of the park kiosk generously provided scones, jam and cream with an

afternoon cup of tea to the volunteers, who were sheltering under the kiosk's verandah during a heavy storm.

The visitor survey plays an important role in developing a management plan for the park. Visitors' opinions, together with data such as age, size of groups and length of stay, help us to plan for the park's future.

Another survey is planned for spring and additional help would be welcome. Please contact Anna Cunninghame, the John Forrest Park Plan Co-ordinator, on 364 0777 if you feel inspired to help.

TURTLE UPDATE

Volunteers important to the success of CALM's green turtle tagging project.

Under the direction of senior research scientist Dr Bob Prince, a select group of volunteers and university students have been tagging turtles at four locations: Ningaloo Park, Exmouth, parts of the Kimberley coast and Barrow Island over the past two summers.

Most tagging has been of adult female green turtles, but a number of flatback, hawksbill and loggerhead turtles have also been recorded.

Local residents have been crucial to the projects' success, as tagging requires long nights on the beach waiting for turtles to appear.

During the last season nearly 1500 green turtles were tagged at the primary rookeries with well over 100 sightings at other more remote locations.

An extensive volunteer network covers several remote areas, with help from many different organisations and individuals, including the Aboriginal community in the West Kimberley.

The return of turtles to their former rookeries at Barrow and Lacepede Islands is of great significance.

More than 20 of the original 420 turtles tagged in the 1986-87 season have been recorded once more and isolated reports of tagged turtles have come from areas as far as the Gulf of Carpentaria.

One of the largest contributors of volunteers to the Department's program is WAPET. More than 35 employees have volunteered their time and other assistance to the project.

Near Karratha, local CALM officer Greg Oliver has been assisted by the Local Environment Action Force and the Nickel Bay Naturalist Club.

Port Hedland Shire has contributed in the management of turtle rookeries by turning the important Cowrie Beach into a reserve. This has meant restricting vehicle access onto the beach and providing information signs.

- Nick Packer

VOLUNTEER NEWS is for volunteers

Your comments, letters, articles, photos and notices of up-and-coming events are all welcome and we'll do our best to publish them.

This newsletter can only be effective with your contributions so if you think you have something interesting to say, or wish to make us aware of a CALM volunteer project, please feel free to do so.

Send all articles to: **The Editor**
VOLUNTEER NEWS
Policy and Extension Branch
P.O. Box 104
COMO WA 6152

So you want to be a volunteer?

by Estelle Leyland

If you have time to spare, have skills or abilities and love nature, CALM needs you as a volunteer. But before you race off to sign on, there are several things to consider.

Working as a volunteer in our national parks is not all sunshine, scenery and bushwalks. Depending on your assignment, there can be long hours of work, mentally and physically. Extremes of weather can be trying, so if you aren't used to very hot or freezing cold areas, don't consider working in them.

Isolation is another problem, as many of our national parks are

far from any towns, and you may have to live alone or in a tiny community. Self-sufficiency is important, as you are there to lighten the ranger's workload, not increase it.

Although you will be expected to plan a lot of your own program, you should be willing to take orders from the ranger-in-charge, as he is responsible for all workers

in his area. You must also observe park regulations.

Now for the best part! The advantages of volunteer work far outweigh all other considerations. The satisfaction you get depends mainly on your love of our environment and natural treasures. To

live and work on a day-to-day basis in our Australian bush is an experience beyond any man-made pleasure. As 'progress' encroaches more and more into our natural habitation, the time must come when our national parks are the last remaining refuge of our unique flora and

fauna. What tremendous satisfaction there is in contributing to their preservation.

CALM provides training, equipment and support - in fact almost all you need. But the most important prerequisite is enthusiasm. Your time and effort will be of help to our national parks, but the one who will profit the most will be you!

I know. I'm a volunteer.

Estelle Leyland has been working as a volunteer with CALM at Millstream National Park since March this year. Estelle's role has been to collect information on the resources of the Park. So far Estelle has written a draft publication on geology and almost completed a comprehensive study of the exotic weeds of Millstream. She has also managed to add 30 more birds to the current Millstream bird list. In addition, Estelle has been collecting plant specimens for the local and State Herbaria.

GO BUSH

Policy and Extension Branch manager **Jim Sharp** is not one to miss out on an opportunity.

When Brisbane Forest Park Manager Tony Charters visited Perth for the Royal Australian Institute for Parks and Recreation Conference recently, he was leg-roped by Jim to address a meeting of the Northern Forests Regional staff.

Tony played a major role in developing Go Bush, the popular recreation and public education program in Brisbane Forest Park.

The park is managed and operated by 22 fulltime staff and has 30 volunteers.

The Go Bush Program and the Bush Ranger Safaris offer about 50 different activities to the park's two million visitors each year.

Activities include night spotlights, forest breakfast tours, native plants, stream ecology, rainforest plants and Aussie animals. They are led by fully trained volunteers.

Regional manager Eric Jenkins was highly enthusiastic about adopting the program, and the first activities will be run in the Northern Forest Region during the September-October school holidays.

- Colin Ingram

Fishing spot saved

Volunteers will again help to preserve a popular south west fishing area known as Black Point Dune, within D'Entrecasteaux National Park.

Erosion from natural causes and from vehicles and motorcycles has placed the dunes under threat. Last May, 24 volunteers spent a day at Black Point Dune planting marram grass.

CALM officer Lindon Piggot enlisted the help of residents and volunteers from the Nannup Lions and Nannup Angling Club. The project was planned by CALM officer Vicki Metcalfe.

Further work on the dunes is being planned. Anyone interested in helping can contact Lindon Piggot at CALM's Nannup office on (097) 561101.

CARE - Conservation, Animal rescue, Research and Education

CALM Exmouth staff are working side by side with locals for the benefit of the environment.

After successful volunteer projects in the Exmouth area, residents decided it was time to unite their good work.

So in May, they joined forces and established CARE: conservation, animal rescue, research and education.

DRIVING FORCE

The driving force behind CARE is Ningaloo Marine Park Manager, Sue Osborne. Sue is now president of the association, which has a large number of volunteers.

The non-profit making group is divided three

into four sections: business, wildlife care, Milyering and research and monitoring.

CARE is financially supported by CALM so that projects the group undertakes can be carried out successfully.

CARE members hope to make the public aware of their impact on the environment.

Some of the activities being undertaken by CARE include assisting staff at Milyering Visitor Centre, assisting wildlife researchers in marine turtle research, monitoring whale movements and rehabilitating sick and injured fauna.

For more information contact Sue Osborne at Milyering Visitor Centre on 099-491 808.

- Cameron Barr

NEW INITIATIVES ON PENGUIN ISLAND

Penguin Island's visitor centre will soon provide guided walks and information for foreign visitors.

The island's volunteer scheme has been operating for several years and is now moving towards self-management with a series of new initiatives.

At a recent evaluation meeting, the group developed new ideas and improvements for the forthcoming season. Trained guides will highlight important parts of the island and answer visitors' questions.

New signposts for the information centre will be erected on the island and signs advising visitors of island "Do's

and Don'ts" will be erected on the mainland near Mersey Point.

Visitors will have access to an improved touch table in the centre and to a display tree for artwork and photographs.

Numbers of visitors using the centre's facilities will now be recorded by staff.

Pat Gammon was re-elected as "Roster Officer" for the next season.

Volunteers will also help Murdoch University researchers with work on the island.

Anyone wishing to join the program or obtain further information should contact Rae Burrows on 364 0719.

Dune brushing

Major dune stabilisation work has been completed by Conservation Volunteers (WA) on Garden Island.

Four major 'blow outs' on the western side of the island were closed off and brushed by the volunteers in August and September.

CALM Metropolitan Region operations officer Leon Griffiths and reserves officer Grahame Rowland have developed a good relationship with the group and hope to organise more programs like this in future.

(Conservation Volunteers were formerly Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers.)

Pilot program

CALM's Metropolitan Region and the Department of Community Services have embarked on a pilot program using juvenile offenders in nature reserves.

The program has been trialed at Twin Swamps Nature Reserve where six young boys completing community service orders spent three weeks brushing tracks to halt soil erosion.

Reserves officer Grahame Rowland said the key to the program's success was a good supervisor who could relate to the boys and help them develop an appreciation for work.

Grahame said reserves management officer Terry Blumer had been successful in achieving these objectives.

Similar future projects are planned.

A VALUED RESOURCE

All our valued volunteers who have registered with CALM are eligible to obtain CALM publications at reduced prices through the Como Reception Desk.

Orders can be placed by telephoning (09) 367 0333 or writing to P.O. Box 104 Como WA 6152.

Marmion Marine Park update

A new and exciting information program is underway in Marmion Marine Park.

Volunteers are being trained by CALM and Underwater World to provide a weekend service to the growing number of park visitors.

"Friends of Marmion" volunteers will learn about marine conservation, the park's geology, flora and fauna, tides and currents, and marine safety so they can

by Nick Packer

answer visitors' queries.

The trainees will staff the information foyer within the CALM office at Hillarys Boat Harbour during spring and summer.

It is hoped that future operation of the visitor centre will be entirely by "Friends of Marmion". Volunteers are expected to be rostered on once every six to eight weeks. Anyone interested can contact Dawn Chivers on 405 2549.

YANCHEP VISITOR SURVEY

Many thanks to the "Friends of Yanchep" who carried out traffic surveys in Yanchep National Park.

Over four days, nine volunteers painstakingly recorded visitor and vehicle numbers between 6 am and 6 pm.

Because of inaccurate vehicle recording from automatic devices, park supervisor Terry Hales approached the "Friends of Yanchep" to do a manual survey.

At present visitors are asked to pay a \$4 levy per car on an honour system. The survey attempted to find out the cost effectiveness of employing a staff on gate duties beyond the existing hours.

The figures revealed a high proportion of passenger cars, with the peak usage between 11am and 5pm. Visits to the Yanchep Inn, which is within the park, certainly swelled numbers.

The volunteers also recorded the number of visitors, the type of vehicle and the proportion of patrons who were exempt from park fees on account of holding annual passes or on official park business.

CALM would like to thank Stan Dailey, Joe and Nina Hill, Pauline Dossett, John King, Joy and Ron Davis, and Lola and Ken Gibbs.