

# Volunteer News



Department of Conservation and Land Management



March 1991

## Teamwork Saves Seals

by Tanya Maxted

**Volunteers from all walks of life gave up their free time to help CALM save NZ fur seal pups and other wildlife affected by the Sanko Harvest oil spill near Esperance and clean polluted beaches at Cape Le Grand National Park.**

Esperance locals - some of them members of LEAF - the Local Environment Action Forum - registered in their droves. More than 250 names were taken by the CALM Esperance district volunteer coordinator John Winton.

On Hood Island, the first seal pup colony to be affected by the oil spill, volunteers joined CALM officers who were airlifted onto the island by helicopter for the intensive cleanup operation.

The pups - aged between two weeks and two months - were caught and penned ready for washing. Working in teams, the volunteers washed the pups in two types of detergents three times, using brushes to break up the tarry pollutant, sprayed their coats with Preen and then rinsed them thoroughly.

Once washed, the animals were then treated by CALM vet Dr Nick Gales, who worked with a team of volunteers to weigh, measure and tag the pups, take blood samples from them and treat their infected eyes.

Before they were released back into the wild to rejoin their mothers, the pups' habitat was cleaned by volunteers using high pressure hoses and by scrubbing. This was done to ensure the pups would not become re-oiled.

The setup was the same on Seal Rock - the second colony found to be affected by the spill. While Hood

Island had 38 pups oiled, there were up to 160 coated in varying degrees on Seal Island.

Briefings for volunteers were held each evening at the CALM Esperance office. Tales of seal bites and other antics flowed, and the evening news was watched by all; the volunteers laughed as they saw themselves on national television covered in oil trying to avoid the razor sharp jaws of the snapping seals.

And then as suddenly as the operations had begun, flights to the two seal colonies ended as they were closed for a week to allow the bonding process between cow and pup to occur.

Volunteers were picking up shovels

instead of seal pups as they cleaned the usually pristine white beaches of Cape Le Grand National Park blackened by the oil. CALM Esperance district manager Klaus Tiedemann - CALM controller throughout the operations - thanked the volunteers for their efforts.

He said that there had been a quick response to assist CALM within the first two days of the Sanko Harvest running aground.

As well as the seal cleanup, Mr Tiedemann said that volunteers had also helped search along nearly 100 km of affected coastline for oiled wildlife, catered for food and transported other volunteers from site to site.



*Volunteers cleaning beaches at Esperance.*

# Wallaroo Rock Clean-up

**CALM's Goldfields Region conducted its first volunteer program in early November last year when they launched a campaign to clean-up at least 20 years of refuse at Wallaroo Rock, a proposed nature reserve some 80km north-west of Coolgardie.**

The reserve will include some Goldfields' woodland, the rock itself and three dams.

The dams were built in the 1900s to provide water to the locomotives servicing the Goldfields' woodlines. The dams were later used to irrigate a garden which supplied vegetables to Kalgoorlie's historic "York Hotel".

The task of cleaning took the combined efforts of 50 volunteers including seven Australian Conservation Volunteer members on their way to another voluntary project at the Eyre Bird Observatory.

The Shire of Coolgardie contributed machinery and staff to dispose of several car bodies and dig large rubbish holes.

The results of the clean-up included 10, three tonne truck loads of bottles, cans and small debris; six car bodies; two massive tandem axle bus chassis; an old shed and concrete pad, and 12 wheelbarrows of broken glass laboriously raked, swept and handpicked off the rock.

The first half-a-days work was arduous and depressing; with several truck loads of rubbish removed from the worst affected area, nothing seemed much different. However as is often the case, a change suddenly became apparent, and by late afternoon all were aware of great changes at Wallaroo Rock.

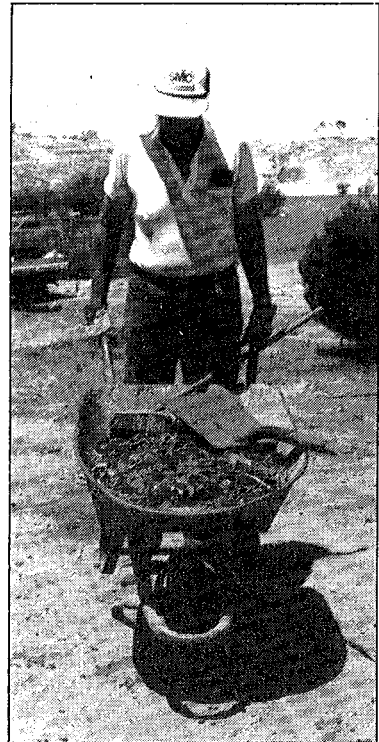
Declining spirits and tired limbs were revived late Saturday afternoon by a sunset swim and refreshments contributed by Roger Underwood.

CALM staff also used the weekend to do some pit-trapping and spotlighting to give the volunteers some insights into wildlife survey techniques and the natural history of the area they were assisting to maintain.

As the community becomes more environmentally aware, people are being encouraged to take their rubbish with them when they leave. As a result bins won't be installed at Wallaroo Rock and they will become increasingly scarce in other areas too.

The ultimate fate of the area as a CALM managed reserve is dependent upon negotiations on tenure, access and maintenance, with other Government Departments and the Shire of Coolgardie.

**Andrew Chapman**



*Volunteer Richard Eaton with a barrow full of broken glass.*

## Community - CALM Link

**Two-way communication between CALM and the community is the aim of Community-CALM Link, a new group formed in the Jerramungup and Ravensthorpe Shires on the South Coast.**

The group's 10 members were recommended by the Fitzgerald River National Park Advisory Committee, based on their geographical distribution and involvement within their communities.

They will have weekly meetings with CALM Rangers so they can inform the

public about road and track conditions, and any special attractions such as whale sightings or particular wildflowers in bloom.

Members will be available to answer queries from the community, as well as to attend local community meetings and special events when possible.

The Community-CALM Link group will meet regularly with CALM to provide feedback on community concerns and ideas for improving management of the Fitzgerald River National Park.

### **VOLUNTEER NEWS is for Volunteers**

Your comments, letters, articles, photos and notices of up-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 your articles to:

**VOLUNTEER NEWS**

P.O. Box 104

COMO W.A. 6152

## Low Life Probe

Work on the lower plants, liverworts, mosses, algae and fungi, have in the past been sadly neglected at the WA Herbarium.

Their curation has mainly relied on the expertise of visiting research scientists. As a result the poorly curated lower plant collections have remained in disarray and largely inaccessible with the majority of specimens unidentified.

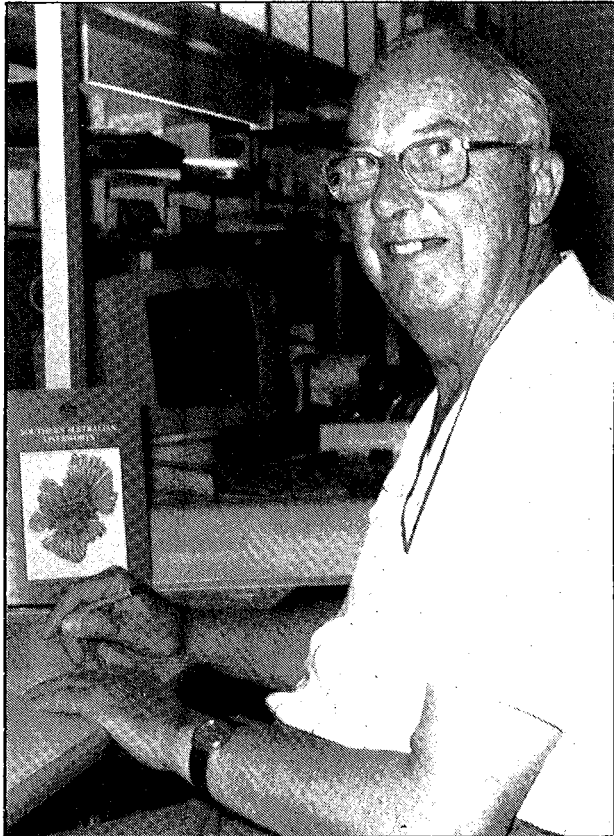
Things are now changing in this arena with the help of a volunteer.

When Brian Best, an honorary biologist at the National Herbarium and Botanic Garden, Zimbabwe, decided to migrate to Australia, he contacted the Herbarium and volunteered to curate our moss and liverwort collections.

Brian began work at the Herbarium in November 1990 and has already produced a checklist of bryophytes (mosses) in WA (in manuscript form). Brian's task is to painstakingly sort through the liverwort and moss collections making sure the name on the packet is a true description of the plant it contains.

By soaking the plant specimens in water, Brian effectively sorts the plant from the substrate, then using a microscope he is able to identify the plant. Sometimes he finds there is more than one type of specimen contained in the packet. When the specimens are identified, they are dried and returned to their packet (or placed in new packets) with the correct name recorded on the front.

Through this process, Brian has effectively extended the moss and liverwort collection and is creating a highly valuable and useful Herbarium resource from a previously disparate collection of lower plants. - Vicki Hamley



*Moss man Brian Best at work at the Herbarium.*

## Seed Foraging At Moora

The members of the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers are often willing helpers with CALM's volunteer program.

They have worked on the Wallaroo Rock Clean-up, the Leschenault Peninsula and various other projects

Recently Craig Mathews, who assists with the story writing and production of Volunteer News, joined the ATCV on a project in the Moora area to collect native tree seed early in December last year.

The weekend operation, organised by the ATCV and led by licensed seedpicker Neil Ovens, involved picking seedpods off trees along roadsides and bushland soon to make way for new gravel pits.

The seedpods were taken to a nursery at Coomberdale where District Co-ordinator for Greening Australia, Phil Bellamy, then spread the col-

lected seedpods onto tarpaulins to dry. The seed was later collected and washed, and the empty seedpods are discarded.

From there the bulk of the seed is taken to Stan Lewis, of a local Land Conservation group, to be used in a direct seeding program which aims to decrease land degradation in the area.

The remaining seed is primarily used to rehabilitate unused gravel pits.

Overall, the weekend proved to be successful in terms of the seed collected and in volunteer involvement. It was a very enjoyable weekend.

For further information on seed foraging or other weekend pursuits, please contact Ian Stirling (ATCV) on (09) 335 5508.

### Volunteers For Conservation

A short list of just some of the volunteer groups/projects currently active in WA.

Friends of the Herbarium  
Bob & Barbara Backhouse  
(09) 367 0500

Marmion Marine Park  
Guides

Linda Arnold (09) 342 5091  
Wildlife Carers

Sue Smith (09) 295 1588

Friends of Yanchep  
Joe Hill (09) 561 1786

Campground Hosts  
Terry Hales (09) 364 0777

Conservation Volunteers WA  
Ian Stirling (09) 335 5508

For information concerning other volunteer projects contact Terry Hales at CALM on (09) 364 0777.

# Walpole Holiday Activities

**CALM holiday activities for visitors to the Walpole district attracted a record number of participants this year.**

The four-week program, which has been running every Christmas for the past four years, took holiday makers and locals on activities including spot-lighting tours, wilderness bush walks, fauna surveys, canoeing, forest management and prescribed burning sessions.

CALM National Park Ranger and program co-ordinator Rod Annear said that more than 1600 people attended activities, compared with about 600 in 1990.

"The response this year was overwhelming. At one of our film nights at Peaceful Bay we had more than 120 people attend.

"Much of the success can be attributed to the efforts of three volunteer interpreters who worked long and hard to publicise and run many of the activities.

"Walpole staff were great as usual, helping run or plan the program, but without the help of the volunteers we couldn't have hoped for the same results."

Five volunteers were selected and trained before the summer program began at a special week-long training course held at Windy Harbour.

Three headed for Walpole and two ran similar activities for campers at Shannon National Park camp-sites.

Running activities wasn't the only thing the volunteers helped out with.

Volunteer Sue Stirton acted as the Nuyts Wilderness Trail host and also recorded the condition of camp-sites and trails and observed usage patterns within the wilderness area.

Southern Forest Region Community Education and Interpretation Officer Cliff Winfield said the value of personal interpretation cannot be underestimated.

"Brochures and information panels have their place, but nothing can beat the experience of face-to-face

interpretation," he said.

"Through programs such as those at Shannon and Walpole we have the opportunity to increase participants' appreciation of the natural environment, help them develop a more caring attitude toward it, increase their understanding of park and forest management and encourage them to be more thoughtful in their recreational use of park and forest areas."

Rod Annear

## North-West Bound

**Estelle Leyland, a CALM volunteer, recently completed seven months survey work at Millstream-Chichester National Park.**

With her Datsun Sunny and trailer packed to the hilt, Estelle arrived at Millstream in April last year.

With a background in natural history, mostly self taught, Estelle was able to complete a number of tasks. She collected numerous specimens for the WA and Pilbara Regional Herbariums as well as supplementing the Park's own Herbarium.

Estelle also compiled and prepared a report on the occurrence and distribution of exotic weed species within the National Park and opportunistically collected information on bird species, recording their abundance and the vegetation associations in which they were observed.

On completion of her work, Estelle was presented with a copy of the

CALM publication "North West Bound".

After spending Christmas down south, she returned to the Pilbara to collect her car and trailer before heading to Broome to continue her volunteer work with CALM.

### Volunteer Survey In April

**To assist CALM to develop and improve its Community Involvement Program, a telephone survey of CALM volunteers will be conducted in April.**

Our aim is to find out what motivated volunteers to work voluntarily with CALM, and what their expectations are of CALM.

The results of this survey are required to update our volunteer programs where improvements may be needed.

A random sample of registered volunteers will be selected to participate.

If you receive a phone call from an Edith Cowen University Researcher in Perth, then your co-operation would be greatly appreciated.

Results of this survey will be published in a later edition of Volunteer News.

## — Volunteers' State Conference —

The Fourth Annual State Conference for National Volunteers Week is to be held on the 12 - 13th of April at the conference room of the Department of Community Services in East Perth, and already it is shaping up to be a very exciting event. If you would like more information and a registration form, please write to :

Community Involvement Co-ordinator  
Policy and Extensions Branch  
Conservation And Land Management  
P.O. Box 104  
COMO W.A. 6152

or telephone Terry Hales at CALM on (09) 364 0777.