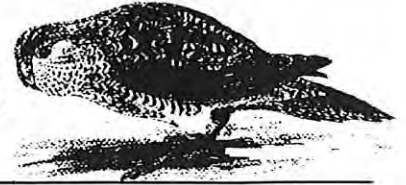


# NIGHT PARROTS: STILL ELUSIVE



An interim recovery plan for this least known of all Australian parrots has been completed and endorsed by CALM's Director for Nature Conservation. The primary aim of the interim recovery plan is to find one or more populations of Night Parrots in Western Australia to study and if necessary conduct protective management.

As the primary current action, CALM is conducting a public campaign to gain information about possible sightings of Night Parrots. Over thirty reports have now been received and field outings (including an Easter Campout by the WA Group of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union) have been conducted to four places from which one or more such reports have come. These field trips were to Maranalgo Station near Paynes Find in May 1995, Burnerbinmar Station, between Paynes Find and Yalgoo in August 1995, Lake King chain of lakes in January, 1996 and April 1996, and Maroubra Station, north of Beacon in May 1996.

Various people including members of CALM, the Museum of WA and keen amateur birdwatchers have also searched likely places on an opportunistic basis over the last several years.

No sightings of Night Parrots have yet been confirmed, although only one report has actually been proved to be in error. Not surprisingly, the searches so far have been very much like looking for a needle in a haystack. If the Night Parrot is largely solitary, especially outside the breeding season, and if numbers are as low as we expect, searches using spotlighting or disturbance of vegetation during the day depend greatly on good fortune. That is, on such things as disturbing the one

samphire patch out of many thousands in which a Night Parrot happens to be hiding, or covering in a night of spotlighting the few hectares out of many thousands in which Night Parrots may be feeding. This experience has confirmed the idea that where possible searches should be based on surveillance at isolated watering points in an otherwise dry area.

All of the field outings so far have been confined to the southern Goldfields and the Wheatbelt. Consistent with the interim recovery plan CALM is planning to conduct an expedition later this year to a more remote region, such as the eastern Pilbara to Rudall River area, traditionally considered to be among the strongholds of the Night Parrot. Coincidentally, a very recent, and rather convincing

report of two Night Parrots has come from east of the Rudall River National Park on the Canning Stock Route. An exact position is available for this report and we will try to include the area in the planned field trip.

Given the secretive nature of this species, the vast areas of potential habitat still available, and the likelihood that numbers anywhere will be small, many more trips may still be needed before the Night Parrot's survival is confirmed. Once one or more populations are found the tasks of studying the species, clarifying its conservation status, identifying any processes threatening it and ensuring its conservation can begin in earnest.

*John Blyth*

## Interim Recovery Plans (IRPs) for Critically Endangered Taxa

Recently a new *Guideline* was approved and circulated throughout CALM for the preparation of Interim Recovery Plans (IRPs). These Plans are written to guide the recovery of threatened taxa and ecological communities, especially those that are Critically Endangered. They are prepared when urgency or insufficient information make it inappropriate to prepare full Recovery Plans. IRPs will usually prescribe recovery actions over a three year period. It is CALM's aim that at the end of this period either a full Recovery Plan will be prepared or the taxon or community will have been recovered to Vulnerable or a lower category of threat.

All IRPs will be numbered in a series. A number will be assigned by WATSCU once the IRP has been judged by the Director, WATSCU, to be ready for approval by the Director of Nature Conservation.

Approved IRPs will be published in groups at or near the end of each calendar year as one issue of the *Western Australian Wildlife Management Program* series.