

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF BIODIVERSITY

B&B AND FARM BUSHLAND

by Ann Carr

IN 1991, when the wool market collapsed, I said to John: 'Maybe we could open our house to guests? We like people; there is room in the house; the farm is picturesque, especially in spring with the everlastings; Coalseam Park and the wildflowers on the nearby sandplains are great tourist attractions - and we need the money!'

This will now be the sixth year we have run our bed and breakfast business. Guests have come from all over WA, the eastern States of Australia, New Zealand, European countries, America and Japan. Most come during the wildflower season, August to October. We can accommodate 4-5 guests at a time and provide dinner as well as B&B, dining together with our guests at night. During the evening I advise on what plants are in flower and where to go to see them, while John answers the farm questions.

Guests are also welcome to walk in the hills behind the house, where there are birds, plenty of kangaroos and views of the surrounding countryside. When the everlastings are flowering we take our tourists to a special part of the farm that is a carpet of pink and yellow. Time permitting, I also offer a springtime guided walk on 'the rocks' to interested guests. We don't advertise 'farm activities' as we feel that the extra insurance cost and the time it takes are not worth it, but if something special is happening, eg shearing, they are welcome to visit the shed.

To elaborate on the 'farm ecotourism' side - our farm is 4000



Everlastings, Langton.

acres, of which almost half is grazed woodland which has a ground cover of everlastings. They include yellow pompoms, *Cephalipterum drummondii*, tiny yellow daisies, *Hyalosperma glutinosa*, and golden *Waitzea nitida*. We also have a special area where pink *Schoenia cassiniana* mix with the others in a beautiful display as far as the eye can see.

'Everlastings are very susceptible to the sprays used in agriculture'

The everlastings need care to survive as they are very susceptible to the herbicide sprays used in agriculture (for some reason the pink species seem to be the most susceptible). Our main farm activity is grazing sheep and cattle with only a small amount of crop sown, and near the pink area no cropping at all. Luckily it adjoins a reserve so we don't have to worry about neighbours' sprays. John also

believes that careful grazing management also helps to control the weeds, such as wild oats, resulting in a better survival and display of everlastings. Of course, overgrazing would be disastrous.

Apart from the grazed woodland, we have two special *Land for Wildlife* areas, 'the rocks' and the 'hills behind the house'.

The rocks - properly known as Enokurra Hills - are an outcrop of metamorphosed sandstone with good native vegetation. It has a number of interesting plant species that I have not seen anywhere else in the Shire. We fenced stock out of the area in 1992. Since then the native shrubs and ground covers have regenerated and are thriving, except for the part at the base - which was good grazing - where wild oats and other pasture weeds have established a thick cover.

On the rocks I show tourists the plants, from orchids to trees. I explain things such as: borya being a resurrection plant; the difference between male and female sheoaks; the area's importance for birdlife

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and animals such as carpet pythons, and we view the Yandanooka Valley from the lookout (Enokurra is aboriginal for lookout). The biggest management problem here is weeds, as they are inhibiting regeneration. Everyone who walks the rocks is requested to pull up a few blue lupins, and we are planning to treat the surrounding weeds, a section at a time, as we will probably need to manually spread suitable local seed into the treated areas, or only weeds will come back.

The 'hills behind the house' were also fenced in 1992 and I hoped the site would become a 'seed bank' for the surrounding area. It is a lovely walk close to the house and includes a creek which runs after rain and tadpoles appear. The area was grazed woodland of York gum *Eucalyptus loxophleba* and jam *Acacia acuminata* with the large shrubs kurara *Acacia tetragonophylla* and standback *Hakea recurva* with a ground cover of yellow pompom everlasting and non-native grasses.

Unfortunately, there has been little regeneration. Why? Perhaps there are too many weeds? - or maybe its been grazed too long so

that few seeds are left in the soil? (the steep slopes would exacerbate this effect due to erosion) - or are the kangaroos eating the young seedlings? - or maybe it needs a fire? We don't have answers to these questions yet. However, the site does seem to have become a safe haven for all the local kangaroos, from which they venture out in the evenings to browse in the paddocks, while a few brave ones mow the back lawn at night. The tourists love them - the neighbours aren't so impressed!

Economically, its a small supplement to our farm income. We could make it more commercially viable by expanding - building more accommodation, etc, but then it wouldn't be a personal experience for the guests or us, and that is how we like it. We are a working farm with B&B a sideline. The tourists are seasonal, we are flat out during the wildflower season - luckily a less busy time farmwise - and more relaxed the rest of the year with only occasional guests.

We have a shelf of books on native flora and fauna, copies of 'Landscape', mounted plant specimens from the Mingenew

Herbarium, and, of course, now a *Land for Wildlife* folder, all of which the guests can peruse. I really enjoy sharing my knowledge of local flora and fauna and guests often tell me they are now more aware of WA's biodiversity. Of course, some guests just want a bed for the night and are not nature buffs, so the conversation covers different topics - although just as interesting. However, being able to suggest local wildflower areas to visit does sometimes lead to a booking another year.

Ann and John Carr of 'Langton Farm', Yandanooka, can be contacted on (099) 72 6062. They are members of the Greenbrook CG. John has farmed in the Mingenew - Yandanooka area all his life. Ann is compiling a herbarium of local plants for the Mingenew LCDC and has recorded birds for national and state surveys.

Ecotourism contacts

Every year, thousands of people visit WA during the wildflower season.

Some of these visitors are members of *LFW* in other states, and they would probably like to meet landholders with similar interests.

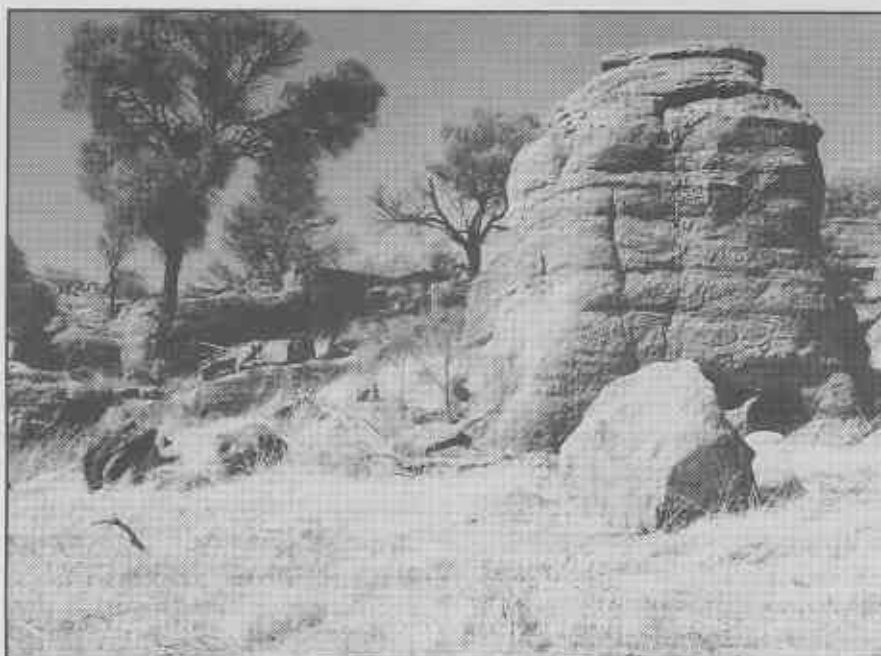
Would you be interested in being put in touch with any of these visitors?

I will be compiling a list of potential WA contacts, please notify me by phone (08) 9334 0530 or fax (08) 9334 0278

if you would like to be on it, please include

- ◆ Name
- ◆ Phone
- ◆ Knowledge of eg: birds, wildflowers, no-fill etc
- ◆ Tourist facilities available (eg: farmstay)

Penny Hussey



'The Rocks,' Enokurra Hills