

LOOKING for somewhere to get a bit of peace and solitude, do a bit of fishing, a bit of birdwatching? The WANaturalists' Club's Yunderup Nature Observatory is just the place!

There are not many rivers in Western Australia that form a sizeable delta at their mouth, but the Serpentine and the Murray are the exception. Together they create a unique landscape at Yunderup, on the Peel-Harvey Inlet, south-east of Mandurah. The eastern end of the Inlet is a real delta made up of islands and channels created by the rivers over hundreds of years. The process is a natural one and continues all the time. There are seven islands, some occupied permanently or as holiday homes, others retain their pristine character.

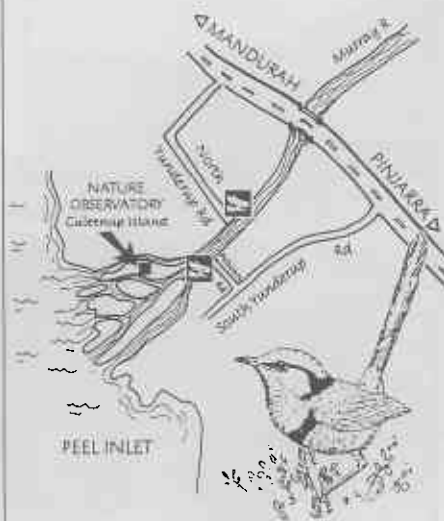
At 7 ha, Culeenup Island is one of the largest. It is delineated by two channels, North Wargooloop and South Jeegarnyeejip and the Murray River itself. It is roughly east-west oriented, just over 2 km long and about 500 m wide at its broadest.

In 1970, the WA Naturalists' Club was granted some land at the western extremity of the 'built-up' area, as a site for a field study centre, to act as a focus for study of the exceptionally rich natural environment. Through the voluntary efforts of many Club members, a building was erected on site in 1984/5. It sits on stilts above the floodplain, and from the verandah there are

ABOUT GROUPS

ESCAPE TO AN ISLAND?

by Otto Mueller



excellent views of the abundant bird life.

The building has a large main room including a kitchen with all the essentials. There are also three bedrooms, a bathroom, two toilets, a study and a laundry. There are four bunk beds in each bedroom, thus 12 people could be accommodated on any one night.

The island's vegetation consists of open woodland and scrubland on sandy soils, plus saline and freshwater wetlands. It has a very

rich flora, including 23 different orchids. Flora and fauna identification books, lists of plants and birds and a field herbarium are available to help you identify what you see. The area is a RAMSAR wetland and is a paradise for birds, especially water birds which roost or nest along the channels, or feed on the mud-banks in the Inlet, but there are also many bush birds such as Splendid Fairy-wrens. In winter, you will need rubber boots to explore properly!

Apart from observing the wildlife, what else is there to do? Well, you can bushwalk to Cooper's Mill at the end of the island; you can swim or fish off the Club's jetty; you can use your boat to explore the delta, the rivers and the Inlet; or you could just sit and laze away in the peace and quiet of this serene and beautiful place.

There are two public boatramps (see map), the trip to the Nature Observatory takes 10 mins. Those who haven't got your own boat or canoe, may use the Club's boat, which is trailerparked at North Yunderup. You will need to take your own food, sleeping bag, etc.

And the cost? - just \$16 (adult) and \$11 (child) per weekend - best value in WA! Other charges apply for different lengths of stay. For bookings and further details ring Otto Mueller on (08) 9341 7762.

Think about it and have a break on an island!