

## FLORA

**F**OLLOWING the article on Woylies by Mark Garkaklis in the January issue of Western Wildlife, I thought readers would like to hear the latest news on research into Australian truffle-like (hypogeous) fungi.

Most truffle-like fungi are believed to form mycorrhizal associations with plants, but some probably do not (more research is needed, of course). Mycologist Teresa Lebel (Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne) is about to publish the description of a new genus closely related to the Agaricaceae, a group of saprophytic fungi which includes the commercially-grown species of mushroom *Agaricus bisporus*. She believes that it is extremely unlikely that this new fungus is mycorrhizal. Following genetic studies, other Australian hypogeous fungi have been found to be related to saprophytic above-ground (epigeous) fungi such as *Protrubera* with *Clathrus*, *Endoptychum* with *Agaricus* and *Montagne* with *Coprinus*.

Because of research on mycophagy in Australian mammals (principally by Andrew Claridge, National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW) and mycorrhizal associations of native plants (principally by Neale Bougher, CSIRO WA, and overseas investigators) there has been a marked increase in research on our truffle-like fungi during the last decade. The findings are very exciting and funding has allowed

### TRUFFLES (AND THE FUNGIMAP CONFERENCE)

by Katrina Syme

truffle expert James Trappe (retired Professor of Mycology, Forest Sciences Department University of Corvallis, Oregon, USA) to spend more than a year here in collaborative work with Dr Claridge, Dr Lebel and other Australian scientists.

In the last decade, 25 genera and some 200 new species of truffle-like fungi have been described. Another 200 are currently being described and it is now estimated that we could have more than 1,200 species. This is in marked contrast to Europe, which has only about 150 species of truffles.

You can hear Australian native truffle specialist Teresa Lebel talking on this subject at the June Fungimap Conference in Denmark. Many other inspiring speakers have agreed to come and they include: Neale Bougher: 'Fungi in remnant woodlands of the Western Australian wheatbelt'; Roger Hilton: 'Cup, saucer and flask fungi'; phycologist Roberta Cowan: 'Fungi in the marine environment' and Richie Robinson: 'Wood-rotting fungi'. The person largely responsible for initiating the Fungimap project, Tom May (Chief

Mycologist, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne), will be a keynote speaker. New Zealand mycologists Ross Beever and Geoff Ridley will also present talks.

During our workshops, participants will learn how to identify fungi; record characters for herbarium collections and view microscopic features. On field excursions there will be ample opportunity for the discovery of unusual and new species of fungi - so few are named! But by then you will appreciate the enormous difficulties in naming new species, having heard Bettye Rees' talk: 'Fun and games in fungal taxonomy'.

The fungi we find will be labelled and displayed and as well as the workshops and talks, there will be an open forum, a dinner and entertainment. The conference ends on the evening of Tuesday June 26th. (Note that the Conference dates differ slightly from those previously advertised and are from 22-26th June, inclusive).

Numbers are limited, so please register as soon as possible. Brochures are available from: Conference Organiser  
Denmark Environment Centre  
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