

## IN BRIEF - FAUNA

### NATIVE SEED-EATING FAUNA - NEED NATIVE PLANTS TO EAT THE SEEDS OF!



Western ground parrot eating semaphore sedge.

WA's rarest endemic bird, the western ground parrot (WGP), was recorded on videotape for the first time this year by Mike Barth, the WGP Recovery Project Officer. At the same time, Brent Barrett was taking some still pics, two of which are shown here. As well as being excellent shots of this very rare and elusive bird, they record what the bird is feeding on. Mike notes that while they were observing the bird, it fed on all sorts of low heath plants, pulling the fruits down to beak level. The most common food items were small semaphore sedges (*Mesomelaena* sp.) but they also ate the seeds of *Daviesia teretifolia*, as well as sundry other plants.

As well as other parrots, quite a number of native birds feed on seeds and fruits when they are available. From the emu, through bustards, bronze-wing pigeons, malleefowl, button-quails, and various parrots to pipits and finches, seeds are an important part of their diet. Although in the south-west area agricultural seeds – weeds and crops – have largely taken the place of native plants, it is still important to ensure that revegetation contains low-growing seeders for the smaller, ground-feeding birds. It is possible that this activity could be important to distribute the seeds, as some may survive to germinate in the droppings. The seed dispersal of many low sedges, curly grasses and twine rushes, for example, is not well understood, nor, unfortunately, is their seedling cultivation.

Daviesias (bitter peas) are another matter. These low-medium height shrubs are widespread across the whole of WA, so there will be one or more species suitable for every area. They are often prickly and form dense, low nest sites. The flowers are red or brownish-russet and usually very attractive. They are followed by a small



Western ground parrot eating *Daviesia teretifolia*

triangular pod shaped like a sailboard sail. Being peas, they contribute nitrogen to the soil. Easy to collect seed, easy to grow – why not included some daviesias in your next replanting project? If you are on heath on the eastern side of the south coast, try *D. teretifolia* – some other animal will thank you, even if you are not fortunate enough to have a western ground parrot!

Photos: Brent Barrett

### CARNABY'S COCKATOOS USE ARTIFICIAL NESTS

On Alison Doley's farm, 'Koobabie', at Coorow, there were 33 active Carnaby's cockatoo nests this year, including four in the seven artificial nest boxes that have been installed. They are supported by 4" galvanized pipes which have a major advantage in that no nest predator can reach them. As well they should be safe from fire, unless an ember should blow into the wooden nest. This lady of the house seems quite content with her accommodation!

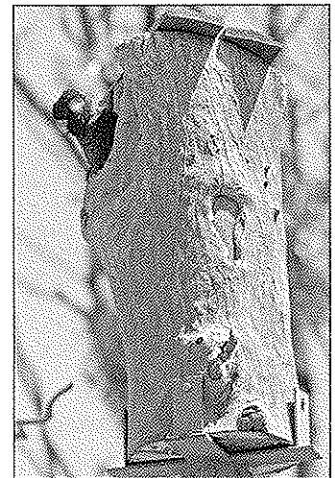


Photo courtesy of Peter Odekerken.