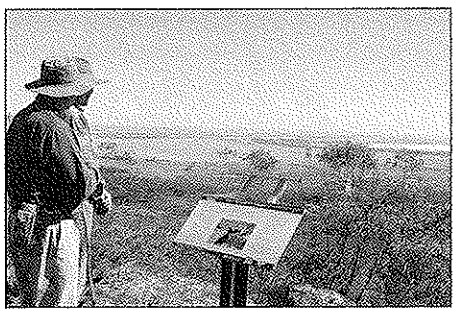
NEWS

WONDERFUL WONGAN WILDLIFE!

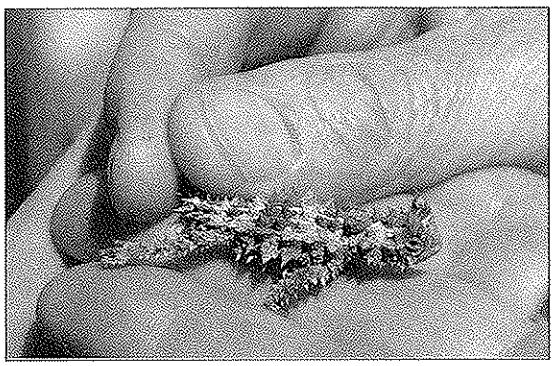
Thirty years ago, members of the WA Naturalists' Club conducted a three-year survey of the Wongan Hills, culminating in the book *The Natural History of the Wongan Hills**. It confirmed this extraordinary location as a biodiversity hotspot – long before the word 'biodiversity' had even been invented! *LFW* collaborated with the Avon Catchment Council's Ecoscape project to arrange a field day to see what the surveyed sites look like now.



Looking out from The Speaker's Chair towards Lake Hinds. Note how these greenstone hills rear out of a very flat, largely cleared landscape. (Penny Hussey)

About 40 people attended, some locals and some from further afield, including people who had been on the original survey team. Unfortunately the survey's leader, Kevin Kenneally, was called away at the last minute and so was unable to attend, but Stephen Davies' talk on the recent malleefowl survey was fascinating, and shows that the Wongan Hills are still a stronghold for the bird.

The bushwalks were in private property, with woodlands and thicket in excellent condition, having almost no weeds evident. But it was very dry – the plants were under drought stress and few animals were visible. Plans were made to return in spring, when the wildflowers will be out, for a proper botanizing walk.



A highlight was finding a hatchling thorny devil. Thorny devils feed only on ants and are found in woodlands, shrubland, mulga, mallee and grassland, across the arid zone of WA and the drier wheatbelt, South Australia, the Northern Territory and far western Queensland. It lays a small clutch of up to 10 eggs in Nov/Dec, hatching in early autumn. (Lee Francis)

It was a very pleasant day, fuelled by some excellent food, and our thanks go to Fiona Falconer and to Margaret Redfern, the Ecoscape Coordinator, for their superb organisation.

Penny Hussey

* The book is available from the WA Naturalists' Club, email; wanats@iinet.net.au

The Land for Wildlife team

The LFW team, 2009. Back row, L-R: Phil Worts, Wayne Gill, Zara Kivell, Avril Baxter, Sheila Howat, Dorothy Redreau, Cherie Kemp, Mal Harper, Penny Hussey: front row, L-R: Claire Hall, Sylvia Leighton, Heather Adamson, Fiona Falconer.

Do you know ...?

how to calculate the age of a jarrah tree in forest? Measure the trunk diameter over the bark (the DOB) at 1.3m above the ground surface. (This should be recorded in centimeters, ie 1.3m is 130cm.) Then do the following calculation:

age = 2.345 x DOB + 6.968

This formula assumes that the site has been subjected to neither fertiliser application nor clearing, both of which would alter the growth rate.

Kim Whitford DEC

This newsletter is a compendium of articles written by many different people. The views expressed are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Department of Environment and Conservation.
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