Coastwest

SOUTHCOAST
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

CREATURES
OF THE COASTAL BUSH

ALBANY, DENMARK & WALPOLE AREAS

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Acknowledgements

The *Creatures of the Coastal Bush* guide has been designed as an easy to use identification tool, describing some of the more common plants and animals you may encounter while bushwalking along the South Coast.

The living creatures featured in this guide play important roles in the ecosystem. They switch between predator and prey, pollinate plants, disperse seeds and spores and create a habitat, or a home to live.

Every living thing needs the right combination of food and protection to survive.

There are many opportunities to see bush land habitats and wildlife on walk trails.

Bushwalking trail advice is offered by:
- Albany Visitor Centre (08) 9841 9290
- DEC South Coast Region, Albany (08) 9845 5000

To get involved in natural resource management activities contact:
- South Coast NRM, Albany (08) 9845 8537

If you see injured wildlife contact:
- DEC 24hr Wildcare Helpline (08) 9474 9055
- WA Seabird Rescue 0418 952 683

Living things

Getting outdoors

- Wear clothing to suit the weather, including a hat and sunscreen or jacket.
  For further information go to:
  www.sunsmart.com.au.
- Wear good boots and make sure they're scrubbed clean of soil to prevent the spread of Phytophthora dieback.
- Take plenty of drinking water with you.
- Take a hand lens or magnifying glass for closer inspection.
- Respect the environment and take any rubbish safely home with you – recycle or place it in the bin.
- Keep to the track to avoid damaging surrounding bush.
- Take your camera and capture memories.
- Appreciate and leave life where you find it – each plant and animal is an important part of the environment.
- Tread lightly - leave only your footprints...

It is always important to be prepared, so you can make the most of your outdoor experience.

Photo: Svetlana Micic

GOLDEN ORB WEAVER

GOLDEN ORB WEAVER *Nephila edulis*

This spider is known for building golden webs up to 1m long. The webs are spun by the female using the wind to assist and are constantly repaired. These spiders are harmless to humans and eat moths, grasshoppers, beetles, bees, locusts and can even catch small birds. The large female can grow up to 24mm, has colourful banded legs and a silver-grey body.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Housemates

The golden orb allows quicksilver spiders to live in its web. The quicksilver spider eats the small insects that become trapped and keeps the web clean.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

MOUSE SPIDER

MOUSE SPIDER

***Missulena* spp.**

This is a type of trapdoor spider which means it lives in an underground burrow with a trap door. These burrows are often near water and can be up to 30cm deep. The spider eats mainly insects (including other spiders), small animals and snails. It is an ancient and primitive spider as it has downward pointing parallel fangs. This is why it rears up in an aggressive manner when it is threatened.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Wrong name?

The mouse spider was named because people mistakenly thought it created very deep burrows like a mouse.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

CHRISTMAS SPIDER

CHRISTMAS SPIDER

***Gasteracantha* sp.**

This spider has six spines which project from its heavily armoured back. It is sometimes social and can build large communal webs. The flying insects caught in the web are shared by many spiders. It is called a Christmas spider because it usually appears in the bush in the summer months leading up to Christmas.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Silent signals

The Christmas spider's web has fluffy balls of silk scattered over the surface of its anchor threads. These are thought to alert animals and prevent them from destroying the web. The rest of the web is virtually invisible.

A tick is not actually an insect but a small arachnid which lives off of the blood of mammals, birds and sometimes reptiles. It climbs into foliage at the edge of animal paths and transfers itself onto animals or humans as they pass. It imbeds itself into the skin of its host with its barbed mouth and feeds on its blood. It normally lives on kangaroos and wallabies but can survive for months without feeding. To avoid ticks stay away from areas where kangaroos have been resting. Tucking your trousers into your socks and keeping yourself covered will help keep these blood suckers away.

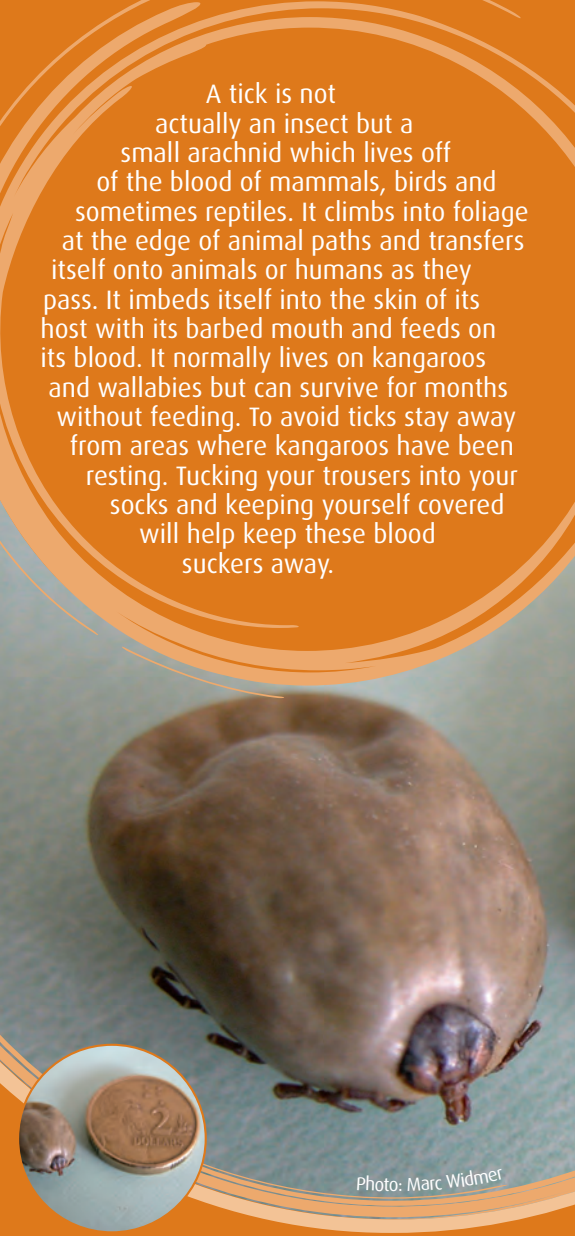

Photo: Marc Widmer

KANGAROO TICK

Ixodes australis

ARTHROPODS

If you go for a walk after it's been raining, you may see a centipede, especially if you look in the leaf litter or under stones and dead wood. A centipede can have 20 - 300 legs and has one pair of legs per body segment. It needs a moist home, because it doesn't have a waxy layer on its body like insects and spiders. This causes it to lose moisture very quickly and is the reason why it hides under things. Centipedes always have an odd number of pairs of legs - 15 or 17 pairs, but never 16.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

CENTIPEDE

Chilopoda

ARTHROPODS

Carabids are one of the largest families of beetles and can often be found on the ground running around looking for prey. The beetles have strong legs which they use for burrowing and fast running. They feed on other ground-living beetles, slaters and worms. Some carabids hunt by stealth, patiently waiting until prey comes near. Others attack their prey with a sudden rush. Adults can run very fast – they open their wings and fly off in a split second.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

CARABIDS

Family Carabidae

ARTHROPODS

This flightless dusty-blue beetle can be found under logs and shedding bark on trees, particularly eucalypts. It forages on the ground at night eating decaying vegetation. It takes water from its food and may also collect it from the built-in gutter around its body. This flange protects it from predators particularly redback spiders and Carabidae beetles.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

PIE-DISH BEETLE

***Pterohelaeus* spp.**

ARTHROPODS

A weevil has a long snout like an elephant, a black and ochre striped middle and is about 15mm long. It likes to eat eucalypts and chews around the edges of leaves – a large group can strip a tree completely. If you disturb a weevil, it will play dead by tucking its legs tight beneath itself and drop from the leaf it was eating or resting upon.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

WEEVILS

Family Curculionidae

ARTHROPODS

The crusader bug is also known as the holy cross bug because of the distinct cross marking on its back. The crusader bug has a big body and a little head and eats plants and grains, especially during summer when it is most active. Look out if you disturb one, as it may spray you with stinking fluid.

Photo: Rob Horler

CRUSADER BUGS

Family Coreidae

ARTHROPODS

This is a scavenging ant which forms highways to its food sources and builds bulky nests above the ground from sticks. It releases a special chemical when injured which alerts other ants to potential danger. Spiders can detect these chemicals and prey on the injured ants. The stick nest ant will attack sick or injured animals, yet when a colony of them leaves a nest, it often becomes a home for small animals and reptiles.

Photos: Alan Dank's Photography

Photo: Andrea Degan

ARTHROPODS

STICK NEST ANTS

Iridomyrmex conifer

A bull ant is known for its aggressive behaviour and powerful sting. It has large eyes which let it track intruders from up to 1m away. An adult will eat mainly nectar and honeydew but the ant larvae is carnivorous and eats small insects brought to it by the hunting worker ants. Bull ants make nest mounds up to 1m across, which they decorate with stones and plant fragments. If you look closely at its nest you will see where the insect dumps soil from excavations, unwanted waste and even dead ants.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

BULL ANT

Myrmecia

ARTHROPODS

This caterpillar begins life as a white egg on a leaf. When it hatches it is white with a black head, later it becomes very hairy and dark brown with rows of pale yellow spots on its back and sides. It feeds at night and is not fussy about which plants it eats. The caterpillar emerges from its cocoon as an adult moth, which has black and white wings approximately 6cm wide and a black and scarlet ringed body.

Photo: Marc Widmer

WOOLLY BEAR CATERPILLAR

Spilosoma glatignyi

ARTHROPODS

Sawfly larvae are called spitfires and congregate in large groups on eucalyptus trees during the day and at night spread out to feed. They prefer young trees and can defoliate an entire tree before moving along the ground to the next tree. Once it is ready to pupate it goes into a cocoon under the ground where it stays for up to three years before it emerges as an adult wasp. A spitfire stores eucalyptus oils from the leaves that it eats in a special pouch which it regurgitates when it feels threatened. This has a strong smell and deters the birds that try to eat it.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

SPITFIRE SAWFLY

Perga affinis

ARTHROPODS

This Australian native bee is very important to the production of food and is very effective at pollinating crops which honey bees cannot, such as tomatoes, eggplants and chillies. It has distinct blue bands - the male five and the female four. It has six sticky legs and a long tongue to help extract nectar. It clings onto flowers and vibrates powerfully causing the pollen to shoot out. It is a solitary creature and does not create a hive. It can sting but is not as aggressive as other bee species.

Photo: Kim C Beasley

BLUE BANDED BEE

(Native bee)

Amegilla cingulata

ARTHROPODS

Although this is the best known bee in Australia it was actually introduced from Europe in about 1822. Swarms of these bees have escaped from commercial honey hives - some settle in tree-holes and take over the homes of native birds that nest there. When a colony becomes crowded, the queen bee will leave to find a new home. New virgin bees then fight to the death to see who will be the next queen. The surviving queen takes over and mates to maintain the colony.

Photo: Mal Gray

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

WESTERN HONEY BEE

(Feral bee)

Apis mellifora

ARTHROPODS

Photo: Sylvia Leighton

WESTERN BANJO FROG
(Pobblebonk)

WESTERN BANJO FROG

Limnodynastes dorsalis

This frog only lives in the south west of WA. It has pale brown markings with large black or dark brown patches and a pale cream stripe running down its back. It also has bright red markings under its legs. It eats insects, worms or anything it can capture. During July to December a single "plonk" noise can be heard from the male similar to the sound of a banjo string being plucked.

Photo: Angela Sanders

Unusual mating

The female produces a large foam nest which floats on the water to lay her eggs into. During mating, the female traps air with her hands, which she passes between her legs. The air bubbles become trapped in the jelly and eggs emerging from her body. The eggs are then fertilised by the male and the foam nest floats away.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

QUACKING FROG

QUACKING FROG

Crinea georgiana

This is a ground dwelling frog which grows up to 4cm long. Its back pattern is dark brown, light tan and grey and it has a distinctive red patch under the back legs. Its call is similar to a duck quacking. During winter it may be found near temporary pools at granite outcrops and during summer and autumn it may be hibernating under rocks and logs.

Photo: Angela Sanders

Try this...

In the wet winter months when breeding, calling male frogs will respond to human "quacks" by "quacking" back with the same number of calls. You will need to stand still and let the frogs settle first.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

KING'S SKINK

KING'S SKINK

Egernia kingii

This is a glossy, black bodied skink which grows up to 55cm long. It generally eats soft plant matter but can also eat insects and eggs. It doesn't lay eggs like other reptiles but, gives birth to two to eight live young. It can be seen on the Middleton Beach boardwalk. It is known as the Yandy in Noongar.

Photo: Angela Sanders

Mythbuster!

It is commonly thought you won't come across a snake in areas where there are king's skinks. Unfortunately this myth has just been busted! Carpet pythons actually eat king's skinks.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

CROWNED SNAKE

CROWNED SNAKE

Elapognathus coronatus

This is a common snake in the Albany area. It is olive-grey/brown in colour and can grow up to 70cm long. It has a distinct bluish grey head and a dark broad band across its neck. In late summer to autumn, the snake gives birth to live young which measure 12 to 15cm long and are perfect mini adult replicas. It gives birth when there are lots of skink hatchlings about to feed its young. It sometimes makes its home in abandoned stick ant nests.

Photo: Shaun Welsh

Misty days

This snake is mostly nocturnal, but can be seen on overcast and misty days. This may be because their favoured prey of frogs and lizards are about and moving slower.

CARPET PYTHON

CARPET PYTHON

Morelia spilota imbricata

This python can be found in many habitats including banksia and eucalypt woodlands. It constricts its prey of birds, mammals or reptiles in its jaws before throwing coils around it. When dead, it swallows its prey head first. The female lays her eggs inside a log and coils around them for 60 days. If the temperature drops too low she will shiver to generate heat and keep the eggs warm.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Big mumma!

The female carpet python can weigh up to four times more than a male. Some snakes have been recorded at 4.5kg in weight and 4m long.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

RED-EARED FIRETAIL

RED-EARED FIRETAIL

Stagonopleura oculata

If you look closely in dense vegetation you may see the red tail of this bird hopping around the ground collecting seeds for food. During the courting season in spring, the male sits up high with a blade of grass in his red beak and calls the female. He then displays this to her, which shows her he can provide. Listen for the piercing floating "ooee" of this secretive bird.

Photo: Andrea Deegan

Hot spots

These birds prefer wet areas with thick vegetation and can be seen around the Ellen Cove Boardwalk, Little Grove, Lake Seppings and Two Peoples Bay.

NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER

NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER

Phylidonyris novaehollandiae

These birds can be seen chasing each other near blossoms as they search for nectar to eat. They have black and white streaks with a yellow patch on their wings and a black head and can grow up to 20cm long. They build nests of twigs and grass in shrubs including woolly bush and banksia. The birds are very important for pollinating plants especially banksias and acacias, transferring the pollen which ends up on their forehead.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Listen and learn

A warning call from a New Holland honeyeater may tell you when there's a snake about. It has a different call when it spots a bird of prey nearby.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

PIED OYSTERCATCHER

PIED OYSTERCATCHER

Haematopus longirostris

This bird can be seen on sandy coastlines and estuaries running backwards and forwards with the tide eating exposed molluscs, worms and small fish. It uses its especially adapted bill to stab at shellfish and sever the muscle that closes the shell – it then eats the body parts. It is easy to identify with its black and white belly, scarlet bill and red legs. It nests in open areas and produces two to three eggs in a clutch. Please give these birds space from August to January when they may be nesting.

Photo: Andrea Deegan

Sooty or pied?

The distinctive white patches on the pied oystercatcher differentiate it from the sooty oystercatcher which has a totally black body. The pied inhabits sandy beaches whereas the sooty prefers and is more camouflaged on, rocky coastlines where it hunts its food.

PACIFIC GULL

PACIFIC GULL

Larus pacificus

This bird has a wing span of up to 1.5m and a distinctive yellow bill with a red tip. It can be seen flying along dunes or following fishing boats. Listen for it shouting "ow, ow" or "auk, auk". It eats mainly fish and molluscs but will also hunt at night and take the young of other seabirds. It breeds during September to December on offshore islands or in a hole lined with seaweed near the beach. This bird is unusual as it takes three to four years to develop its adult colours.

Photo: Andrea Deegan

Hot spots

Try places like Emu Point, The Gap and the Blowholes to see these birds. Watch them as they rise vertically 15m into the wind to drop molluscs on to the rocks to break them.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

OSPREY

OSPREY

Pandion cristatus

This graceful bird of prey can be seen around beaches, estuaries and upstream. It dives for fish and can often be seen in a tree eating its catch. It has a distinctive dark brown mark through its eye and a wingspan up to 1.7m. An osprey call sounds like a "pee-ee" squeal. These birds mate for life and breed from April to July, having two to three eggs in a stack of sticks high in a tree.

Photo: Andrea Deegan

Have you seen one?

Look up high into the top branches of trees and you may see the huge nest of an osprey. These nests are added to each year with all sorts of things including sticks, seaweed and rope.

QUENDA

(Southern brown bandicoot)

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(Southern brown bandicoot)

Isoodon obesulus

The quenda has coarse dark grey to brown fur and grows up to 45cm long including its tail. It has small round ears and a short tail which is sometimes broken off from fighting. An inquisitive creature, it spends a lot of time digging in the topsoil for food including arthropods, tubers and fungi. It lives in dense vegetation in high rainfall areas.

Have you seen?

Although you may not see this nocturnal creature, you may notice it's been around, as it leaves behind conical shaped diggings from searching for the tubers that it eats.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

HONEY POSSUM

HONEY POSSUM

Tarsipes rostratus

This tiny marsupial grows up to 18cm long including its long muzzle and tail. On average it weighs about 8 grams and has three long brown stripes running from behind its ears to its tail. It eats only pollen and nectar, so it is essential it lives in an area where there is a plant flowering every evening of the year, such as banksia-rich heaths. The honey possum plays a vital role in transporting pollen so plants can reproduce.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Not a possum at all

The honey possum is not actually a possum at all but the sole survivor of a group called Tarsipedidae. Its long pointed snout, three long body stripes and tiny teeth make it different from other small marsupials. It also has the largest testicles for its body weight of any mammal on the planet.

MARDO

(Yellow- footed antechinus)

MARDO

(Yellow- footed antechinus)

Antechinus flavipes leucogaster

You can identify the mardo by its grey/brown fur, white ring around its eyes and the black tip on its tail. It gets its name from its short yellow-brown, broad feet. Mardos can be seen foraging for food on the ground, in trees and among rocks. It eats invertebrates, as well as eggs and nectar. Its nest is built from dry eucalypt leaves in tree cavities or among rocks.

Photo: Sylvia Leighton

August mating

The mardo mates during a two week period around August. The mating is so frenzied that the male's immune system becomes compromised and he dies from stress shortly after.

SHORT NOSED ECHIDNA

SHORT NOSED ECHIDNA

Tachyglossus aculeatus acanthion

The echidna has lived on the Australian continent for more than 150 million years. You may see one ambling along or you can look for half-moon-shaped scratchings at the base of termite mounds. Its snout is very important for finding food, digging and squashing worms and larvae. Its hearing is so sensitive it can sense vibrations from ants and termites working underground. It is a monotreme, which means it is one of only two mammals who lay eggs.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

What's in a name?

The name echidna comes from the Greek goddess Ekhidna who was half snake (reptile) and half woman (mammal).

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM

WESTERN RINGTAIL POSSUM

Pseudocheirus occidentalis

This nocturnal animal lives in small family groups and in dense shrubbery and thickets. It makes a woven nest of leaves 20 to 30cm wide called a drey. It leaps between branches eating leaves, flowers and fruit and it especially loves peppermint trees. It grows up to 80cm long including its tail which has a white tip. It has dark brown fur on top and cream underneath. It is threatened by clearing of the bush and predators such as foxes.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Spotlight

Albany has a healthy colony of western ringtail possums which you can see on the Mt Clarence coastal trails if you venture out at night with a spotlight.

AUSTRALIAN THREATENED SPECIES

VULNERABLE

Photo: Mal Gray

SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE

SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE

Eubalaena australis

A southern right whale swims slowly and was the 'right' whale to hunt as it floated on the surface when dead. They were almost hunted to extinction but can be seen along the South Coast from May to October. This whale likes to play at the surface basking for long periods, lob tailing, rolling and flipper slapping. It comes into sheltered bays and harbours to mate and calve.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

AUSTRALIAN THREATENED SPECIES

ENDANGERED

Is it a southern right?

Look out for this whale with v-shaped blows and no dorsal fin. It also has white callosities on its head in a pattern unique to each whale, which can identify individual animals. Aerial photographs are used to determine how many southern rights visit our shores.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

AUSTRALIAN SEA LION

AUSTRALIAN SEA LION

Neophoca cinerea

The rarest sea lion in the world, this endangered animal is only found on the coastline of South Australia and from the south of Western Australia to the Abrolhos Islands. Adult males are larger than females and can weigh up to 300kg. Each breeding island is made up of closely related individuals, aunts, daughters and cousins. It is agile for its size and can leap, surf, gallop, climb and walk on all fours.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

AUSTRALIAN THREATENED SPECIES

VULNERABLE

Unusual breeding strategy

Unlike other species which give birth at a similar time every year, the Australian sea lion breeds on average every 17.5 months. Dominant males will guard females for the right to breed with them when they come into season.

Photo: Emma Evans

MARRI

MARRI

Corymbia calophylla

This large tree belongs to the group of gum trees known as the Bloodwoods. It is also called a red gum because of the red effusions that you see on wounds on its trunk. This gum is called kino. It has one the largest seeds of any of the eucalypts/corymbias, these seeds are contained in the woody, urn-shaped fruits which we call honky nuts. It is a very adaptable tree which can grow in a variety of environments.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Photo: Sheryn Prior

Who's been eating my honky nuts?

The seeds inside honky nuts are a favourite food for many birds including parrots and cockatoos. The long-billed black cockatoo and the red-capped parrot are both skilled at removing the nutritious seeds without breaking open the honky nut.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

JARRAH

JARRAH
Eucalyptus marginata

This tree grows up to 40m tall with a trunk up to 3m across. It has rough grey/brown bark that sheds in long flat strips. Its leaves are shiny dark green on top and paler underneath. It has white flowers in early spring and summer. It has deep roots (up to 40m) that can draw groundwater in a drought. It also has a lignotuber which stores carbohydrates underground so that it can regenerate after fire.

The great provider

Jarrah trees provide food and shelter for birds, insects and mammals. Its flowers produce nectar - food for animals. Hollows formed in the trunk are used by birds and possums to breed. When the tree falls, it provides food for fungi, lichens, mosses and insects. Fallen trunks and branches are also habitat for marsupials, lizards and snakes.

Photo: Wildflower Society of WA - Albany

PEPPERMINT TREE

PEPPERMINT TREE

Agonis flexuosa

This plant can be a many stemmed shrub or a stately tree with spreading branches and weeping foliage. It can grow up to 10m tall and has white flowers from September to December which are pollinated by many different insects. Its leaves smell like peppermint when they are torn or crushed. It is a favourite food and habitat for western ringtail possums. Look out for their scat (poo) under the trees.

Photo: Wildflowers Society of WA - Albany

Full of bends

The name *flexuosa* is Latin for 'full of bends.' It gets this name because the stem of the plant creates a zigzag pattern as it changes direction at every leaf node.

Photo: Wildflower Society of WA - Albany

COASTAL WATTLE

COASTAL WATTLE

Acacia cyclops

This is a dense shrub which grows in a domed shape if exposed to the wind or as a small tree in more protected sites. It has flat, broad seed pods which twist to release the seeds during warm days or at the end of summer. The twisted pods remain long after the seeds have gone. Instead of leaves it has phyllodes up to 10cm long. Bright yellow clusters of round flower heads are produced from early spring to late summer.

Photo: Andrea Deegan

Bloodshot eye?

This plant is also called red-eyed wattle because of its distinctive seeds. Each black seed is surrounded by a bright red seed stalk (aril). This attracts birds and insects which forage under the plant for fallen seeds which they spread widely in the landscape.

SHOWY DRYANDRA

SHOWY DRYANDRA

Banksia formosa

This is a medium-sized shrub which grows up to 1.3m tall. Its large yellow/orange flowers are best from September to December and provide nectar for birds and honey possums, which in turn help pollinate the flower and is necessary to develop the seed. The dark, hard follicles hold the seed open during hot weather or when a bushfire occurs, allowing the winged seed to fall out.

Photo – Alan Danks Photography

A handsome plant?

The name *formosa* comes from the Latin word *formosus*, which means handsome or beautiful and refers to the overall appearance of the plant. Latin is the main language used in botany because its words are stable and their meaning doesn't change.

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

GIANT BANKSIA

GIANT BANKSIA

Banksia grandis

This banksia can be a tree or a shrub and only grows in the south west of WA. It flowers from October to January and provides important nectar for marsupials, birds, bees and ants. Each follicle contains one developed seed and one 'empty' seed which are either side of a winged 'separator'. Once the follicle opens, in bushfire or hot weather, the separator holds the seed in position until it becomes wet through rainfall. The separator then swells and pushes the winged seed out to fall to the ground and hopefully germinate.

Photo: Wildflower Society of WA - Albany

A sweet tongue

The elusive honey possum (*Tarsipes rostratus*) needs to eat its own body weight in nectar each day to survive. Its diet is made up exclusively of nectar and pollen, which it collects with its long brush-tipped tongue.

Photo: Emma Evans

COASTAL WOOLLY BUSH

COASTAL WOOLLY BUSH *Adenanthos sericeus*

This is a large shrub with soft grey/green foliage that grows up to 5m tall. It has red/orange flowers for most of the year which attract nectar feeding birds, although the flowers can be hard to find. The coastal woolly bush can be found growing within the dune system where it protects the sand from wind and water erosion. It can be used as a native Christmas tree because of the soft grey foliage.

Photo: Rob Horler

Albany's own

Albany has its own subspecies which grows around King George Sound and extends west to Torbay and east near to Cape Riche. The second subspecies grows some 300km to the north-east at Cape Le Grand in Esperance.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

HEART-LEAF POISON

HEART-LEAF POISON

Gastrolobium bilobum

This is a bushy shrub which occasionally grows up to 4m tall. From August to December it produces clusters of yellow/orange pea-flowers at the end of its branchlets. It gets its common name because the leaves have two lobes at the end like a heart. Once its flowers have been pollinated, small black seeds, with a white aril are formed. These seeds are held in a pod which opens and releases them over summer. These fall and are gathered by ants which take them back to their nest.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

1080 Poison

This plant produces monofluoroacetic acid which is the main ingredient of 1080 poison. Native animals like possums and kangaroos are able to eat this plant safely but it is toxic to livestock and introduced animals like foxes, dogs and cats.

Photo: Emma Evans

STICKY TAIL FLOWER

STICKY TAIL FLOWER

Anthocercis viscosa

This is a shrub which can grow up to 4m tall and has white/cream flowers from winter, through spring to summer. It has a distinct smell which you may notice before you see the plant which some people think smells like jasmine. The leaves also have a sticky feel to them. What do you think it smells like?

Photo: Alan Danks Photography

Homemaker

This plant likes to grow near granite rocks and is able to establish its root system in the tiniest of cracks. The roots and fallen branches of the plant trap soil and organic matter, which creates a site for other plants such as mosses, ferns and orchids to grow. As these moss beds develop, they help hold moisture which would otherwise run off the rock surface.

Photo: Emma Evans

PARASITIC OLAX

PARASITIC OLAX

Olax phyllanthi

This is a small shrub which grows on the slopes of limestone dunes and in the hollows in-between. It can be recognised easily from a distance, as its drooping grey/green leaves sway heavily in the wind. It has small white flowers that bloom on and off throughout the year. This is a hemi-parasitic plant, which means it can extract water and nutrients from nearby host plants. It does this by latching on to their root systems.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

Bull ant sting?

Next time you have a bull ant sting try this: parasitic olax was traditionally used to treat stings from bull ants by rubbing the leaves on the skin.

Photo: Sheryn Prior

COASTAL DUNE WATTLE

COASTAL DUNE WATTLE *Acacia littorea*

This is a dense, strong smelling shrub which grows up to 3m tall and has yellow flowers from August to November. If you look closely you will see each flower 'ball' is actually an inflorescence made up of 8 – 15 tiny flowers. The name *littorea* means 'growing near the coast'. The leaves look like the shape of a shark's tooth, but are they really a leaf?

Not a true leaf

Look closely near this plant and you may see seedlings growing. When young, these seedlings have pairs of small divided leaves, but as it grows the leaf stems start to flatten out and become a phyllode, with the original small leaves falling off. This phyllode loses less moisture through transpiration and allows the plant to survive in its harsh environment. Can you find these leaf look-a-likes?

This is a dense plant that can be found growing in clumps on sand dunes and also under peppermint trees. It can grow up to 1.5m tall and has flat leaves. It has a black/brown inflorescence made up of hundreds of tiny flowers. Its dense growth provides a great home for burrowing animals which can hide from larger predators.

Photo: Shaun Welsh

Photo: Wildflower Society of WA - Albany

PLANTS

COASTAL SWORD SEDGE

Lepidosperma gladiatum

This is a tough plant found growing on sand dunes close to the water. It only has leaves at the base of the stem and grows up to 90cm high. It has brown ball-shaped flowers at the end of the stems from November to March. It grows from a rhizome, which means part of its stem is found underground. The rhizomes and root systems help to hold the sand dunes together.

Photo: Wildflower Society of WA - Albany

Photo: Sheryn Prior

PLANTS

KNOTTED CLUB RUSH

Ficinia nodosa

This is a very small orchid that grows to a maximum of 15cm. It has a small leaf near the base of the flower stem and flowers during April and May. This early flowering enables it to set fruit quickly, then for the rest of the growing season it is replenishing its underground bulb, ready for next year. In Albany it is unusual because it grows on limestone, generally it grows on exposed granite outcrops near the coast, amongst moss beds.

Photo: Shaun Welsh

PLANTS

GRANITE BUNNY ORCHID

Eriochilus pulchellus

These are carnivorous plants which lure, capture and digest insects using sticky glands that cover their leaves. They can grow for up to 50 years in areas where there is a lot of sunlight. They use enzymes to dissolve insects that become trapped and then absorb the nutrient soup through their leaves. This helps them supplement their requirements when growing in nutrient poor soils. The sundews either have large flat leaves on the ground or more delicate climbing stems with the small, gland covered leaves held out, ready to catch a fly or mosquito.

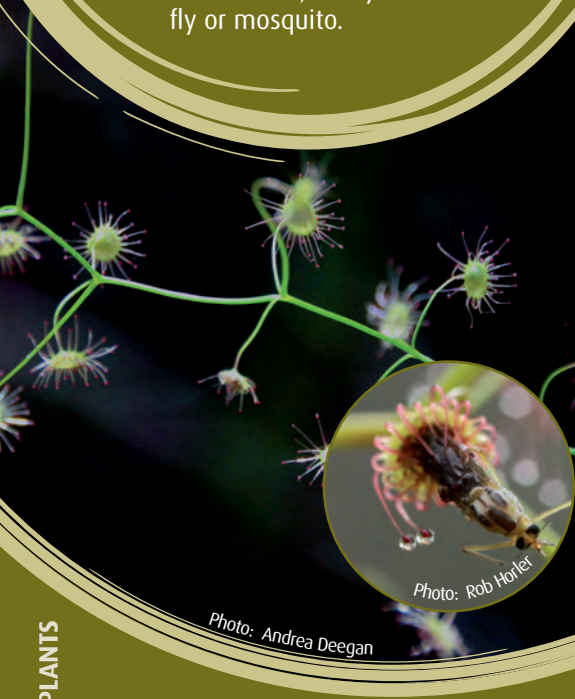

Photo: Rob Horler

Photo: Andrea Deegan

PLANTS

SUNDEWS

Drosera

Orange bracket fungi is very common and produces fruiting bodies on dead wood. Like other saprotrophic fungi, this species breaks down dead organic matter, returning the nutrients to the soil, where they become available to other organisms. Bracket fungi were traditionally used by people to cure sore mouths by sucking them or rubbing the fruiting bodies on their lips.

Photo: Katrina Syme

ORANGE BRACKET FUNGI

Pycnoporus coccineus

The native oyster mushroom grows in early to mid-winter in coastal areas. In Western Australia, it is commonly found fruiting on the trunks of peppermint trees, gaining its nutrition from the heartwood and also by trapping nematodes on its specialised hyphae. Beware - the native oyster mushroom can be difficult to distinguish from the poisonous, luminous ghost mushroom (*Omphalotus nidiformis*) so keep it out of your cooking pot.

Photo: Katrina Syme

THE NATIVE OYSTER MUSHROOM

Pleurotus australis

FUNGI

This colourful, very common species produces fruiting bodies (mushrooms) over an extended period. It has an orange/yellow cap and contrasting white gills. The name *xanthocephala* comes from Greek for yellow head. Vermilion grisette forms a symbiotic relationship with various plants (including eucalypts), via the fungal mycelium contact with the plant roots. The fungal mycelium passes moisture and nutrients to the plants in exchange for carbohydrates and can also protect the plant from pathogens.

Photo: Katrina Syme

VERMILION GRISETTE

Amanita xanthocephala

FUNGI

Lichens consist of a symbiotic relationship between a fungus and a photosynthetic partner. This lichen lives on tree bark, particularly peppermint trees. The thallus (body) of the lichen is creamy-white and lives above the surface of the bark. The fruiting bodies (apothecia) look like orange discs. It is a crustose lichen which means it grows flat on a surface. The tree provides the habitat for the lichen. Many minute creatures including insects, arthropods and spiders use the lichen for food or as a home.

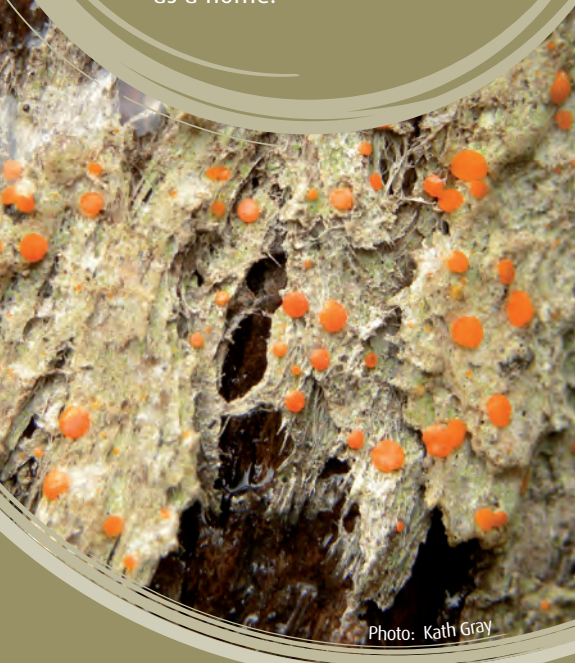

Photo: Kath Gray

LICHEN

Caloplaca dahlii