



Small worlds

Islands are something else. You have to cross a barrier to get there – usually water, but it can be any sharp change in geography or even a fence or wall. They're great for a holiday – as you cross the barrier, you leave behind all your everyday baggage. Isolated island populations develop in their own interesting ways. You're in another world: smaller, simpler, safer, full of endemic species.

You're also vulnerable to cyclones, changes in climate and sea levels and devastating disruptions by introduced species.

Welcome to our Island Sanctuaries issue, where our contributors look at all sorts of islands and their wildlife: islands surrounded by water such as Lord Howe, Wadjemup/Rottnest and Tiritiri Matangi and islands created through other barriers such as the wetland reserve on the outskirts of Ingham in Queensland and the reserves being created for the western swamp tortoise around Perth. Also, check out John Stanistic's 'Wildside' column about islands of karst geology as snail refuges, Carol Booth's thoughts in 'Comment' on a disengaged 'island' mentality in a threatening world and Mark Rigby's galactic islands in 'Summer Skies'.

It's almost impossible to assemble an issue on islands and their wildlife without mentioning rats. Ian Hutton in 'Safety margin' gives a clear and alarming account of the impact of black rats on Lord Howe Island; there are similar tales for many island ecosystems.

Some of my best friends' pets are rats. As individuals or in small groups, they are charming, clever, entertaining, engaging animals. Uncontrolled on a fragile island ecosystem, they are devastating. Rather like people. Is there any difference, apart from that one is an omnivorous, opportunistic, disease-spreading ecological disaster and the other is a rodent? Well, we do try to manage and govern our large populations through political systems which can be criticised and improved. Let's not give that up.

As always, we encourage you to renew your own subscription to *Wildlife Australia* and to keep giving it as a gift. Not only is it actually four gifts in a year, as well as an entertaining way to support your own and WPSQ's commitment to environmental education – sometimes it's five gifts if you're a lucky winner of one of our subscription prizes. Our autumn subscription prize is a copy of *Rottnest Island Australia: the spirit of Wadjemup* by Michael Legge-Wilkinson and Sallyann Gudge, who contributed the inspiring article on Wadjemup that appears on pp 30-35 of this issue. See our subscription ads for details.

Congratulations to Centenary State High School Resource Centre, Mt Ommaney Qld. As the winner of our spring subscription prize, they receive a copy of Steve Wilson's *A Field Guide to Reptiles of Queensland*. It's a valuable addition to a resource centre and we hope it nurtures a lot of herpetological interest.



We are amused and captivated by the claim by Carolyn Bussey of WPSQ's Fraser Coast branch, that WAM is reaching a widening readership. As evidence, she sends this image taken on her verandah at Burrum Heads.



Many thanks to everyone who sent in suggestions for the Gliders of Queensland project slogan (see WAM 42-1, p48) and congratulations to Lorelle Campbell and her daughter Kathleen of Byfield for the winning entry. It's always polite to say 'all entries were of a very high standard' but in this case, it's so true. Really! Well done, WAM readers!

SAREN STARBRIDGE, editor

Swamp

