



BETTER UNDERSTANDING

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S BIODIVERSITY

A TREASURE TROVE

Australia is one of the most biologically diverse places on Earth. It is home to between 600,000 and 700,000 species, most of which are 'endemic' to Australia, which means they are found nowhere else in the world.

Western Australia has more than its fair share of this remarkable diversity. Eight of Australia's 15 declared biodiversity hotspots are in WA. The South West of WA is an internationally recognised biodiversity hotspot. WA has one of the highest rates of species discovery in the world and more are being discovered all the time.

Biodiversity (biological diversity) refers to the variety of lifeforms native to a geographical area.



DECIDING PRIORITIES

- How do we, as a society, decide whether an area of land should be developed or protected for biodiversity?
- What conditions should govern land development?
- How can developed land be most effectively managed to help protect biodiversity?
- What monitoring should occur?
- When, and to what extent, should disturbed land be rehabilitated?

These are difficult questions; easy to form opinions over, harder to answer with robust facts. With sound, objective and readily accessible information, we, as a society, can move towards obtaining good answers to these questions.



Meeting the gaps in biodiversity knowledge

BALANCING CONSERVATION WITH DEVELOPMENT

A balance between economic, environmental and social factors is widely desired, but too often conflict arises between biodiversity conservation and resource development.

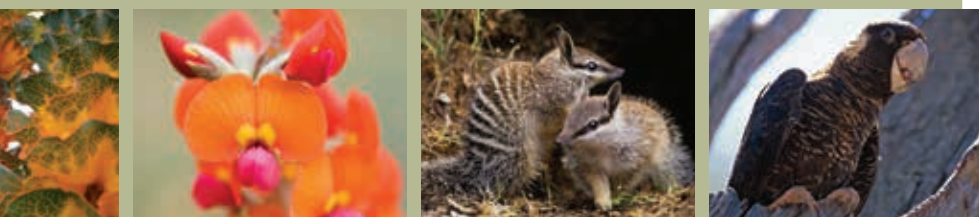
High-value biodiversity is under pressure from:

- land use change for urbanisation, agricultural, minerals and industrial development
- exotic plants and animals, and disease
- changes in the environment, including altered fire regimes
- changed hydrological processes
- climate change

There is a lack of accessible and adequate information and agreed biodiversity conservation priorities. The Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI) addresses this need.

We address these questions in a way that accommodates biodiversity conservation and economic development.

Photo acknowledgements: Suzanne Prober, CSIRO; Megan Hele and Lochman Transparencies.



ABOUT US

The Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI) was created after extensive consultation. It answers a need. It fills a gap in our information collecting, sharing, and decision making processes. More efficient, better informed decision making will benefit industry and environmental interests, substantially improving productivity and biodiversity conservation.

While there is a substantial research effort into biodiversity, with hundreds of written reports and peer reviewed scientific papers published each year, there is widespread agreement that the effort is fragmented. Integrating knowledge to inform policy and land use decisions would be a great improvement. This is what WABSI aims to do.

WABSI is an independent entity, overseen by a representative board and administered by a small executive team. The State Government, through the Department of Premier and Cabinet, provided start-up funds for the institute. The initial funding is for five years. Partners in the collaborative venture include The University of Western Australia, Curtin University, Murdoch University, Department of Parks and Wildlife, CSIRO, Environmental Protection Authority, Department of Mines and Petroleum, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, WA Museum and Edith Cowan University.

**The Western Australian
Biodiversity
SCIENCE INSTITUTE**

*Scientific excellence for
more informed decisions*

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