

# Looking Back...

with Molly Smith

In July 1987, Helen Pierce (dec'd) and I accompanied a team from the then Department of Conservation and Land Management on a project to endeavour to establish a colony of Noisy Scrub Birds in the Walpole Wilderness area.

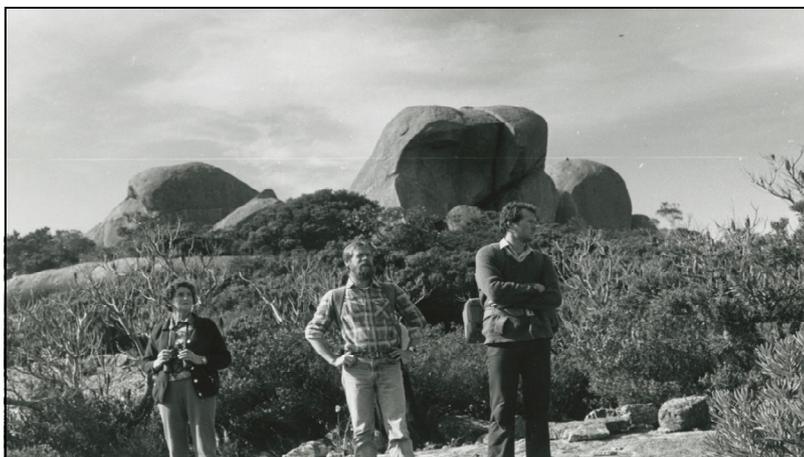
We met CALM Ranger Bruce Bond at Gerner's Bridge not far from the entrance of the Wilderness Block and waited for Alan Danks and his assistants who were bringing five Noisy Scrub Birds from Two Peoples Bay near Albany. The birds were housed in three covered boxes.

We travelled in vehicles for part of the way until we reached the point where we had to proceed on foot to the release site. The boxes were unloaded and Alan fed the birds some mealie bugs to settle them down after their journey. The boxes were then loaded on to hikers frames to be carried to the site. Bruce left us then to return to Walpole.

Our walk towards Mt Hopkins, which was to be the release site, took us through some interesting country...down gullies, up hills, through low heath scrub dotted with peppermint trees and blackboys. We passed through a dry swamp of huge Warren ti-trees which had not been burnt for many years. On we went up the rocky slopes of the mountain and marvelled at the view when we reached the top. A calm ocean was the back drop, with Broke Inlet and Chatham Island in view in one direction and farmlands and Mt Frankland in another.

We continued on to the southern side of the mount and found a thick bushy area of sword grass and other vegetation clumps. Once again the birds were unloaded and left to settle after the back pack rides. Finally the boxes were placed in a strategic position within a metre of the scrub and the doors were opened. We all felt the importance of the moment and sincerely hoped that the five little pioneers would find the area to their liking and eventually become a colony. Each little bird gave a squeak as it gained the safety of the bushes and we took time off to eat our lunch and wish them a safe journey. We were delighted to hear a song from the two males and felt that this augured well for the success of the venture.

On our return journey to the vehicles we were rewarded with a wealth of bird life...Little Wattle birds, New Holland honeyeaters, Western Spinebills



Mount Hopkins Photo: Courtesy H.Pierce's Book

and Blue Wrens.

We left the Wilderness Block after a very interesting day. In conversation with Alan Danks recently, I learned that when the release location in the Nuyts Wilderness Block was checked twelve months later there was no indication that the little colony had survived. However, it was also good to hear from Alan that translocations have been successfully achieved in other areas.

Information from Helen Pierces book "My Life Story" and my own recollections.

~ Molly Smith



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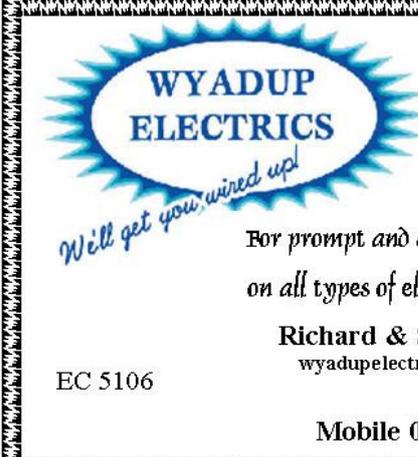
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