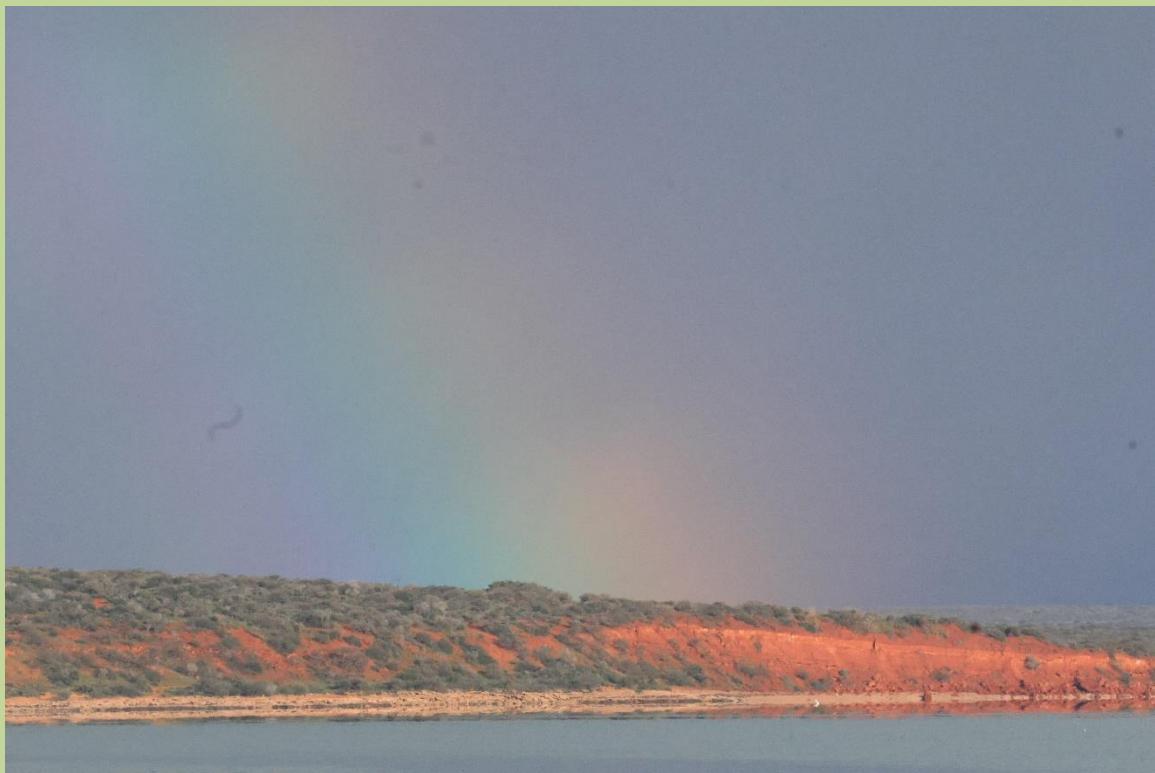


**Brian Everingham
Diary
2024**

**August
Volume 5**

Denham



Saturday 17th August 2024

We are now in Denham on Shark Bay, having packed up in Exmouth and departed the scene at 6.50am. It was a long drive, back down to Carnarvon ((obligatory stop for a fruit ice cream), where we filled up the car, and then on down the main highway until the loop back north on Shark Bay Road.

By then we were being buffeted by strong winds, coppering dust clouds and, eventually, torrential rain. It was my shift behind the steering wheel. I pulled over and we all had lunch in the car.



Winnie creating magic

We have a two storey large house, with two kitchens and Faye and I have the upstairs double bedroom overlooking the waters west. Through the clouds is Dirk Hartog Island. To our north is Francois Peron National Park and, of course, Monkey Mia.

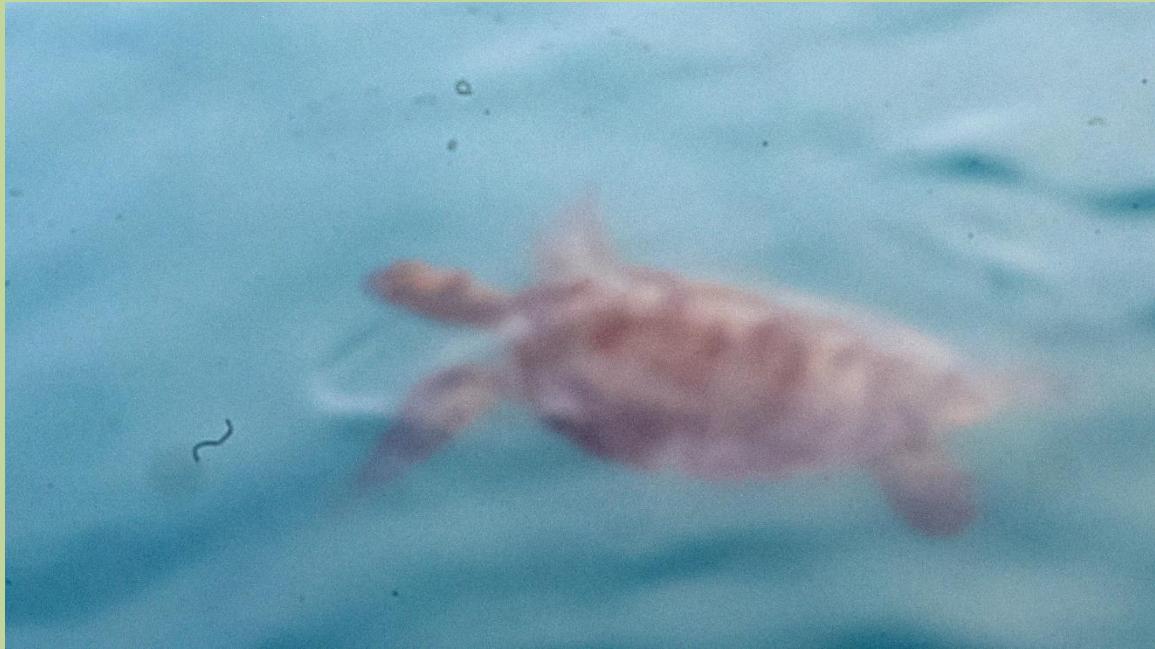
I must mention that around Exmouth and on many road verges there are continuous strips of that pernicious weed, Buffel Grass. It is seeding. It must be changing the entire ecosystem.



And the birding highlight today was the Little Eagle: several of them.

Sunday 18th August 2924

We left the house before 7.00am and arrived at Monkey Mia well before the 7.30am first feeding of the dolphins. The place was packed and Suk Kwan, Joanne and Lydia were all eagerly anticipating the arrival of the dolphins, ready to stand in the water along the shoreline. It did not happen.



While the dolphins were cruising along the shore line, they had no intention of coming to shore for a morsel of fish when they could get their own.



In any case, a front swept through, bringing wind and rain. Many of the masses left, no doubt to catch buses, and we had a coffee and nibbles.



Juvenile Welcome Swallow (see the white gape along the beak)

Faye and I then walked south along the bay, looking out over a sand spit with loads of shore birds, discovered a pair of Red-capped Plover and photographed the dolphins off shore.

The 10.00 showing was a success. By the time we returned we joined a much smaller gathering to witness the dolphin feeding. They only feed a handful of females and even then, they get but a morsel of their average requirement of 8-10kg of fish per day.





Those old images of people playing with the doings are long gone. No touching! Masks warn by the “feeders” to reduce potential transmission of disease, etc. Nowadays, in other words, dolphins are not and cannot become dependent on humans and therefore the

young learn to fish with mum. I was not aware that baby dolphins can take up to three years to be weaned from its mother's milk.

The party satisfied, we then did a loop walk through the red sand dunes and excitedly heard Chiming Wedgebills, even if we didn't see them. We missed out on seeing or even hearing a definite record of the Western Grasswren but we did see several White-browed Babblers.





There may be a connection between these two images



After lunch we then visited Little Lagoon. It's beautiful but so badly managed. 4WD access along the beeches! Poorly managed road access. Buffet grass along the roadsides. Not impressed.

Nor, for that matter, was I impressed at "The Thong Shack". Apart from the stupidity of having a humpy covered in human thongs, a monument to the "Bogan", this area, too, has been attacked by reckless 4WD activities. Another area that could look delightful if ee humans respected it.

After an afternoon rest, Faye and I then headed out along dusty tracks to the coast, via several euros and a variety of plants.

We then dropped down to the beach and found a pair of Pied Oystercatchers.



And walked along that beach until we arrived at the edge of town. It was time, then, to head home for happy hour and dinner.

Monday 19th August 2024

On our last day in the Peron peninsula, we headed south, out of Denham, to Shell Beach. It's 45km south and it is made up of billions of tiny shells. Apparently, they are cockle shells and the surrounding ocean is highly saline. There is also a feral animal proof fence across the peninsula here as this is the narrow 3km waist of the peninsula. It extends some distance into the water and is electrified.





Apart from the beach of shells, my highlight was to finally see the Thick-billed Grasswren, number 101 in the species count for our WA trip this visit.

Mind you, the beach was itself fascinating. The Coquina Shell (*Fragum erugatum*) is actually mined for building blocks further south and there is an old building in Denham built of those blocks.

The beach is a series of ridges, the result of varying sea levels, showing the longevity of this geological structure too.

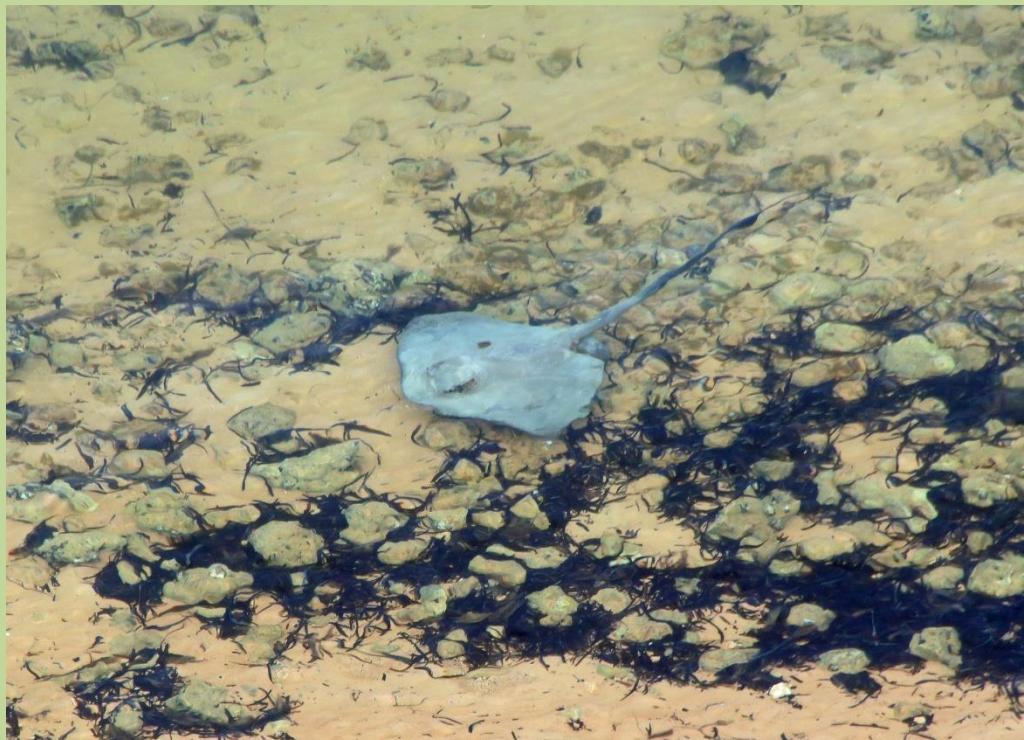
And that fence!





But let us move on: to Eagle Bluff! And to an amazing walkway and viewing platform down into turquoise seas, within which we definitely saw a stingray and several sharks and may have even seen dugong, lazily moving through. Certainly, we were looking at some wonderful sea grass beds.





The ray and the shark





After that, we returned home, had lunch and, in my case, then spent the afternoon exploring the town. That included back streets and the old town jail (I confess that I prefer the old English spelling as gaol!). It also included going to the National Park office

and chatting with Tegan about the expansion of the national park to take in the lands south to the feral proof fence. This land will come across as an agreed partnership with the local indigenous people next week, if I understood the timeline correctly.









Having then stopped for a Shark Bay lager, I returned to the residence, met Faye,

showered, washed and dried clothes and enjoyed happy hour while watching the sun set. During that time Faye walked to Little Lagoon and added a few more birds to the trip list.



Winnie outdid herself tonight with a delightful vegetarian curry dish. Totally yummy!

