

PREFACE

INDIAN OCEAN FOCUS ISSUE

The Pacific Ocean and its littoral has long provided a focus for scientific (and other) research. The Indian Ocean rather less so. The humanities have perhaps been less parsimonious in their attention to the Indian Ocean Basin – the Centre for Indian Ocean Peace Studies, a cooperative venture between Curtin University and the University of Western Australia flourished in the 1990s, sponsoring *The Indian Ocean Review* which was an important vehicle for the research on the history, geography, archaeology and politics of the region. Important publications of this era and genre included, Kenneth McPherson's *The Indian Ocean: a History of People and the Sea* (OUP, 1993) and *The Maritime Boundaries of the Indian Ocean*, by V L Forbes (Singapore University Press, 1995).

The Indian Ocean Marine Research Centre with two foci, Watermans Bay Marine Centre and in its new building on the UWA Campus, will boost marine science capacity in Australia.

It is important that the Royal Society of Western Australia acknowledges this significant theme: this issue includes papers on the Indian Ocean and its Western Australian littoral. It opens with a paper on Darwin's sojourn in the region, and is followed by papers on the biotas of Leeuwin Current off south-west Australia, and Fremantle Harbour.

The islands on Western Australia's Indian Ocean margin have an important ecological status, and an account of the recovery of seabird colonies on an island in the Houtman Abrolhos following the eradication of introduced predators provides an example of the efforts being made to conserve them. A companion paper on Dirk Hartog Island, the fieldwork for which was done in association with a cat eradication campaign, documents the food sources of the feral cats and the significance of these preferences for the ecology and conservation of the island.

Detailed accounts of some of the biotas of the Shark Bay and Jurien Bay areas fringing the ocean follow. A short research note on the ghost bat takes us inland to the Karijini National Park in the Pilbara.

The Society has traditionally encouraged young researchers, particularly through the annual postgraduate symposium. It is a pleasure to include extended abstracts from the 2014 symposium on the marine environments of the Kimberley, in the north of the state and Shoalwater Bay in the south-west.

Tsunami have had an important effect on the landforms, vegetation and human communities surrounding the Indian Ocean for millennia, and this is particularly the case in the Shark Bay region, where ancient tsunami carried massive blocks inland. This is one of the striking conclusions of a recent book on the geology of Shark Bay, reviewed in this issue.

A final short review considers two brief field guides to the freshwater fish of two regions of Western Australia's ocean margins.

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Editor-in-Chief