



# Lasting adventures

A history of **LANDSCOPE** Expeditions  
by Hannah Beaney



As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of *LANDSCOPE* magazine, we look back at a groundbreaking program that saw members of the public invited to join conservation scientists in the field to see and participate in hands-on research activities. *LANDSCOPE* Expeditions ran from 1992 to 2009 and traversed the State, laying the foundation for some major conservation programs that still exist today.





**F**rom traversing the rugged landscape of the Kimberley, to uncovering rare flora and fauna in the south-west; *LANDSCOPE* Expeditions promised a share of adventure, discovery and camaraderie.

Starting in 1992 with a trip to the Gibson Desert, the idea for the expeditions was inspired by The University of Western Australia's Extension program led by Jean Paton (nee Collins) and Western Australian Naturalists' Club excursions, led by Kevin Coate and Kevin Kenneally, both

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*Previous page*

**Inset** Exploring Woolgorong Station.  
**Main** Volunteers at a seabird breeding colony on Pelsaert Island, Houtman Abrolhos.  
*Photos – DBCA*

**Above** Examining pitfall traps along the Canning Stock Route.  
*Photo – Graeme Liddelow*

**Above right** The Durba Hills on the Canning Stock Route.  
*Photo – Wendy Thompson/DBCA*

*Opposite page*

**Insets (from top)**  
 Bat Island, Kimberley expedition vessel.  
*Photo – Kevin Kenneally*; Little corellas and pied cormorants at Lake Gregory.  
*Photo – Michael Coote/DBCA*; Expedition member painting the landscape on the 2007 A brush with nature expedition.  
*Photo – Bill Muir*; Photographing wildlife along the Canning Stock Route.  
*Photo – Andrew Spiers*

of which conducted scientific research trips throughout Western Australia. As the program was designed to raise public awareness of plant and animal species, the eligibility requirements for the volunteers joining the expeditions were simple.

“The only qualifications needed are general good health, common sense, enthusiasm, an ability to adapt to other people, and a sense of humour,” former *LANDSCOPE* managing editor, Ron Kawalilak said at the time.

Participants were members of the community, young and old, who would join expedition teams that consisted of departmental scientists and regional staff. On each trip, the expedition leaders were responsible for keeping an expedition diary and thoroughly documenting details—from scientific discoveries to personal anecdotes and humorous moments.

Flicking through these honest, authentic diary entries in modern times provides an insightful glimpse into the past. While useful to understand scientific discoveries, these diary entries have also captured the spirit of the expeditioners through the selection of memories, giving a relatable human element to the formulaic structure of science.

Averaging between five and ten expeditions per year, the location of the trips depended on scientific research priorities and public appeal. A full list of all the trips for the year ahead was detailed in an Expeditions Program, giving potential volunteers a snippet into each of the

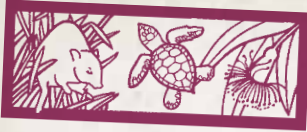
locations, the field work to be conducted and the cost and duration of the trip. A brief biography of the head scientists and expeditioners leaders was also included, giving expeditioners a chance to get to know the leadership.

## PAVING THE WAY

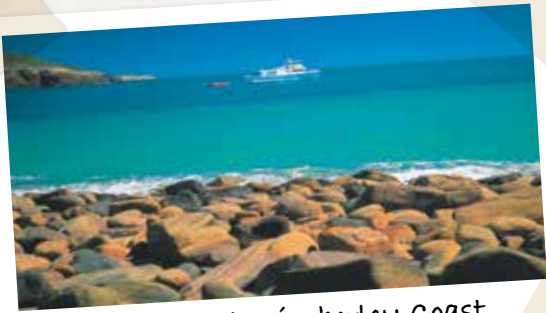
While the *LANDSCOPE* Expeditions program has concluded, the legacy of research and scientific contribution expeditioners made continues to hold value. Several of these trips paved the way for established and continuing Parks and Wildlife initiatives, such as the conservation program Western Shield, which works to reduce introduced predators and protect local fauna (see ‘Restoring the balance: 25 years of wildlife protection’, *LANDSCOPE*, Spring 2021).

Laying the foundation for this program was the introduction of Project Eden in the 1990s. Project Eden is an initiative that aimed to reintroduce native species and remove all foxes and feral cats from part of the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. An expedition in 1998 saw participants recording data on both reintroduced species and the feral cat population. Project Eden is still going today, having inspired the Dirk Hartog Return to 1616 restoration project.

Citizen scientists are often limited by their resources and capabilities, which made these expeditions appealing to those who wanted to make a difference, but did not know where to start. The major attraction to volunteers was the diverse learning



# Expeditions locations



Bat Island, Kimberley Coast



Lake Gregory



Capturing the art of the landscape

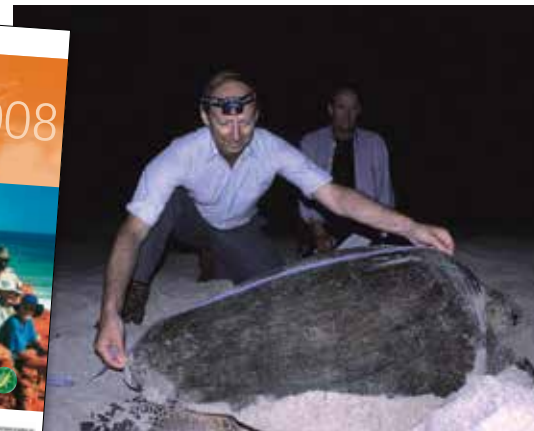


Canning Stock Route





“There was the sense of adding a small piece to the conservation puzzle, with volunteers knowing the work they were doing would benefit the environment for generations to come.”



experience the expeditions offered, alongside knowledgeable scientists in the field. Many volunteers became repeat expeditioners, allowing them to hone their skills each time round.

### HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Volunteers for the expeditions ranged from 13 to 81 years, and by the turn of the millennium in 2000, more than half of the volunteers had been repeat expeditioners. One woman even signed up for her seventh expedition at the age of 79.

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Often, biological surveys were carried out in remote areas where minimal work

had previously been conducted. This meant each survey provided a standard for which future observations could be compared. Biological surveys typically involve the recording of animal populations, flower patterns and other notable natural processes in the area.

Kevin Kenneally was the Scientific Coordinator of LANDSCOPE Expeditions and went on many of the trips himself. Discovering new things was always a highlight of a trip.

“So many new discoveries were added to science, it was one bit of excitement after another,” Kevin said.

With many volunteers coming from city backgrounds, the trips also provided an escape to nature, away from the bustle and business of everyday life. While the expeditions were scheduled and involved

manual work, they were also a way to connect back to the natural world. Hearing animal cries while at a remote camp or listening to birds at dawn and dusk allowed participants to feel far away from the urban demands of the city.

With tourism perpetually evolving, these expeditions also appealed to an audience interested in nature-based tourism experiences. They were an opportunity to explore some of the unique treasures found in WA, combined with an element of scientific philanthropy. There were instances of volunteers and scientists coming from overseas to be involved, many returning for multiple expeditions.

To add to the tourism marketing of the expeditions, all volunteers were given a LANDSCOPE Expeditions duffle bag,

**Above** Base camp for the 1994 turtle tagging expedition to Cape Domett in the north Kimberley.

*Photo – Tom Keating*

**Top right** Expedition staff (left to right) Cheryl Tonts, Kevin Kenneally, and Jean Paton.

**Above right** Collecting data on turtles.

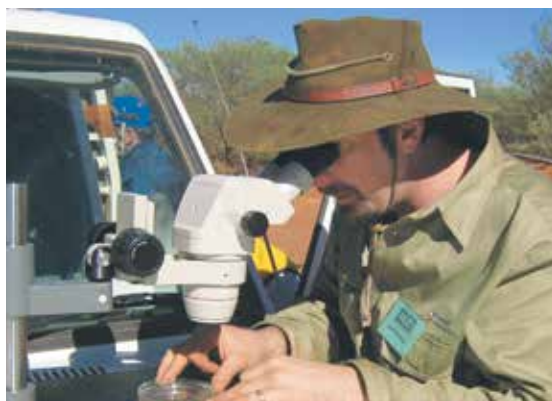
*Photos – DBCA*

**Inset** LANDSCOPE Expeditions program, 2008

### Protecting native fauna: Western Shield initiative

Western Shield is a program working to reduce the impact of feral cats and foxes on Western Australia’s threatened and native species. Since starting in 1996, the project now covers 3.8 million hectares of land across WA and operates through the laying of baits for predator control. The first initiative of the program was Operation Foxglove, which used 1080 baits to control foxes in the northern jarrah forest. It was not until nearly a decade later that a feral cat bait, known as Eradicat®, was developed to target feral cats. This program has seen population increase for a variety of native species, both through the reduction of invasive predators and through successful translocation of species into baited areas.





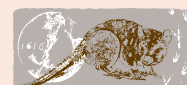
thermal mug, stubby holder, lanyard and name badge. This merchandise standardised the luggage brought by each of the members while also serving as a valuable marketing opportunity.

However, perhaps the best marketing opportunity for the trips was not the merchandise, but rather the reputation for excellence the expeditions established. Volunteers went away from the trip full of freshly acquired knowledge and experiences, which they discussed with friends and family alike. Rather than a marketing program, the expeditions relied on news coverage garnered from the occasional journalist invited on an expedition. Word of mouth was often the best way to attract the attention of prospective volunteers.

Contributing to this reputation for excellence was the unblemished safety record of the expeditions. Throughout its entirety, there were no significant incidents or medical emergencies. Kevin Kenneally attributed this pristine track record to thorough training and planning by expedition organisers and project leaders, such as alerting the Royal Flying

## Foundations for restoration: Dirk Hartog Return to 1616 project

Return to 1616 is a restoration project aiming to return Dirk Hartog Island to its ecological state prior to European influence. Named after the Dutch explorer, this island has had a varied history. In the 1860s it was used as a grazing ground for sheep and by the 1900s it was home to lighthouse keepers, who introduced goats as a food source (See 'Welcoming wallabies to Wirruwana', *LANDSCOPE*, spring 2018). Reduced vegetation from the sheep and goats, combined with predation from cats, meant only three small native animals remained in 2009. The first phase of the Return to 1616 project began in 2012, and set out to eradicate all feral cats, sheep and goats from the island (see 'De-stocking Dirk Hartog: Eradicating goats and sheep', *LANDSCOPE*, spring 2019). By the end of 2017, there were no more goats, sheep or cats on the island, paving the way for the start of phase two in 2018. Phase two is focused on translocating 13 species back onto the island, which started with the banded hare-wallaby (*Lagostrophus fasciatus*) and the rufous hare-wallaby (*Lagorchestes hirsutus*). By 2022, six species had been translocated to Dirk Hartog with more planned for the future.



RETURN TO 1616  
DIRK HARTOG ISLAND  
NATIONAL PARK



Doctor Service of the expedition's route and the number of people involved.

While the expeditions were pitched at a cost that allowed the department to break even, any left-over funds went directly to a trust fund. This could only be used towards future research and conservation projects. By the year 2000, expeditioners had contributed three-quarters of a million dollars towards Western Australian wildlife and conservation research, which only grew throughout the remaining years.

Leaving behind a lasting impression of discovery, determination and scientific discipline, the *LANDSCOPE* expeditions embodied the true potential that comes from a collaboration of scientists and everyday people wanting to give back to nature.

**Top left** Expeditioners work side-by-side with scientists in the field.

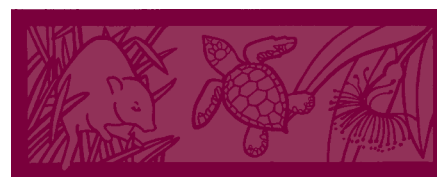
Photo – DBCA

**Above left** Examining entomological specimens along the Canning Stock Route.

Photo – Andrew Spiers

**Above** Expedition members on the Montebello Islands.

Photo – Kevin Coate



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