



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



# Volunteer Satisfaction Survey Report 2018

By

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# VOLUNTEERING FOR NATURE

A snapshot of Parks and Wildlife Service Volunteers



**84.5% satisfaction**  
with volunteer experience



**86.3% recommend**  
to others as a place to volunteer



**88.3% will continue**  
**volunteering**

## Most important reasons for volunteering



**90.0%** Opportunities to contribute to environment and conservation



**87.6%** Enhancing support for protection of native flora and fauna



**87.4%** Pursuing an area of interest



**87.4%** Providing meaningful and enjoyable experiences



**81.9% satisfaction**  
with their relationship with staff



**75.7% satisfaction**  
with feedback from project coordinators  
and staff



**81.9% satisfaction**  
with their on-ground management or  
supervision



**82.0% satisfaction**  
with recognition received



*“Meaningful volunteering work which allows me to contribute to the conservation of marine turtles and little penguins and give back to the community. The staff are like minded and positive, motivated, energetic people who inspire me and make my volunteering experience highly enjoyable. Thank you! A surprise recognition gift last year was so nice because it was unexpected.”*

Source: Parks and Wildlife Service: Volunteer Satisfaction Survey Report 2018



## Executive Summary

Volunteers play a huge role in the ability of Parks and Wildlife Service to deliver a variety of outcomes. Volunteers participate in an extensive range of activities including wildlife rehabilitation, staffing the Wildcare Helpline, campground hosting, maintaining tracks and trails (Bibbulmun Track, Munda Bididi Trail, Cape to Cape), seed collection, weeding and participating in fauna and flora surveys. During the 2016-17 reporting year Parks and Wildlife had 5,410 people volunteer a total of 723,508 hours to more than 250 statewide projects. As at 1 March 2018, there were more than 15,500 volunteers registered on the Parks and Wildlife volunteer database. The highest proportion of volunteers registered in Parks and Wildlife's volunteer database, both by number of volunteers and hours contributed, are wildlife rehabilitators, followed by campground hosts.

This report presents the findings of a volunteer survey requested by the Volunteer and Community Involvement Unit in March 2018. The survey was initiated after an internal audit found there was scope to solicit feedback from volunteers in relation to their volunteer experience.

A total of 1,340 volunteers responded and indicated that they were, overall, highly satisfied with their volunteer experience with the department. On average, most respondents (84.4%) were very satisfied with their volunteer experience, while 86.3% of respondents indicated that they would recommend Parks and Wildlife as a place to volunteer to a friend or colleague and 88.3% were likely to continue volunteering with Parks and Wildlife. Most respondents were from Western Australia (95.4%). Retirees contributed the largest proportion of respondents (39.4%), followed by those working full-time (27.1%).

The most important reasons given for volunteering with Parks and Wildlife were:

- opportunities to contribute to environment and conservation (90%),
- enhancing support for protection of native flora and fauna (87.6%),
- pursuing an area of interest (87.4%),
- and providing meaningful and enjoyable experiences (87.4%)

In most cases, expectations were met or exceeded with the Parks and Wildlife volunteering experience.

Volunteers were most highly satisfied with:

- the opportunity to contribute to environment and conservation (89%),
- pursuing an area of interest (89%),
- having a meaningful and enjoyable experience (88.8%),
- supporting protection of native flora and fauna (87.7%)
- and spending time in natural settings (86.5%).

When asked to describe in their own words the most enjoyable aspect of being a Parks and Wildlife volunteer, the top responses were associated with helping and working with wildlife, contributing to the environment and conservation, enjoying nature and the outdoors and for social reasons, whether that was staff or other volunteers and like-minded people.

Respondents were also questioned about their Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) induction at registration. Since July 1 2016, all volunteers receive a mandatory induction prior to commencing volunteer work. Almost half (41%) of respondents indicated they had received the induction, with 47% stating they had started with the department before the mandatory OHS induction was introduced. Only 11.8% of respondents said they had not received the new induction. Overall however, respondents felt they received adequate training and support to complete their role (67.4%). Continued promotion of the importance of OHS and other task-related training may help to improve volunteers' satisfaction ratings in this area. Volunteer project supervisors should support and encourage further training for volunteers wherever possible.

The majority (78.0%) of volunteers considered it important to have their contribution recognised, with 70.4% of respondents saying that they had received recognition in some form for their volunteering. Most (82.6%) of those were satisfied with the recognition they had received.

Most (81.9%) respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their relationship with staff, with 75.7% indicating that they were satisfied with the provision of feedback they received from project coordinators and staff.

The report shows that expectations of volunteers are met or exceeded in most part. The lowest importance and satisfaction rate was for 'It improves my awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture'. However, expectations were still exceeded, indicating that volunteers may not be linking their volunteer work and the cultural significance it may have. This is a potential area for improvement as the department has generally not had a focus on including volunteers in cultural awareness training in the past.

Although generally the survey response was positive, those that said that they were dissatisfied (38 respondents; 2.8% of total respondents) were given the opportunity to suggest how we could improve their volunteer experience. The responses to this question were varied but included 'more support and recognition from the department' (13 respondents), 'improving systems to make it easier to volunteer', and 'more opportunities to volunteer' (5 respondents) and 'more financial support' (3 respondents).

# Introduction

## Background

This report presents the results of the Parks and Wildlife Service survey of registered volunteers. As of March 1 2018 there were more than 15,500 volunteers registered on the Parks and Wildlife Service volunteer database. Of these, 5,410 were active in 2016-17 (volunteering >1 hour) and contributed 723,508 volunteer hours to more than 250 volunteer projects across Western Australia.

The findings of the 2016-17 audit *Reviewing the Effectiveness of Volunteer Engagement and Management* showed that volunteer expectations, motivations and satisfaction should be evaluated, having last been surveyed in 2013-14. As a result of these findings it was recommended that the level of satisfaction of long-term volunteers continue to be recorded and used for developing the management of the volunteer program.

This survey aimed to obtain accurate and useful statistical information on the overall management of volunteers in Parks and Wildlife. It also provides useful insight into volunteer satisfaction and the overall effectiveness of the program as per the recommendations of the 2016-17 Volunteer Management Audit.

## Project aims & objectives

The objectives of the survey were to:

- Provide accurate information on the effectiveness of the volunteer program and the expectations, motivations and satisfaction of the department's Parks and Wildlife Service volunteers.
- Assist in understanding why people choose to volunteer with Parks and Wildlife and provide valuable feedback to be used in the planning and management of the volunteer program.
- Provide information to improve volunteer recruitment and retainment.
- Provide specific improvements to the volunteer program by directly involving volunteers.
- Continue to measure volunteer satisfaction for the assessment of future performance of the program.
- Increase the effectiveness and efficiency with which Parks and Wildlife manages volunteers.

## Method

### Volunteer questionnaire

Monitoring occurred via an online survey link (SurveyMonkey) emailed to all currently registered Parks and Wildlife Service volunteers in the volunteer database system (Volgistics), who had provided a valid email address.

### Response rate

An email was sent out to a total of 9,986 registered Parks and Wildlife Service volunteers in March 2018 providing details of the online survey link. The total response was 1,340 (a 13% overall response rate)<sup>1</sup>. The sample is a representative sample of the volunteer population with a low margin of error.

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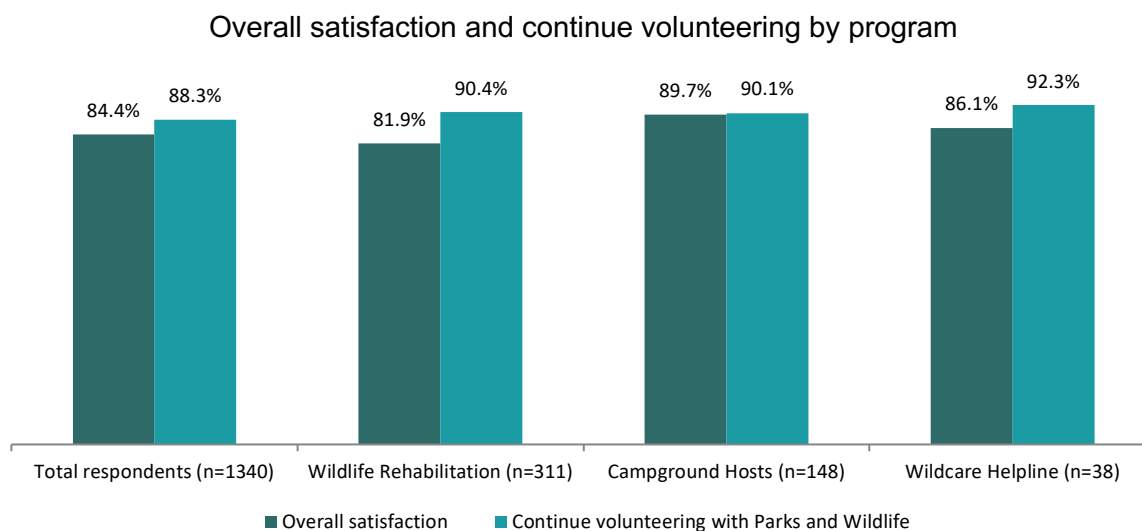
<sup>1</sup> Margin of error = 2.49. For example, if 50% of the sample responds to a particular answer, then you can assume that if all volunteers had been surveyed, between 47.51% (50-2.49) and 52.49% (50+2.49) would have picked that answer.



## Outcomes

### Volunteer satisfaction

On average, most respondents were very satisfied with their volunteer experience (84.4%). This very high response indicates that respondents are likely to communicate a positive image of Parks and Wildlife to others - 86.3% of respondents indicated that they would recommend Parks and Wildlife as a place to volunteer to a friend or colleague.

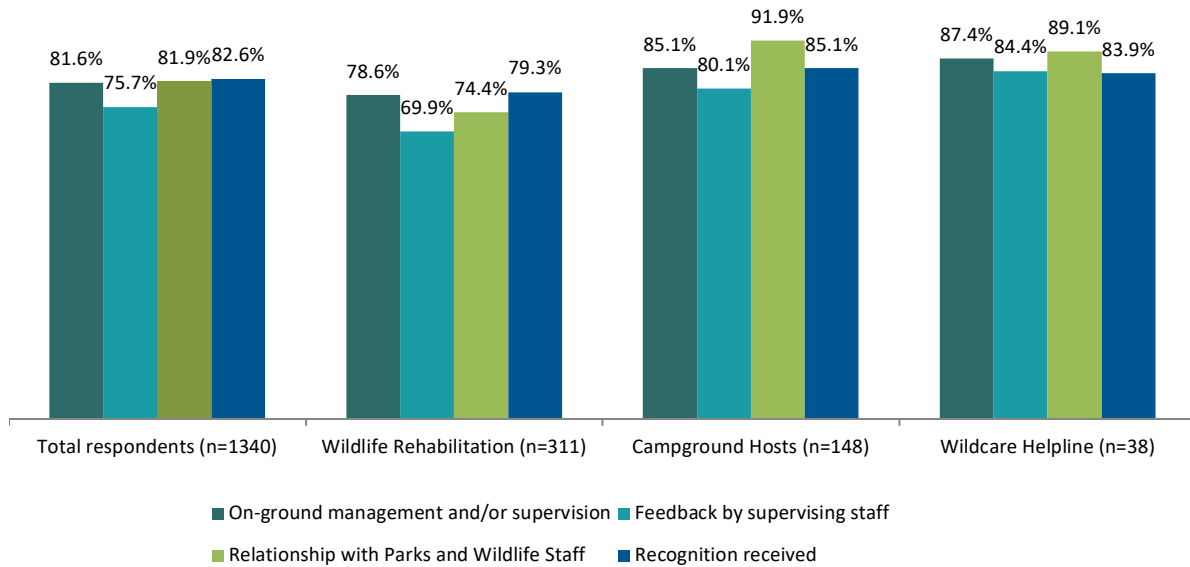


The majority of respondents (88.3%) were likely to continue volunteering with Parks and Wildlife, which reiterates that most volunteers have a positive opinion of their experience and a strong commitment to Parks and Wildlife. These results remain consistent with the previous 2013-14 Parks and Wildlife volunteer survey that reported high levels of satisfaction with volunteer experiences.

Programs and projects that Parks and Wildlife directly oversee or manage were also analysed for satisfaction (sample sizes are relevant to the number of volunteers registered in each program). Volunteers participating as Campground Hosts were the most satisfied (89.7%) followed by the Wildcare Helpline (86.1%). Wildlife Rehabilitation volunteers, who are not directly managed by Parks and Wildlife staff, had satisfaction lower than the total score (81.9%), however there was a strong intention to continue to volunteer (90.4%) implying a high level of loyalty or dedication to their work.

Those that said that they were dissatisfied with the Parks and Wildlife Service program (38 respondents; 2.8% of total respondents) were given the opportunity to suggest how we could improve their volunteer experience. Responses varied but included more support and recognition from the department (13 respondents / 1% of total responses), improving systems to make it easier to volunteer, and wanting more opportunities to volunteer (both 5 respondents / 0.4% of total responses) and more financial support (3 respondents / 0.2% of total responses).

## Satisfaction with supervision and recognition by program



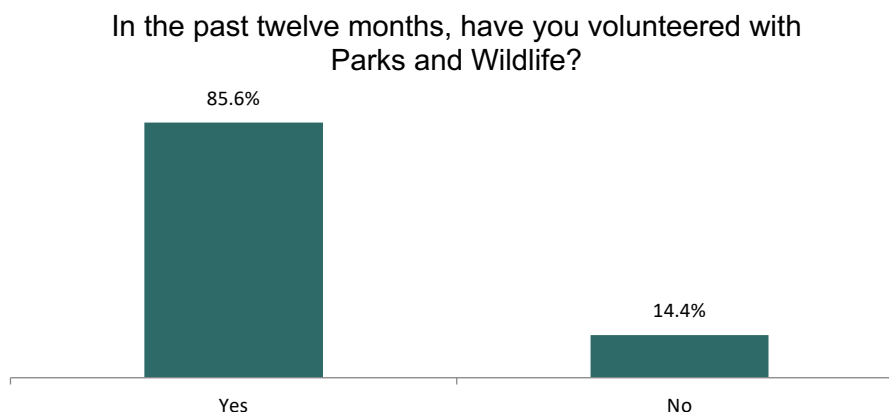
On average, most respondents (81.9%) indicated they had a positive relationship with staff, while 75.7% were satisfied with the provision of feedback they received from staff in relation to their volunteer work. Campground Hosts (91.9% satisfaction) and the Wildcare Helpline (89.1% satisfaction) reported the highest average satisfaction with these aspects. Most volunteers (82%) felt that the recognition they received (rewards, events etc) was satisfactory, while 81.9% were satisfied with their on-ground management or supervision.

We would suggest that improvements to on-ground management could include increased support from staff in reference to providing feedback, additional advice and presence, particularly in wildlife rehabilitation projects. It is important to note that wildlife rehabilitation centres are not under the direct supervision of DBCA, but make up a large number of registered volunteers, so improvements could be made in communications between DBCA staff in support of these centres.

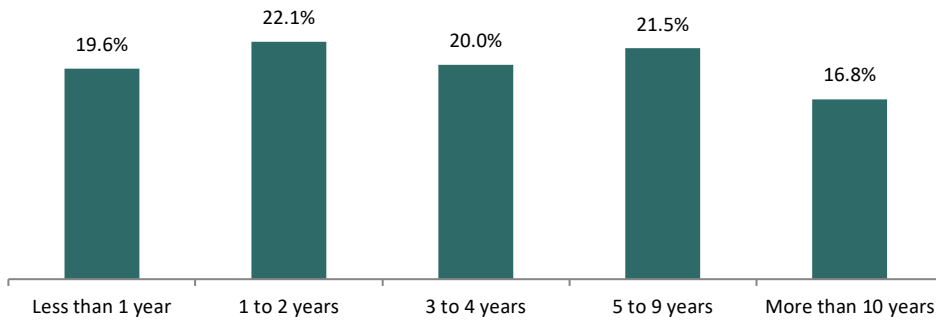
Other areas identified include improved communication regarding feedback and actions on reported issues as this received the lowest overall average satisfaction. The lowest satisfaction for feedback by supervising staff was for wildlife rehabilitation (69.9% average satisfaction) with 39% of wildlife rehabilitation respondents indicating that feedback from supervisory staff was somewhat satisfactory to not at all satisfactory.

## Volunteer information

Most respondents (85.6%) indicated that they had volunteered on Parks and Wildlife projects in the past 12 months. The length of time respondents had been volunteering with Parks and Wildlife were evenly spread. Most respondents had been volunteering for less than 5 years (61.7%), however over a third had been volunteering for more than 5 years with about 17% volunteering for more than 10 years.



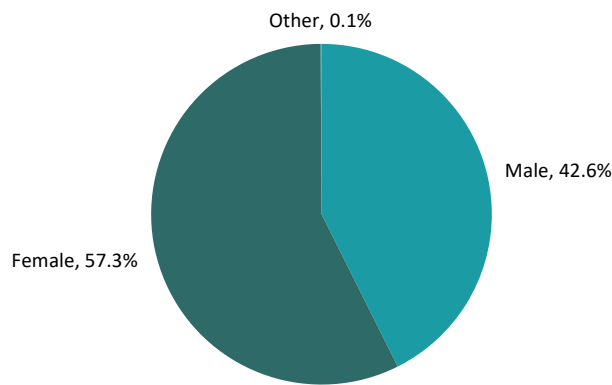
### About how long have you been a volunteer with Parks and Wildlife?



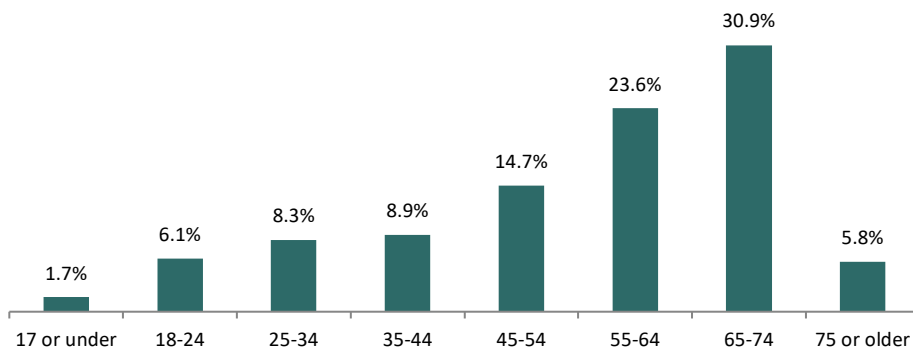
### Volunteer gender and age groups

Volunteer respondents comprised 57.3% female, 42.6% male and 0.1% other (1 respondent) (n=1185). Most respondents were aged 45 and over (74.9%) with the largest group being 65 to 74 (30.9%).

### Are you?



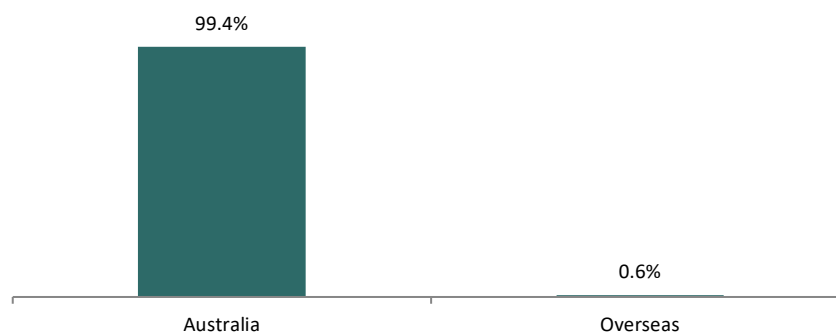
### Which age group do you belong?



## Residence

For volunteer respondents where an Australian postcode was provided, the majority (95.4%) resided in Western Australia. Volunteers from other states include 18 (1.5%) from Queensland, 16 (1.4%) from Victoria and 11 (0.9%) from New South Wales. Those from overseas (0.6%) came from countries including Germany, USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Switzerland and Belgium.

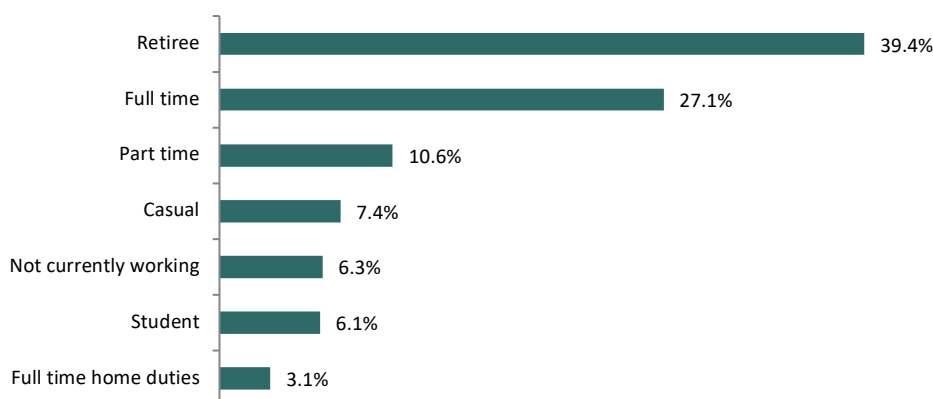
### Where is your usual place of residence?



## Employment status

The largest proportion of volunteer respondents (39.4%) were retirees followed by those employed in full-time work (27.1%). Similarly, the ABS<sup>2</sup> reported that one-third of volunteers were employed full-time and a further third of volunteers were those in retirement.

### Employment status



## Experiencing volunteering

### Survey response by program

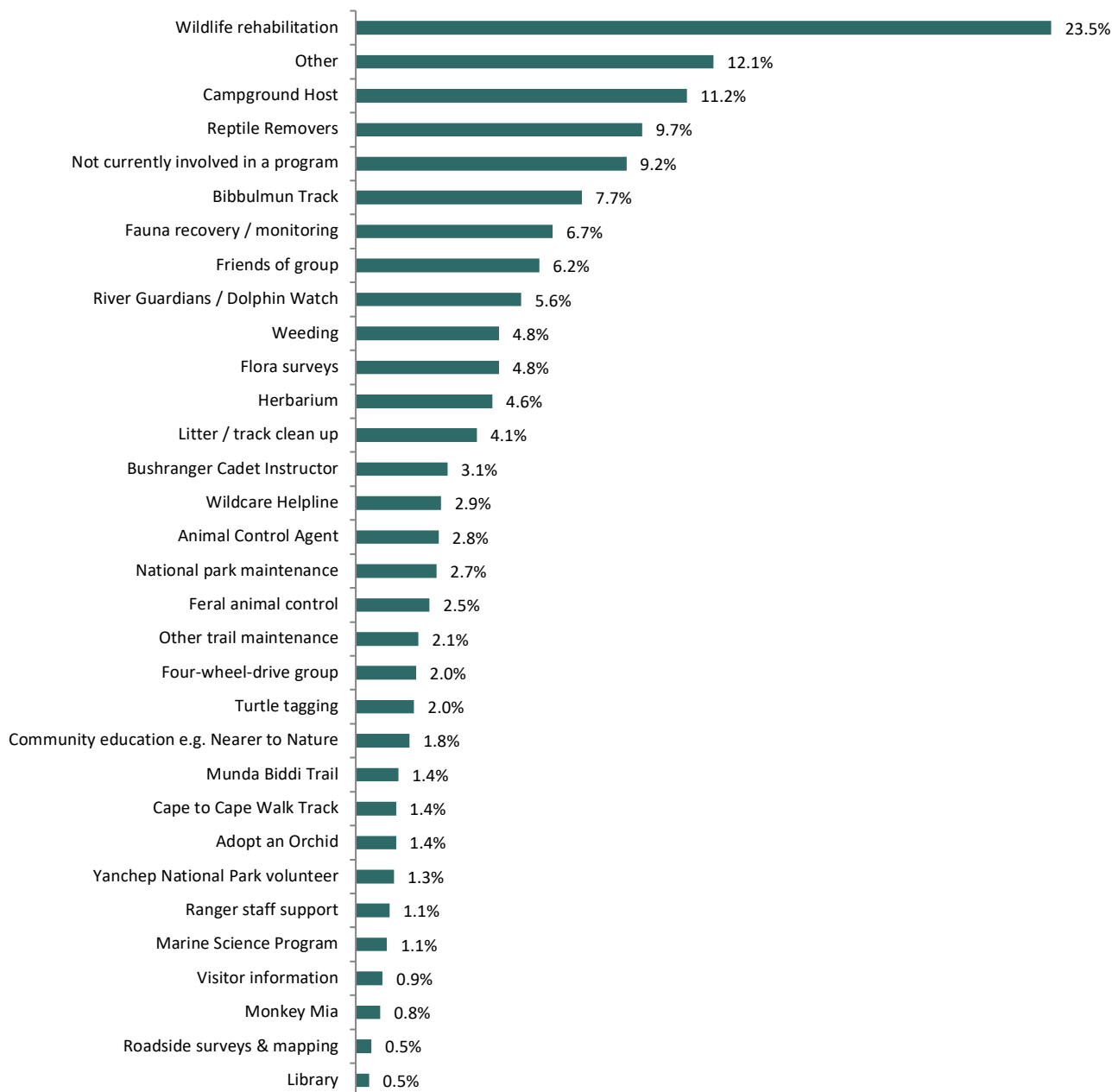
Parks and Wildlife offers a wide range of volunteer programs (320 in 2016-17) and as such has a large number of active volunteers (5,410 in 2016-17) who contribute many hours (723,508 in 2016-17). Information about the volunteer programs, such as number of hours contributed, and number of hours volunteered per program, are recorded in a secure online volunteer database, Volgistics. Data showed that in 2016-17 the largest percentage of hours per program were completed by wildlife rehabilitators (332,679 hours or 45.9%) followed by campground hosts (160,523 hours or 22.2%). In most cases, wildlife rehabilitation volunteers are managed via wildlife rehabilitation centres, and supported indirectly by DBCA staff across several divisions.

Respondents to the survey generally showed a similar distribution by volunteer program to data from the department's volunteer database, therefore providing a representative sample. Volunteer survey respondents

<sup>2</sup> ABS (2010). *Voluntary Work, Australia, 2010*. Catalogue no. 44441.0. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, Australia.

indicated that the programs with the largest proportion of respondents were: wildlife rehabilitation (23.5%) and campground host (11.2%). Some volunteers (12.1%) stated 'other', indicating that they felt their work was not covered in the options provided, while a small proportion were also not currently involved in a program (9.2%).

### What Parks and Wildlife volunteer program/s are you currently involved in?



### Reasons for volunteering

The two most important reasons respondents choose to volunteer with Parks and Wildlife is to contribute to environment and conservation (90.0%; 4.50 rating) and enhancing support for protection of native flora and fauna (87.6%; 4.39 rating), thereby supporting the objectives of the department. Contributing to environment and conservation was also the aspect they were most satisfied with. Other important reasons given were to pursue areas of interest (87.4%; 4.37 rating) and provides meaningful and enjoyable experiences (87.4%; 4.36 rating). Other important reasons for volunteering are providing an opportunity to help the community and improving awareness and understanding of environment and conservation (both 84.0%; 4.20 rating).

When asked about whether their volunteering experience satisfies these reasons, volunteers were highly satisfied (>80% satisfaction) with most of the reasons presented.

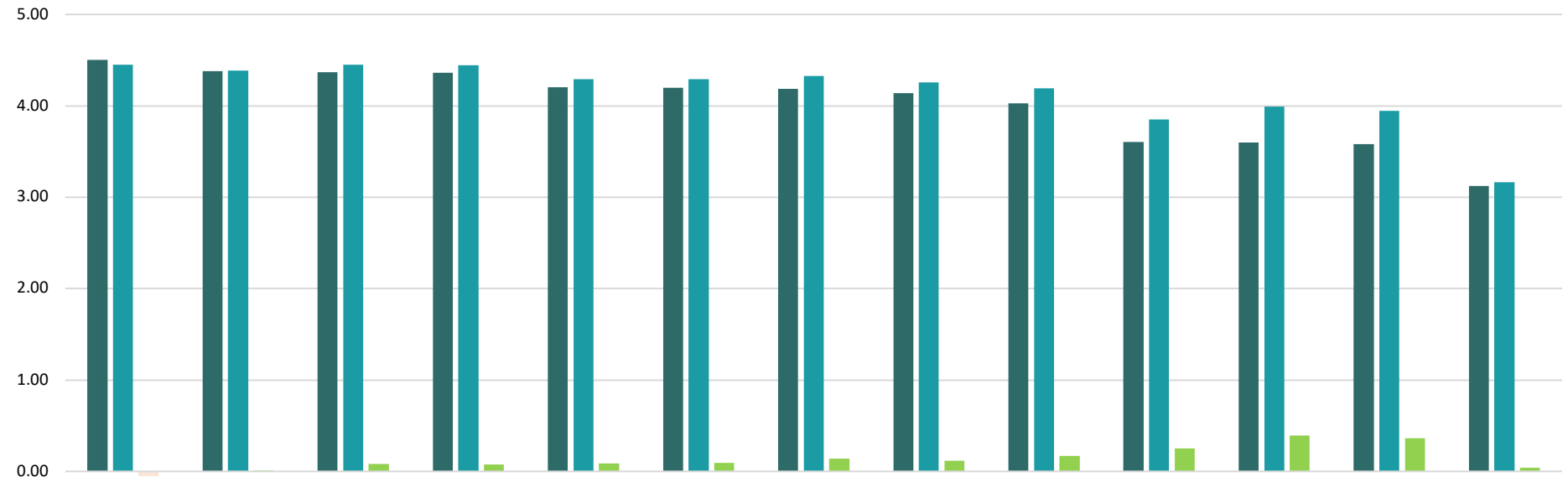
Expectations were significantly exceeded for most of the reasons given. Volunteers were most satisfied with the opportunity to contribute to environment and conservation, pursuing an area of interest (both 89.0% satisfaction; 4.45 rating), having a meaningful and enjoyable experience (88.8% satisfaction; 4.44 rating), supporting protection of native flora and fauna (87.7% satisfaction; 4.39 rating) and spending time in natural settings (86.5% satisfaction; 4.32 rating).

The largest positive gaps where satisfaction significantly exceeded importance were for the opportunity to socialise, meet new people and network (0.39 gap), improving health (through keeping active) (0.37 gap) and being involved with the work of the department (0.25 gap). These all were rated between 77% and 80% satisfaction.

The lowest importance and satisfaction rating (about 62%) was for 'It improves my awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture'. However, expectations were still exceeded, indicating that volunteers may not be making the connection between what they do and how it may be culturally, as well as environmentally, significant. The department has generally not had a focus on including volunteers in cultural awareness training in the past.

While some volunteer projects, such as campground hosts, have had access to cultural awareness training occasionally, this is an area of improvement that will potentially aid future learning and satisfaction for volunteers, while improving volunteers' knowledge of cultural connections to Parks and Wildlife Service work.

### Importance satisfaction analysis



	It provides me an opportunity to contribute to environment and conservation*	It enhances my support for the protection of native flora and fauna	It allows me to pursue an area of interest*	It provides me a meaningful and enjoyable experience*	It gives me the opportunity to help the community*	It improves my awareness and understanding of environment and conservation*	It allows me to spend time in natural settings*	It increases my skills and knowledge*	It provides me an opportunity to be involved with like-minded people*	It provides me an opportunity to be involved with the work of the department*	It provides an opportunity to socialise, meet new people and network*	It provides me an opportunity to improve my health (through keeping active)*	It improves my awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture
■ Importance	4.50	4.38	4.37	4.36	4.20	4.20	4.18	4.14	4.02	3.60	3.60	3.58	3.12
■ Satisfaction	4.45	4.39	4.45	4.44	4.29	4.29	4.32	4.26	4.19	3.85	3.99	3.95	3.16
■ Gap Analysis	-0.05	0.01	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.14	0.12	0.17	0.25	0.39	0.37	0.04

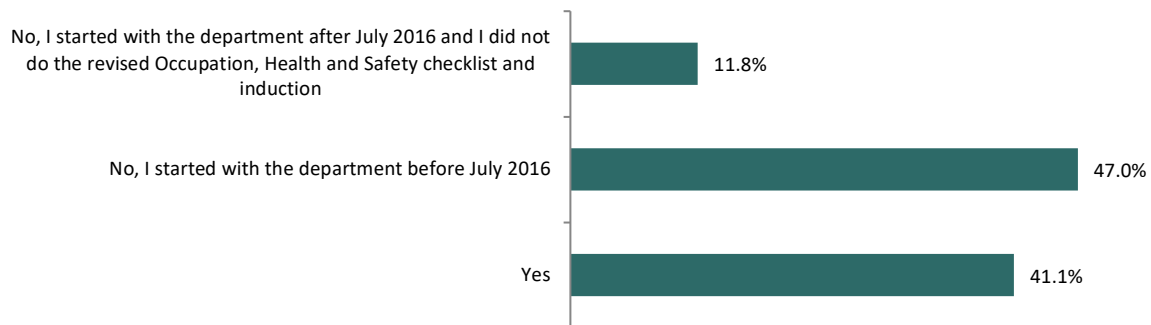
## Induction and training

In July 2016, the department introduced a revised registration process which includes a mandatory Occupational Health and Safety checklist for supervisors to work through as part of any new volunteers' induction. Almost half (47%) of the respondents stated they were registered before the introduction of the new process, with 41.1% of respondents having completed it. A small proportion, (11.8%, 144) of respondents said that they have not completed the induction in this new format. As the induction is mandatory, but still a relatively recent change, we would hope to reduce this number in the future. On average, most (69.3%) respondents felt that this training was adequate to complete their role, while 67.4% of respondents felt that they had been provided with adequate training and support to complete their role.

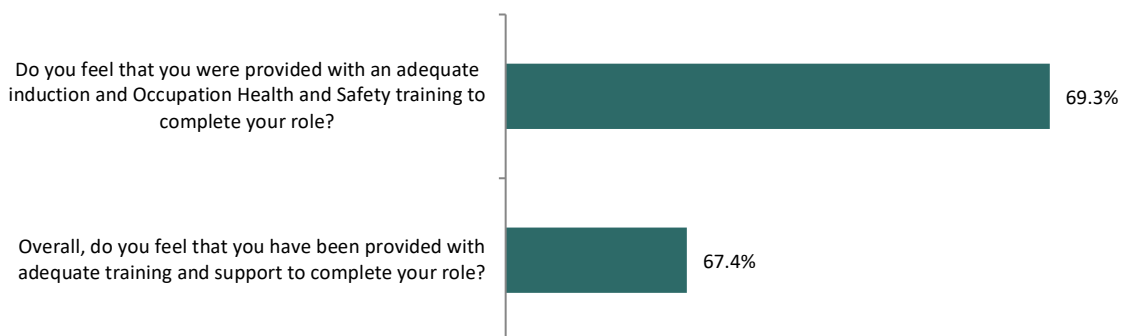
Continued promotion to DBCA staff of the importance of OHS and other task-related training may help to improve volunteers' satisfaction ratings in this area. Volunteer project supervisors should support and encourage further training for volunteers wherever possible and appropriate.

It is important to note that 23.5% of respondents are not managed directly by DBCA staff as they are under the supervision of external groups. However, this is an area that should be raised with these groups of volunteers further from DBCA's 'care, custody and control'.

### Have you participated in this revised Occupation, Health and Safety checklist and induction since July 2016?



### Average rating %





## Most enjoyable aspect of being a volunteer with Parks and Wildlife

Volunteer respondents were asked what their most enjoyable aspect of being a volunteer with Parks and Wildlife was to date. The 989 qualitative responses to this open-ended question demonstrated the wide range of motivations, experiences and the impact of their voluntary effort.

When asked to describe the most enjoyable aspect of being a Parks and Wildlife volunteer, the top responses were:

- helping and working with wildlife (31.5%, 303 comments),
- contributing to the environment and conservation (16.2%, 156 comments),
- enjoying nature and the outdoors (13.2%, 127 comments),
- social reasons, including staff, other volunteers and like-minded people (10.6%, 102 comments).

## What has been the most enjoyable aspect of being a volunteer with Parks and Wildlife to date?

(verbatim)

*"Just being there, great sense of community and environmental contribution. Love every minute of it"*

*"Giving back to the environment and being involved in something I enjoy".*

*"Helping the rangers and learning about the environment. Meeting people who share the same interests."*

*"Doing flora surveys for the Banksia Woodland Restoration Project. I learnt so much and had the best group of people to learn from. I received great support and knowledge. I value my experience volunteering for them greatly"*

*"Working with rangers who are so passionate about their work"*

*"Participating in projects located in areas of the State which I would not have been able to visit, i.e. Rosemary Island; Lorna Glen; Western Desert, Walpole wilderness areas"*

*"Just being there, great sense of community and environmental contribution. Love every minute of it."*

*"Caring for wildlife in need. Volunteering with like-minded people."*

*"Being closer to nature whilst also being able to contribute to the community as well as the friendships that I have formed."*

*"Meaningful volunteering work which allows me to contribute to the conservation of marine turtles and little penguins and give back to the community. The staff are like minded and positive, motivated, energetic people who inspire me and make my volunteering experience highly enjoyable. Thank you! A surprise recognition gift last year was so nice because it was unexpected."*

*"Being outdoors, in the bush, learning, observing."*

*"To enhance the visitors' enjoyment whilst using the grounds or facilities."*

*"Talking to and helping people from other countries while helping to conserve nature and to make everyone's experience enjoyable."*

*"Working with children whilst volunteering at Nearer to Nature over the last 7 years and helping children to understand the importance of respecting the natural environment and the animals within it."*

*"Working with volunteer colleagues to assign found samples including the correct identifying data of flora, native & weeds species, of the south west to their correct place in the South West Regional Herbarium based in the Bunbury Parks & Wildlife facility."*

*"Our relationship with staff and volunteers are extremely good I should say. I am very much enjoying working with Parks and Wildlife. I feel I am working meaningfully. Our working atmosphere is the most enjoyable aspect so far."*

*"Participated in a short stint, and do plan in the future to continue volunteering, but thoroughly enjoyed my time and found it very interesting and very rewarding to enter the bush with the P&W Officer and leaving with knowledge and knowing what P&W is all about. They do a great job."*

## Conclusion

The diversity of roles and involvement from volunteers is essential to the successful ongoing vision and output of the department. Overall, people who volunteer with Parks and Wildlife are generally satisfied with their experience.

To continue to receive this positive feedback from volunteers it is important that they are valued for their commitment to their role, and that their contributions are appreciated and recognised, at a project and departmental level. Sincere, constructive feedback for the volunteers is important in showing that volunteers are making a genuine contribution to the department's work. This is also relevant for those programs, such as wildlife rehabilitation, where volunteers are not directly managed by DBCA staff, but whose work greatly supports the department.

There were some areas that some respondents thought could improve their volunteer experience. These included 'more support and recognition from the department', 'improving systems to make it easier to volunteer', 'more opportunities to volunteer' and 'more financial support'. This feedback can be used to consider more focussed efforts in these areas, where possible.

Another area highlighted for potential improvement could be around cultural awareness training for volunteers. The department has generally not had a focus on including volunteers in cultural awareness training in the past in the same way as DBCA staff. Exploring the possibility of delivering this training to volunteers could increase volunteers' understanding of their volunteer work, and how that fits into DBCA's work and its cultural significance.