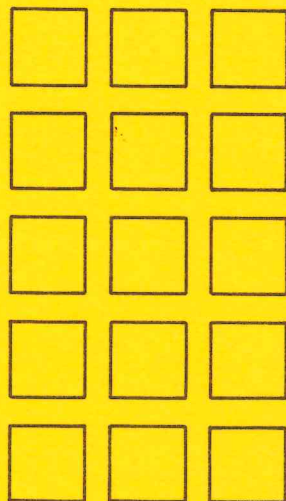


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Officer Training



Department of Conservation and Land Management, W.A.

Officer Training



Department of Conservation and Land Management, W.A.

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1986

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THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

The Department of Conservation and Land Management has two main functions. The first is to manage Departmental Lands and Resources throughout Western Australia. The second is to provide a management and advisory service to other authorities and bodies (governmental, community or private) also concerned with land management and the conservation of the State's flora and fauna.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management has the responsibility for managing a vast 16.2 million hectare estate. Of this, 9.9 million hectares are Nature Reserves, 4.4 million hectares are National Parks and 1.9 million hectares are State Forest. A wide range of land forms and landscapes is represented in this estate: from highly fertile well watered country in the South, to arid deserts in the North and East. A major responsibility of the Department is the conservation of fauna and flora.

The Conservation and Land Management Act, under which the Department is constituted, provides for three controlling bodies:

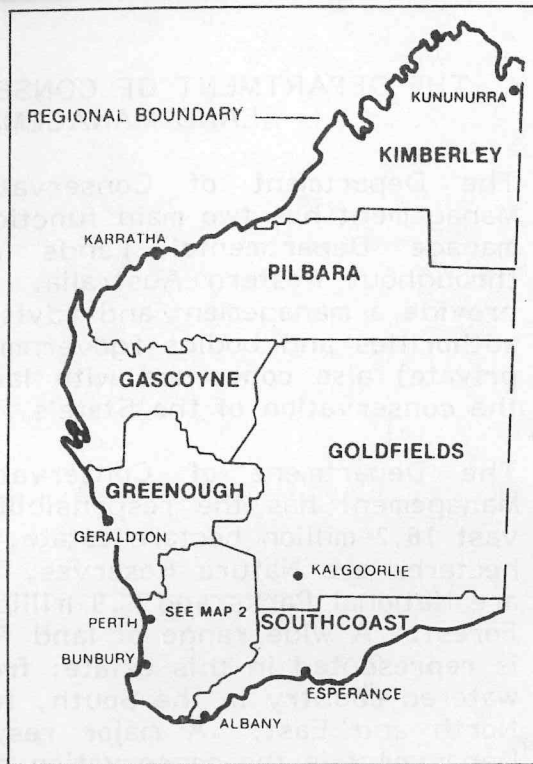
Lands and Forests Commission
National Parks and Nature Conservation
Council
Forest Production Council

These bodies advise the Minister of Conservation and Land Management on land management, National Parks management, conservation policy and timber production.

A vital feature of the legislation under which the Department of Conservation and Land Management operates is its emphasis on public participation.

CALM REGIONS IN WA

MAP 1



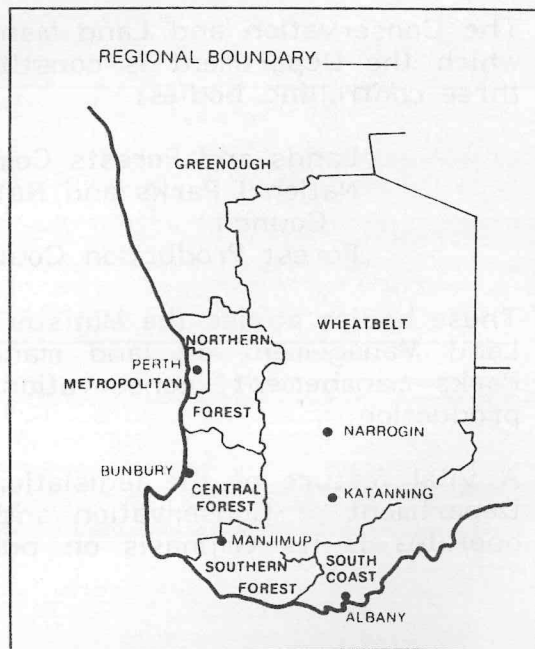
This is achieved by including public representation on the three controlling bodies and by providing formal mechanisms for public involvement in land management planning.

Planning must satisfy, as far as possible, the public requirement for resources such as recreation areas, water, timber, flora, fauna, and the landscape. These resources need protection from the harmful effects of fire, disease, soil deterioration and uncontrolled human usage. The conservation of flora and fauna, through effective management of habitat, is given major emphasis in the Department's organisation and procedures.

Although policy and overall control is from State Headquarters in Perth, the Department of Conservation and Land Management operates from 10 regional centres, each with considerable autonomy. Thus the benefit of a small organisation is retained without losing the larger scale resources essential to a land management agency. Specifically each region, in its management strategy can be sensitive to the local environment and to the local people, whilst simultaneously having access to central facilities such as aerial photography, information and mapping. Research, training, fire management and disease control are promoted according to regional needs.

CALM REGIONS IN THE SOUTHWEST

MAP 2



The Department in its headquarters, regions and districts employs about 1400 people. Of these, 700 are salaried staff engaged in management, administration, supervision, clerical duties, research and a host of support functions. The rest carry out the practical work involved in the management of the estate. This work includes fire prevention and fire suppression; afforestation and the tending of established forest; the development of recreation and tourist facilities; the protection and maintenance of parks and reserves.

Of the Department's 700 salaried officers, approximately 400 are classified as field officers.

The main categories of field officers are:

- Wildlife officers
- National park rangers
- Reserves officers
- Forest officers
- Technical officers employed in Research and other support sections
- Certain categories of Administrative Staff

Some of these posts are filled through a two year field officer cadetship; others, which require specialised skills, are advertised individually.

WILDLIFE OFFICERS

The primary role of wildlife officers in Western Australia is to become familiar with Wildlife Conservation Legislation in order to conserve flora and fauna in the wild.

Wildlife officers are principally concerned with the enforcement of Legislation, but also perform a wide range of other functions.

Wildlife Conservation Legislation enables the Department to conserve the State's flora and fauna directly and through the implementation of management programs. Regulation of various commercial and non-commercial activities affecting wildlife are supervised by wildlife officers.

To fulfil their enforcement roles, wildlife officers are required to undertake a range of field duties including patrols, investigations and observations. These activities may be undertaken day or night; sometimes in harsh weather conditions.

The duration of patrols may vary from one day (or night) to 10 days. Work may commence at unusual times and often duties are undertaken on weekends and public holidays.

A wildlife officer is required to undertake independent, unsupervised duties and therefore must be confident and practical. The officer is required to apprehend and interview offenders, gather evidence, compile detailed investigative reports and attend court to give evidence.

Routine duties performed by wildlife officers include the inspection of bird dealers' premises, kangaroo processing establishments, kangaroo carcass chiller units, aviaries and flora dealers' premises. Officers also oversee the licensed activities of bird trappers, professional kangaroo shooters and flora pickers.

Applications for licences prescribed in Wildlife Conservation Legislation are usually subject to investigation by wildlife officers who also provide related advice.

Other functions performed by officers include the regulation of open seasons and management programs which may allow hunting, trapping or other approved activities. Monitoring flora and fauna populations, water levels in various wetlands and checking the condition of various species of rare flora are also undertaken by the wildlife officer.

Officers carry out extensive surveys to determine the conservation value of likely areas of land and also search for rare flora to determine its range and population. Officers co-ordinate volunteers in their efforts to rescue sick or injured fauna and provide assistance to the public by providing advice on wildlife matters.

Wildlife officers' duties do not only apply to land managed by the Department, but include Crown Land, reserves, private property, offshore islands and the marine environment.

Wildlife officers may be stationed in any of the Department's regions. The wildlife officer's work involves irregular hours of duty, and according to the seasonal pressures, lengthy periods away from home and headquarters. This involves disruption to family, social and sporting life. The dependents of a wildlife officer may be disadvantaged by reduced educational and employment opportunities. Also the cost of living in the country is considerably higher than in the metropolitan area.

THE NATIONAL PARK RANGER

The Department of Conservation and Land Management is responsible for the care, control and management of Western Australia's national parks. These are located from as far north as Kununurra to east of Esperance and 35 are staffed by National Park Rangers. The Ranger's task is to help preserve and enhance the natural environment of the parks as well as provide access and facilities for the enjoyment and recreation of the public.

Rangers assist the park visitor in different ways; for example by providing information about the park and its natural features and by maintaining various facilities including trails and picnic areas. The ranger must also supervise public visitation and assist in emergencies such as an accident or if someone is lost. The park must be kept clean of rubbish and toilet facilities maintained.

A ranger must be skilled in environmental management and land management practices. Duties of this kind include assisting with land rehabilitation programmes and fire management. With the growing knowledge of environmental management practices and public interest, the role of the ranger is increasingly emphasising such aspects as conservation, resource management and environmental interpretation.

Included in the current complement of 85 ranger staff are 17 mobile rangers based in caravans. These rangers travel the State assisting at national parks where seasonal tourist numbers require additional support staff. For example, during the winter mobile rangers are located in the Pilbara and Kimberley at Millstream-Chichester, Hamersley

Range, Geikie Gorge, Tunnel Creek and Windjana Gorge National Parks. For the summer some will move to parks in such areas as Busselton, Walpole, Albany and Esperance. Park-based rangers, who comprise the majority of park staff, either have their own housing or are accommodated in departmental houses in or near national parks.

Whilst a large number of rangers are located near the metropolitan area, rangers may be sent to any park in the State, both in the Department's interest and to widen their experience. Training by such means as technical courses and inservice seminars, is becoming increasingly important; therefore once employed the new ranger must also be prepared to study.

It is essential for the ranger to have the personal qualities necessary for dealing effectively with the public. Apart from this a normal employment requirement for rangers is the completion of year 12 secondary education with satisfactory grades in such subjects as English, Mathematics and the Sciences. The ability to communicate well, both verbally and in writing, and current A and B class drivers' licenses are also required. Additionally, it is helpful for applicants to be able to demonstrate a previous interest in environmental or related matters and to have had relevant practical work experience.

Few vacancies occur for park rangers, about 3-4 a year, and competition for these is high. Positions are advertised in the Saturday edition of the "West Australian" Newspaper.

FOREST OFFICERS

A Forest Officer may be qualified by a Degree in Forestry, by the Certificate of Conservation & Land Management or by other types of qualifications recognised by the Department. This section deals essentially with the field officer. The degree-qualified forest officer is discussed later in this booklet, and this section deals essentially with the sub-degree qualifications.

Forest officers at the field officer level are normally stationed at one of twelve districts which extend from Wanneroo, which is just north of Perth, down to Walpole on the south coast. These are the main operational forestry centres where most forests and forest employees are located. One of the tasks of a forest officer is to control and direct this labour force. Therefore the training of a forest officer includes a large component of practical work through which supervisory skills are acquired. The forest officer must be physically fit and mentally alert.

Forest officers may also work in districts such as Kalgoorlie, Kununurra and Karratha where forestry problems require different expertise. Forest officers may also be involved in research, planning, forest survey and other specialities according to their own aptitudes and to the over-riding needs of the Department. As a general rule early training concentrates on basic forestry principles and practices and is designed to impart a broad range of skills.

Forestry is mainly an outside job and frequently involves work in inclement weather and under uncomfortable conditions. There is, in addition a considerable amount of office routine and administration which demands conscientious application to repetitive "paper work". In other words the forest officer must be an effective public servant as well as an effective technician.

A forest officer at the field officer level having completed his cadetship and obtained an appointment in the Department, commences a period of "on the job" training.

For two years this involves a graduated work program with increasing responsibility. It also involves the successful completion of training reports, which together with satisfactory conduct and efficiency determines his or her advancement. A series of promotion examinations are designed to further the training program and to strengthen claims for promotion within the Department. In general, conditions of service, leave entitlements and allowances are those laid down in the Public Service Act and Regulations.

A forest officer, for much of his or her career, can expect to be stationed in medium sized towns in the forest regions, such as Manjimup or Harvey, or in smaller communities such as Dwellingup or Kirup. Such communities offer limited opportunities for the education and employment of children. The cost of living may be appreciably higher than in the Metropolitan area, and sporting and social opportunities may be restricted.

A forest officer, after some years of operational experience, may expect serious limitations on his or her freedom of movement because of the demands of fire control. Although under most circumstances this will be recompensed by overtime payment, loss of recreational opportunity may not be appreciated during the summer months by the forester's family.

Forestry involves the management of land and its resources for the maximum benefit of society in both the short and long term. It is concerned with a wide range of objectives, such as the protection of flora and fauna habitat and the regulated production of timber. These challenges are sometimes endowed with a gloss and glamour which are misleading. They can be solved only by unremitting hard work, against fluctuating often unpredictable weather conditions and constrained by limited resources.

Forestry as a career does not fall into the "get rich quick" category. To achieve full job satisfaction the forest officer should be prepared both to live and to work in a bush environment.

2ND YEAR CADETSHIP - DEPARTMENTAL TRAINING SCHOOL

On successful completion of the 1st Year of the cadetship, cadets attend a Departmental Training Centre (usually Dwellingup). The second year consists of approximately 60% practical and 40% theoretical work.

The syllabus is based on the policies and programs of the Department and of the operations and prescriptions which result from them. In addition cadets are taught skills which will enable them to develop into operational supervisors, technicians and later managers of the estate entrusted to the Department.

The subjects taught include the following:

- Management Principles
- Departmental Legislation
- Related Legislation
- Administration
- Health and Safety
- Soil & Vegetation Surveys
- Plant Propagation
- Man Management
- Engineering (Building, Roads, Explosives)
- Experimental Method
- Harvesting & Utilisation of Forest Products
- Survey and Mapping
- Recreation Development
- Protection (Fire, Disease, Human Activity)
- Wildlife Management
- Park Management
- Silviculture

Cadets are from time to time stationed at Districts or with individual departmental officers so that they may understand the practicalities of the work that lies ahead.

The Cadetship is governed by a formal agreement between the Executive Director and each individual cadet.

Cadets must satisfy the requirements of a progression of examinations, assignments and practical tests.

During the second year of their cadetship, cadets are given basic accommodation and facilities at a moderate rental. They are responsible for purchasing food which is cooked for them by a cook supplied by the Department and paid in part by deduction from cadet's salaries.

On successful completion of the second year of the cadetship, cadets are eligible for a certificate of achievement from the Department of Conservation and Land Management, and for a certificate from the Department of Technical and Further Education, these certificates being complementary.

Cadets may then apply for a position in the Department of Conservation and Land Management. No absolute guarantee is given of such a position being granted. This depends mainly on the Government's ability to provide a sufficient allocation, but also on the level of success achieved by the cadets during the course.

The cadetship is not bonded. In the past several cadets have chosen to obtain employment with private companies and with other Government organisations.

ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF RECRUITMENT

Whereas the field officer cadet training scheme is the normal recruiting and training channel for school leavers, certain other vacancies are offered.

These vacancies will be for positions where special skills or prior work experience is required or where the job is seen to require a mature person.

The qualities required will be enumerated in the advertisement.

Thus a WILDLIFE OFFICER vacancy may be advertised requiring, among other things:

- . Capacity to undertake an enforcement function.
- . Knowledge of flora and fauna and an ability to identify basic species.
- . Sea-going qualifications.

A NATIONAL PARK RANGER vacancy may be advertised requiring the applicant to fulfil the conditions for a Mobile Ranger, including:

- . Possession of a large caravan.
- . Experience in natural resource management.
- . Aptitude in dealing with the General Public.

A FOREST OFFICER or a TECHNICAL OFFICER vacancy may be advertised requiring the applicant to have specific experience in plant or wildlife propagation in order to assist in Research Projects.

Such vacancies are normally to be found in the Saturday editions of the "West Australian", and will occur irregularly.

SALARY SCALES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

The Department of Conservation and Land Management was formed by the amalgamation of three individual Government organisations. The field officers of these organisations were governed by differing conditions of service and salary scales. For a transitional period these differing conditions and salary scales can be expected to continue.

The advertisements of job vacancies and cadetships show precisely what salary scales are offered, and whether the conditions of service are based on the Public Service Act or are governed by a specific Award or Agreement. During the interviewing and selection process every effort will be made to give the applicant the fullest information on such matters. Conversely, the applicant should seek clarification, whenever necessary.

It is expected that, with time, there will be greater interaction between field officers of all categories, leading eventually to a merging of responsibilities and more uniform salary scale.

As a general rule, applicants for permanent posts should:-

1. Provide evidence of age in the form of an Extract of Birth Entry, or a certified copy of their Birth Certificate.
2. If not an Australian citizen by birth, provide evidence of having subsequently obtained Australian citizenship.
3. Undertake a medical examination by a registered medical practitioner to satisfy the Executive Director that the appointee is in a fit condition to fulfil the duties of the office. The fee for the examination and the certificate of practitioner is paid by the applicant.

When the post is incremental, progress will be subject to good conduct, diligence and efficiency. Promotion will be subject to vacancies being available and to the officer's diligence and efficiency. Passing promotional examinations is, for some classifications of officer, a condition of promotion.

Unless otherwise stated in the award or agreement under which the officer is employed, the conditions for annual recreation leave, sick leave, long service leave and retirement are those stated in the Public Service Act.

Most positions require that the officer should be prepared to work anywhere within Western Australia. The possession of a current driver's licence is usually a condition of employment.

SUITABLE DEGREE COURSES

The Department employs a wide range of officers qualified by degrees and diplomas in biological and environmental sciences. Examples are, Landscape, Architecture, Botany, Forestry, Zoology and Recreation Management.

Courses leading to a Bachelor of Science (Forestry) and Bachelor of Science (Zoology Major) are detailed below as examples.

BSC (FORESTRY)

SYLLABUS (University of W.A.) or similar units at Murdoch University are:

Botany 100
Geology 100
Chemistry 100 or 120
Mathematics 150 or 160

Units are subject to confirmation by University Registrar (students must check with Registrar to ensure that selected units chosen have no lecture time clashes).

SYLLABUS (A.N.U.) - available from:

Department of Forestry
Australian National University
CANBERRA ACT 2600

SYLLABUS (University of Melbourne) - available from:

School of Agriculture and Forestry
University of Melbourne
PARKVILLE VIC 3052

BSC (ZOOLOGY MAJOR)

This complete course is available at the University of Western Australia.

1st Year: Zoology 100⁵
Chemistry 100 to 120
A first year Mathematics unit and
Botany 100

2nd Year: Zoology 200 and
Botany 200
Microbiology 210
Physiology 200³

3rd Year: Zoology 300 and
Zoology 310 (or part thereof)

All zoology majors take Zoology 100, 200 and 300 in successive years to give a wide foundation for future study. There is, however, a Zoology 310 unit made up of three sub-units, any or all of which may be taken in addition to Zoology 300.

Zoology 200 students are required to attend a three day field camp during the week preceding term 1.

Officers having similar or comparable qualification are normally employed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management at Public Service salary scales higher than those available to field officers. Also their ultimate expectations are a higher level of responsibility, and major involvement in management, research and other specialities.

Other Departmental staff with appropriate Diplomas or Degrees are employed in the Department's Mapping Branch. As in other government departments and organisations, there is a further large group of officers responsible for administrative and clerical functions.

It is outside the scope of this booklet to provide details of the wide range of departmental officers other than field officers and their equivalent in specialist sections.

Specific enquiries should be directed to:

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND
LAND MANAGEMENT
50 HAYMAN ROAD
COMO WA 6152