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Department of
Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future



Science Division Brochure 2009

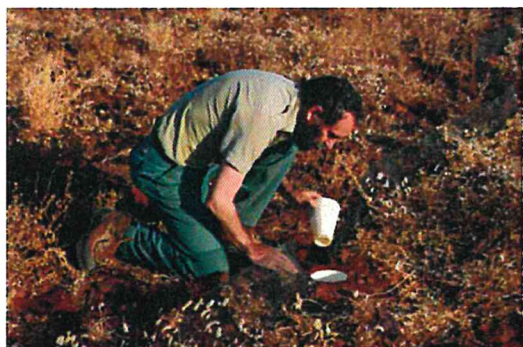
Science Division

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Background

The Science Division is the Department of Environment and Conservation's prime source of new knowledge and information based on scientific research. The work of the division reflects the department's significant investment in multi-disciplinary biodiversity conservation research, monitoring and biogeography. The Perth Observatory is also administered through the Science Division.



In partnership with others, the division strives to understand the composition, patterns and processes of the Western Australian marine and terrestrial biota as a basis for its conservation and sustainable use. Having a significant centralised and coordinated science capability is one of the department's strengths, and recognises the vital role of science and information in underpinning its policies and practices to conserve and protect the State's biodiversity.



Key strategic goals of DEC's Science Division are to:

1. Understand the composition of, and patterning in, terrestrial and marine biodiversity.
2. Understand threats to biodiversity and develop evidence-based management options to ameliorate threats.
3. Monitor and evaluate the condition and trends of species, populations and communities in terrestrial and marine ecosystems.
4. Provide information and scientific tools and concepts for best-practice management of biodiversity as an integral part of natural resource management.
5. Improve knowledge of how people respond to, and interact with, the natural environment including protected areas and threatened species.
6. Promote and facilitate the uptake of research findings and communicate the contribution of science to biodiversity conservation and natural resource management.
7. Through the Perth Observatory, undertake research and provide astronomy information and education.

Key supporting strategies to achieve these goals are to:

1. Build integrated and multi-disciplinary teams of skilled people to address key complex biodiversity issues.
2. Improve the quality and relevance of scientific output by using best practice methodology, reporting, publishing and communication.
3. Expand research capability by building strategic partnerships.
4. Improve management and integration of corporate biological data and information.
5. Retain and recruit versatile, skilled and motivated staff.



The division comprises some 170 people including scientists representing diverse conservation, natural resource management and astronomy disciplines, as well as technical officers, library staff and employees providing administration support. Many of the division's **scientists** enjoy national and international recognition in their various fields of expertise. The division publishes two in-house science journals – *Nuytsia* and *Conservation Science Western Australia*.

The division is structured around eight outcome-based research and science applications programs, including a recently created Biodiversity and Climate Change Unit, and is supported by a program that provides administrative and library services. The focuses of the programs are:

- Biogeography Program – **Patterning and inventory of biodiversity (biological survey).**
- Fauna Conservation – **Species approach; animal ecology, biology, genetics, threatening processes.**
- Flora Conservation and Herbarium – **Species approach; plant and fungi ecology, biology, genetics, threatening processes, collections, systematics, Vegetation Health Service.**
- Landscape Conservation – **Ecology of ecosystems and communities, landscape restoration, landscape monitoring, landscape fire.**
- Marine Science – **Biodiversity assessment, ecosystem research, monitoring and evaluation of Marine Protected Areas, threatened marine fauna.**
- Science Applications – *Florabase, Naturemap*, (Bioinformatics), biometrics, directorate support.
- Biodiversity and Climate Change Unit – **Climate** change impacts on biodiversity, coordination of partnerships in climate change science.
- Perth Observatory - Astronomy information, research, education.
- Science Support - Work centre finance and budgets, administration, infrastructure, library, directorate support.

Building strategic partnerships is vital for addressing Western Australia's **most pressing biodiversity** conservation and natural resource management needs. The Science Division supports some 77 mostly PhD students and has more than 100 significant research partnerships with other Commonwealth and State research institutions, universities, Natural Resource Management groups, community groups and the corporate sector, particularly the mining industry.



Science Division staff are based throughout Western Australia including Albany, Manjimup, Busselton, Dwellingup and Kununurra and at three locations in the Perth metropolitan area: the Woodvale and Kensington research centres and the Western Australian Herbarium and the Perth Observatory, Bickley.

