



Conservation News

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

APRIL 2002

Traditional owners and Department live in harmony in Purnululu

by Nigel Higgs and Tracy Peacock

THE granting of living leases in Purnululu National Park to traditional owners symbolises a new relationship between the Department of Conservation and Land Management and Aboriginal communities.

A 15-year wait by traditional owners for living leases ended recently when the State Government granted a 2180ha living lease to the Kwarre Aboriginal Corporation and a 1481ha living lease to the Kayiyirriwareny Aboriginal Corporation.

The groups asked the Government to approve the living leases as far back as July 1987.

Premier Geoff Gallop said the signing of the leases marked the end of many years of frustrating waiting by indigenous groups in the Kimberley.

"For the first time, traditional owners in Western Australia will have full legal entitlement to live on their traditional lands in a conservation reserve," he said.

Dr Gallop said the granting of the living leases demonstrated the Government's commitment to involving traditional owners in managing areas in national parks and working in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Land Management to conserve their lands for now and for future generations.

Department Senior Policy Adviser Peter Sharp said: "The expectation is that in the long-term there will be Aboriginal communities living in the Park in these lease areas."

There are also moves to set-up a Purnululu Park Council comprising representatives of traditional owners.

A deed of agreement is to be signed soon between the Environment and Heritage Minister Dr Judy Edwards and the Purnululu Aboriginal Corporation.

Purnululu National Park has been nominated by Australia for World Heritage listing.

The outcome of the nomination should be known in mid-2003.



Acting Executive Director, Keiran McNamara (second from left) with the historic deeds of agreement with senior policy advisor, Peter Sharp (left); the graphic designer who designed the certificates, Tiffany Aberin, and Director of Parks and Visitor Services, Jim Sharp. Photo by David Gough

Longer licences for ecotourism operators

THE Department is now offering licences for up to five years for tour operators who achieve accreditation from the Tourism Council of WA and the Ecotourism Association of Australia.

Unrestricted licences previously had to be renewed each year which involved time and expense for the industry and Department.

Director of Parks Jim Sharp said

exploring and discovering our natural heritage was a rewarding experience and was encouraged by the Department provided the activity's impacts were monitored and managed.

"In order to ensure that private and commercial activities are not detrimental, the Department attempts to ensure everyone is aware of the relevant restrictions

and monitors compliance with these requirements and the effects of interaction activities," he said.

Those operators who take the initiative to become accredited should be rewarded.

The aim of the Department is to achieve a balance between nature-based tourism and recreation and maintaining the conservation values of parks and reserves.

Bibbulmun Track a lifeline for displaced timber workers

by Sue McKenna



The new Bibbulmun Track maintenance crew members are former timber workers. Steve Luff (left), Trevor Insley (second from left) and Peter Bracknett (right) are former Sotico workers. Sid Sepkus (second from right) oversees their day to day work for the Department.

Photo by John McKenzie

FOUR displaced timber workers have become the bushwalker's best friends as they work their way down the Bibbulmun Track in their new jobs as the Department's maintenance workers.

Trevor Insley, Steve Luff and Rod Collins—all former Sotico workers—are from Northcliffe while Peter Bracknett is from Manjimup.

They are joined by a fourth Northcliffe resident, Departmental Supervisor Sid Sepkus, who oversees their day to day work for the Department.

They are carrying out maintenance on huts and camping facilities, clearing debris from the track, building stream crossings, restoring directional markers and improving walker safety along 220 kilometres of the more difficult Bibbulmun Track terrain.

They began about four weeks ago from just south of Willow Springs, maintaining several kilometres a day. They will progress through Wheatley, Beedelup, Pemberton, Northcliffe, Pingerup and Broke Inlet.

The men bring much more than hands-on labour to the job, as Trevor, Steve and Rod are members of the Northcliffe Fire and Rescue Service, while Peter is a member of the Manjimup Fire and Rescue Service.

"They're the soul of the community down there," the Department's Parks and Visitor Services Officer in Pemberton, John McKenzie, said, adding that their value as a crew increased immeasurably because of their fire protection work in the district.

Continued page 4

Working Together

In last month's *Conservation News* the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Judy Edwards outlined her priorities for the next year as including biodiversity conservation, salinity, forests, expanding our parks system (including marine parks), joint management with indigenous communities, services to visitors in our parks, and working with the community.

The State Government is due to bring down its 2002-03 budget in the near future. Directors and their staff are now working on next financial year's service provider agreements for the Department to deliver the Department's outcomes in line with the Government's priorities.

The year ahead will provide significant opportunities in the conservation field, as well as challenges, and I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to continue to lead the Department during that period.

One of the Department's initiatives over the last two years has been the rolling out of a public participation training course to over 160 staff. During April the Department's Corporate Executive and a number of support staff attended a shortened version of the course. This provided some familiarity with the course contents, as well as valuable feedback on the benefits staff have derived from the course.

Another highlight of April was the three-day fire symposium which attracted an attendance of about 350 from WA, interstate and overseas. Coupled with the soon-to-be published internal review of our fire management conducted by Pilbara Regional Manager Chris Muller, the symposium provides food for thought for the forthcoming public review of our fire management to be conducted by the Environmental Protection Authority. The Department's Science Director, Neil Burrows and his team are to be congratulated on their foresight and hard work in putting together a very successful symposium.

Keiran McNamara, Acting Executive Director



Ecoplan program transferred to Department

THE Ecoplan program has joined the Department of Conservation and Land Management as part of the State Government's restructuring.

It had been with the Department of Environmental Protection for 11 years.

Ecoplan primarily provides support to individuals and community groups within the Perth metropolitan area System Six region.

Acting Ecoplan Coordinator Bridget Hyder-Griffiths said Ecoplan did this by providing training in practical bush regeneration, ecology and people management skills, as well as by supporting community groups,

providing a quarterly newsletter, Ecoplan News, and other activities.

"The move allows Ecoplan to tap into the conservation expertise and resources of the Department," she said.

Ecoplan is based in the Wildlife Branch but located in the Swan Region office at Kensington, enabling interaction with other officers within the region as well as the Off Reserve Conservation Unit and other Department staff.

For more information contact Ecoplan on ecoplan@calm.wa.gov.au or phone (08) 9474 7040.

Star letter

It's great to know that the public appreciates the people in the Department.

This letter arrived to congratulate two of the Department's seasonal staff, Chris Mecole and Dave Turnbull, on their knowledge and work in Mundaring recently.

The letter was sent to Peter Batt, Operations Manager for Regional Parks at Mundaring.

Dear Mr Batt,

I would like to place on record my appreciation of the work your operatives are undertaking in the reserve next to my house at 7 Azeza Court, Darlington.

I met two of them today when I heard chainsaws and went out to see what was going on. They were engaged in cutting out a non-native wattle species which has proliferated in the block since a wildfire 10 years ago.

I was most impressed by their knowledge of the bush and its animals, and their dedication to its preservation. Chris gave me some useful information which I will use to help keep down the growth of this invasive pest in future.

Your organisation is well served by such employees and I congratulate you on your program to enhance our natural environment. I look forward to the continuation of this excellent initiative.

Regards,
Tony Rees

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Praise for training

by Nola Withnell

TWO graduates of the Effective Manager and the Diploma of Management programs believe staff should take advantage of future training programs.

Nursery Officer Patricia Sprigg, based at the Department's plant nursery in Narrogin, and District Protection Officer Charlie Downes based at Collie said the program had given them new ideas and concepts.

The Effective Manager Program began in 1998 to support staff who are developing management skills.

The programs allow them to study at their own pace using manuals, audio and videotapes, and group tutorials.

The course improves each year as the facilitators at the Challenger College of TAFE in Fremantle, incorporate feedback and make appropriate changes.

Nominations are now being called for the fourth Effective Manager Program to be held next month.

Patricia Sprigg said her role had changed from being a technical person in the production and dispatch of seedlings at the Narrogin Plan Nursery to managing personnel and operations.

She began to study for the Certificate IV of Management being promoted by People Services and running externally through Challenger TAFE.

Patricia said the courses provided an insight

into the different cultures, structures and managerial styles in the department.

"I carried out several investigations on the motivation of internal and external employees which revealed that communication and the ability to set clear objectives are the most valuable attributes a manager can possess," she said.

Charles Downes decided that after 25 years of contributing to the Department, it was time to nominate for the Diploma of Management to formalise some of his roles undertaken throughout his career.

"The Effective Manager course is well-rounded and covers most areas of management that we need to be aware of," he said.

"The Diploma in Management offers the opportunity to grapple with issues in our organisation that we need to address well for our organisation to be successful."

Both thanked Alan Byrne and his team for setting up the course, and Noel Montague from Challenger TAFE who coached and encouraged a diverse group to competence beyond expectations.

For more information contact Alan Byrne at the Training Centre Dwellingup on 9538 1200 or alanby@calm.wa.gov.au.

Enthusiasts rediscover 'extinct' plant

by Alanna Chant



Don and Barbara Bellairs with the rediscovered plant.
Photo by Alanna Chant

THE dedication of two Kalbarri plant enthusiasts has led to the rediscovery of a plant species that has not been recorded for almost 130 years.

The species is *Stachystemon nematophorus* that until now was listed as presumed extinct. It previously was known only from two collections, one made by James Drummond from Moore-Murchison Rivers in 1859 and another by Augustus Oldfield from the Murchison River before 1873.

But recently, Don and Barbara Bellairs have had confirmation that a plant they collected in Kalbarri National Park is the species that has not been formally recorded since then.

Stachystemon nematophorus—the species doesn't have a common name—is a slender, erect shrub between 30 and 60 cm tall. It has narrow leaves about 12 mm long with very small flowers that grow in clusters at the ends of branches. Little is known about the plant's biology and ecology and the rediscovery will provide a good opportunity for study.

The finding by Mr and Mrs Bellairs has enabled the identity of another specimen collected in the Kalbarri area by Andrew Brown and Steve Van Leeuwen of the Department of Conservation and Land Management in 1985 to be confirmed.

Mr and Mrs Bellairs have had a keen interest in wildflowers and the natural environment for many years and began collecting flora specimens and

creating a herbarium 30 years ago.

The Bellairs moved to Kalbarri 35 years ago and began collecting flora specimens and sending them to the WA Herbarium to confirm identification. They opened a wildflower centre in Kalbarri called 'Kalflora'. Their extensive flora knowledge contributed to the success of the centre and they continued their herbarium collections.

When they retired and sold the wildflower centre together with their herbarium collection, the Bellairs began expanding the Kalbarri National Park's herbarium collection as volunteers for the Department.

Their volunteer work also included assisting with the Department's *Western Shield* native animal recovery initiative in Kalbarri National Park through helping with trapping and radio tracking of woylies and chuditch.

Since Mr and Mrs Bellairs began collecting flora, they have collected 1142 specimens in the Kalbarri area. They have collected 13 species listed as Declared Rare Flora and 86 that are listed as Priority or poorly known flora. They estimate there are possibly 1300 to 1400 different plant species in the Kalbarri National Park, as they are still finding plants they have not yet collected.

Improvements at Woodman Point

VISITORS to Woodman Point Regional Park should be able to enjoy a raft of improvements to the popular coastal park this summer.

Work on the conservation and recreation plan for Woodman Point and Beeliar Regional Parks will start soon.

Specific tasks will address access, parking and security at the John Graham Recreation Reserve site and the Woodman Point headland, as well as rehabilitation of the conservation areas.

Improvements at the reserve include providing additional grassed and barbecue areas and re-routing the access road.

Stage one also includes rehabilitation of the vehicle tracks at the headland and degraded areas around John Graham Reserve with local coastal species.

The Department's Regional Parks Unit Coordinator Tim Bowra said the Woodman

Point Regional Park attracted about 500,000 visitors each year.

He said they came from a wide catchment area ranging from the Perth foothills to nearby areas such as Fremantle and Kwinana.

Tim said the Department had conducted a consultation process which included involvement of the Woodman Point Regional Park Community Advisory Committee, newspaper advertisements, park signage and brochure distribution.

Funding for the works has been provided by the Department of Industry and Technology (DIT) as an environmental commitment associated with the new Jervoise Bay Harbour Development.

The commitment was to prepare and implement a Conservation and Recreation Enhancement Plan for the regional parks adjacent to the harbour.

New approach to public participation in Shark Bay

A NEW approach to encouraging the public to take part in planning processes has begun in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area.

Until now, communications were developed in an uncoordinated fashion by agencies and tour operators in Shark Bay.

Members of the local community felt excluded from the planning processes of government agencies.

To address these problems, a new approach to communications planning was developed to foster community support and participation, and interagency cooperation.

A cross-disciplinary approach was achieved using input from a marketing consultant and academics.

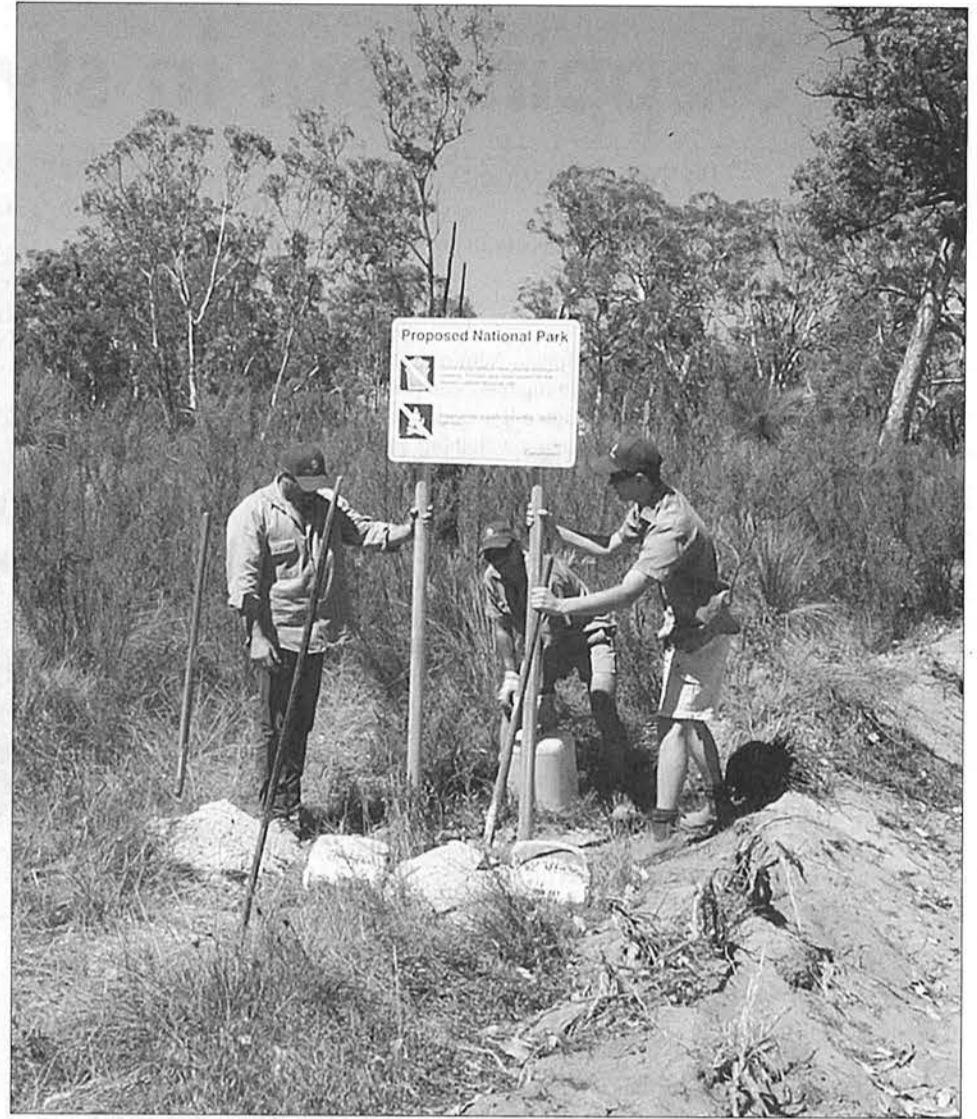
Key stakeholders who live and work in

by Kelly Chapman

Shark Bay were identified and 110 individuals interviewed. Their responses were compiled anonymously into a discussion document which will be distributed back to everyone who was interviewed, and made available for public review.

The next stage of the process will be to develop a strategic communications plan which meets management objectives and community, social and economic aspirations for the area.

For more information contact Kelly Chapman at the Department's Denham office.



Left to right: Phil Radamanthos, Gavin Amos and Daniel Coffey erect a Proposed National Park sign in Wandoo National park. Photo by Michael Phillips

Cleanup in new parks

THE massive task of creating five new national parks covering 64,000ha in the Perth Hills area has begun.

More than 300 tyres have already been removed from the area and there are more than 150 car bodies still to be taken from State forest in the proposed parks—Mundaring National Park, Helena National Park, Pickering Brook National Park, Canning National Park and Wandoo National Park.

National Park Ranger Michael Phillips said it was a "huge job" turning the forest area into national parks and they had only "scratched the surface" in the number of tyres, building rubble, household rubbish, garden waste and asbestos still to be removed.

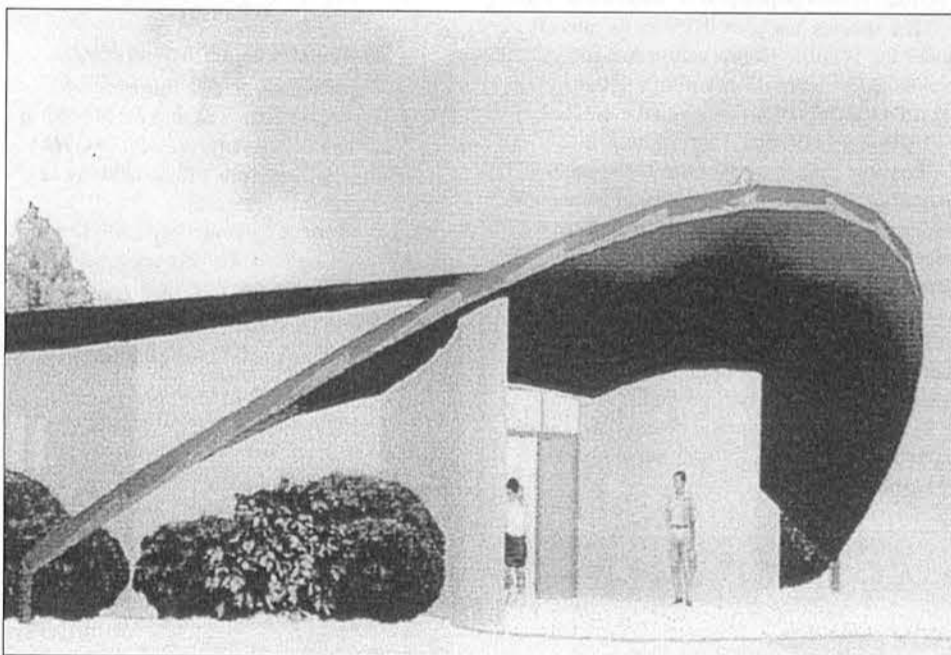
Michael said it was estimated that 250

tonnes of rubbish was being illegally dumped in the area each year.

He has three former timber workers—Phil Radamanthos, Gavin Amos and Wayne Needham—and five graduate recruits—Nola Withnell, Sam Hurd, Ed Greenway, Daniel Coffey and Fiona Boulton—helping with new signage in the area.

Works to be carried out during the next few months include erecting signs, removing rubbish and managing weeds, rehabilitating disused gravel pits, redesigning and upgrading recreation sites and beginning the public consultation and information process.

by Tracy Peacock



An artist's impression of the new Dryandra interpretive centre.

New animal viewing enclosure at Dryandra

WORK has started on the \$290,000 Dryandra Woodland's animal viewing enclosure and interpretive centre.

The new facilities will include buildings, fencing, new roads and lighting.

When completed in August the enclosure will house bilbies, western barred bandicoots, boodies, banded hare-wallabies and rufous hare-wallabies (or mala).

It is part of the Department's Return to Dryandra program, aimed at restoring nature's balance to the woodland area, north-west of Narogin.

The viewing enclosure will give visitors a

close-up, non-intrusive look at native wildlife which is part of the Department's threatened species captive breeding program.

Paul McCluskey, Parks and Visitor Services' Regional Leader in the Wheatbelt, said the enclosure would be a unique wildlife tourism experience.

"The animal viewing enclosure will give visitors the opportunity to see Western Australia's small mammals which are rarely seen by taking a night-time tour," Paul said.

The project has been funded through the State Government and a grant from the Commonwealth Regional Tourism Program.

Double take: Young person wins two prestigious awards

THE WA Youth Awards were a double bonus for Jason Le Coultre. As well as winning the Youth Environment Award sponsored by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Jason also was named WA Young Person of the Year.

Jason, who received the awards earlier this month from Environment and Heritage Minister Judy Edwards, was nominated for his work on a prototype of a Reservoir Regulator—a simple, low-cost system for preventing water loss on farms.

The invention came about as a result of a water crisis on a friend's family farm and is considered to have widespread application not only in rural Australia, but internationally as well.

The Department's Acting Executive Director, Keiran McNamara, said the Department valued its sponsorship of the Youth Environment Award and was extremely pleased that this year's winner also was named WA Young Person of the Year.

"The overall standard of the finalists in the

Environment category was not only exceptionally high, but also reflected the innovative and practical approaches young people are making in terms of raising environmental awareness within the community."

The other finalists were:

- James Wishart of Bedford – involvement and youth leadership with CALM Bush Rangers;
- Katherine Bryant of Carlisle – involvement and youth leadership with CALM Bush Rangers;
- Luke Stange, East Perth – City Farm Project and Men of the Trees;
- Neil Robinson of Capel and Stuart Fearon of Bunbury – a study of chytrid disease in frogs in a local wetland system; and
- Simon Hydzyk, Lynwood – involvement in a range of environmental projects including the use of smoke as a stimulant to germinate native plants.

The Youth Minister's Positive Image Award went to Ben Rees-Mogg of Balingup who is a member of the CALM Bush Ranger Unit at Manjimup High School.

Stepping out in style in new uniforms

by Tracy Peacock

A NEW range of corporate apparel appears to have been a hit with Department staff.

Introduced late last year, orders have been flowing in for the versatile clothing range for men and women.

The Department's People Services Branch Administrative Assistant Brenda Smith said feedback on the clothing had been positive.

She said 215 orders had been taken since last December.

Special care had been taken in choosing the clothing, particularly when staff worked across the State in varying weather conditions, she said.

Based around a navy blue theme, the clothing range features shirts, trousers, blouses skirts, jumpers and jackets.

Regional Services Advisor John Skillen said the new uniforms were the result of a corporate apparel policy introduced last year.

He said there were three types of corporate apparel: general apparel for front counter staff and other people dealing with the public; uniform for certified officers such as forest officers; and work wear for wages staff.

It was the first time there had been a corporate uniform provided to staff dealing with the public, he said.

"It's primarily for staff dealing with the public, but other employees can avail themselves of the uniform provided they have the managers approval," John said.

"Plans are currently underway to have a new field uniform available by the end of the financial year or soon thereafter."



Modelling the new uniforms are (from left) Milwant Gill, Kim Hanafee, Brenda Smith, Barbara Slade, Brad Colton, Alicia Taylor, Sue Fiannaca and Tanya Mercer in front.

From page 1

The job with the Department means much for the men who found themselves out of work in the south-west timber industry at Christmas last year.

Trevor says he's now doing a job that he loves when, for a while, he thought he'd never have a job at all.

"I'd been working down here for six years when I was made redundant," said the husband and father of a six-year-old daughter.

"Everyone was expecting it but they didn't know who was going at the time. This job has increased the morale at home, certainly," Trevor said.

He spent three months working for the dole but jumped at the chance to work for the Department under the Government's timber industry's restructuring plan.

The men are working in one of the Bibbulmun Track's steepest sections, in the Donnelly River Valley.

"The scenery is absolutely beautiful and you never have smoko in the same place," Trevor said.

Trevor said when he first moved to the district he wanted to work for the Department but took the job at the mill because it was the first to come up.

"I find this job more enjoyable. It's a pleasant job but not an easy job," he said.

They have been joined by Ross Bernardin, another displaced timber worker. Ross has been rostered to work with the team for two weeks between working with local Departmental fire crews.

Sunrise for sunset frogs

by Rhianna Mooney

THE future for one of the state's rarest frogs is looking brighter.

The sunset frog is known from only 24 populations in a 305 square kilometre area in the Walpole-Bow Bridge area.

Now, a five-year recovery plan prepared to conserve the species has been approved by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Judy Edwards.

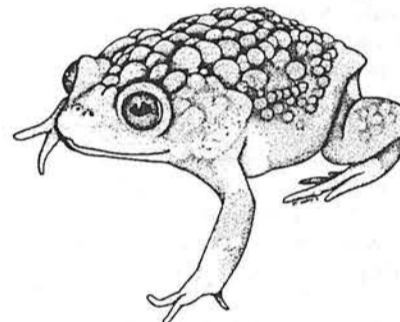
The Department's Deputy Director of Biodiversity Conservation, Andrew Burbidge, and Dale Roberts from the Department of Zoology at The University of WA prepared the recovery plan to conserve known populations and encourage the discovery and protection of additional populations.

Andrew said the plan involved searching for new colonies, and monitoring known populations as well as research into the effect of fire on the frogs.

"Interestingly, the sunset frog has been located in several highly-modified swamps in farmland and in some areas after a low intensity spring fire in 2000, populations seemed to increase," he said.

"The plan also includes habitat management and liaison with private landowners through the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Land for Wildlife initiative."

The sunset frog was discovered in 1994 by Dr



Pierre Horwitz of Edith Cowan University and is known to live in at least 24 sites including 12 on private property, 10 in proposed National Park or State Forest and two in proposed dam sites. The total known population is estimated at 2100.

"The species has been listed as threatened under the Wildlife Conservation Act and ranked as 'Vulnerable' according to the World's Conservation Union's (IUCN) Red List Category criteria," said Andrew.

"Possible threats to the sunset frog include inappropriate fire regimes, physical damage to swamps, damage by feral pigs, loss of swamp vegetation because of dieback, construction of dams and subsequent flooding, pollution of swamps and collection by humans."

The moderate sized frog is characterised by its brilliant orange colour and fine light blue spots on a dark grey background.

The species is an aquatic breeder and males have been heard calling from September to December.

Conservation briefs

\$500,000 for Pilbara

A \$500,000 capital works program has been announced for national parks in the Pilbara.

Works include improvements and redevelopments at Karijini and Cape Range national parks.

New facilities in Avon Valley and Murray River

Visitors' services and facilities in national parks between the Avon Valley and Murray River will be improved through a \$534,000 capital works program.

Works will include upgrading of the walk-trail at Lesmurdie Falls, improvements to the picnic area at Walyunga national park and works at Lane Poole Reserve.

Eco-tourism conference in May

The Department's annual Tourism Information Exchange will start on May 21 at the Aquarium of Western Australia (AQWA) in Hillarys. A trade expo will be held in conjunction with the conference.

The conference and trade expo aim to create a flow of information between government agencies, tourism operators and local government authorities.

Minister's role strengthened

The role of the Minister for the Environment and Heritage will be strengthened under amendments to legislation introduced to Parliament last month.

Dr Judy Edwards will have final say on the implementation and the development of the Forest Management Plan.

The proposed amendments to the Conservation and Land Management Act will also consolidate the Conservation Commission of WA's position as the responsible authority for management planning for the terrestrial conservation estate, including State forests and timber reserves.

New Home Loan Interest Subsidy Scheme

Corporate Executive has endorsed the introduction of the State Government's home loan interest subsidy scheme for Department employees.

Depending on circumstances, the scheme may provide an interest subsidy for up to five years for staff who currently live in accommodation provided by the Department and who purchase their own home. The scheme is not an employee entitlement.

A letter has been sent to each tenant inviting them to contact their District Manager for additional information on the scheme, along with necessary application forms.

For further queries please contact the Department's Housing Coordinator, Jenny Keeley on (08) 9334 0276.

Staff changes . . . Staff changes . . . Staff changes . . . Staff changes . . .

Contracts

Jack Mercer, research scientist, Science Division, Albany; Emma Munday, officer, Science Division, WA Herbarium; Natalie Jolakoski, graphic designer, Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs, Crawley; Daniel Coffey, assistant operations officer, Mundaring; Marguerite D'Alton, GIS officer, Information Management Branch, Kensington; Shilan Haria, programmer/analyst, Fire Management Branch, Kensington; Jennifer Langton, officer, Park, Policy and Tourism, Kensington; Tushar Oza, programmer/analyst, Fire Management Branch, Kensington; Maria Rigoli, records officer, Corporate Information, Kensington; Terry Passmore, seasonal ranger, Cape Le Grand National Park, Esperance District.

Resignations

Mathew Cork, marine conservation officer, Marine Conservation Branch, Fremantle; Ann-Maree O'Callaghan, regional Bushcare facilitator, Mid West Regional Office, Geraldton; Jason Kickett, Landcare field officer, Regional Parks, Fremantle.

Permanent appointment

Mark Cowan, ecologist, Goldfields Regional Headquarters, Kalgoorlie; Greg Chant, operations officer, Merredin District Office; May Carter, marketing manager, Nearer to Nature Environmental Activity Program, Hills Forest Discovery Centre, Mundaring.

Contract ceased

Janette Gathe, project co-ordinator, WA Herbarium; Mike Hislop, technical officer, Science Division, WA Herbarium.

Criteria progression

Jim Cocking, technical officer, Woodvale.

Reclassification

Melissa D'Silva, assets co-ordinator, Financial Services, Kensington.

Promotion

Richard Boykett, bushland manager, Bold Park, Botanical Gardens and Parks Authority.

Temporary deployment

Christina Gilbert, national park ranger, Collie; Grant Lamb, interpretation officer, Dwellingup; Brian O'Hehir, national park ranger, Margaret River.

Transfer

Paul Roberts, planning officer, from Merredin District Office to Parks Recreation Planning and Tourism Branch, Kensington; Keith Lillie, works centre co-ordinator, from Donnelly District, Manjimup to Donnelly District, Pemberton.