



Conservation News

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

JULY 2002

Department welcomes Aboriginal trainees

by Rhianna Mooney

YOUNG Aboriginal people are joining the Department in a wave of new recruitment schemes destined to give Aboriginal people a greater say in how conservation lands are managed.

This initiative is a part of the Department's commitment to implement a State Government policy of meaningful joint management between the Department and indigenous people, including provision of employment and training opportunities.

The Department's Senior Policy Adviser, Peter Sharp said new Aboriginal traineeships were part of a move to have at least 18 Aboriginal trainees join the Department over the next 36 months.

"Our goal is to ensure that in 10 years, 10 to 15 per cent of employees will be Aboriginal," Peter said.

"We need to integrate the Department's responsibility for land management with the aspirations of the traditional owners."

Peter said the Department had established a Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES) to operate statewide and assist Aboriginal people meet minimum level entry requirements for employment in field positions.

"Six trainees have been appointed and another six will commence this financial year under a remote location training program supported by the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations," he said.

"An urban training program, undertaken with the assistance of non-government organisations such as the Southern Aboriginal Corporation of Albany, will train 12 indigenous trainees for five years and provide 60 qualified indigenous officers within eight years.

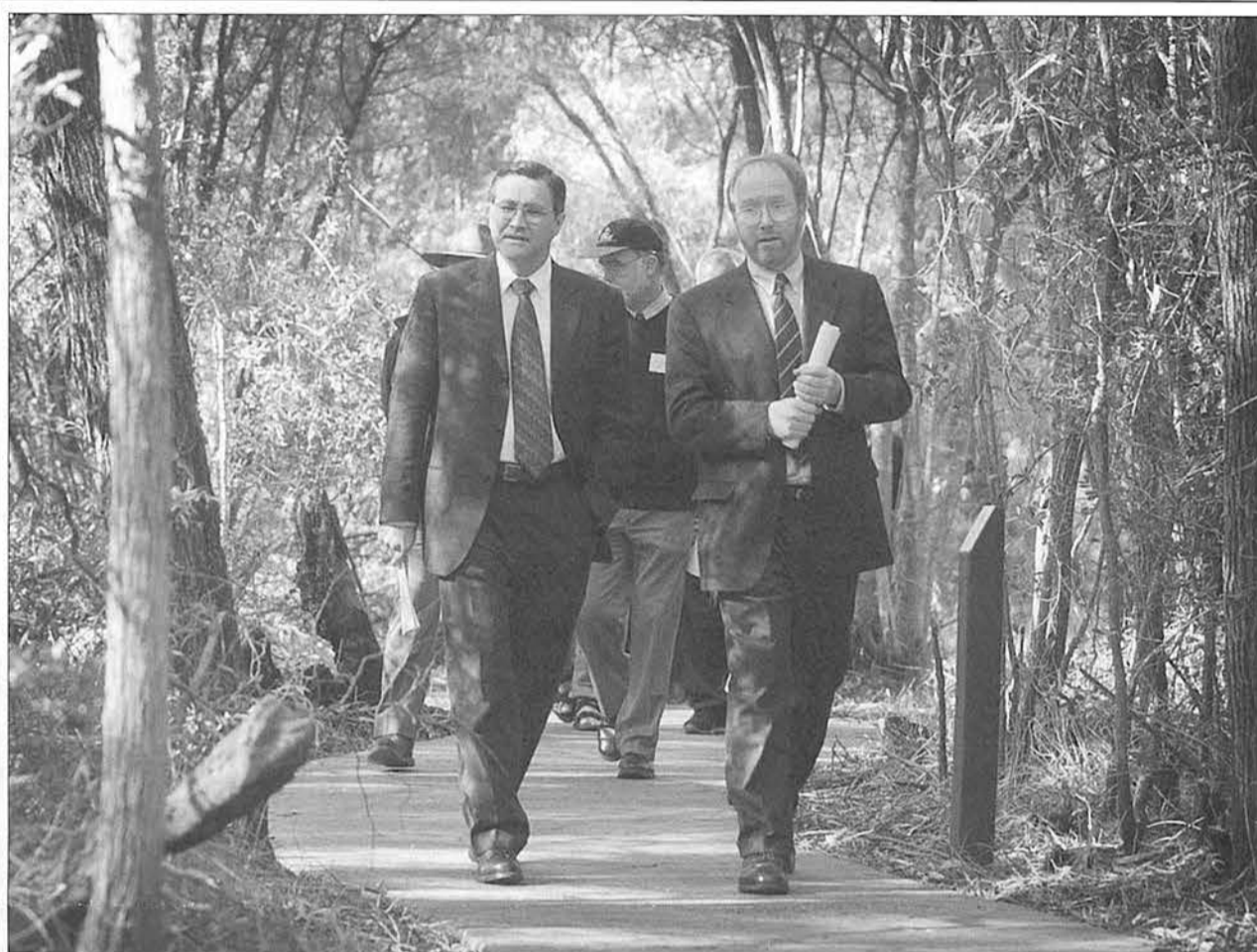
"Scholarships and cadetships sponsored by the Department over the next seven years will produce at least 15 tertiary trained indigenous people for employment in the Department.

New recruits are already working at Yanchep National Park, the Goldfields, Shark Bay and Albany."

Peter said employing more Aboriginal people reflected the Department's recognition of its social responsibilities and reiterated the benefits of taking on Aboriginal people who had a close affiliation with the land.

"The Department acknowledges that the European value system is not in line with the Aboriginal value system . . . somehow we have to bridge that gap," he said.

He anticipated the trainees would play a key role in providing advice to District Managers, Regional Managers and staff about how to liaise with Aboriginal people.



Premier Geoff Gallop (left) and Acting Executive Director Keiran McNamara stroll through the John Boyle O'Reilly memorial pathways. Photo courtesy South Western Times.

New facilities near Bunbury impress Premier

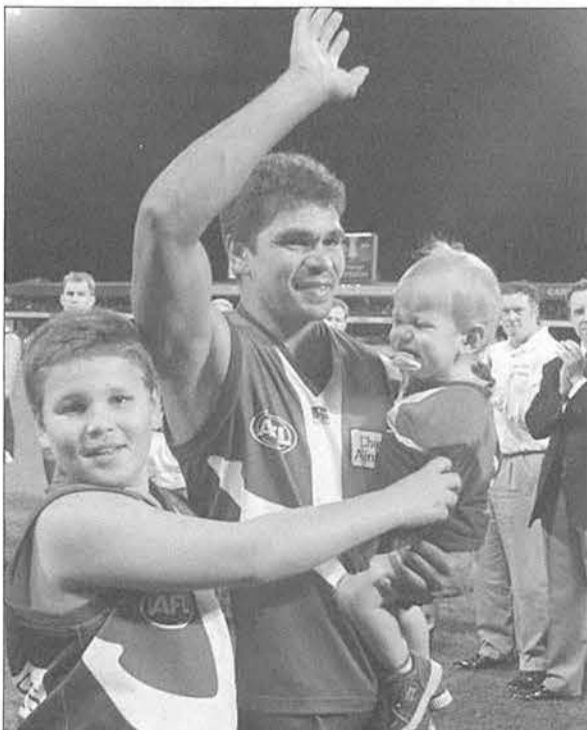
THE life and adventures of Irishman John Boyle O'Reilly have been commemorated with the creation of a memorial in the Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park.

Premier, Dr Geoff Gallop and Acting Executive Director, Keiran McNamara opened the new interpretive display, which features John Boyle O'Reilly, who staged a daring escape from captivity from the shores of Leschenault Peninsula near Bunbury in 1869.

The John Boyle O'Reilly memorial is part an upgrade to the facilities at the peninsula and was designed after extensive consultation with many of the 70 guests who attended the official opening—including people from the Department, the Irish community, local Nyoongars, the Shire of Harvey and other Government agencies.

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Kickett swaps football for conservation



Dale, pictured with sons Jordan (left) and Lochlan at his last AFL game. Photo courtesy of the Fremantle Dockers Football Club.

WELL-KNOWN footballer Dale Kickett has joined the Department of Conservation and Land Management on a 40-day contract.

Dale, who recently announced his retirement from the Fremantle Dockers, will work in a number of national parks and with Aboriginal trainees across WA.

He started mid-June on a one-day a week program.

He'll be sponsored by The Next Goal career transition program, a partnership between AFL Sportsready Ltd and the AFL Players Association.

Dale's choice of employer for the funding support application was obvious, he is the son of recently retired National Park Ranger Keith Kickett.

As a young boy growing up with a national park ranger father and his natural affinity with the land, Dale felt he would one day follow his father's career beyond his AFL playing duties.

His long-term goal is to secure

by Alan Byrne

a position with the Department as a national park ranger.

Initially, Dale will work in the Yanchep National Park with Education Coordinator Jason Barrow and two Aboriginal Trainees.

He will also be involved in other projects in the metropolitan area including the Aboriginal Heritage Unit at Kensington.

With the recent commencement of the Aboriginal Traineeship program, Dale and Assistant Training Officer Beth McKernan will visit trainees to talk about his journey as a successful professional footballer and his lifelong desire to work in national park management.

Dale will also visit Aboriginal schools involved in the CALM Bushranger program to discuss career opportunities for Aboriginal people within the Department.

Study of wandoo decline

THE Department is analysing the results of a widespread survey into the cause of the wandoo tree's decline.

Group Manager of Forests and Tree Crops, Dr John McGrath said the cause of the decline was unknown.

"We don't know exactly what has caused the decline over the past 20 years but hopefully the results of this study will give us some indication," John said.

Contractor Jack Mercer has undertaken a four month departmental survey across the wandoo woodland to determine the cause of their decline and death.

"The pattern of decline across the landscape is highly variable but there are some interesting trends," Jack said.

"While it is still speculative, there is evidence at some sites to suggest the decline is a cyclical pattern which involves a three to eight year decline and recovery period, followed by stabilisation and then further recovery.

"There are other sites that may not recover."

"We surveyed a large area throughout the Wheatbelt and State forest and conducted comparative analyses of sites studied 11 years ago," he said.

"We examined a range of factors including geographic variables, climate, soil conditions, rainfall, salinity, insects, fire history, size and density of trees and different land uses."

Results should be available later in the year.

Working Together

If you haven't read last month's column by Andrew Burbidge, I recommend you do so. It's not often you will see a concise perspective on changes in conservation over more than 30 years, as well as an insight into future challenges. Andrew has had a marked influence on conservation within and beyond Western Australia, and we wish him well in retirement.

We have just seen the end of another financial year in which the Department's financial performance has been excellent. My thanks go to all managers, administrative staff and others for keeping us on track while still delivering high quality services to the community. I know we'd all like more funds for conservation but government involves choices about priorities right across the community's expectations. The next task for the Department will be contributing to the functional review recently announced by the Premier, to ensure we remain focussed on the right priorities.

The last few weeks have included a cross cultural training day for Corporate Executive with the Indigenous Heritage Unit; meeting all the Shark Bay staff and visiting Monkey Mia, Francois Peron National Park and Project Eden; seeing the high quality of visitor and interpretive facilities at the John Boyle O'Reilly memorial in Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park; and a Corporate Executive visit examining visitor facilities at Stirling Range National Park, efforts to save Australia's most endangered marsupial (Gilbert's potoroo) at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve and visitor risk management in the coastal environment of Torndirrup National Park, as well as meeting with the Albany staff. These opportunities are valued by myself and Directors as a means of keeping well informed, taking pride in our collective achievements and hearing the views and concerns of staff.

Keiran McNamara, Acting Executive Director



Volunteers work to save potoroos

EARLIER this year, 24 volunteers helped out over a two-week period to track and study the behaviour of the Gilbert's potoroo.

The aim of the expedition was to learn more about the potoroo, which is only known to live at Two Peoples Bay near Albany, and encourage community participation in conservation activities.

Principal Research Scientist Tony Friend said the program has run for the last three years.

"It has been a really good way of getting people involved in conservation, and an opportunity to learn more about a rare species that there is not a lot of local knowledge about," Tony said.

"This year, about half of the volunteers were from Albany and most of the others were from Perth.

"The first year we ran the program, we had 80 respondents but unfortunately, we could only take 24 volunteers with us."

Tony said that the work of the volunteers was important to the Department's efforts to learn more about the potoroo.

"We would not be able to do the amount of work that we do without a big team. The volunteers are fantastic."

He said the volunteers worked six-hour shifts in teams of four to record the potoroos' movements.

"We fitted small radio-transmitters on the tails of six potoroos so they could be tracked, and their movements recorded.

"The volunteers did not need a biological background, just an interest in the potoroo recovery program and its success.

"We find that the volunteers are keen to learn so that they can contribute to the project and they pick up what is required of them very quickly," Tony said.

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Managing Editor: Sue McKenna

Journalist: Tracy Peacock

Contributing Editor: Rhianna Mooney

Design and Production: Tiffany Aberin

Telephone: (08) 9389 8644

Facsimile: (08) 9389 8296

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The new trainee rangers Jeff Daubney (front left), John Jackway (front right) and Julia Northin (back right) are pictured with Pemberton Ranger-in-Charge Rod Annear (back left) and Pemberton ranger Jeff Kimpton.

Three new rangers in Donnelly

LOCAL national parks will be better protected and visitors better serviced with the employment of three new national park rangers and three trainee rangers in the Department's Donnelly District.

They have been employed as part of the Government's *Protecting our Old-Growth Forests Policy* commitment to create 30 new national parks throughout the south-west native forest areas.

"The appointment of these new rangers will allow us to better protect the hundreds of thousands of hectares of national parks in our district," Ranger-in-Charge Rod Annear said.

"In addition, it gives us a greater capacity to collect baseline information about the environment, such as flora,

fauna, weeds and feral animals."

They will also be part of the team implementing many of the "new parks" projects that are under way.

These capital works are part of an additional \$9 million allocated by the State Government over four years to improve visitor facilities and roads in the new national parks.

Donnelly District Manager John Gillard said the new rangers would benefit the parks and the community.

The three new rangers are Jeff Daubney and John Jackway in Northcliffe and Julia Northin in Manjimup.

The successful applicants for the three trainee positions have not yet been announced.

Big Brook challenge

IF you hadn't heard its time again to think about getting your team together for the Big Brook Relay

The event will be held on Saturday, November 16, so there's no time to lose if you want to improve your fitness and lose that beergut and sagging bum.

Events are crosscut sawing, cycling, running, canoeing, and swimming, with the winning team receiving the Karri All Sports Trophy.

There's also the Derriere Award for the team who with flair, style and panache are last past the post.

For those staff who wish to stay the full weekend why not contact the Pemberton Tourist Centre to book some accommodation. Call them on 9776 1133

Don't leave it until the last minute to get your team in - start organising today!

If you have not been approached by a colleague (or strong-armed into it by the boss), but you would like to join a team or form one yourself, contact David Meehan in Pemberton without delay for details, as entries must be in no later than October 31.

He can be reached by phoning him on (08) 9776 1207.

Above all, the Big Brook Relay is a family day, with children's activities, and—for those minimally competitive grownups who enjoy becoming horizontal while leaning on a rope—there's a tug-of-war.

A sausage sizzle will be available at lunchtime on Saturday, but please bring other picnic or barbecue foods, fighting irons (cutlery), crockery and glasses, as well as your own frisbees, sailboards, canoes, and so on.

See you there!

Pilots see start and end of aviation era

THREE Department senior pilots have witnessed the beginning and end of an era in WA aviation history.

John Woodward at Dwellingup, Iain Farmer at Bunbury and Greg Simpson at Manjimup—were the first to fly the Department's Piper Super Cub spotter planes when they were introduced in the late 1970s.

Now the trio patrol the south-west skies in the new fleet of eight Champion Scouts.

The Super Cub was one of 10 used to patrol the south-west forests over the past 24 years providing important fire information.

More than 100 seasonal pilots also flew the Super Cubs.

Many of these pilots gained flight hours in the planes in the early part of their careers and have now gone on to fly in other areas of general aviation or for airlines in Australia and overseas.

The manager of the Department's Fire Management Services branch, Rick Sneeuwjagt, said John, Iain and Greg had extensive flying careers in the Super Cubs.

"Individually they've probably flown to the moon and back a few times," he said.

It has been calculated that the Super Cubs collectively flew more than 120,000 hours and covered around 20 million kilometres.

Rick said the last Super Cub was sold at the end of June.

"It's still a sought-after aircraft. We had about 15 people put in tenders and even had people fly in from other States to have a look at it," he said.



Greg Simpson and a cub, taken several years ago. Photograph courtesy Greg Simpson

New facilities near Bunbury impress Premier

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The upgrade to the area includes the interpretive shelter, expanding and resurfacing the parking area, a new public toilet, a 500 metre walk trail including an elevated boardwalk over wetlands areas, lookout platforms and seating.

Other projects include upgrading the Belvidere picnic area, rehabilitating degraded sand dunes, installing a lookout at Buffalo Beach, interpretive and educational material and sealing roadways.

The Premier was so impressed with the standard of work—particularly the interpretive shelter and the access for all boardwalks and pathways around the wetland—that his office called after the event to congratulate staff on his behalf.

The Premier also thanked staff from Collie, Harvey, Bunbury and Perth for developing the facility and said that the

Department's crew had done a fine job. He also thanked staff for organising the opening ceremony.

The aim of the new interpretive shelter is to provide interpretive information about John Boyle O'Reilly as well as the indigenous history and use of the area and the intrinsic conservation values of the Peninsula.

John Boyle O'Reilly was a 'political prisoner' who was transported to Western Australia in 1867. He had been arrested and charged in 1866 with withholding information about an intended mutiny in Ireland.

He was a member of the Fenians and the first to escape from WA. He fled to the United States on an American whaler where he organised a 'rescue' of a further six prisoners who had escaped from Fremantle Prison.

Cross cultural training starts

THE Department has started its new series of cross-cultural awareness training.

The first workshop was conducted with Corporate Executive on July 3.

Four others are planned for the rest of the year and are likely to include one for wildlife officers plus the Pilbara, Busselton and Albany.

Noel Nannup, of the Department's Indigenous Heritage Unit, hoped the series would continue into 2003.

He said as a land management and biodiversity conservation organisation it was important that staff were sensitive to Indigenous culture.

"Our main focus of the course is to alert non-Aboriginal people to the plight of Aboriginal people since colonisation," he said.

Noel said an understanding was necessary so that people could start to work together for the future.

The two-day course teaches staff about Aboriginal culture, biodiversity according to Aboriginal groups, how family structures work, history, a timeline of legislative acts, comparison between Aboriginal and white societies, traditional medicine, protecting traditional knowledge, sacred sites and relationships with other Government departments.

Noel said the first course with the Corporate Executive had been well-received.

The day was introduced by Nyoongar Elder Doolan Leisha Eats.

"She told a little story as well which helped to set the scene," Noel said.



Pilbara volunteer Debbie Pallentine with an injured kangaroo.
Photo courtesy of Pilbara Newspapers.

Heart of gold for volunteer carer

DEBBIE PALLENTINE has been caring for injured kangaroos for more than 17 years.

Each night Debbie and her friend Hazel Mackey drive between the Woodside Plant and Parker Point in Dampier Peninsula looking for kangaroos that have been hit by the day's traffic.

"Every night there are always a few kangaroos that have been hit along the road," Debbie said.

"We go along and drag them off the road so cars don't keep driving over them and check their pouches for joeys.

"If the mother is seriously injured we will often have to put her down and take the joey with us so we can look after it until they are old and strong enough for us to release them."

Debbie said that caring for the kangaroos could become expensive especially if they had been injured by cars.

"I am lucky enough to have found a medical supply company that supplies me with equipment each year and a vet in Perth who will treat the kangaroos for me," Debbie said.

"I have often sent injured or sick kangaroos in a plane down to Perth so the veterinarian, George Huber can treat them.

"George is just fantastic and refuses to accept payments for the work he does on the kangaroos. Many of them just wouldn't have survived without his generosity."

Debbie said she has cared for kangaroos from the time she was three years old.

"I lived on a farm where we had kangaroos, so my love for them goes a long way back," Debbie said.

Volunteer army our most valuable resource

EACH year, thousands of volunteers donate their time and expertise to the conservation of Western Australia's fauna and flora.

The Department's Acting Director of Nature Conservation, Gordon Wyre said he has seen a marked increase in the number of nature conservation volunteers over the past few years.

Last year 1600 people contributed almost 200,000 hours towards the Department's activities, compared to 70,000 hours five years ago.

Gordon said the Department supported the volunteers' work by providing organisational assistance and resources.

"The Department has developed numerous activities and programs to support and encourage volunteers working for nature conservation or assisting the Department, through activities like LANDSCOPE expeditions and friends group working bees," Gordon said.

"In the last decade, we have also seen growing interest in private nature conservation initiatives, including private benefactors and cooperatives that are purchasing land to be privately managed for conserva-

"There has also been an increasing trend in people incorporating conservation activities into their normal farming regime."

Gordon said it was important to recognise that the State's nature conservation capacity had been greatly expanded through the work of private individuals and volunteers.

"Community understanding of nature conservation has evolved and the Department is happy to be able to work with the broader community to enhance nature conservation across all lands and not just formal reserves," Gordon said.

"We have also noticed significant changes in wildlife care from the past, where people were able to care for animals themselves, but now because of various demands or awareness of the skills required, volunteer carers are increasingly relied on to provide that service.

Gordon said the volunteer programs were an increasingly important means for effective conservation partnerships to be built between the Department and the community.

"The volunteer programs support and complement the work of the Department and we simply wouldn't be able to do all that is necessary to be done for nature conservation without them," Gordon said.



Taking part in the first cross cultural awareness course were two of the Department's directors, Ron Kawalilak (left, Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs) and Jim Sharp (centre, Parks and Visitor Services), with Indigenous Heritage Unit presenters Marissa Maher, Noel Nannup and Koodah Cornwall. Photo by Ernie McLintock.

Indicative boundaries announced

Indicative boundaries for three new national parks in the State's South West have been announced.

The proposed parks are Greater Dorgadup, east of Pemberton; Jane, north-east of Northcliffe; and Boorara-Gardner, south-east of Northcliffe.

A community advisory committee will be set up to assist in determining the final boundaries as well as laying the foundations for proposed management plans.

New weed found

Department botanist Rob Davis has found a potentially serious weed.

The Canary Island St Johnswort comes from the Canary Islands in the Atlantic, the home of many Mediterranean-climate garden plants and some serious weed pests.

The weed was found earlier this year near Bremer Bay and occurred along about 300 metres of road verge.

Specimens were taken as part of the Herbarium's Weed Information Network that is documenting the weeds of the State.

John Hanel heads to Victoria

The Department farewells long-standing staff member, John Hanel and his family as they return to Victoria after 23 years in WA.

John spent more than 16 years in the Department, the last three years as the Ranger in Charge at Cape Range National Park.

He began as a Mobile Ranger, working at 13 National Parks in a four and a half-year period.

"I am certainly going to miss the Department . . . I am leaving a big part of my life behind," John said.

"I have had a really good time over the last 16 years and have made some really good friends."

John and his family are returning to Victoria to take up a lease with Parks Victoria within the Lower Glenelg National Park, which is on the border on Victoria and South Australia.

Nicole heads to international soil science conference

Nicole Robinson—a research scientist at the Department's Science Division in Kensington—will head to the 17th World Congress of Soil Science Conference in Bangkok next month.

She will present a poster on her work on salinity at the conference, thanks to a travel grant from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC).

"RIRDC is also funding the Phase Farming with Trees Project, which is related to salinity control and has links with the work that will be presented at the conference," she said.

Nicole added the conference would cover all aspects of soil science.

"We are particularly interested in the symposia on soil and water conservation, forest soils, soil remediation and land degradation," she said.

"Even though our work is primarily on the control of salinity, we are sure to get a lot out of it and the subject matter will be relevant to the work undertaken by the Department."

1000th threatened seed collection

Department officers Ryan Butler and Leonie Monks collected the 1000th seed collection for the State's Threatened Flora Seed Centre.

At the end of June, the pair collected the little-known *Eucalyptus jimberlanica* near Norseman.

Reaching the 1000th milestone represented 10 years of tireless, painstaking and significant work, said the Centre's manager and Senior Research Scientist, Anne Cochrane.

"It has been extremely important for the conservation of our rare and threatened flora," Anne said.

Seed has been collected and banked from as far south as Esperance to the Pilbara in the north of the State, although most collections have come from the South West and Wheatbelt regions.

Ranger loves the Fitzgerald life

AFTER one year, Peter Wilkins has settled into his position as Ranger in Charge at Fitzgerald River National Park.

Peter and his family moved to the Fitzgerald National Park after spending nine years in the Northern Territory and two years in Albany.

Peter said that he and his family are very happy at their new posting because they enjoy living within the natural surroundings.

"I'm happy wherever I am, as long as I am in the bush," Peter said.

"I grew up on an agricultural property in South Australia where I built up an empathy and interest in the natural environment.

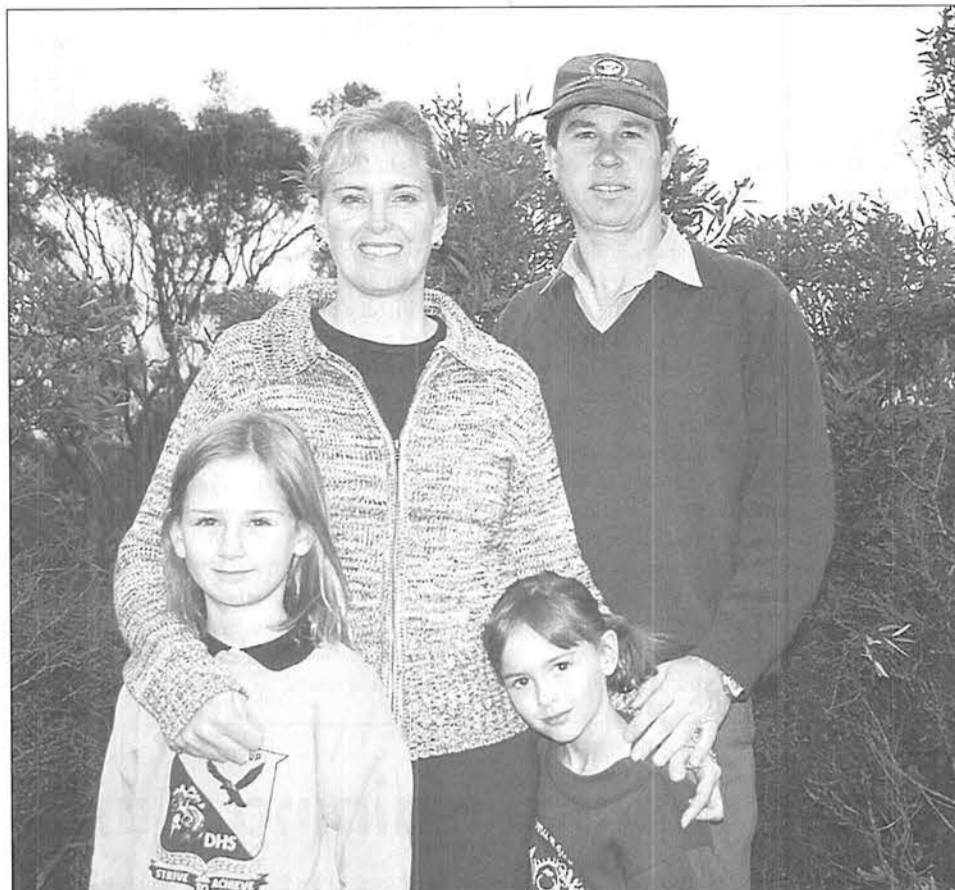
Peter said that working in Fitzgerald River National Park has helped him gain new park management experience particularly in coastal management.

"Most of my conservation career has been on various National Parks in Central Australia where management issues and techniques can be very different," Peter said.

"I enjoy the challenge of becoming familiar with the park's flora and fauna which are different to those in my other postings.

"The park's plant list must be close to 1,900 species so there is a fair bit of learning to do. This megadiversity makes going to work every day really exciting because the chances of seeing something new is a certainty."

Peter is looking forward to the many new challenges and experiences to gain during his stay at Fitzgerald River National Park.



Peter Wilkins pictured at the park with wife Jo and children Danielle (left) and Emma. Photo courtesy of Peter Wilkins.



June Craig top 5 Awards

FIVE women were awarded the June Craig scholarship at this year's Department of Conservation and Land Management graduation ceremony.

The award encourages career and expertise development for women within the Department, and celebrates the work of Western Australia's first female Minister with a conservation related portfolio.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Judy Edwards (left) was pic-

tured with (from second left) Laura Beck, Margaret Byrne, Ingrid Hunt, Cheryl Cowell, Tammie Reid and June Craig.

The recipients will use their awards for various purposes, including travelling domestically and overseas to learn how other parks and visitor services are managed, attending and presenting at conferences and running a women's workshop on creative bridge building.

Photo by Ernie McLintock.

New salinity project

THE Department has begun a recovery project to address salinity degradation at the headwaters of the Fitzgerald River in the southern Wheatbelt.

This area is part of the internationally recognised Fitzgerald River Biosphere Reserve.

The project area also includes Lake Magenta Nature Reserve and adjoining farmland.

Signs of salinity began appearing at the headwaters of the river about five years ago and water quality and the health of the vegetation growing along the river have since declined.

The Department has started a comprehensive recovery project in partnership with neighbouring landowners to address the problems caused by surface and rising ground waters.

A surface water management assessment is also being conducted.

When the assessment is completed, works will begin in the nature reserve to help redress the growing salinity problem.

These works may include strategically placed engineering structures.

Planning assistance is also being offered to neighbouring landowners, along with financial assistance for actions that will have a direct effect on the salinity problems being experienced in the nature reserve.

Banner from Bush Rangers at Albany office

by Sylvia Leighton

THE Department's South Coast Regional Office has received a beautiful banner from the Albany Senior High School CALM Bush Rangers group to help decorate the office.

It depicts the nature conservation works carried out by the volunteers.

Bush Rangers Coordinator at the school, Val Davies, encouraged the students to design

images that promoted this theme.

The students then painted the design on to a large banner.

The banners are displayed at exhibitions and information workshops throughout the region and when they are not officially being used they brighten up the corridors of the office.

It was another way for the

Department to extend communication networks into the community and see some of their viewpoints.

The banners were exhibited as part of an environmental exhibition run in conjunction with the Albany Community Environment Centre.

The themes depicted include: nature conservation works carried out by volunteers - Albany Senior High School CALM Bush

Rangers; fire - Year 5-7 at Wellstead Primary School; the noisy scrub bird - Year 8 at St. Joseph's College; feral animal control - Year 9 at North Albany Senior High School; nature conservation on farmlands and in local communities - Year 1 at Ravensthorpe District; our favourite native animals - pre-primary at Albany Primary School; and fire - Year 9 at North Albany Senior High School.