



# Conservation News

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## New WA regulations allow reptiles and frogs as pets



Phil Radamanthos (left), Wayne Needham (centre) and Gavin Amos at the Mundaring Work Centre. Photo by Rhianna Mooney.

### Mundaring welcomes three new workers

**THREE displaced timber workers are enjoying their new jobs in the Department's Mundaring Work Centre.**

Gavin Amos, Phil Radamanthos and Wayne Needham were employed by the Department as part of the Government's commitment to find employment for displaced timber workers.

Mundaring's National Parks Ranger for New Parks, Michael Phillips said Gavin, Phil and Wayne were employed by the Department in conjunction with the Forest Liaison Program, which aims to find employment for displaced timber workers.

"The Forest Liaison Program provided us

by Rhianna Mooney

with a number of applicants for employment in the Department, and we offered the positions to Gavin, Phil and Wayne," Michael said.

"The guys were initially employed on a five month contract, which was extended for another 12 months.

"There is a possibility that their contract will be further extended."

Gavin said they were enjoying their work in the Department and looked forward to future challenges.

"We have been involved in a lot of work

around the district's proposed national parks including general maintenance, rehabilitation work, signage, rubbish removal, removal of car bodies, weed control work, fauna trapping and flora surveying," Gavin said.

"We have also started our Certificate IV in Land Management through Bunbury TAFE.

Wayne said that being employed by the Department eliminated a lot of uncertainty that was caused by being made redundant.

"It can be very scary out there, especially if you have a family and a mortgage," Wayne said.

"I am definitely one of the lucky ones."

**NEW regulations have been introduced under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 allowing people to keep reptiles and amphibians as pets in Western Australia.**

Species able to be kept are to include the western green and golden bell frog (motorbike frog), western bearded dragon, western bluetongue lizard, bobtail lizard, Stimson's python and south-west carpet python.

Crocodiles and marine turtles are excluded from the pet keeping provisions.

The Department's Acting Director of Nature Conservation, Gordon Wyre, said the new *Wildlife Conservation (Reptiles and Amphibians) Regulations* allowed reptiles and amphibians to be kept as pets under strict controls managed by the Department.

The new system is based on specific licence categories and limited to a list of species prepared by the Department in association with the WA Society of Amateur Herpetologists and reptile keeping specialists from throughout Australia.

Gordon said the licensing arrangements would commence in the next few months after talks with people wanting to trade in reptiles and amphibians as pets.

"While there will be very few animals available initially, numbers will increase through licensed sources.

"However, people need to be aware that it is illegal to take reptiles and amphibians from the wild to keep as pets and that people who try to illegally keep these animals will be prosecuted."

Licences will be issued with special provisions for dealing, trade, breeding and wild harvest as well as special security and experience conditions for those who intend to keep dangerous species. The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Judy Edwards, has determined that only adults with suitable experience will be eligible to apply to keep dangerous snakes.

The licensing system will operate on a sliding fee scale with higher fees for higher species categories.

Gordon said the system would be managed by the Department's Wildlife Branch and operate on a similar basis to avian fauna licensing.

### There's a new moon this month

**THE Kimberley adventures of pioneers Aeneas Gunn and Joseph Bradshaw, have been captured in a new book *Under a Regent Moon*.**

Environment and Heritage Minister Dr Judy Edwards officially launched the book by the Department's *LANDSCOPE* Expeditions Coordinator Kevin Kenneally and Kimberley District Conservation Officer Tim Willing, saying it was an important piece of Western Australia's history.

The book provides a historical account of the Marigui settlement on the remote Prince Regent River and is based on articles and diary entries written between 1891 and 1892 by pioneer pastoralist Aeneas Gunn.

Kevin said that after his death, Aeneas Gunn was immortalised as 'The Maluka' in his wife's Australian classic, *We of the Never-Never*.

"Many people know of 'The Maluka' character in the *We of the Never-Never* story, but few people know of Gunn's pioneering work," Kevin said.

Kevin and Tim began working on the book five years ago.

"Tim came across Gunn's articles in a paper written by Northern Territory author Barbara James about pioneering women," Kevin said.

"It referred to Aeneas Gunn's articles and sparked our interest in Gunn's life and writings."

In 1997 Kevin led a *LANDSCOPE* Expedition to the historic Marigui site on the Prince Regent River, prompting them to find out more about the story behind the settlement.

Tim found the accounts of Gunn's journey archived in the State Library of Victoria.

Tim and Kevin researched material at Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens and Herbarium, Sydney's Mitchell Library and WA's State Archives.

"It was like putting together a jigsaw, finding all the bits and pieces and assembling them into an account of this Kimberley pioneering endeavour," Kevin said.



Pictured (left to right) are Acting Executive Director, Keiran McNamara, Co-author Tim Willing, the Minister for Environment and Heritage, Dr Judy Edwards and Co-author Kevin Kenneally at the launch of *Under the Regent Moon*. Photo by Rhianna Mooney.

# Working Together

I am writing this column while Keiran McNamara takes some well earned leave. Keiran has provided excellent leadership over the last year and I am sure that we all wish him a relaxing break.

An important part of the annual cycle of our Department is fire management. The ecosystems throughout our state were shaped by fire and other natural influences long before the Swan River Colony was founded. Fires occur naturally and indigenous people excelled in their use of fire as a land management tool for thousands of years.

A challenge for our Department is to manage fire to achieve optimum outcomes for biodiversity throughout our state. We will meet this challenge in consultation and partnership with interested people and experts in the community. Progress is being made through the recent fire symposium, the valuable report by Chris Muller and the forthcoming independent review by the Environmental Protection Authority.

One constant of our Department during any period of change is suppression of dangerous wildfires on our land. We rely on our employees to do this. I admire and congratulate our fire suppression and management people for their high level of training, fitness, innovation, motivation and safety awareness and their partnership with other organisations involved in fire suppression. Their involvement in the NSW and US fires is widely acknowledged. I know that the work of our people is valued by Corporate Executive.

We have recently introduced a new voluntary fire fitness assessment program. Many people are walking each day as part of the fitness program. I have been pleased to see that many people who are not involved in fire suppression are walking in support of the initiative. I congratulate those involved. Our Department encourages and supports fitness and healthy lifestyles for everyone.

**John Byrne**  
Acting Executive Director



# Fire review completed

by Tracy Peacock

**A MAJOR review of the Department of Conservation and Land Management's fire policy and operations in the south-west forest regions has been completed with nearly all of its 41 recommendations to be implemented.**

The six-month internal review, commissioned by Corporate Executive, was conducted by the Department's Pilbara Regional Manager, Chris Muller.

The report has been welcomed for its contribution to ongoing examination of key issues and improvement to fire management.

It provides a basis for constructive dialogue and further debate on key aspects of fire management.

Regional Services Director Alan Walker said the review signalled an important change in direction for the department's planned fire management work through the setting of clearer biodiversity conservation objectives for planned burning programs.

"Chris has also investigated and reported on some of the important legal aspects of the Department's fire work. In particular, the legal responsibility for fire protection under the Bush Fires Act has been clarified," he said.

"He has also made important recommendations on fire fighter safety issues."

The review also covered issues such as fire research, wildfire responses, fire management plans, public communications and staffing matters.

Alan said 37 recommendations had been accepted by the Department and an implementation plan was currently being developed.

Liaison with other State government agencies will be required in some cases.

He said a few of the recommendations relied on the outcomes of the upcoming public review of fire management to be conducted by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

The public review will be initiated later this year.

Recommendations included greater resources being allocated to long-term fire effects research and relevant Science Division staff being directly involved in fire planning including annual burn plan reviews.

The Department will also initiate a formal process of public involvement and consultation on fire planning.

The review was the second step in a three-stage strategy to ensure fire management in the natural landscape is in line with the State's nature conservation objectives.

The first stage was a three-day scientific and community symposium on the impact of fire on south-west ecosystems that attracted 350 delegates.

The third stage will be the independent public review by the EPA.

# Communities restored by Project Eden

**NOW in its eighth year, Project Eden at the Peron Peninsula, Shark Bay has been highly successful in its feral control and translocation program.**

In a lunchtime seminar, Project Eden's manager Colleen Sims, said Project Eden aimed to turn Peron Peninsula into a haven for threatened native animals.

"The idea of Project Eden was to reconstruct Peron Peninsula into the vibrant and complex ecosystem that existed prior to European settlement," Colleen said.

"Two thirds of the native fauna found on Peron Peninsula is locally extinct. Project Eden aims to restore some of those communities to the Peninsula," Colleen said.

"The project has three parts, the first aims to remove and mitigate the threatening processes that have been responsible for the population decline of many native species, the second aim is to re-establish by re-introducing, native species into the area, and the third aim is to develop ecotourism and

by Rhianna Mooney

educational opportunities."

Colleen said that since the program began, there has been a significant recovery of flora and remnant fauna species and successful re-introductions of malleefowls and bilbies.

"The program has been successful in protecting many previously endangered species from predation," Colleen said.

"Since the beginning of Project Eden, aerial baiting has virtually eliminated foxes, and has reduced feral cats by 80 per cent. Over 12,000 goats have been removed from the Peninsula, and myxomatosis and Rabbit Calicivirus (RCV) has reduced the number of rabbits."

The feral animal control, captive breeding and reintroduction of animals to Peron Peninsula is a component of the State-wide Western Shield program and maintains a high national and international conservation profile.

# Yanchep trainees are real winners

**YANCHEP'S newest Aboriginal trainees, Wayne Dekker and Robert Narrier, are part of a new generation of young Aboriginals destined for greater things in the Department.**

They are employed under a special partnership traineeship between the Federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the Department.

"We learn everything that you would need to know to be a park manager, from outdoor work to office work," Wayne said.

"The traineeship is multifaceted ... everyday the job is different and I am learning all the time," Robert said.

"There is also an opportunity for permanent employment in the Department when we finish our traineeship."

Wayne said the park offered a broad range of cultural activities to raise community awareness and understanding of the Nyoongar culture as part of its visitor services.



Aboriginal trainees Robert Narrier (left) and Wayne Dekker (centre) with their supervisor, Yanchep Education Co-ordinator, Jason Barrow.

"We do Nyoongar tool making, didgeridoo playing, dances, bush tucker walks and many other different activities to give visitors an insight into the traditional culture and lifestyle of the Nyoongar people," Wayne said.

"We do a lot of interpretive pro-

grams that provide people with a great opportunity to see how Aboriginal inhabitants lived," Robert said.

"I am proud to be part of that culture and demonstrate it to the visitors that come to the park."

# Health and safety series begins

**THE Department has started a new series of health and safety training programs.**

The first program was in early September with 16 participants from across the State.

The Department's Occupational Health and Safety Consultant Richard McAlinden said trainees and supervisors took part in the program.

Three more sessions are planned during the next three months and will cover issues such as occupational health and safety procedures, a discussion on physical hazards and safety and health provisions and structures in the workplace.

Richard said the program provided participants with the knowledge and skills required to enable them to apply sound occupational health and safety practices.

"We have an extremely good safety and health record and this is one way to make sure this record remains," he said.

# Employees fit to fight

by Tracy Peacock

**AS the fire season approaches, the Department's employees can be seen preparing to undertake a trial of the new fire fitness assessment.**

The new fire fitness assessment measures cardiovascular fitness, strength and muscle endurance similar to the levels used in fire-related tasks.

There are two levels of fitness relevant to the Department's fire roles.

The first is a light walk test for personnel working away from the fire zone. It is a 1.61 km walk over flat terrain within 16 minutes.

The second is the moderate field test for personnel working within the fire zone. It is a 3.22 km walk, with an 11.3 kg pack, over flat terrain within 30 minutes.

Fire Fitness Facilitators have been visiting work centres, explaining the

new medical and fitness assessment and an eight-week fitness training session.

The fitness program is designed to progressively increase distance and speed, and in the later weeks, gradually add weight to the packs.

The facilitators will be returning to work centres to conduct the fitness assessments.

Facilitators include Steve Blythe, Shaun Attwood, Ian Miscamble, Dennis Hancock, Garry Carr, Gary Hunter, Peter Smith, Damien Jameson and Ed Turner.

Details of the fitness assessment, medical assessment and eight-week training program are available on the Fire Management Services web site.

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# Right on track

**RIGHT ON TRACK** is a new feature in *Conservation News* dealing with the strategic directions and core values of the Department. It looks across the Directorates, at current projects, thinking and actions that demonstrate our corporate objectives, in hands on, every day, practical ways... This month's article was written by Director of Regional Services Alan Walker.

## Collaboration enhances biodiversity

Recently I was in the Wheatbelt Region for a couple of days and I had a chance to chat to Narrogin based Revegetation Officer Gavan Mullan about some of the projects that he and other departmental staff have been working on.

Two projects were particularly interesting. The first was a study of revegetation site preparation techniques in the central Wheatbelt, focusing on ripping and mound ploughing. The second was a study of seedling quality for landcare plantings in agricultural landscapes, focusing on seedling root form.

On closer examination, a number of aspects of these projects really impressed me. These were:

1. The alignment with "core business". Successful revegetation is one of the most important thrusts for maintaining or enhancing biodiversity in the agricultural landscape.

2. The extent of internal (departmental) collaboration in the development of these projects. Officers such as Peter White (Rural Advisory Officer, Narrogin), Greg Durell (Operations Officer, Narrogin) and Trish Sprigg (Nursery Officer, Narrogin) have been closely involved in the studies.

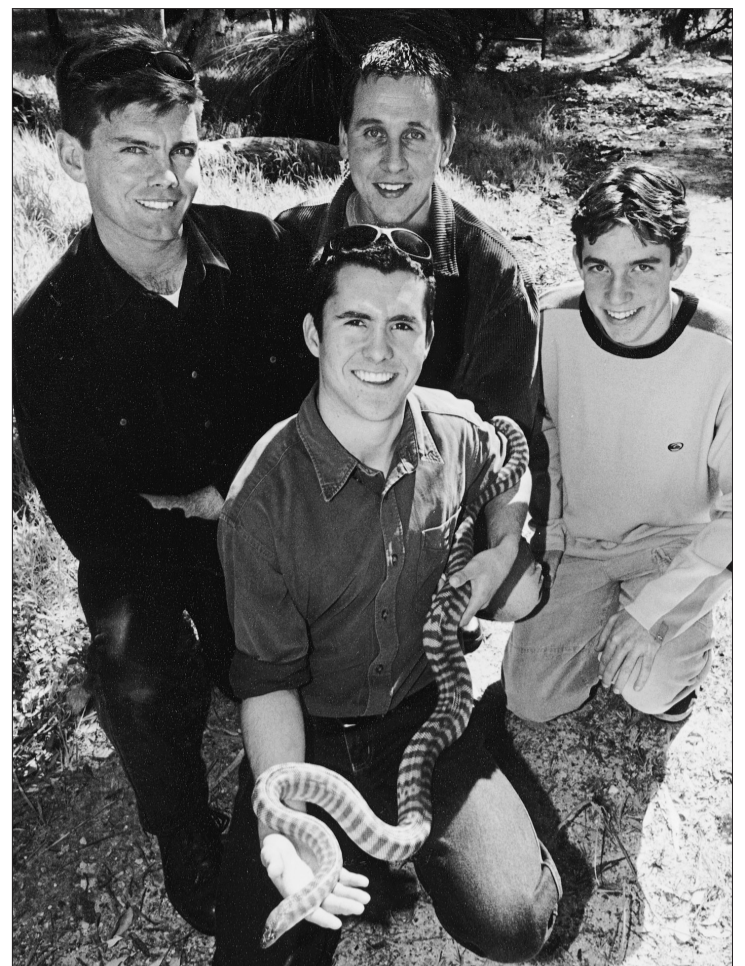
3. The broad external collaboration in the work. Technical support has been obtained from the Forest Products Commission, Department of Agriculture, Oil Mallee Association and private nursery owners.

4. The professional documentation of the work. Project reports released with proper acknowledgement to Bushcare and the Natural Heritage Trust, contain excellent prescriptions, diagrams and photographs that provide clear and practical guidance to practitioners in the field. The reports have a strong

scientific underpinning but also adopt a user friendly approach with well documented case studies.

5. The communication of the findings of the studies to key audiences. Gavan and other staff in the region have been very active through field days, demonstrations and the rural media in spreading the message about new developments in revegetation work. The reports will also be available on the web through "Naturebase" in the near future.

My recent visit and field inspections reinforced to me how staff in the Wheatbelt Region are providing effective leadership. These two examples outlined here illustrate leadership in the development of scientific knowledge and operational techniques that will enhance revegetation and nature conservation outcomes in this significantly altered landscape. Well done to this Wheatbelt team—you are "Right on Track".



All Saints College student Darren Harper (front) holds a Stimpson's python. He is joined by fellow Year 12 student Alex Beilby (right) and the Department's Technical Officers, Mike Scanlon (left) and Jim Cocking. Photo by Ernie McLintock.

## Monkey Mia feeding program

by Rhianna Mooney

**DOLPHINS** Piccolo, Shock and Kiya may join the other feeding dolphins at Monkey Mia during the next five years.

Piccolo will be introduced to the feeding program in October and, if successful, Shock may be recruited in two years and Kiya in five years.

Monkey Mia's Parks and Visitor Services Leader, Carl Beck said between seven and eight dolphins regularly visited the Monkey Mia beach, including three feeding dolphins.

Carl said the feeding program was structured so the dolphins wouldn't become too reliant on humans as part of the Department's commitment to a sustainable dolphin interaction program.

"By the time we introduce dolphins to the feeding program they are fully independent of their mothers and will have learnt the necessary survival hunting and social skills," he said.

He added the dolphins were hand fed a limit of two kilograms of fish a



Monkey Mia Operations Manager David Charles is pictured feeding Piccolo. Photo by J. Mann.

day, which was approximately one third of their daily requirement. This meant the dolphins had to hunt for themselves and teach their calves to hunt.

Carl also said dolphins had stable social groups and it was important

the feeding program did not interfere with their intricate social dynamics.

"It is important we remember that feeding the dolphins is for human education and enjoyment, but the dolphin's welfare is extremely important," Carl said.

## National Science Week

**ACTIVITIES** around the Department saw students from Penrhos and All Saints College celebrate National Science Week with many different hands on activities.

Two Year 12 students from All Saints College spent a day with a scientist at the Department's Woodvale Research Centre and the WA Herbarium.

Alex Beilby and Darren Harper were shown work conducted by the Department's Science Division and various animals and insects including snakes, mammals and spiders. The program was particularly interesting for Alex and Darren who both have their sights set on becoming scientists and studying Environmental Science at University.

"A day with a scientist gives us a chance to come and see the sort of work that scientists do in the Department," Darren said.

"We are both very interested in

pursuing a science-based career in an organization like the Department."

"We were lucky enough to see examples of laboratory and field work at the Woodvale Work Centre and WA Herbarium typically undertaken by scientists," Alex said.

Pre-primary to Year six Penrhos College students were also treated to many of the Department's schools programs, including meeting native animals, identifying plants, and investigating and solving the mystery of *What happened to the woylie?* Some classes learnt how Aboriginal people traditionally caught a meal with spears, dug for wild potatoes and made a fishing fence.

The co-ordinating teacher from Penrhos College, Maree Zimulis, said the day was a wonderful learning experience for all staff and students and taught them the importance of conserving the biodiversity of their local forests and bushlands.



Pictured (left to right) are Tim Bowra (Regional Parks Coordinator), Brendan Dooley (Senior Planner) Jacinta Overman (Nature Conservation Planning Officer), Fran Logan MLA (Member for Cockburn) and Alan Walker (Director, Regional Services) at the launch of the Woodman Point Regional Park Draft Management Plan. Photo by Rhianna Mooney.

## Woodman Point public comment

**THE** draft management plan for Woodman Point—one of Perth's most popular beachside conservation and recreation areas—has been released for public comment.

Launching the plan on behalf of Environment and Heritage Minister Dr Judy Edwards, Cockburn MLA, Fran Logan said Woodman Point Regional Park attracted more than 500,000 visitors a year.

"The long-term future of this area depends on managing the increasing demands of human use with the conservation and protection of the park's environmental values," Mr Logan said.

"It is important that we manage and counteract pressures caused by recreation and tourism but at the same time, provide facilities to attract visitors to the area."

Mr Logan said that the area was of particular importance for its remnant vegetation including the only remaining extensive stands of Rottneest Cypress on the mainland.

"The area also contains many historical

remnants, including a former quarantine station, a crematorium and gravesites, an army munitions depot, two ship wrecks, historical artifacts and rock carvings," he said.

Mr Logan said the area has social significance because of the extensive community input in revegetating the area and thanked community volunteers and schools that have been involved in revegetation of the area.

The draft management plan was prepared by the Department on behalf of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia in liaison with the City of Cockburn, the park's community advisory committee and other interested members of the community.

"The release of the draft management plan will enable the community to have their say on the management of the area, which is an important step in the park's management," Mr Logan said.

The closing date for submissions on the draft management plan is 30 November 2002.

**Frankland District Health and Fitness Day**

Frankland District's Health and Fitness Day complemented the District's pre-existing awareness of the importance of safety and health in the workplace. The day covered issues such as mental health, skin cancer, HIV Aids and Hepatitis, back care, counselling, the peer support program and alcohol and drugs and concluded with a brainstorming session on how to get the District 'moving'. The day was very productive and enjoyed by the whole District.

**Recovery plan posters**

Threatened ecological communities, including mound springs and invertebrate communities of caves, have been featured in two new posters produced by the Department's WA Threatened Species and Communities Unit (WATSCU).

The posters are part of a series of 59 that have been produced for threatened communities and rare flora. They provide information, such as a description and general location of the communities, threatening processes and recovery actions that are underway.

The posters will be distributed to the Department's regional and district staff, volunteers, landowners, local Government offices and other Government departments.

**Draft Forest management plan released**

Public comment is being sought on the draft 10-year plan for the management of south-west forests.

When finalised, the plan will provide for the implementation of the State Government's protecting our old-growth forests policy.

The draft plan is the first under the new administrative arrangements that separate commercial timber operations from forest management.

Copies of the plan are available from the Conservation Commission of WA's website, [www.conservation.wa.gov.au](http://www.conservation.wa.gov.au), the Commission's office or from the Department's south-west offices.

**Salinity work in the Dalwallinu and Coorow area**

Major salinity works have been undertaken in the Dalwallinu and Coorow area thanks to the local community.

Western Australia's fifth Natural Diversity Recovery Catchment—the Buntine Marchagee—has been the subject of works over the past six months.

More than 93 per cent of the 180,000 hectare catchment is privately owned by 106 landholders and only 1.2 per cent is contained in reserves managed by the Department.

To coordinate the activities in the area a full-time recovery officer has been employed by the Department's Midwest region.

A steering committee comprised of two local government authorities, seven local landowners, research institutions and government departments has been established.

The committee has already guided the development of an action plan of activities until the preparation of a Catchment Recovery Plan.

# Black-flanked rock-wallabies released

by Christine Freegard

**DEPARTMENT staff and volunteer groups trapped and released 50 black-flanked rock-wallabies in August, as part of a translocation project.**

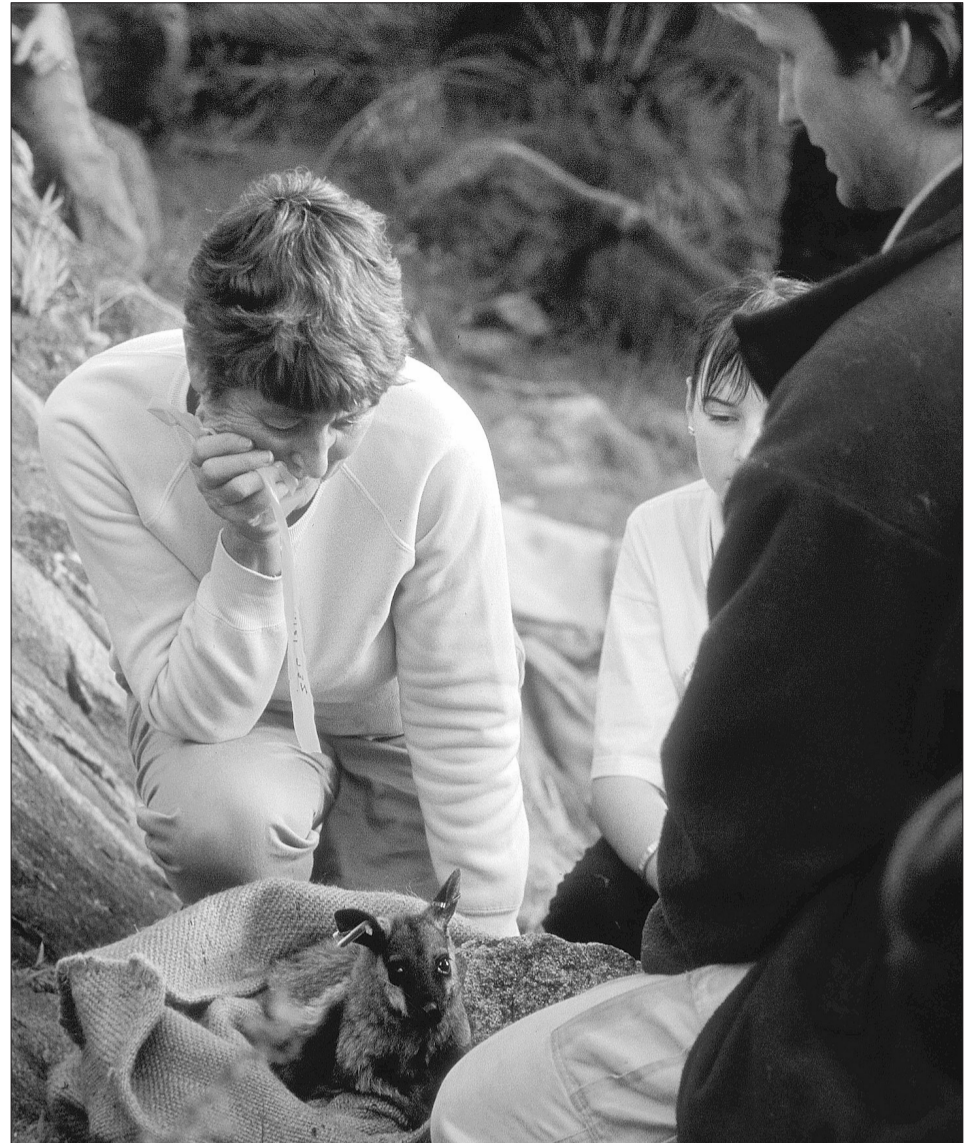
The black-flanked rock-wallabies were trapped at Mount Caroline Nature Reserve and Querekin Rock and released into the Avon Valley as part of the Western Shield program.

The project aimed to relocate the rock-wallabies to parts of their former range and stop them interfering with agricultural practices. Fox baiting in the area has allowed populations of rock-wallabies to increase to a point where they are now causing problems for neighboring farmers by eating crops and soiling machinery.

Staff from the Wildlife Branch, Woodvale Research Centre, Narrogin District, Merredin District and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) formed the trapping and releasing team. Volunteers were recruited via the Chittering Landcare Centre from various local community groups, including the Swan River Trust, Muchea Tree Farm and the Bullsbrook Scouts to help carry the rock-wallabies into the release sites.

Black-flanked rock-wallabies were once widely distributed across Western Australia, but the species is now vulnerable. Their main stronghold is a cluster of reserves in the wheatbelt region, between Kellerberrin and Quairading in the state's south west.

Some of the translocated rock-wallabies were used to replenish colonies that were established in 2001 at Avon Valley National Park and AWC's Paruna Sanctuary. A new colony was also established at Walyunga National Park. Between 2001 and 2002, a total of 97 rock-wallabies have been released into the Avon Valley.



Wendy Sanderson (right) and Karrie Loudon (centre) from the Chittering Landcare Centre with the Department's Peter Orell (left) releasing black-flanked rock-wallabies into Walyunga National Park. Photo by Christine Freegard.

# Warming up to life in Alaska

by Tracey Peacock



Arvid Hogstrom in cooler climes in Alaska.

**EXMOUTH'S Arvid Hogstrom has spent the past 12 months learning how to keep warm.**

The Department's Exmouth District Operations Officer has been on exchange in Alaska.

Leaving WA last June, 32-year-old Arvid arrived in Alaska during their summer, but soon experienced sub-zero temperatures.

"Watching the seasons change is something you don't get here," he said.

"When I arrived it was the middle of summer and by October-November the rivers were frozen over and there was ice as far as you could see.

"I hadn't seen snow and had never been in temperatures below zero.

"I was fortunate that I arrived in the middle of summer and had time to acclimatise."

Arvid made the job exchange with the US National Parks Service and in return Alaskan Danny Rosenkrans worked in Exmouth.

Working at Wrangell-St Elias National Park, the largest park in the US parks system with five million hectares, proved a unique experience for Arvid.

"I assisted everybody doing a range of projects from biological surveys, fish inventories to public access into the national park and managing tour operators," he said.

"One of the key areas that I got into was subsistence management.

"Subsistence is the right of local people to hunt and fish in the national park."

Arvid, who has worked with the Department since 1988, described his year-long exchange as an experience of a lifetime.

"The opportunity to see management from a different perspective was just an eye-opener and makes you aware that there are other ways of dealing with issues in national parks management," he said.

## Staff changes . . . Staff changes . . . Staff changes . . . Staff changes . . .

**Promotion**

Bruce Bone, District Manager, Narrogin District; Kellie Agar, Parks and Visitor Services Project Officer, Swan Region, Kensington.

**Contracts**

Malcome Trudgen, Senior Research Scientist, WA Herbarium; Cathy Foster, Cashier, Marketing and Customer Section, Kensington; Neil Blake, NRM Technical

Input Coordinator, Nature Conservation, Albany; Jazmin Goddard, Customer Service Officer, Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs; Diana Papenfus, Project Officer, Swan Region, Kensington.

**Permanent appointments**

Gina Broun, Conservation Officer, Moora District, Jurien Bay.

**Contract ceased**

Iris Flenady, Programs Officer,

Mundaring; Ewan Buckley, Forest Ranger, Albany; Information Management, Midwest Region, Geraldton.

**Resignations**

Tim Brett, Forest Ranger, Perth Hills District, Dwellingup.

**Secondment**

David Brewtnall, Media Relations Officer, Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs.