



# Conservation News

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND LAND MANAGEMENT  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

JANUARY 2003

## Biodiversity to be offered added protection

by David Brewtnall

**A NEW proactive approach to wildlife biodiversity has been announced by the Government.**

The community will be fully consulted on a proposed new Biodiversity Conservation Act which is to replace the 50-year-old Wildlife Conservation Act.

A key proposal for the new Act is that it will formally recognise positive measures under which the Government can work cooperatively with people and communities to protect biodiversity.

This will include protecting threatened ecological communities, expanding conservation covenants, giving recognition to bioregional planning and private conservation areas.

Environment and Heritage Minister Dr Judy Edwards said the new laws would be based on a "proactive rather than reactive" approach to biodiversity.

"In particular, they will provide for actions to be taken to produce better conservation outcomes than are available under the traditional legislative focus of prosecutions after a breach of legislation," she said.

A consultation paper has been released as part of the community participation process to develop the new legislation. When a draft Bill has been prepared, there will be further consultation with key interest groups.

Significant increases in maximum fines for unlawfully taking threatened species are proposed. These are currently limited to \$10,000, compared with up to \$500,000 for an individual under Commonwealth legislation.

Dr Edwards said higher penalties would "provide a strong deterrent to wilful acts of destruction and other activities, such as stealing fauna from the wild with a view to smuggling them out of the State, or unauthorised importation of prohibited species that could pose a disease risk."

The proposed new legislation will also bring WA's system of ranking threatened species into line with the principles adopted by the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

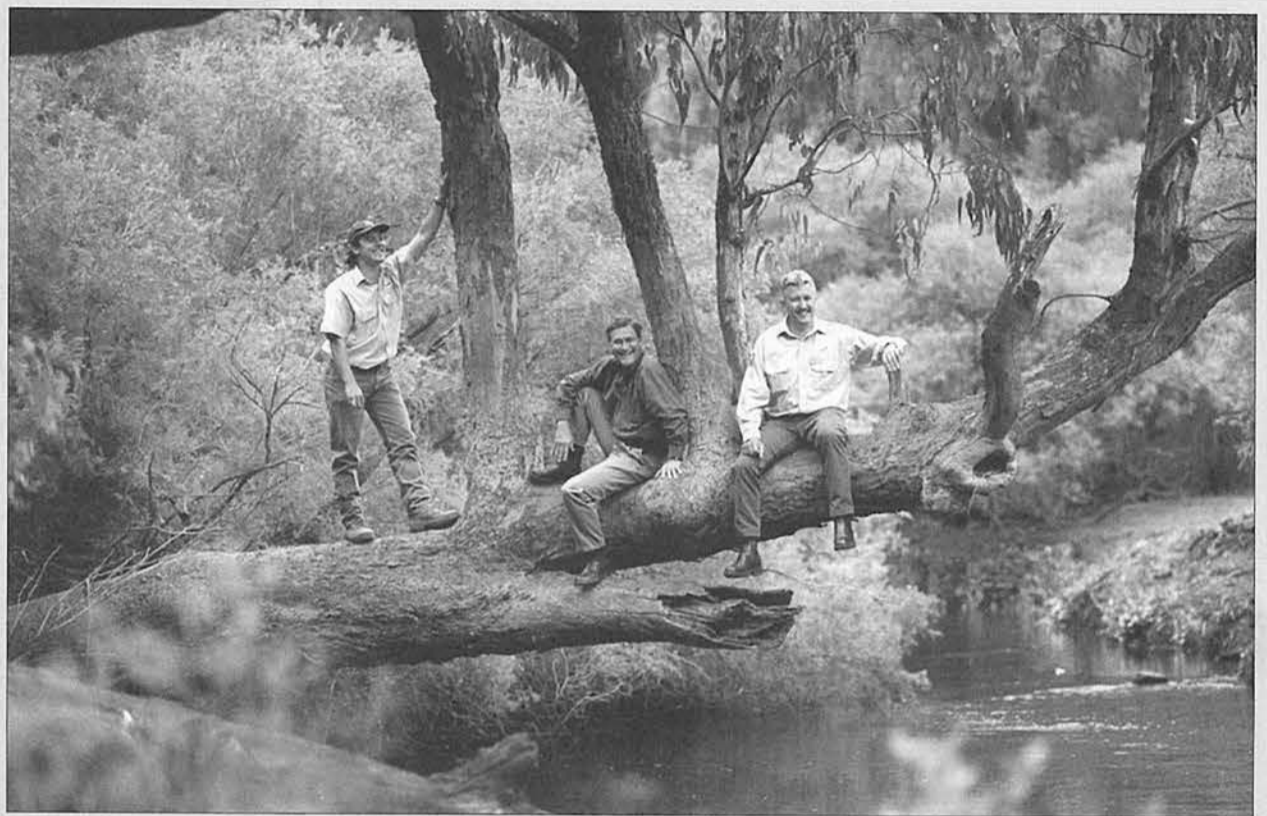
It will also cover the need to respect native title and protect customary use of biological resources in line with traditional cultural practices, and provide legislative backing for actions such as recovery plans prepared to conserve threatened species and ecological communities.

Copies of the consultation paper are available from the Department's website - <http://www.naturebase.net>.

Comments on the paper should be sent to Kylie Dyson at our Crawley office or e-mailed to [biodivconsult@calm.wa.gov.au](mailto:biodivconsult@calm.wa.gov.au). Submissions close on March 5.



The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Judy Edwards with a rare red-tailed black cockatoo. Photo by Norm Bailey.



Premier Geoff Gallop with rangers Darren Steven (left) and Brian O'Hehir. Photograph by Rod Taylor, West Australian Newspapers. Map courtesy of West Australian Newspapers.

## Premier steps out in new parks

by David Brewtnall

**WA PREMIER Geoff Gallop was the first official visitor to what will be the Blackwood River National Park, one of four new proposed South West national parks unveiled in December.**

As well as Blackwood River, indicative boundaries have been announced for the Butler, Hilliger and Milyeannup National Parks, located south-west of Margaret River and south-east of Nannup.

The Premier was hosted on his park visit by the Department's Darren Steven and Brian O'Hehir, who have taken up newly-created park ranger positions.

The four new national parks extend over more than 67,000ha and include extensive areas of old-growth forest in line with the Government's election commitments.

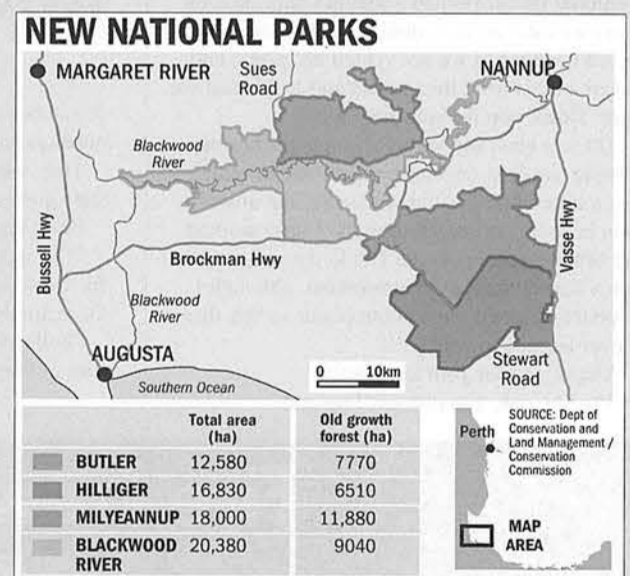
"They will give communities such as Nannup, Augusta and Margaret River opportunities to develop a range of nature-based tourism and recreation activities, secure in the knowledge that these areas will be reserved for future generations," Dr Gallop said.

The Government has now announced indicative boundaries for 15 of 30 new national parks to be created as part of its ambitious *Protecting our old-growth forests* policy.

Comment will now be sought from stakeholders, including community groups and interested members of the public prior to finalisation of the boundaries of the new parks. Further details will be published in local newspapers at a later date.

The Government has allocated the Department \$25 million over four years for the planning, development and day-to-day management of the new parks.

Of Blackwood River's 20,380ha, 9,040ha is old-growth forest. Butler (12,580ha) has 7,770ha of old-growth forest; Hilliger (16,830ha) preserves 6,510ha of old-growth, and Milyeannup's 18,000ha includes 11,880ha of old-growth.



## Review of Western Shield a timely move

**THE Western Shield program – Australia's biggest wildlife recovery project – is being comprehensively reviewed for the first time in its six-year history.**

The wide-ranging review, coordinated by the Wildlife Branch's Senior Zoologist, Peter Mawson, assisted by Principal Research Scientist Tony Start, is expected to take until mid 2003 to complete.

The review will focus on current tasks as well as future directions and recommend improvements.

by Tracy Peacock

It will canvass the opinions of a wide range of groups and will include internal and external reviews.

"Since Western Shield commenced there have been many outstanding highlights and the program now has a very high profile in the West Australian community with lots of people coming on board to help us

recover threatened fauna," Peter said.

He said the review would look at the program's objectives, how well these had been achieved plus looking at future directions.

"The review wants to make sure we've been spending money as effectively as we can to achieve as many benefits as we can," he said.

"We'll also be looking at the scope of Western Shield. For instance, should it be broadened to deal with other threatening processes such as fire in the Kimberleys?"

Peter said the first phase of the review, the preparation of 11 internal review papers, had begun.

The papers will be on baiting; fauna monitoring and staff training; translocations and fauna reconstruction sites; captive breeding and coordination; Project Eden; Montebello renewal; Return to Dryandra; feral cat control; community support and education; financial analysis and project management;

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# Working Together

The Department's work consists of much more than just dealing with fire, nevertheless it is fire that is occupying the attention of many at present.

We have had serious fires along the central west coast, south-west forests and south coast. At the same time our TV and newspapers have shown us the devastation of the Canberra fires, and the extensive fires burning in the high country and elsewhere in NSW and Victoria.

In my letter to the editor published in The West Australian on 23 January, I wrote:

*Prescribed burning remains a cornerstone of fire preparedness and management in the south-west of WA. It is true that in recent years we have fallen short of prescribed burning targets, but that is primarily because the succession of dry winters has reduced the number of days suitable for safe and effective burning. Minimising the risk of smoke haze over Perth also reduces the number of available burning days, but this is not the primary reason for not meeting targets.*

*We also acknowledge that the optimum regime of prescribed burning (ie. frequency, season, intensity and scale) is a matter of debate, and we will continue to work with scientists, fire managers and the community to deliver the best possible outcome for protecting human life, property, and biodiversity and landscape values.*

The way we manage and respond to fire in this nation should be the subject of scrutiny and review. However, it is sad to see accusation and blame over recent fires being thrown around, in a quite politicised manner, while volunteer and professional firefighters are still in the middle of fighting the fires.

Community debate about prescribed burning and other aspects of fire management is entirely legitimate and should be welcomed by the Department. The debate should be conducted objectively and with respect for various viewpoints, including those of experienced firefighters, scientists and conservationists.

I would like to thank all staff in the Department who have worked so professionally on fire suppression operations to date this season.

**Keiran McNamara,**  
Acting Executive Director



The Tadi children (front row, left to right) Ivonne (10), Lorraine (3), Dianne (7), Matthew (5), Jason (9) with (back row left to right) Liz Pepper from Charity Link, Monica Tadi, Judy Kenward (Crawley), Vicki Santwyk (Conservation Commission) and Keiran McNamara (A/Executive Director). Photo by Rhianna Mooney.

## Family overwhelmed by goodwill

**MONICA Tadi and her five children were overwhelmed when they received Christmas presents, food and money from our Crawley staff.**

by Rhianna Mooney

Staff from the Department and the Conservation Commission of WA took delight in giving the family some Christmas cheer.

Receptionist Judy Kenward and personal assistant Vikki Santwyk said they wanted to do something special for a family this Christmas.

"I think it is important to do something that reminds everyone of the true spirit of Christmas ... this certainly helped us at Crawley remember," Judy said.

"It is so satisfying to do something nice for others, especially when you get the opportunity to see how much it meant to them," Vikki said.

Monica and her children were so grateful that they came in personally to say thanks.

At a morning tea in the family's honour, Monica said the gifts had restored her faith in the magic of Christmas.

"It touched my heart. I really was speechless," she said.

"It has been tough since I moved to Australia from Chile, but the reward is that I have happy and healthy children.

"We just wanted to show our appreciation to the people who did this for us and tell them how much it meant to us."

Staff at Crawley donated the gifts through Charity Link, an organisation that enables Western Australian charities, community groups and businesses to work together to help people in need over Christmas.

"Charity Link relies on the generosity of organisations such as the Department to give families and individuals some Christmas cheer," Charity Link Manager, Liz Pepper said.

"In this case the Tadi family's Christmas was made special, thanks to the Department's staff.

"It will be a Christmas I'm sure they'll never forget."

## Conservation News January 2003

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## Snake quiz winners

**TRACY Heaperman and Jennifer Feszczak blitzed the field to win Conservation News' snake quiz.**

Tracy, from the Corporate Information Section, and Jennifer, from the Information Management Branch, correctly answered the five questions which were:

- 1) Are reptiles warm or cold blooded?  
**Cold blooded**
- 2) How do snakes smell? **With their tongue**
- 3) What is the term for when a snake sheds its skin? **Slough**
- 4) How do pythons kill their prey?  
**Constriction**
- 5) Can snakes swim? **Yes**  
Congratulations! A *LANDSCOPE* calendar is on its way!

## Letters to the editor

My wife and I have recently returned to England from a holiday experience of a lifetime, thanks to your work in keeping up WA's National Parks. We had a month's park pass for our hire car, and we would never have seen so much beauty had we not visited the parks, and taken advice from the rangers and locals that we met. Thank you for your hard work.

Do you have any volunteer programmes that people can help on, as we would like to return for a future holiday, but we would like to assist you in some conservation work. I have worked on Nature reserves in the UK in the past, and I am a horticulturalist by profession, although I probably learned more about plants in WA than I ever learned in college!!!

Thank you for your kind reply,  
David Cook, Broadstone, England.

## Review of Western Shield a timely move

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threatened fauna issues currently not covered in Western Shield; and quokkas and western ringtail possums as case studies.

They will be presented at a full-day workshop with local and interstate guests.

Peter described the workshop as a "vital" part of the review process.

"Our external reviewers will be there and it will be an opportunity for frank discussion among all those people inside and outside the Department who are involved in the program," he said.

"Following the workshop the external reviewers will be taken on a tour of operational areas such as the bait factories and fauna recovery

areas like Dryandra."

The report by the reviewers will be available for public comment before the Environment and Heritage Minister Dr Judy Edwards makes decisions about any changes to the program.

The Western Shield program is the Department's project that aims to maintain biodiversity and protect threatened fauna by controlling introduced predators such as foxes and feral cats.

It covers 3.5 million hectares and three species of mammal have already been taken off the threatened species list and many native animals are being bred in captivity and re-established in their former habitats.

## Fire crews show our Christmas spirit

**CHRISTMAS** celebrations were put on hold while 400 of our firefighters controlled wildfires started by lightning between Geraldton and Manjimup.

The 100 Incident Control staff and 230 fire crews assisted by 70 admin support staff were on duty during the days leading up to Christmas Day after lightning strikes triggered dozens of fires around the city, in the Mid West and the northern forests as far south as Manjimup.

"The lightning strikes happened on Sunday December 22, with the worst fires occurring in the Jurien District," Fire Services Manager, Rick Sneeuwagt, said.

"However it was really only on Monday, with winds and hot weather, that the fires in the forested areas started showing up.

"We had 28 new fire starts in the Mundaring area alone, with all seven water bombers, including the spare, in operation at once for the first time."

The worst fire was a 60,000 hectare fire that threatened Cervantes and Jurien.

"It was a big concern. Ten days earlier lightning-caused fires had threatened Jurien and Toodyay but this time three large fires burned through Badgingarra National Park, Nambung National Park, the Southern Beekeepers Nature Reserve near Cervantes, Wongonderrah Nature Reserve, large tracts of unallocated Crown lands and private farmlands.

"Most of the reserves south of Jurien were burned," Rick said.

Mid-West Region fire crews were totally

committed by Sunday, December 22, so 18 of the Department's fire managers and crews were flown in from the South West's Blackwood District the next morning.

"In spite of the severe weather the Department's fire crews and local bushfire volunteers managed to keep the fires from entering Cervantes and Jurien which was a major concern," he said.

Apart from local crews, most South-West staff were home by lunchtime on Christmas Day.

"It was remarkable that our firefighters were able to deal with more than 40 lightning strikes around the State and to keep the fires small. I was impressed with the way they prioritised the situation and decided which fires

to leave for a while and which to tackle immediately," Rick said.

Most of the fires were able to be controlled by Christmas Eve – a major feat by staff and volunteers.

"Some people came back from annual leave to help out so we appreciate how much they gave up," Rick said.

"In protecting life and property by their firefighting efforts, our personnel also recorded no significant injuries during these demanding circumstances.

"It appears a lot of our training and education is paying off. It was a co-ordinated effort with staff from the Forest Products Commission, Fire and Emergency Services and support organisations working well under pressure."

# 2002 – the year in review

## January

- The State Government announced that the area of Wellington National Park near Collie would be increased nearly six-fold, and that a new national park in the jarrah forest and wandoo woodlands north-east of Manjimup would be created.
- National medals were presented to Departmental and Forest Products Commission staff for their bushfire fighting efforts. The medals and clasps were presented to 110 officers, crews and support staff from throughout the State.
- The Department and the Forest Products Commission sent a 15-person team of fire management specialists to NSW to relieve staff who had been working on the fires for the past eight days.
- The Department's fire crews took a breather after one of the worst weeks in 10 years in terms of the number of bush fires that broke out on conservation lands.

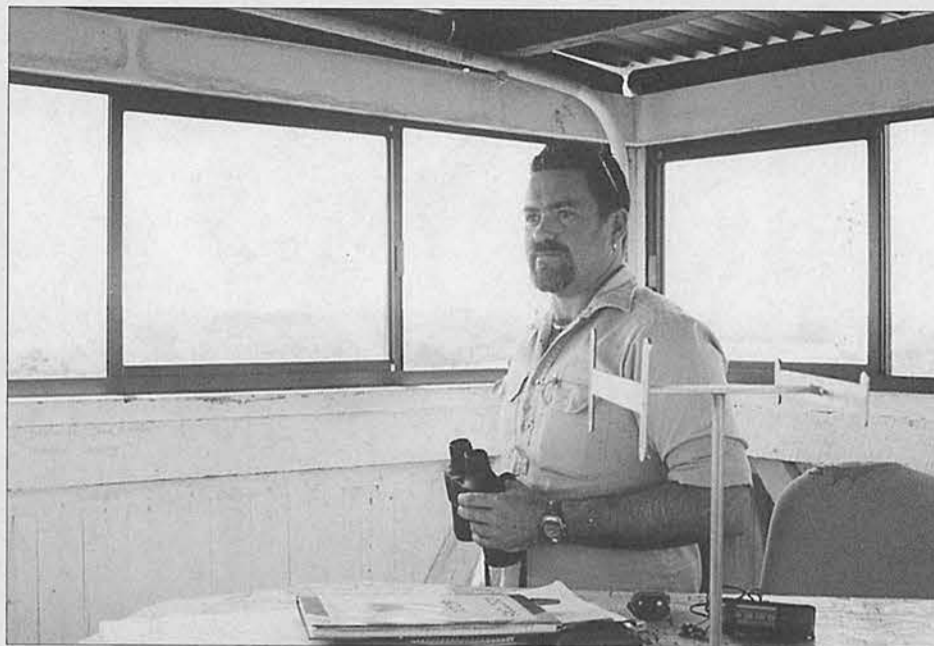
## February

- The Department announced that work had begun on the first comprehensive summer survey of dugong abundance and distribution in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area.

## March

- Aerial baiting to control predatory foxes across 3.5 million hectares of conservation lands in the State began, as part of the regular quarterly baiting program.

- Construction of the Dryandra Woodland's animal viewing enclosure and interpretive centre started.
- The State Government announced that living areas for traditional owners in the Purnululu National Park in the Kimberley would be granted.
- Capital works programs increased substantially. More than \$1.45 million was allocated to build national parks facilities in the forests around Manjimup, Pemberton, Northcliffe and Walpole and more than \$600,000 in the expanded Wellington National Park area near Collie.
- A total of \$433,500 was allocated to improve facilities and access at several national parks across the south coast and in the Lower Great Southern, and more than \$640,000 to upgrade facilities in Kimberley conservation areas.
- A \$613,000 capital works program to improve visitor facilities and access began in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park with \$1.34 million also being allocated to conservation reserves in the State's Mid-West Region between Shark Bay and Cervantes.
- Visitor services and facilities in national parks and reserves between the Avon Valley and the Murray River received \$534,000 while \$500,000 was allocated to the Pilbara and \$90,000 to the Goldfields.
- The Department announced the introduction of new licensing procedures which give benefits to tour operators who achieve



Former displaced timber worker Harry Everett joined the Department as part of a State Government commitment to employ displaced timber workers. He is now working in the Blackwood District. Photo by Tim Foley.

- industry-based accreditation programs.
- Work started to create five new national parks extending over almost 64,000ha in State forest in the Perth Hills area.

## April

- The WA Government announced \$282,000 for capital works and other programs associated with the proposed new and existing conservation areas along the Blackwood River.
- The dedication of two Kalbarri plant enthusiasts led to the rediscovery of a plant species that had not been recorded for almost 130 years.
- The diverse flora of the Geraldton region featured in the latest Bush Book field guide series published by the Department.
- About 240 tamar wallabies and woylies were reintroduced into South-West native forests.

## May

- Successful fox control made possible the translocation of 70 tammars into conservation areas in the hills of Perth.
- Western Australia's Toolibin Lake Recovery Team and Technical Advisory Group won the prestigious National Salinity Prize for developing new technologies to address salinity problems in the Wheatbelt's Toolibin Lake catchment.
- The Department announced it would use the outcomes of a three-day symposium on fire ecology and impacts to refine its fire man-

agement regimes for the State's conservation estate.

- A remediation action plan for locating, identifying, retrieving and disposing of chemical containers that may have been buried near Dwellingup began.
- Significant rehabilitation work started in the Drummond Natural Diversity Recovery Catchment near Toodyay under the State Government's salinity program.
- A community advisory committee was set up to assist with the preparation of a management plan for conservation reserves along the Esperance coast.
- A new multi-tyred deep ripper designed by the Department was publicised to help farmers cut costs in land care projects to combat salinity, conserve biodiversity and establish commercial tree crops.

## June

- The State Government announced the establishment of a community advisory committee to help guide the planning process for the Wellington National Park.
- A part of Western Australia's aviation history closed with the decommissioning of the Department's last Piper Super Cub spotter plane.
- The management and protection of bushland in the metropolitan region was given a helping hand with the launch of the 2002 Bushland Care Day Program.

## July

- The Department started a recovery project to address salinity degradation occurring at the headwaters of the Fitzgerald River in the Southern Wheatbelt.
- Indicative boundaries were announced for three new national parks in the State's South-West.
- A new package of incentives for native vegetation protection and a new Natural Resource Management Council to broaden the current management of salinity issues was created.
- The long-term conservation of Western Australia's unique flora reached another milestone with the banking of the 1000th seed collection for the State's Threatened Flora Seed Centre.
- A potentially serious weed shrub called Canary Island St Johnswort (*Hypericum canariense*) was discovered by the Department's botanists.
- The Conservation Commission of WA recommended to the State Government that a number of additions be made to proposed and existing formal reserves.
- The State Government released a major review of the Department's fire policy and operations.
- The Indigenous Heritage Unit conducted its first cross-cultural awareness training course with the Department's Corporate Executive.



Wheatbelt Regional manager Ken Wallace (front) accepts the National Salinity Prize with Richard George from the Department of Agriculture and Audrey Bird, a farmer in the Toolibin Lake Catchment. Photo from the Canberra Times, taken by Adam McLean.

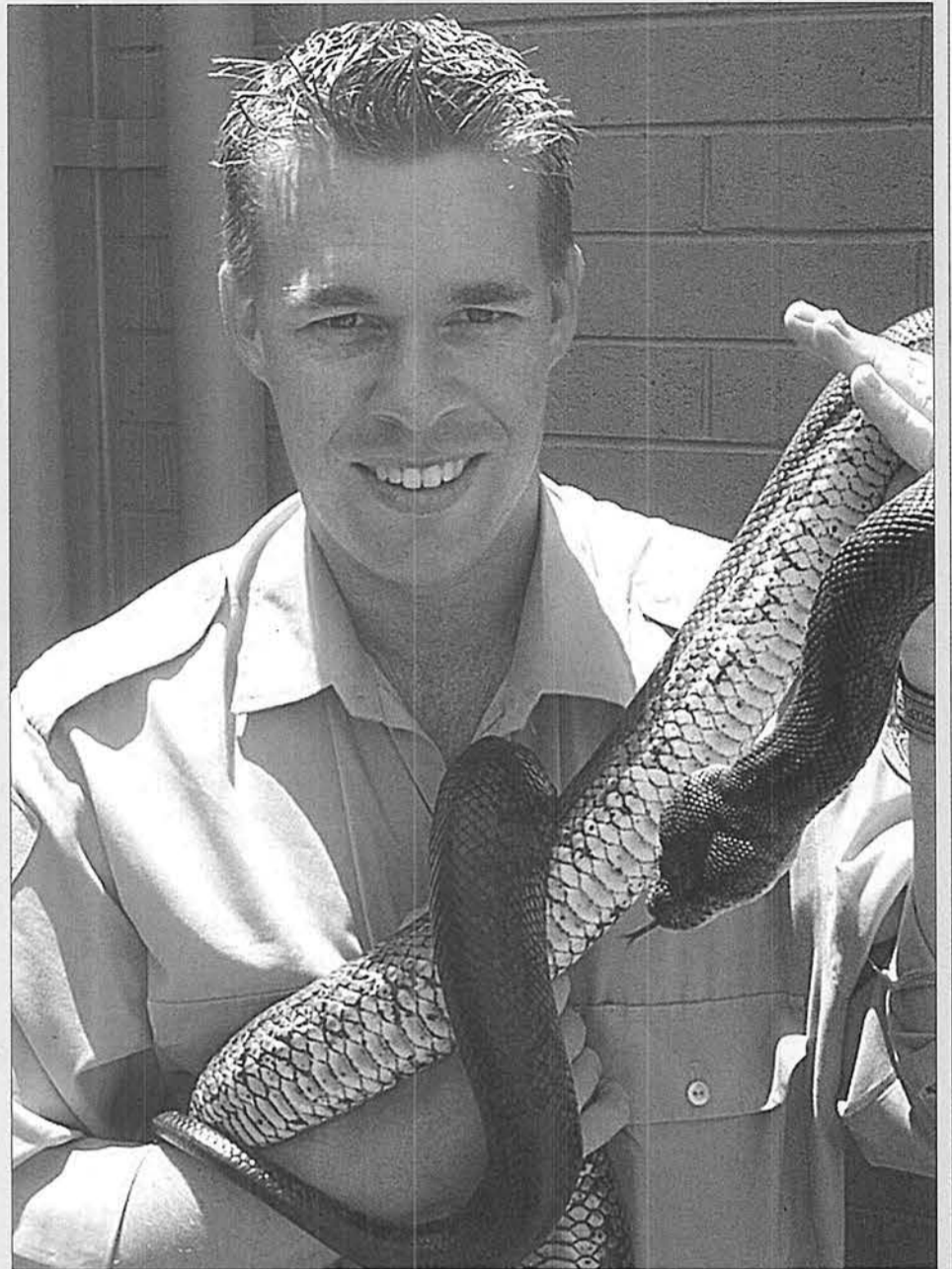


Graham Liddelow (left), Rod Simmonds, Graham Norrish, Ian Wilson and Peter Keppel (right) accept prestigious national medals and clasps to recognise more than 2,000 years of accumulated fire fighting service by 110 Department and FPC staff. Photo by Ernie McLintock.

# 2002 – the year in review



Taking part in the cross cultural awareness course for Corporate Executive 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.



Departmental Wildlife Officer Matt Dowling holds a carpet python. The State Government announced that new regulations would allow people to keep some reptiles and amphibians as pets.

## August

- Five senior WA fire fighters were part of a 45-strong Australian-New Zealand contingent that headed to the United States to help combat a series of wildfires.
- About 60 black-flanked rock wallabies were translocated into two national parks and a privately-owned sanctuary as part of the Western Shield wildlife recovery program.
- The State Government started a four-year program to upgrade research and development into specialist plants for conservation projects as part of the WA Salinity Strategy.
- A draft 10-year plan for the overall management of the south-west forests was released for public comment.
- Information on science publications covering flora, fauna and forests from the mid-1700s to the present day went online.
- The Department started a major program to upgrade visitor facilities at the tip of the Francois Peron National Park in Shark Bay.
- The Department said it would work to step up its prescribed burning activities in the face of a potentially serious summer bush-fire season.
- The State Government outlined a new initiative to help local community groups undertake a range of conservation projects in and around Perth's regional parks.
- The introduction of a fourth dolphin into the hand-feeding regime at Monkey Mia was successful.
- Department fire crews with assistance from local volunteer bush fire brigades worked to contain a fire burning in the Cape Arid National Park and Nuytsland Nature Reserve near Israelite Bay east of Esperance.
- Department fire crews with assistance from local volunteer brigades faced a torrid day combating several bushfires throughout the south-west, south-east and Goldfields.
- The State Government announced it would

- provide \$150,000 over three years to assist the Bibbulmun Track Foundation.
- Summer aerial baiting to control predatory foxes to be carried out on 3.5 million hectares of conservation lands in the State during December and January.
- The preparation of a strategy to conserve tuart woodlands was taken a step closer with the release of a status report on tuart conservation and protection.

## December

- Environment and Heritage Minister Dr Judy Edwards will now have the final say on the development and implementation of the new Forest Management Plan following the

- passing of amendments to the Conservation and Land Management Act in the Upper House.
- The Department said it would continue to increase its presence at Coral Bay over the next few months as part of its strategy to conserve the distinctive features of the Ningaloo Marine Park and adjoining coastline
- The work of volunteers in helping to protect the environment was recognised with the announcement of the Department's annual Volunteer of the Year and Outstanding Service Awards.
- Two dolphins at Monkey Mia gave birth.
- The Department started a comprehensive review of its highly successful major feral animal control and fauna conservation program, Western Shield.
- The Department started the process to prepare a surface water management plan for the Buntine-Marchagee Natural Diversity Recovery Catchment.
- The State Government's program for increased aerial fire fighting resources in the South-West started as two additional water bombers were formally stationed in Manjimup.
- The State Government announced there would be an independent review of the Conservation Commission of WA and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority.
- A strategy for broad community involvement in finalising boundaries for new national parks proposed under the State Government's Protecting our old-growth forests policy was announced.
- The Environment and Heritage Minister, Dr Judy Edwards, announced that the State's wildlife conservation laws would be rewritten into a new Biodiversity Conservation Act for the 21st century.
- Indicative boundaries were released for four new national parks in the State's South-West.

## September

- The State Government announced new regulations were being introduced under the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 allowing the keeping of reptiles and amphibians as pets in WA.
- The rich variety of flora found in Western Australia's South West was fully documented for the first time in a new book.
- The release of a second group of captive-bred native dibblers into Peniup reserve near Jerramungup was another milestone in the reintroduction of the endangered marsupial in WA.

## October

- The Department announced it had been able to complete about 20 per cent of its 2002-03 prescribed burning program so far this year.
- The Coogee Primary School became the 1000th member of the Department's Land for Wildlife scheme.

## November

- The State Government announced it would lease extra aircraft including water bombing helicopters based in the metropolitan area.



The Department recognised the work of more than 5,600 registered volunteers in the Volunteers of the Year Award ceremony. 15 Outstanding Service Awards were given and three people were named Volunteers of the Year. Photo by Norm Bailey.

# FloraBase is a world wide hit

IT isn't hard to work out why FloraBase – the Western Australian Herbarium's online plant identification and information retrieval system – was a finalist in the innovation category of the 2002 Premier's Awards.

Launched in 1998, the site averages 100 hits per hour, every day of the year. It is accessed by people all around the world.

The WA Herbarium's Director, Neville Marchant, said FloraBase combined information from four databases about the names, species and description of WA plants, as well as photographic images and information from the library.

"FloraBase is essentially a front-end delivery system of information held in the Herbarium," he said.

"It is innovative on a world scale, and enables us to form and sustain collaborative relationships with kindred organisations – locally, nationwide and globally.

"FloraBase means the Herbarium can further develop partnerships with community groups in regional areas whose members constantly provide us with plant specimens and data."

WA Herbarium Research Scientist

by Rhianna Mooney

Alex Chapman said FloraBase enabled the Department to better plan for the future by making more information about the state's plant biodiversity readily available.

"FloraBase enables us to fill many gaps in our information about species' taxonomy, geography and seasonal changes because people are able to access information and cross-check it against species they might find in their area," Alex said.

"It highlights what we already know as well as what we don't know."

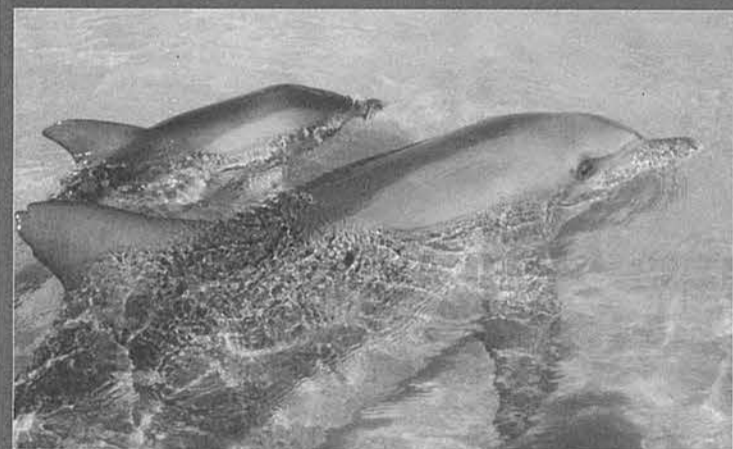
The Innovation Section of the Premier's Award celebrated performance and achievement in the development of projects or initiatives that demonstrate a leap in public sector management or service delivery.

Neville said the award was a great achievement, only made possible by the numerous staff and volunteers who contributed to the project's success. He also said that a second, more user-friendly, information rich FloraBase was being developed.



Nicholas Lander (left), Ben Richardson, Alex Chapman and Neville Marchant (right) show off their award and the FloraBase program.  
Photo by Rhianna Mooney.

## Monkey Mia new arrivals



Monkey Mia dolphin Nicky and her newborn calf Yadgalah.

THE Monkey Mia dolphin population has had some new arrivals.

Three calves have been born since December.

Local school children and the Yadgalah Aboriginal Group have come up with names for the new baby dolphins.

Nicky's calf was named Yadgalah, which means friend, Puck's calf was named Wada, meaning pearl, and Surprise's calf was named Burda, meaning star.

It's the first time that the internationally famous dolphins, which

regularly come into the beach, have all calved within a short period.

The Department has been monitoring the progress of the new arrivals and there will be changes to the interaction program.

Because dolphin calves depend totally on their mothers and have to be constantly moving during their first few weeks of life, the new mothers will be fed only by the Department's staff and away from the other dolphins.

Visitors will be asked to stay out of the water whenever a mother and calf visit the beach.



Barna Mia was officially opened by Dr Judy Edwards (centre) who was joined by (left to right) Reserves Officer, Kate MacGregor; Katanning District Manager, Bruce Bone, Regional Leader Parks and Visitor Services, Paul McCluskey; Chairman of the Dryandra Woodland Focus Group, Mike Brown and Acting Executive Director, Keiran McNamara.

## New night tours at Dryandra

by David Brewtnall

DRYANDRA Woodland has been something of a tourism 'hidden gem,' to use the words of a local tourist official.

Now the gem has a shining new facet – Barna Mia. Planned and developed by the Department, and opened on 14 December by our Minister Dr Judy Edwards, Barna Mia offers visitors an 'up close' night-time glimpse of rare Western Australian marsupials in their natural habitat.

Tours through the new facility's striking, straw bale interpretive centre begin with a 30-minute introductory presentation on the theme of nature conservation – in particular, its importance to people's well-being and quality of life – and of captive animal breeding programs like *Return to Dryandra*.

All tours are guided and the animals' welfare is paramount. Visitors

are taken into a spotlight four-hectare viewing enclosure, where they can see rare marsupials like the bilby, burrowing bettong, banded hare-wallaby, rufous hare wallaby and western barred bandicoot.

Most of these threatened marsupials are now breeding at Dryandra – living proof, as it were, of one of the Department's most meticulously planned and successful programs. As part of the *Return to Dryandra* program begun just four years ago, predation by the European fox has been brought under control by the successful baiting strategy, the *Western Shield* program.

Narrogin district manager Bruce Bone said Barna Mia was "the outcome of years of work by Wheatbelt Regional and Narrogin District

staff," and praised district staff who fulfilled animal-feeding rosters.

The interpretive centre was constructed by a local builder and craftspeople and mostly funded by the State Government, which provided \$270,000. The Commonwealth contributed \$80,000.

A new program of ecoeducation programs is being developed by Narrogin district staff, strongly focussed on the need for biodiversity conservation and the return of threatened species once found across most of WA's agricultural and arid zones.

It is hoped around a third of Dryandra's 20,000 annual visitors will opt to take a tour. Cost is \$12 for adults, \$6 for children and \$32 for families – fees determined on a cost recovery basis.

For more information go to our website, <http://www.naturebase.net/tourism>



The opening of the centre was attended by departmental staff (back row, left to right) Bruce Bone, Roland Mau, Kim Kershaw, Sam McWilliams, Barb Kennington, Gavan Mullan, Acting Executive Director, Keiran McNamara and Paul McCluskey (front row, left to right) Kate Macgregor, Julie Wyland, Briohny Alexander, Environment and Heritage Minister Dr Judy Edwards, Tamie Wrangmore and Tricia Sprigg.

## Conservation briefs

### Library volunteers do the job

By Lisa Wright

Books on shelves, journals in boxes and maps in cabinets!

These are just a few of the things you see when you walk into a library.

Many of these items are visible because of the work carried out by volunteers.

Whether they are library students still studying or library technicians looking for employment or working full time, they have in common a love of libraries and a desire for experience in different aspects of library duties.

These duties include basic cataloguing; search, retrieval and loaning; indexing journals and conferences; and shelving and filing.

Some of them even carry out work from a distance, indexing materials at home which is emailed back for inclusion in the library catalogue.

I would like to pass on the thanks of all Departmental library users to the past, present and future volunteers.

## Kids 'adopt' centre

by David Brewtnall

THANKS to children from Applecross Primary School, thousands of WA students of all ages have been able to enjoy a special 'up close' encounter with wildlife at Mundaring's Hills Forest Discovery Centre.

Once again in 2003, money raised by these small friends of the Centre will enable wildlife 'close encounters' to feature in the Department's popular EcoEducation excursion, *Back from the Brink*.

Woylies like these pictured are among a variety of rare creatures brought to the Hills centre from the Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre at Gooseberry Hill.

Volunteers from Kanyana provide the excursion's highlight when they introduce students to woylies and other threatened species, including marsupials like the bilby, mala and burrowing bettong, some of which are bred at Gooseberry Hill.

Annual fund-raising by the Applecross children usually brings in around \$1,000, but they excelled themselves in 2002. A cheque for \$2,400 was handed to the Department in December, making a grand total since 1998 of \$7,400.

Money has been earmarked for *Back from the Brink* since 2000. In the previous two years funds provided nesting boxes and dens for wildlife and a viewing hide in the forest.

Right: Applecross Primary School staff and children were thanked for their support for EcoEducation at a function at the school. Fran Logan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and student Ashleigh Yates (11) are pictured with woylies brought to the school from Kanyana. Photo by Norm Bailey.



Members of the Nature Conservation Review Workshop at the Broome Work Centre (left to right): Keith Claymore, Chris Done, Tony Start, Alan Walker, Kevin White, Gordon Graham, Allen Grosse, Norm McKenzie, Tim Willing, Allan Thomson, John Gault and Kevin Kenneally.

## Kimberley plan developed

A FIVE-YEAR Kimberley Region Nature Conservation Output Operational Plan was developed at a special workshop in December at the Department's Broome Work Centre.

The Kimberley region has rich biological, landscape and cultural resources which are not only intrinsically valuable, but also underpin an expanding nature-based tourism industry.

Reversing the impact of inappropriate fire regimes and the widespread degrading impacts of introduced animals were the most important conservation management issues identified by the workshop.

by Kevin Kenneally and Jean Paton

Wildfire is the most degrading process with 40 per cent or more of the region burnt each year.

The protection of biodiversity on Kimberley near-shore islands was also identified by the workshop as the State's most important conservation reserve issue.

Workshop members included: Keith Claymore (A/Senior Policy Adviser - Nature Conservation); Chris Done (Regional Manager - Kimberley); John Gault (Business Manager - Kimberley); Gordon

Graham (A/State Bushcare Coordinator); Allen Grosse (Work Centre Manager - Broome); Kevin Kenneally (Scientific Coordinator Landscape Expeditions); Norm McKenzie (Principal Research Scientist); Tony Start (Principal Research Scientist); Allan Thomson (Conservation Officer - Kununurra); Alan Walker (Director of Regional Services) - Facilitator; Kevin White (Senior Operations Officer - Broome); and Tim Willing (Conservation Officer - Broome).

An annual review of the operational plan for the Kimberley region was recommended.

## Life turns full circle for Walpole chief

by Sue McKenna

LIFE has come full circle for Walpole's new District Manager, Peter Bidwell.

With tongue firmly in cheek, the Albany Parks and Visitor Services' leader says he's back to where he started when he began his career in Walpole as a Departmental gang member 30 years ago.

"I always had my eye on the top job . . . I told them years ago they should've promoted me and I wouldn't have had to move so much," he quipped.

Peter's first job saw him driving bulldozers and trucks, and marrying local Walpole girl Marlene into the bargain.

He left but returned to the township in 1980 where, over nine years, he wore several hats. He was in charge of logging operations, the recreation officer, the fire co-ordinator, the roading officer and

the person co-ordinating the rehabilitation of the old Shannon township.

In 1989 he went to Bunbury as the Department's Senior Fire Operations Officer before heading to the Blackwood District as District Manager and then becoming the Bibbulmun Track Project's co-ordinator.

He later went to Albany where he has been working as the Parks and Visitor Services' regional leader.

"I've always loved Walpole and I'm happy to be moving back," he said.

"I am looking forward to the challenges of implementing the new Walpole Wilderness Area and the Karri Tingle Discovery Centre proposals."



Peter and Marlene Bidwell in Albany.

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

### Promotion

Paul Blechynden, District Manager, Merredin; Clive Coshan, On-line Services Officer, People Services Branch; Laurina Bullen, Planning Officer, Planning and Visitor Services Branch; Craig Simpson, Fleet Contracts Officer, Fleet/Supply section, Corporate Services Division.

### Contract

Skye Arkeveld, Officer, WA Herbarium, Science Division; David Chadwick, Seasonal Ranger, Stokes National Park, Esperance District; Diane Harley, Indexer, Corporate

Information; Christopher New, Project Officer, Manjimup Regional Headquarters; Ian Welch, Information Management Officer, Corporate Information.

### Permanent appointments

Rod Quartermain, Senior Project Officer, Parks and Visitor Services, Kensington; Clare Rose, Information Management Officer, Information Management Branch; Darren Wallace, Systems Analyst, Fire Management Services; Judy Kenward, Officer, Corporate Headquarters, Crawley; Teresa Dimasica, Planning Officer, Planning and

Visitor Services Branch; Beth Loudon, Conservation Officer, Katanning District Office.

### Transfer

Tony Raudino, Reserves Officer, Forest Management Branch, Bunbury Regional Headquarters to Midwest Region, Geraldton Regional Headquarters.

### Temporary transfer

Shawn Thomas, National Park Ranger, Exmouth Office.

### Temporary deployment

Alice Reaveley, Conservation Estate Office, Moora District, Regional Services to Parks

and Visitor Services, Kensington.

### Contract ceased

Ian Anderson, Project Officer, Bibbulmun Track, Kensington; Gillian Stack, Project Officer, Nature Conservation, Woodvale; Renee Romyn, Landscape Architect, Regional Parks, Fremantle.

### Resignation

Angela Walker, Officer, WA Herbarium, South Perth; Shirley Tonkin, Officer, Albany Regional Headquarters.

### Reclassification

Alan Jones, Fleet Supervisor, Corporate Services.