



# Conservation News



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APRIL 2005

## Wheatbelt biological survey findings released

The findings of one of the largest and most comprehensive biological surveys conducted in WA have been released.

Releasing *A biodiversity survey of the Western Australian agricultural zone*, Environment and Science Minister Judy Edwards said the survey results presented major advances in understanding biodiversity and a significant boon in the fight against salinisation.

"This is the first time that such a survey has been undertaken in Australia, and marks a major milestone in the State's biological survey program that commenced in the early 1970s," she said.

Before the survey, it was thought that just one species of threatened flora was likely to disappear without remedial action.

The survey revealed that 450 flowering plant species, and 400 spider, scorpion and aquatic invertebrate species were at risk of extinction from salinity.

The systematic survey was undertaken by CALM and the Western Australian Museum, in collaboration with The University of Western Australia and the University of Adelaide.

"It was part of the State Salinity Strategy and aimed to determine the threat of secondary salinisation to terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity as well as increase our understanding of the biological richness of this 250,000 sq km area," Dr Edwards said.

The survey was conducted between 1997 and 2001 and involved the sampling of more than 1000 terrestrial and wetland sites across the

By Mitzi Vance

Wheatbelt by multidisciplinary teams of scientists.

"The results highlighted a number of important findings for biodiversity management and provided an enormous amount of new information about the area's ecosystems," she said.

"In addition to species extinctions, all remaining remnants of many valley-floor wetland, shrubland and woodland communities could disappear because of salinisation."

Dr Edwards said the survey confirmed the importance of the region as a centre of species richness despite the level of threat posed by salinity and the high degree of habitat fragmentation.

"Twenty-five new invertebrate species and six new plants were found during the survey, and many more species are awaiting scientific description, including a new family of crustaceans," she said.

"Overall, some 30 per cent of aquatic and 50 per cent of terrestrial invertebrate species found have not been formally described by science, indicating the significant knowledge gaps that remain about our biodiversity."

Dr Edwards congratulated the team of people who carried out the survey and in particular CALM's Greg Keighery, Stuart Halse and Norm McKenzie who coordinated the project.



Environment and Science Minister Dr Judy Edwards was pictured at the book launch with (from left) CALM Principal Research Scientist Stuart Halse, CALM Executive Director Keiran McNamara, WA Museum Scientist Mark Harvey, CALM Principal Research Scientist Greg Keighery and CALM Principal Research Scientist Norm McKenzie. Photo - Rhianna Mooney

## Whale rescue success in Busselton



One of the 350 volunteers helps to stabilise one of the stranded whales. Photo - CALM

The emotional bonding between people and whales was on show when more than 350 community members helped to rescue a pod of beached pilot whales this month.

More than 60 CALM staff were involved in the rescue, with the enthusiastic support of students, tourists and people of all ages and professions.

The saga began on Sunday, 3 April when 19 whales beached themselves at several locations along a 20km section of the Busselton beach between Siesta Park and Peppermint Grove Beach.

Unfortunately four of the whales were already dead when discovered on the beach.

CALM immediately activated an Incident Management Team to provide a coordinated and integrated approach to managing the rescue.

### Initial strategy

"The initial strategy was to provide care to the stranded whales, which were kept wet and upright, before moving them to a holding pen between the Port Geographe groynes during the night," CALM Planning Officer, Mark Pittavino, said.

"Shark nets were placed across the groynes to let them rest inside, enabling vets to check their condition and inject antibiotics and vitamins to assist in their survival before being escorted into open waters the next day."

### Volunteers

Volunteers who heard about the stranding poured down to the beach to don wetsuits supplied by CALM and a local dive shop, working through the night to move the whales to the temporary holding pen at Port Geographe.

"Pilot whales are very social and pod-based. If they were pushed back out to sea while a member was stranded and calling, they would all re-beach. We had to make sure we had them all together," said CALM Whale Rescue Incident Controller Greg Mair.

CALM staff, volunteers and boat owners guided the pod of long-finned pilot whales out to sea on Monday, 4 April after working tirelessly to nurse the surviving whales and ensure their well being.

"Volunteers from many local communities and Perth braved cold conditions to stabilise the whales and consolidate the pod in preparation for a release," he said.

"As soon as veterinary staff and CALM wildlife officers were confident that the whales were strong enough to make the journey, they were guided out to deep water under the supervision of CALM wildlife officers and with the assistance of local boat owners.

Continued page 5...



A father and son volunteer team with a whale. Photo - CALM



# Working Together

Many CALM staff will have heard the comment that "we shouldn't create more national parks and nature reserves, because CALM can't look after what they've got now". That sentiment is often linked with the idea that more reserves aren't needed because of increasing commitment to conservation on private lands.

The fact is that currently WA's system of parks and reserves covers 7% of the State, compared with a worldwide average figure of nearly 12% and a benchmark minimum figure of 15% proposed by scientists to meet the nationally agreed objective of having a reserve system that is comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR).

The formal system of parks and reserves is the cornerstone of protecting biodiversity and landscapes. It is characterised by legal security and protection against damaging activities; public ownership and associated accountability; community input into management planning; public access for nature appreciation, recreation and tourism; capacity for indigenous community involvement and joint management; and professional management expertise.

Private land conservation is crucially important and fully supported by CALM as complementary to the formal conservation reserve system.

Our role is to continue to promote the values of a formal system of public parks and reserves that meets CAR criteria, while at the same time encouraging and supporting conservation efforts on other lands, and promoting integration of efforts across land tenure boundaries at landscape and regional scales.

As for "looking after what we've got", there is very significant Government expenditure through CALM although there are of course many things we would like to do better. Nevertheless, formal reservation and the legal protection it provides, even with a low level of management, is a real advance from a conservation viewpoint, and one that can be built on in the future. Recent years have seen, for example, significant extra resourcing of fire management in parks and reserves, as well as visitor facilities. The history of national parks and other conservation reserves is generally that resourcing improves over time, as these areas are increasingly valued for tourism and recreation.

We should be thankful that our forebears who established the first (John Forrest National Park) of our 96 national parks did not subscribe to the sentiments being expressed in some quarters now.

Keiran McNamara, Executive Director



# Salty loose in Lily Creek



District Wildlife Officer Brad Rushforth (left) and Ranger Ross McGill install a trap at the top of Lake Kununurra, near the Argyle Dam wall. Photo - CALM

**Kununurra staff are scouring Lily Creek Lagoon looking for a saltwater crocodile accidentally released into the water by local police.**

Saltwater crocodiles will attack people, although this one is small (1.8 metres).

However, finding it among the thousands of its much less aggressive fish and bird-eating freshwater cousins at Lily Creek is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

The saltwater crocodile was being transported to the Wyndham crocodile farm in mid March. The man transporting it ran out of time to get it to Wyndham and trussed it up in a friend's laundry until the morning.

By Sue McKenna

The young man's friend forgot to leave a note for his mother that there was a crocodile in the laundry. She returned from a week's holiday to find it writhing beside the washing machine.

In panic she called 000. The police arrived, decided it was a freshwater crocodile after consultation with a local, and released it into Lily Creek Lagoon near a caravan park and public boat ramp.

The error was realised five days later when CALM's District Wildlife Officer Brad Rushforth was called to the local Police Station to have a look at some photographs.

Once its true identity was revealed, Brad's mission was to recapture the crocodiles.

But alas - weeks of setting crocodile traps and searching Lily Lagoon for the lone salty croc have been unsuccessful so far and the croc still roams the lagoon.

The salty isn't considered dangerous to adults but might try to take children and dogs, so warnings have been issued.

Brad carried out five spotlighting patrols and put crocodile traps in several locations to catch it, to no avail.

He guest-starred in plenty of radio and newspaper interviews where the fate of the salty was splashed across the news pages and airwaves.

"We'll catch it one day, but it may have grown a bit bigger before we do, or someone may see it and we'll go out," he said.

In the meantime his next job is to remove another three-metre salty from the Argyle Dam wall.

"That one has just been spotted but has probably been there for years. At least we know where he is and he'll be relatively easy to catch!" Brad said.

## Conservation News April 2005

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# Meagan's back on board

By Rhianna Mooney

**Meagan O'Connor couldn't wait to get back to work after she sustained injuries in the Perth Hills fire. Five weeks after the incident, she was back on board.**

Meagan, a Conservation Employee, joined the team at Jurien in December last year. Before that, she'd worked seasonally for CALM in Kalbarri.

She was involved in the Perth Hills fire suppression operations but was hit by a falling tree branch and sustained serious bruising to her back and neck.

She was taken to hospital and underwent intensive physiotherapy.

Director of Regional Services, Alan Walker, said Meagan's determination to get back to work was outstanding.

"She demonstrated great courage and resilience and it's fantastic to see her back at work," he said.

Meagan said she was put on light office duties when she first returned but she had now resumed her normal duties.

"The local staff in the office were great, but I couldn't wait to get out into the field again," she said.

"I received so much support from all the



Meagan O'Connor back at work. Photo - Rhianna Mooney

local staff and other people within CALM.

"It was fantastic to have so many people looking out for me."

Meagan said she also owed a special thanks to those who helped her on the night of the accident, the first aiders and other crew members.

"I know there were a lot more people involved in my rescue and recovery that were in the background," she said.

"I have no idea who these people were, but I would like to send a special thank you to them as well."

Meagan said since December she had learnt a lot being out in the field.

"We do work in parks and visitor services, nature conservation and fire," she said.

"There are heaps of opportunities to use the skills we develop and I'm hoping this position will be a stepping stone to move on to other things.

"But, in the meantime, I am looking forward to continue working with Overseer Matt Dadd and Conservation Employees Peter Holland and Emma Clingan. We're a close knit team."

# Wild horses moved from Goldfields rangelands

**Wild horses are being removed from Earahedy Station, 200 km north-east of Wiluna, with CALM's blessing.**

The former pastoral station was acquired by CALM under the Gascoyne Murchison Strategy in 1999 to add to the network of conservation lands across Australia.

Although the domestic stock was removed, the brumbies continued to run in herds across the rangelands.

The horses - which had been introduced to the area in the 1920s and selectively bred from by local

By Tracy Peacock

identity Fred Pope until the 1950s - are being removed as part of CALM's feral animal control program on the area now managed for conservation.

CALM Goldfields Regional Manager Ian Kealley said during March, 11 wild horses were captured by a volunteer team led by veterinarians Sheila Greenwell and Paul Wynne-Houchin. The horses were relocated to the south-west for a breeding program.

Sheila said the horses captured from Earahedy were trucked to Margaret River where they will be domesticated during May then presented to the public at an open day on 28 May.

"We intend to DNA type the horses and if they prove to be genetically similar may attempt to register them as a breed."

Ian said a destocking and decommissioning process had started on the 321,500 ha former pastoral station in 1999.

"The plan is to make Earahedy a

conservation park and to do so we need to get rid of feral animals from the station, as they are incompatible with nature conservation," he said.

Feral animals on the station included camels, cattle, horses, donkeys, cats, foxes and dogs.

"We've given approval for the volunteer team to capture another group of wild horses over the next couple of months," he said. "The opportunity exists now as the horses are watering on limited remaining waters at the end of a long, hot and dry summer."

"Essentially, we're putting our feral animal control program on hold for a while until they can go back and trap more of the wild horses that the locals and horse-loving community wanted to see conserved."

"It's really been a 'win-win' situation for both parties - CALM has had feral animals removed from the former station and the others are getting these special wild horses for a breeding program and preservation of a gene pool."



Twenty years ago this month. . . April 1985



# CALM News

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## NINGALOO REEF PARK

## GETS THE GO-AHEAD



● Premier Brian Burke talking to the Department's General Manager Roger Underwood about the development of the Ningaloo Reef Marine Park.

THE Ningaloo Reef is to become WA's first marine park.

The Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, recently announced that the development and management of the marine park had been endorsed as a joint Commonwealth-State venture under the Bicentennial Commemorative Programme.

Mr Hawke announced six Bicentennial projects for Cape near Exmouth south to Amherst Point, about 260km.

They are part of an Australia-wide programme to mark the 200th year of European settlement in Australia in 1988.

Responsibility for the Marine Park will be vested in the Department of Conservation and Land Management once the area has been declared a national park.

Management objectives for the park include the conservation, monitoring and restoration of the natural environment, and the planning and control of recreational development so that the area is protected and available to the public.

The marine section covers an area of about 5000sq km while the on-shore part of the proposed National Park covers about 35,000ha.

The proposed park extends from the North West

The Ningaloo Reef supports a diversity of marine life comparable to other major coral reef systems around the world.

It is an important habitat for marine mammals, particularly whales.

As well as the richness of its coral cover and diversity of its tropical fish, a major attraction of the Ningaloo Reef is its close proximity to the shore.

This stretch of coastline has long been popular with fishermen and in recent years the number of tourists visiting the area has steadily increased.

The Minister for Conservation and Land Management, Mr Davies, has approved a study tour of the Great Barrier Reef Marine National Park by Colin Sanders and National Park Ranger George Duxbury, who is currently based at Exmouth.

## Unusual banksia found

AN unusual banksia, thought to be a new species, has been discovered near Arthur River.

The plant, which looks like a parrot bush when not in flower, blooms for a few weeks in late spring.

It was found by Ken Wallace, of Katanning, a reserve management officer with the Department.

It is known in only one locality and is believed to be sensitive to fire.

Work on the survey, which will be used to compile an atlas to record all Australia's banksia species, began last year and will end in February 1987.

The co-ordinator, Anne Taylor, of the department's wildlife section, said yesterday that about 700 people across Australia were taking part.

More than 400 people were recording in WA, where most of the banksias were found.

## Protection plan for rare species

A MAJOR initiative proposed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management is expected to facilitate the erection of fences around populations of gazetted rare plants of the wheatbelt.

Recent regeneration successes have occurred where critically small populations have been protected from stock, and the practice is to be encouraged.

The two most striking examples are the Mogumber bell (*Darwinia carnea*) and the Wongan triggerplant (*Stylidium coroniforme*).

By 1980, these species had declined to very small populations in unprotected remnants of bush on farms.

In both cases, strong seedling regeneration has occurred following the erection of stock proof fences around the adult plants.

At present 132 plant taxa are gazetted as rare flora under the Wildlife Conservation Act, and the majority occur in wheat growing districts of the State.

Under the Act, no person is permitted to damage or destroy gazetted rare flora on any land (Crown or private) without first obtaining a written permit from the Minister for Conservation and Land Management.

This enables the Minister to monitor the status of rare flora and helps prevent the destruction of rare plants in ignorance.

In practice, the work is achieved by research staff and wildlife officers searching for the plants.

Their results are communicated to flora administration staff who determine land ownership and prepare relevant letters.

The wildlife officers then deliver this information to landowners in person so that effective means of protection can be discussed.

While the overwhelming majority of land owners have expressed an interest in conserving rare flora many have been faced with the prospect of having to fence off plants at their own cost.

Most hold the view that the Government should provide some assistance with this task. However, the resources allocated to the fencing project will not be enough to protect all deserving populations so an important step in the immediate future will be to determine priorities.

## Public Interest

MORE than 1200 public submissions on the proposed management of the Shannon Forest and D'Entrecasteaux National Park have been lodged.

One submission from the Pemberton Apex Club contains more than 4000 signatures and another submission features a video presentation.

Most of the contributions were from local residents, although their numbers were almost matched by metropolitan submissions and a few were received from the Eastern States.

There was one submission from South Africa. The Departments of Forests and National Parks prepared an interim report on the South-West forest area several months ago and called for submissions by the end of March.

CALM's Executive Director Dr Syd Shea is delighted with the public interest.

"Once the submissions have been analysed, a draft of the area's complete management plan will be prepared for final public comment," he said.



● Phil Smith, MLA, congratulates John Carter on his achievement.

## RANGERS GRADUATE

THE last graduation ceremony for Forest Rangers was held at Bunbury on April 12.

In attendance were Philip Smith, MLA, Graham MacKinnon, MLC, David Smith, MLA and CALM's Executive Director Dr Syd Shea.

Thirteen Forest Rangers, who completed their training in December 1984 under the Forests Department's two-year cadet scheme, graduated.

Deputising for the Minister of Conservation and Environment, Philip Smith presented the cadets with their awards.

The Keyne's Memorial Prize for the cadet showing the greatest merit in all aspects of the course was awarded to John Carter.

The Conservator's Prize for the cadet demonstrating all round ability throughout the course, was won by Stephen Davis.

At the ceremony the former Acting Conservator of Forests, Pat McNamara, made special mention of Frank Pridham's contribution to cadet training.

The cadets were also highly commended for their two-year accident free record.

SCHOOL HISTORY Page 4



**FROM MY DESK**



Older members of the Department who have read "The Wind in the Willows" will appreciate why the Matilda Bay headquarters has been tagged "Toad Hall" and (somewhat unkindly) I am being referred to as "Ratty".

Often a humorous comment contains a serious message, and there is a message in this joke which is very important.

The success of this Department will depend on many factors, but one of the most critical will be how successful the policy group interacts with the Operational, Services and Administrative wings of the Department.

Roger Underwood and I are determined that a gap will not develop between the policy and implementation group.

An understanding of the functions of the four policy directors and how they will operate in the Department will, I believe, minimize the development of a "them and us" attitude.

The policy directors have four broad functions. Firstly they will be a focal point of public contact for the policy area they represent.

Secondly, they have a corporate function as members of the senior policy group of the Department. In other words they, with Roger Underwood and myself, will be responsible for deciding major departmental policy.

Thirdly, they will have a roving commission to monitor policy implementation throughout the Department, and they will be responsible for co-ordinating major policy initiatives.

For example, Barry Wilson has overall responsibility for implementing the Ningaloo Marine Park proposal; Peter Hewett is co-ordinating the pine-agroforestry leasing scheme; and Chris Haynes has taken over responsibility for organising the initiation of the Aboriginal National Park ranger scheme.

Joe Havel is the only policy director who has "line" responsibility.

He directs the research, planning and economics sections of the Department.

One of his principal functions, in addition to his managerial role, is to ensure the flow of technical information into the policy group.

The fourth function of the directors is one that offers the most potential for innovative and dynamic policy formulation and implementation, but it also could cause administrative problems.

There is nothing more frustrating to a Manager than to have interference in the operation of his section by senior staff communicating with staff under his

Tolerance is required on both sides for the work.

Although Policy Directors will have access to in the Department, the management response those staff will be advised whenever contact is made, and no Director will make a change in administrative arrangement without referral to agreement with the Policy Group.

All administrative instructions will be made General Manager.

Communication is a two-way process.

It is important that, as well as the Policy Director moving throughout the Department to discuss issues, all staff should visit the Policy Group at da Bay whenever the opportunity arises.

If you have an idea or complaint, here is one which you can have it considered. SYD

**SEC WINDMILL TO POWER CAPE ARID**

**THE ranger's residence at the Cape Arid National Park on WA's south coast is to become CALM's first wind powered dwelling.**

Under a State Energy Commission remote area power supply project, the cottage's power supply will be converted to a wind turbine system with the diesel generator as a back up.

The cost of installing the two kilowatt windmill is less than a quarter of the cost of extending the power main to Cape Arid.

The electricity generated by the wind turbine is stored in batteries and on full charge the batteries will last for up to five days.

Currently the diesel generator is run for 10 hours a day and causes noise and refrigeration problems.

The use of a wind generator at Cape Arid was suggested by Rangers who have lived at the site and know the wind frequency.

Besides the availability of electricity 24 hours a day, other benefits include the reduced cost and the impact overhead lines have on the landscape.

The windmill's performance will be closely monitored and the benefits of installing these turbines

**NEWS FROM THE REGIONS**

at other CALM locations considered.

Investigations are also being made into the possible use of oil flushed toilets in National Parks where there is a water shortage, poor leaching or water catchment restrictions reduce the efficiency or exclude the use of septic tanks or leach drains.

Solar panels provide the power to recirculate the oil.

The technique has been used successfully in the Rocky Mountain National Park.



South Coast Region staff members got together at Esperance recently. Those who attended are: (from left, back row) Ian Solomon (Cape Le Grand), Chris Hunt (Cape Arid), Klaus Tiedemann, John Watson, and Steve Strachan (Stokes). (Front row) Trevor Smith (Mobile Ranger), Jim Smith (Fitzgerald River), and Richard Pemberton (Mobile Ranger).

**Safety update on Sth coast**

**A MAJOR upgrading of rescue equipment is currently under way in the South Coast Region.**

And Rangers in the regions were recently involved in exercises at Esperance to practise cliff rescue techniques.

This follows acting Regional Manager, John Watson's recent study tour of visitor safety programmes and rescue techniques in the US and Canada.

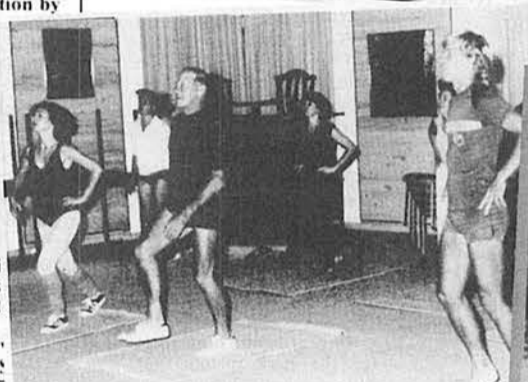
John undertook this study on a Churchill Fellowship.

He said he believed the upgrading of

equipment and rescue techniques was timely because of the increase in adventure activities throughout the region which encompasses the State's most serious rock climbing areas — West Cape Howe, Porongurup Range, Stirling Range, and Peak Charles.

As part of the programme to upgrade facilities, a search and rescue workshop seminar will be held in Albany by the Regional Calm office and the Regional SES coordinator.

The workshop will concentrate on mountain rescue procedures and technique and will include workouts with several types of stretchers.



• Keeping active in body and mind has been beneficial and the lunchtime aerobic exercises at HQ are popular with staff interested in maintaining quality of life. These sessions are held in the Como Theatre between 12.30 and 1.15pm on Monday, Wednesday. All newcomers welcome.



**Ranger seminar**

CALM's National Park Rangers gathered in Perth earlier this month for a two-day conference.

Only emergency staff remained in the field while the 72-strong group, administration staff and supervisors were introduced to CALM's management.

For many, the gathering provided a

chance to meet old friends.

Pictured enjoying the social occasion are (from left) Ric France (Yanchep), Ron Davis (Yanchep), Karl Mucjanko (D'Entrecasteaux), Trevor Anderson — mobile (Cape Arid) and Terry Harnington (Yanchep), Martin Lloyd (Fitzgerald River) squeezed in front.

**GREENING PLAN TAKES SHOOT**

**LIKE a well cared for seedling, the Greening Australia organization has grown rapidly in its first years.**

Originally an offshoot of Bicentenary proposals from NSW and the Australian Year of the Tree (1983), the idea has spread to all states.

In WA this year funding exceeds \$80,000 and the money is being spent on a variety of projects including advisory publications and tree planting projects.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management is represented on the policy committee by the Director of Forests, Peter Hewett.

According to Dr Geof Syme, the WA chairman,

the basic aims of the organization are:

• To increase the public awareness of the value of trees and other vegetation in the community.

• To encourage the retention and regeneration of native vegetation.

• To encourage both rural and urban planting of trees and shrubs as part of the National Tree Programme for Australia's Bicentenary.

• To provide information to all levels of Government, to the public of all ages and to organizations about the establish-

ment and the care of trees and shrubs.

• To assess and make recommendations on tree projects of local Government, community groups and individuals, including applications for the financial assistance of projects and, to this end, seek and accept funds from appropriate sources, whether Government or private.

Western Australia's income includes an ongoing Federal grant (\$25,000), a State grant (\$25,000), wages for part time employees, office facilities, private dona-

Most important projects this year include suburban tree establishment programmes in Melville and Belmont, the continued upgrading of the Milvu Nature Reserve, and the publication of an urban guide for gardens and wildlife.

In the rural scene, the organization is assisting the Wickepin Soil Conservation District with the desalination of Lake Toolibin, and has published a small brochure explaining tax concessions for farmers planting trees.

ations and a special State award of \$20,000 for the funding of specific projects such as the John Tonkin Tree Award.

A comprehensive "Manual of Community Participation" is also being produced.

**Social News**

A highly successful social gathering was held at Operations Headquarters on Friday, April 19.

The first function since amalgamation, the event was appropriately billed as a CALM-DOWNER, and gave everybody at Como a chance to meet and socialize.

The president of the old Forests Department Social Club, Drew Griffiths made the most of the opportunity to encourage new staff to join.

Now simply referred to as the Social Club, the existing constitution will be amended at the Annual General Meeting in July.

Membership of the club is voluntary and the deduction of \$1.00 from each pay is used to subsidize all functions.

The Club's present committee is:

Cheryl Watters (secretary); Debbie Greaves (treasurer); Ian Frame (vice president); Ian Kay (member); Stella Bickmore (member); Phil Davies (member); and Gary Robinson (member).

CALM News is the Department of Conservation and Land Management's new monthly staff newspaper. We hope you will become involved in its publication by sending articles (up to 400 words), letters, photographs (with captions), minutes from meetings and items of interest to: Address to Ian Kay, Editor, CALM News, Department Conservation and Land Management, Como WA 6152 — or phone HQ OHQ ext 328.



• Scott Samuels says farewell.

Scott Samuels of Mapping Branch resigned and left on April 18 for an extended overseas holiday. He plans to see how the other 99.9 percent live but promises to be back in Perth for the America's Cup Challenge. One of Scott's loves is — you've guessed it — yachting. Bon Voyage Scott.

Larne and Paul Marsh (Yanchep) are the proud parents of twin girls. Sharon and Michelle arrived just before the new Department and are now well settled in at home with sister Sarah (6) and brother Michael (4).



# Whale rescue success in Busselton

Continued from page 1...

"During this time, two whales split from the pod and headed further out to sea to deep water beyond Cape Naturaliste. It is possible that the two whales may have aided the rescue operations by encouraging the main pod to continue moving further out to open waters," he said.

Rescuers on the escorting boats reported that the whales were initially tentative about the move, but as they got offshore and felt the cooler deeper waters, they became animated and started to exhibit normal whale behaviour with deep diving and lively, exuberant swimming.

Aerial surveillance was maintained to monitor the progress of the pod until wildlife officers were confident that the whales would not return to the beaches of Geographe Bay.

Volunteers signed up to take part in the rescue and were closely monitored by a CALM safety officer to ensure that the general safety needs of volunteers and CALM staff were being met and that they did not suffer from hypothermia. Other CALM staff, the SES and volunteers prepared meals and hot drinks for those in the water.

"It was a massive undertaking and CALM appreciates the assistance and support of all involved, with special thanks to the boat owners," Greg said.

CALM's South West Regional Manager, Bob Chandler, said staff had operated brilliantly and that the attention to details was extraordinary.

"Wetsuits, fire braziers, shark nets and



Donny Adams, of CALM (left) and a volunteer comfort one of the whales. Photo - CALM

other items were sourced from unfamiliar sources in an efficient manner.

"The Wildlife Branch really made a difference with their knowledgeable support and confident advice and operational input, but the real heroes were the volunteers who came forward in numbers and endured some unpleasant conditions in the water," Bob said.

Mark said that autopsies were carried out on the dead whales while other whales were measured, weighed, sexed and had DNA samples taken to increase our understanding of the species.

"CALM is investigating opportunities to use the carcasses for display, educational and scientific purposes," he said.

## Basketball star joins CALM on whale rescue mission

Famous basketballer Luc Longley joined CALM's Senior Wildlife Officer Doug Coughran and his team in a recent whale rescue near Albany.

While most people celebrated the Easter break with their families, the team spent four days trying to locate and dislodge fishing gear from a southern right whale's mouth.

In a bitter disappointment for everyone after an extensive disentanglement attempt, the nine-metre whale swam away with a heavy 20m rope, a deflated white buoy and four loops of heavy braided green rope still streaming from its mouth.

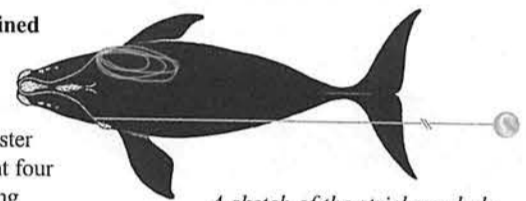
"Because of this complicated entanglement, it won't survive and I'm not convinced that there wasn't more rope inside its mouth," Doug said after the operation.

Joined by seven CALM staff - Wildlife Officers Rick Dawson, Nick Philips, Swan Regional Marine staff John Edwards, Ben Tannock, Chris Mather, Peter Collins from CALM's Albany office and William Bay National Park Ranger Hardy Derschow - Doug led the rescue mission that started on Good Friday when salmon fishermen reported seeing the whale off Betty's Beach near Albany. It had also been spotted near Bald Island the previous day.

A CALM fire spotter plane sent to find the whale resighted it at the Gap, a tourist spot on one of the coast's most treacherous sections.

The team travelled by road, towing a trailer and two inflatable craft. Supported by basketball star Luc Longley and friend Francis in a seven-metre boat, the team set out into a rare south coast low swell for the disentanglement.

"Using two boats in an attempt to confuse the whale and attach a control line to the tangled fishing gear caused the whale to



A sketch of the stricken whale.

By Sue McKenna

slow down and almost stop several times.

"However, the entanglement gear was so thick and heavy that all our grapple designs couldn't jam on the thick rope..."

Unfortunately, while we landed great grapple attempts, they all bounced off the gear, slid along and then dropped off or simply fell off whenever the whale stopped and turned," Doug said.

"Cutting through the entanglement was never going to be the case. Because the whale dodged, weaved and hid, we were never going to have enough time to even tidy the entanglement up, let alone completely disentangle it."

Doug said the team was unable to dislodge the gear and pull it from the whale's mouth.

He said the fishing gear was probably picked up in international waters, causing the whale to arrive in the Southern Ocean six to eight weeks earlier than expected.

"This animal was small, and perhaps the first year away from its mother," Doug said.

He added although the operation had not succeeded on this occasion, the team had learned much about whale behaviour and will be designing special equipment to deal with this type of heavy fishing gear in the future.

"Let's hope there will be a second opportunity to disentangle this whale," Doug said.



CALM Wildlife Officer Kevin Morrison (second from right) takes a whale's measurements. Photo - CALM

## Getting into hot water...

CALM Project Officer Tammie Reid knows all about hot water. In fact, she was in hot water during the Busselton whale rescue.

"Towards the end of the night at about 4.30am we were on the beach, feeling very cold, when one of the volunteers made a joke about wanting hot water in his booties.

"We started putting the kettles on and putting warm water in the booties, and soon the kettles were going non-stop," she said.

Tammie's efforts at letting the media, volunteers and the public know what was going on was tremendous. Working alongside fellow Information Services Officer Neil Taylor (the veteran whale rescue media frontman), the dynamic duo won accolades from the community and the media for their assistance.

"As you walked onto the main operations point there was a tent with a large information wall that contained the media releases, background information on the whales and updated action plans," South West Regional Manager, Bob Chandler, said.

"The attention to detail was remarkable, with Tammie re-orientating the whole display for better night time viewing under

the flood lights and a staged interception of visitors, spectators and volunteers.

"It was very simple 'technology' but exceptionally effective. Even the media members had their own tent for camera operations and to climb into wetsuits. They appreciated it, and said so," Bob said.

Tammie said that at the onset of the incident she did not expect the volunteers would have to work through the night.

"When it was clear we were going into a night shift, we put out a call for volunteers over the radio, and at a local concert, because people had been in the water for up to eight hours already... We were inundated with young people arriving in their wetsuits at 1am.

"We had a huge age range of volunteers, beach hosts and others," she said.

"A member of the Busselton community group, West Whales, organised the beach rosters so volunteers were in the water with the whales for 20 minutes, then out for an hour.

"The volunteers even named the whales. One was called Ursula until a wildlife officer pointed out that it was a male, and then it was renamed Moby Dick!"



Some of our 350 volunteers, nursing a whale on Day One of the operation. Photo - CALM



## Threatened animals showcased in new book

By Rhianna Mooney

A new book, *Threatened animals of Western Australia*, by Andrew Burbidge was launched last month, adding to the knowledge of the State's threatened animal species.

The book, which boasts a description of each species and, in many cases, an illustration or photograph, has already sold more than 700 copies since it was printed in December last year.

CALM Executive Director, Keiran McNamara, who co-authored Chapter 11 – titled 'A vision for the future' – said during the past century, at least 18 species of native WA animals and 14 species of native WA plants had become extinct.

"Today, some 199 animals and 362 plants are formally listed as threatened with extinction, and we know from biological surveys and other work that those figures will grow significantly," he said.

"One of the key requirements for any planning or management action to conserve biodiversity is knowledge," he said.

"And that's where Andrew's book, *Threatened animals of Western Australia*, is such an important addition to conservation efforts in this State."

Keiran congratulated Andrew on his dedication and determination to bring the whole project together.

*Threatened animals of Western Australia* is available for \$32.95 from CALM's NatureBase online bookshop at [www.naturebase.net/bookshop](http://www.naturebase.net/bookshop) or by calling 9334 0333.



Eminent scientist Andrew Burbidge (left) at the launch of his book *Threatened animals of Western Australia* with the book's editor, Carolyn Thomson-Dans, and CALM's Executive Director and co-author of the final chapter, Keiran McNamara.

## South Coast threatened species project

WA's South Coast has been selected as one of three locations in Australia to explore the benefits and feasibility of a more integrated approach to threatened species recovery through a regional recovery plan.

The *Regional Recovery and Threat Abatement Plan for Threatened Species and Communities on the South Coast of Western Australia* project will be developed by South Coast Region staff assisted by a steering committee.

The steering committee has three partners: CALM, the South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team (SCRIPT) and the Australian Government Department of the Environment (AGDEH). The CALM project team consists of Alan Danks (Project Leader), Sarah Comer and Sandra Gilfillan.

Two steering committee meetings have been held. Sandra said a large number of threatened species occurring in the SCRIPT Region would be included in a broader 'recovery plan'.

With about 100 threatened and priority fauna and 840 threatened and priority flora to be considered, the project will take a strategic view and be underpinned by existing recovery plans.

Although integration is a key concept, there will still be single species recovery plans for species such as the Gilbert's potoroo, the western ground parrot and the noisy scrub-bird, which require specific recovery actions.

## Star letter

Fire staff in Walpole received a beautiful card from the Simpson family of Kent River, thanking them for their efforts in fighting local bushfires.

It reads:

"Here is a very small token in appreciation of a GREAT job done by CALM Walpole and units from other divisions.

"The time, effort and equipment used by CALM to control fires in the Irwin Inlet and Kent River area to save our house, farm and of course a number of horses in the Kent sub-division was FANTASTIC.

"The Simpson family is forever in your debt! Thanks again."

Harry

## Conservation briefs

### Flora symposium

A flora conservation symposium hosted by CALM will be held at Technology Park from October 25 to 27.

There will be presentations by a number of national and international speakers. For more information contact David Coates at the Science Division by emailing [floras@calm.wa.gov.au](mailto:floras@calm.wa.gov.au). The symposium proceedings will be published as a special addition of the *Australian Journal of Botany*.

### Research award for Kelly

Former Shark Bay World Heritage community education coordinator, Kelly Chapman, has

received a research award from Edith Cowan University for her thesis on sustainability as part of her Master of Environmental Science degree.

Kelly is now working on water catchment management project for Alberta Environment in Canada and has re-used her Shark Bay communications model to gather information and communicate with the public.

Although based in Canada now, Kelly hopes to return to WA in October, with the possibility of a new business venture concentrating on showing business and governments how to put sustainability options in place.

## Conservation employees' career development project



Pictured (left to right) at the AWU delegates' meeting at Kensington last month were Len Jarvis (Blackwood), Geoff Wilson (Blackwood), Dave Butcher (Donnelly), Brian O'Hehir (Project Officer), Graeme Winfield (Blackwood), Dene Cullen (Frankland), Tony Denhel (Swan), Brad Hasson (Perth Hills), Trevor Farmer (Perth Hills) and Brian Smith (Perth Hills).

On 30 July 2004, Corporate Executive approved a new Career Development Model (CDM) project for conservation employees. Its purpose is to provide a classification system that is based on national standards of competency, which will in turn provide employees and managers with tools to identify training needs and career development opportunities for all conservation employees within CALM.

The project has the full support of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) because the Union believes that an increased focus and resourcing for training is needed for this staff group within CALM. In addition, while career progression pathways are evident in other industrial awards, they are largely absent within the AWU Award currently operative within CALM.

Glen Anderton, President of the AWU said the process was not going to be a quick fix.

"It's a more in-depth development of the AWU career structure, which will assist current and future employees within CALM. Individuals will be able to undertake nationally accredited training as part of their development along a planned career path."

The project will run for approximately 18 months and is jointly funded by CALM's Regional Services and Corporate Services Divisions and has commenced with the appointment of a steering group to oversee the

project. The steering group includes representatives from Regional Services, Organisational Learning and Development, Fire Management Services, Employee Relations and the AWU. The first major task for the steering group has been completed with the appointment of the Project Officer, for an initial 12-month period. Brian O'Hehir was appointed to this position and commenced on 31/1/05.

Regional Services Director Alan Walker said that the project would commence with the matching of the current AWU Award-based competencies against national standards, followed by the identification of competency gaps and the steps required to address those gaps.

"This will involve job analysis, extensive consultation with the conservation employees group and negotiation with the AWU before the appropriate national competency is attributed to tasks," Alan said.

"Ultimately a modified IDAPES will support the CDM process, particularly with its requirement for annual assessments, which can then be used to identify training needs and appropriate development paths for conservation employees."

The project will be introduced through field visits from members of the Steering Committee, in order to inform employees of developments in the project and to encourage commitment to the process from all levels in the Department.

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

### Contract

Dianne Van De Plank, Acting Workforce Services Officer, People Services Branch, Kensington; Andrew Taylor, Resources Assistant, Forest Management Branch, Manjimup; Brad Rowe, Ranger, Pilbara Region, Karratha; Lucy Mulcahy, Resource Assistant, Forest Management Branch, Bunbury; Luke Bentley, Trainee Wildlife Officer, Wildlife Protection Branch, Kensington; Brooke Dellacqua, Officer, People Services Branch, Kensington; Melissa Danks, Project Officer, Albany; Michelle Humphreys, Officer, WA Herbarium; Helen Moses, Project Officer, Kimberley Region; Christopher Doropoulos, Technical Officer, WA Herbarium; Rodney Patrick Sales, Programmer/Analyst, Radio Communications, Fire Management Services, Kensington; Emily Wilson, Project Officer, Pilbara Region, Exmouth; Amanda Broome, Resource Assistant, Forest Management Branch, Bunbury; John Dale, Technical Officer (Curation), WA Herbarium; Fiona Kirkpatrick, Field Officer, Regional Services, Busselton; Paul Leonard Bullock, Resource Assistant, Fire Management Branch, Manjimup; Sharon Ferguson, Field Officer

(Curriculum Writer), People Services Branch, Dwellingup; Renee Kelly Chapman, Clerical Trainee, Kununurra.

### Promotion

Natasha Oke, Fire Operations Officer, Swan Region, Kensington; Jacqui Maguire, Land Planning Officer, Swan Coastal District, Wanneroo; Ian Freeman, Nature Conservation Officer, Dwellingup District; Michelle Widmer, Rangelands Fire Management Planning Officer, Fire Management Services, Bunbury.

### Permanent

Anthony David Smith, Land Management Officer, Sustainable Forest Management Division, Perth and Bunbury; Susan Ajah-Subah, Project Officer, Forest Management Branch, Bunbury; Joy Bornatici, Fire Operations Officer, Fire Management Services, Warren Region, Manjimup; Craig Faulkner, Ranger, Regional Services, Pilbara Region, Millstream-Chichester National Park; Melissa Lever, Licensing Officer, Parks and Visitor Services, Kensington.

### Reclassification

Brad Commins, Operations Manager, Regional Services, Kirup Office, Blackwood District.

### Contract ceased

Kylie Connell, Administration Assistant, Radio Communications, Fire Management Services, Kensington.

### Resignation

Tim Willing, Conservation Officer, West Kimberley District, Broome; Sonya Stewart, Project Officer, Marine Conservation Branch, Fremantle; Karen Wheeler, Marine Conservation Officer, Marine Conservation Branch, Fremantle; Dwight Jolly, Customer Service Officer, Information Management Branch, Kensington; David Pearce, Records Officer, Wildlife Administration, Kensington; Patricia Ann Parker, Assistant Ranger, Millstream-Chichester National Park, Karratha; Wesley Manson, Recovery Catchment Officer, Geraldton.

### Temporary transfer

Vincent Fordham-Lamont, Conservation Estate Officer, Kensington.

### Transfer

Isaac Hatch, Ranger, Denham to Jurien Bay.

### Temporary deployment

Hayley Valentine, Environmental Officer, Corporate Executive to Karratha.