



Conservation News

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MAY 2005

Whale shark conservation on the agenda

DELEGATES to an international conference held in Perth this month have agreed that regional and international conservation measures are urgently needed to protect whale sharks.

More than 80 delegates from 23 countries attended the four-day conference.

Environment and Science Minister, Judy Edwards, and Executive Director, Keiran McNamara, both addressed the opening session of the conference.

Whale sharks are the world's biggest fish and their annual migration includes Ningaloo Marine Park off the North West Cape. Swimming with whale sharks at Ningaloo has grown into a \$12 million a year industry in little more than a decade, attracting visitors from around the world.

"CALM's management program, which includes the licensing of tour operators, is in place to ensure both the protection of whale sharks at Ningaloo and the sustainability of the tourism industry that depends on them," Keiran said.

"The Government's changes to extend the boundaries of Ningaloo Marine Park and increase its total area in 'no-take' sanctuary zones now places the park in the upper echelon of coral reef marine protected areas worldwide."

Dr Edwards told the conference that there was a real – and pressing – need to demonstrate that the value of a live whale shark was many times that of a dead one.

"The creation of the Ningaloo Marine Park is part of Western Australia's commitment to conserving the habitat and part of the migratory paths of whale sharks," she said.

"Whale sharks are protected under the State's Wildlife Conservation Act and the Australian Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. The species is also listed as vulnerable under the World Conservation Union's Red Book.

"Consequently, whale sharks are highly protected in Australian waters and there can be very heavy penalties for people who harm them in any way.

"Sadly, this is not necessarily the case in some other parts of the world."

The Minister said that in recognition of the

need for the conservation of Ningaloo, its ecosystems and, in particular, whale sharks, the State Government had committed \$5 million for scientific research.

The conference communiqué was released by Dr Edwards, who described it as a great milestone in terms of conserving the whale shark at its habitat.

She urged delegates to use the document in their home countries to raise awareness of the status of whale sharks and the threats they faced.

In particular, delegates should use the communiqué to increase the value of whale sharks for nature-based tourism as well as their value and role in marine ecosystems,

and to bring about an end to commercial hunting.

Dr Edwards said she would be forwarding the communiqué to Federal Environment and Heritage Minister, Senator Ian Campbell, who recently announced the formal adoption of a national recovery plan for whale sharks.

Determination sees a return to work

A deliberately-lit fire that burnt through 600 hectares of Yanchep National Park in January almost took Assistant Ranger Brad Johnson's life.

Brad's last memory before the accident was when he walked through the front doors of Yanchep Inn after lunch. He climbed into a small tractor to complete a backburn in the bush near Yanchep Inn when a 30-metre tuart tree damaged by the initial fire fell on him from behind.

Other workers found him but couldn't lift the tree from his neck. They had to wait for other machinery to lift the tree.

He suffered a split skull, a broken nose, a broken cheekbone, three shattered neck vertebrae, a shattered bone lower in his back and lungs filled with fluid.

Surgery followed and his spine is now held together with titanium rods. He spent several weeks at Royal Perth Hospital's Rehabilitation Unit at Shenton Park, learning to walk again, moving back with his parents afterwards.

"I'd just got my independence and suddenly it was taken away from me," Brad said.

The 17-year-old youth who lit the fire pleaded guilty to three counts of arson in the Perth Children's Court in April, and was sentenced to three years' jail on each count, to be served concurrently.

Brad's supervisor, Ranger Gerald Drummond, said: "We'd really like to bring that young man out here and have him work with us on a controlled burn, so he could see what it was like to be at the front line of a fire.

"We'd really like him to see the damage he's done – the wrecked ecosystems, some of



Brad Johnson back at work at Yanchep National Park. Photo – Sue McKenna

by Sue McKenna

which were more than 40 years old, as well as the burned bridges, trails and facilities, and see the total devastation of the bush."

Brad agreed. His avid footballing, surfing, golfing and tennis activities are halted for at least two years while specialists consider whether his back injuries are healed enough to give him the medical all-clear.

He returned to work at the end of March, taking up the light duties of supervising the public and park maintenance.

He cannot drive a CALM vehicle or operate machinery for four months because of his head injuries, but is determined to resume his firefighting role.

"I hope the young man convicted of arson learns that he doesn't need to put people through this stuff any more. I hope he learns from his mistakes," Brad said.



Marine park rangers, Greg Inglis and Lee Butcher, don their scuba gear to fix one of the marker buoys in the marine park. Photo – Rhianna Mooney

Managing ship to shore

by Rhianna Mooney

JURIEN Bay Marine Park's management has received a boost with the appointment of a new marine park ranger.

Greg Inglis, who until he took up the position at CALM worked as a ship master and ranger in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, joins Marine Park Coordinator, Kevin Crane, and Marine Park Ranger, Lee Butcher.

Greg brings 10 years' experience with him from his work in established marine parks.

"Greg has a great mix of skills that contributes to the marine park's management," Kevin said.

"He also has a background in commercial fishing and aquaculture, so he brings expertise in those fields as well as in conservation."

Greg said the move to WA was planned for a few years and he's settling in well at Jurien.

"There are lots of parallels between marine park management in Queensland and WA, it's just the environment that's different," Greg said.

Kevin said that the added team member helped increase CALM's presence in the marine park.

"It's important that we're out in the marine park undertaking our work as well as contacting and being seen by the public," he said.

"People are generally supportive of what we're doing and we're building good working relationships with many of the tour and commercial operators.

"We have an education and enforcement role, which includes contact with people on the water as well as on land."

Kevin said they had featured marine education displays at many community fairs, including the Blessing of the Fleet in November.

"And, so far, we've visited 10 regional schools and spoken to more than 1000 children," Kevin said.

Working Together

On 26 May the State Government budget for 2005/06 was announced.

A highlight for CALM is the allocation of funds to build a new Herbarium and related science facilities. The early planning and staff consultation already carried out will now intensify markedly. Our aim is to provide proper housing for the State's plant collection now and well into the future, as well as provide good facilities for those inside and outside the Department who study and use the collection. The project will also be a major step towards achieving our vision of bringing together CALM's workforce currently scattered across a variety of locations in Perth.

Other highlights in the budget are improved funding for fire management both in the south-west and across the State; increased funding for marine parks and reserves at Ningaloo, the Muirons, the Montebello/Barrow Islands area, the Rowley Shoals and Jurien Bay; and new funding to assist the Department carry out its roles in assessing major development proposals.

These initiatives will build on the gains made in last year's budget, such as in the areas of park facilities and roads, Indigenous joint management and implementation of the forest management plan. There will also continue to be an emphasis on achieving savings through improved whole-of-government purchasing practices.

In order to improve our delivery of conservation outcomes, we are also developing a new initiative based on temporary deployments of staff from the south-west of the State into other regions, with the aim of increasing our efforts in areas such as feral animal and weed control in regions where we have fewer staff.

Keiran McNamara, Executive Director



Gina's making new neighbours in Moora

AS the Good Neighbour Policy nears release, Flora Conservation Officer, Gina Broun, is developing her own working relationship with the Moora District community.

Gina said the Moora District contained many specimens of rare flora and it was important these populations were protected.

"Most of the landholders are really keen to protect the rare flora that occurs on their land," she said.

Gina said a Rare Flora Report Form would

by Rhianna Mooney

be filled out when they become aware that there was a rare species.

"The Rare Flora Report is processed through the system and then a letter from the Executive Director is personally delivered to the landholder outlining what's required in having a protected species," she said.

"When I deliver the letter, I take the time to meet with the landholders and explain that having a rare flora species on their land was not a threat.

"Then, if it's appropriate, changes to the land use will be made and fencing and other arrangements will be made to further protect the species."

Gina said surveys on the land might also follow.

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Leaders trek across regions



Participants at the Breakaway campsite.

THE Nature Conservation Leaders' recent half-yearly meeting took the form of a travelling transect across five sub-bioregions.

The week-long trip started in Albany, travelled along the south coast, then north through several conservation reserves and unallocated lands in the Goldfields and ended in Kalgoorlie.

It involved participants from Regional Services, Science and Nature Conservation Divisions and focused on a number of major management issues in the highly biodiverse South Coast and Goldfields Regions.

The group visited Porongurup National Park, Stirling Range National Park, Fitzgerald River National Park, Peak Charles National Park, the proposed Cave Hill Conservation Park, Bremer Range and the Johnston Lakes Complex (about 200 km south-west of Kalgoorlie).

"It's important that key nature conservation staff develop and gain an understanding of relevant cross-regional nature conservation issues

so that they can lead the way in providing innovative solutions and bringing about change," said Keith Claymore, A/Assistant Director, Nature Conservation.

"There's no better way to learn and appreciate the complexities of some conservation management problems, such as the effects of large scale unmanaged wildfires on biodiversity, than to see them first-hand.

"It's also important that staff gain an understanding of the different conditions of ecosystems and habitats, and how they respond to disturbance plus gain knowledge from one another."

Other specific issues discussed included Phytophthora dieback, threatened species recovery, weeds, managing wild dogs, integration of biodiversity into natural resource management and impacts of mining and exploration on significant flora and vegetation communities.

A report on the trip and key findings and recommendations are expected to be finalised in the next few weeks.

Success at Wagin's Woolorama

by Avril Baxter

WORKING with the community is a key to achieving many conservation outcomes in the Wheatbelt, which was demonstrated again at this year's Wagin Woolorama.

CALM staff from the Land for Wildlife and Roadside Conservation Committee (RCC) programs combined with Landcare staff from the Blackwood Basin, Birds Australia, Greening Australia, Green Skills and the South-West Catchment Council, to develop and staff the Landcare marquee.

As well as making useful contacts and passing on valuable messages to the big number of visitors, the group also managed to win the award for the best on-ground exhibitor.

The display theme was 'Cover up for Landcare' with the CALM component of the display focusing on the value of remnant vegetation and revegetation on farms and roadsides as habitat for native flora and fauna.

A major attraction for the display was Rennie, a Carnaby's black cockatoo which was hit by a car as a fledgling and has become part of CALM's derelict fauna program.

Her distinctive call could be heard across the showground and was part of a display highlighting the Birds Australia-Carnaby's Black Cockatoo Recovery Project which was coordinated by Project Officer, Leonie McMahon.

Land for Wildlife Officer, Avril Baxter, said working closely with the local Landcare project officers and the community was very important in the Wheatbelt and other remote areas.

"Woolorama not only allowed us to get our messages out to the general community, but also gave CALM staff the opportunity to strengthen our relationships with the other natural resource managers who participated in making the Landcare marquee a great success," she said.

Other CALM staff involved in the Woolorama success were Executive Officer RCC, Cressida Wilson, Technical Officer RCC, Kate Jackson, and Katanning District Nature Conservation Officer, Carl Beck.

Twenty years ago this month... May 1985

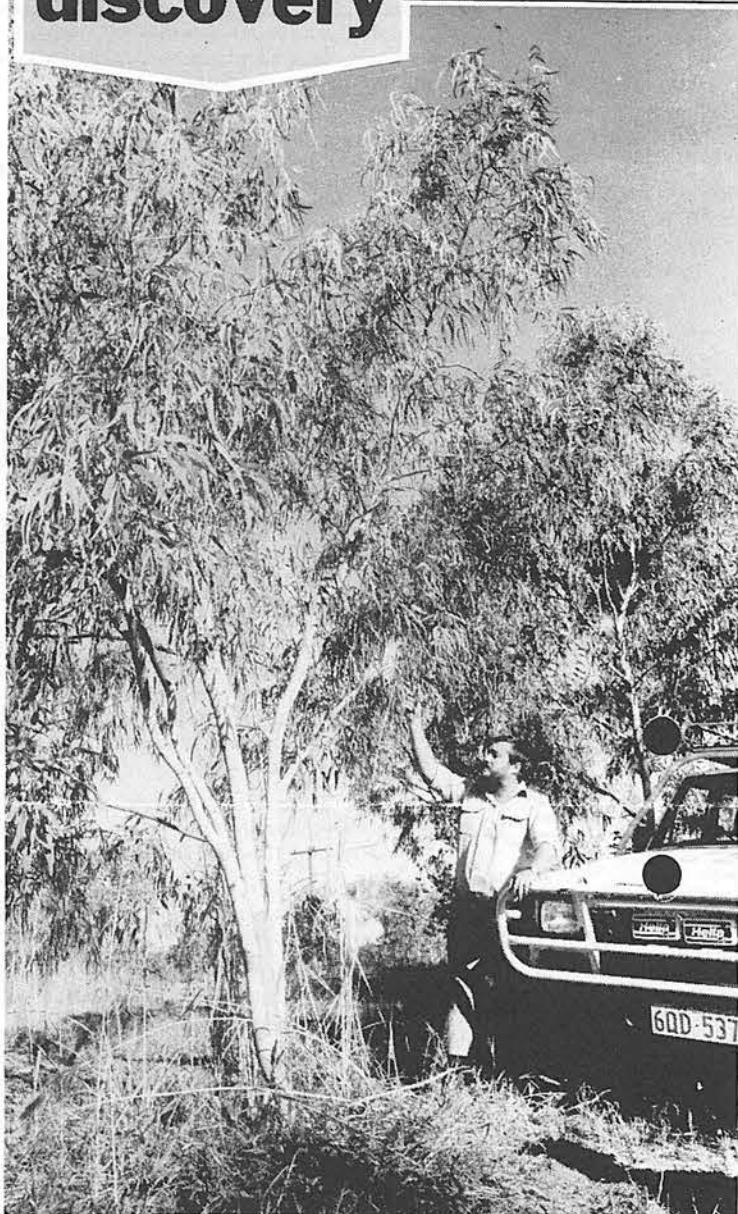


CALM News

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Eucalypt discovery



● Forester David Rose looks at a Halls Creek gum tree at the arboretum. (Photo: courtesy WA Newspapers Ltd)

Kimberley species catalogued

CALM officers in the North West have discovered several new eucalypts while cataloguing the Kimberley's flora.

They are also developing an arboretum for visitors and residents to look at various Kimberley and other exotic species.

About five hectares of the arboretum has been developed, and more than 70 species are represented.

The Department's acting regional manager, Chris Done, said that the arboretum was set up as an educational nursery.

"We wanted to show as many types of trees as we could to townspeople and tourists," he said.

"But we're learning at

the same time about how to grow them."

Chris said that at least three eucalypt species in the arboretum had not yet been named.

He believed that a eucalypt from the northern Kimberleys not yet in the arboretum had not previously been seen.

Chris said that the tree was distinctive, and he believed that it had good potential as a garden shrub or small tree.

Many of the new eucalypts were discovered on seed-gathering and cataloguing expeditions.

Pine Planting Schemes Under Review

THE DEPARTMENT of Conservation and Land Management is currently considering a number of schemes to encourage the further planting of pines on private land in the Manjimup region.

Two of the schemes are joint private landowner and State Government forestry ventures, and private forestry and agroforestry ventures.

The joint ventures will guarantee each landowner an annual income and a share of the profits when the crop is harvested.

The economic returns are far more attractive than returns currently earned by many South West farmers involved in livestock activities.

Pine planting will also give land owners the opportunity to use funds currently invested in livestock elsewhere.

As an added incentive the management of the pines will be carried out by CALM and employment opportunities will be provided for the land owner to work on the plantation.

The scheme also has important conservation, social and economic implications for the Manjimup region.

In particular, pines can help preserve the State's valuable hardwood forests.

While hardwood takes up to 200 years to mature, radiata pine is a fast growing, short rotation crop that can be used for many domestic timber requirements.

In many instances pine is recognised as being a more durable general-purpose timber than local hardwoods.

The social benefits of the schemes include employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled workers and for part-time and seasonal workers.

In particular the schemes are expected to arrest the decline in Manjimup's workforce. Some hardwood timber mills will close with the planned reductions in cutting to sustainable levels.

The schemes are also expected to play a valuable role as part of a soil conservation strategy designed to reduce soil erosion, lower water tables and assist with salinity control.

Survival plan for Noisy Scrub Bird

THE FIRST step in a two-pronged management programme designed to ensure the continued survival of W.A.'s Noisy Scrub-bird will take place this winter.

Between June 17 and August 10 volunteers will assemble at Two Peoples Bay in an attempt to trap and relocate at least 10 pairs.

The translocation programme is being organized by Graeme Folley, the Reserves Officer at Two Peoples Bay.

The other major initiative

will be the introduction of effective habitat management — a longer term project according to Graeme.

In the meantime, Graeme is interested in hearing from people willing to help in the translocation programme.

"Experience is not essential and there are no barriers on age or sex," he said.

CALM will pay the travelling expenses of volunteers and accommodation will be provided at Two Peoples Bay.

Few people are expected to be able to attend for the full eight-week programme, but any period of a week or more will go towards filling a roster.

Graeme promises a holiday with a difference amid some of the south coast's most spectacular scenery.

The total world population of the Noisy Scrub-bird is presently about 300 birds, and apart from a small group at Mount Many Peaks the rest are contained within the Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve.

In this situation the birds are vulnerable to extensive fire or disease, both of which could drastically reduce or wipe out the population.

The extinction of the Noisy Scrub-bird would be

particularly unfortunate because of the great scientific importance of the species and its special place in the history of nature conservation in WA.

When the Noisy Scrub-bird was rediscovered in 1961 the population was small — about 40 to 45 singing males.

Nothing was known about its biology or habitat requirements, and no techniques were available for artificially enlarging or extending the population.

Since then detailed research programmes have been carried out on the bird by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization's Division of Wildlife Research (now Division of Wildlife and Rangelands Research) including an experiment on captive breeding.

Further, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, which was responsible for wildlife conservation in Western Australia and which managed the Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, instituted a management plan for the Reserve and has developed the necessary expertise to establish Scrub-bird populations at new locations.

Rare flora manual

THE DEPARTMENT of Conservation and Land Management has produced a manual on the protection of rare flora in the Central Forest Region.

It was prepared by a Forest Officer at Bunbury, Graham McCutcheon, and supplements work done by Research Officer Steven Hopper.

The manual features gazetted rare species and includes species which are merely uncommon locally, or which are common locally but widely separated from the main distribution in the State.

Each species in the binder is featured on a sheet (in a plastic cover) which shows a coloured photograph, a brief description of the plant and a comment on the site type which it inhabits.

For most species there is a close picture and one which includes something of the surrounding vegetation.

Also shown is the known distribution by botanical districts and by forest blocks.

Each land management district has a copy containing species known or thought likely to occur in that district.

The intention is that field personnel should have the opportunity to become familiar with rare species in their area, and it is hoped that they will be inspired to notice and report both other occurrences of listed species, and other uncommon species which may be then included in the manual.

Actual locations are recorded on a set of maps in the Regional Office and on hardwood and softwood operational control plans in District Offices.



● The noisy scrub bird (photo: courtesy A.G. Wells).

Twenty years ago this month... May 1985

Managing Bengier Swamp

MANAGEMENT responsibility for Bengier Swamp near Harvey has been taken over by CALM.

Important water fowl habitat



• Doug Watkins (L) talks to John Clarke while one of the local farmers harvests a forage crop.

'Tree Person' appointed at Esperance

ESPERANCE has just had a 'tree person' appointed under a Community Employment Programme sponsored by Greening Australia.

Only the second rural tree person and the third to be employed in the State, Vicky Allen started work at the beginning of May.

Vicky is based with Department's district officer Klaus Tidemann in Esperance and they recently paid a flying visit to Perth with Helms Arboretum manager Tony Byrne.

The visit was part of a four-day study tour of South West nurseries and seed stores aimed at improving liaison and gaining background information.

One of Vicky's first jobs in Esperance is to organize the distribution of 18,000 seedlings allocated to the area under Alcoa's Greening Australia scheme.

Besides following up the Alcoa scheme her job involves promoting tree planting by helping people use the right techniques and species for their area.

The job involves much travelling as the area covered extends to Dundas and Ravensthorpe shire councils.

Vicky will also have some practical work, planting trees on roadside verges and parks.



• ESPERANCE 'tree person' Vicky Allen is wasting no time in getting to know her subject.

Marine borers test local wood

A joint CSIRO-CALM team has carried out an offshore timber assessment at the BP Kwinana refinery wharf.

The team was led by John Barnacle of the CSIRO Division of Chemical and Wood Technology and included CALM's Phil Shedley, Des Donnelly and Graeme Siemon.

The trial is just one of many being carried out around Australia in varying conditions.

At Kwinana - different timber species, some treated with preservatives, are being tested for their resistance to marine borers.

Many samples showed evidence of marine borer attack, mainly by limnoria and teredines.

Limnoria are crustaceans which resemble wood lice about 2mm long.

These animals work between high and low water mark, and although the rate of attack is not fast, they leave a pile with an hour-glass appearance.

Damage is obvious on the surface of the timber.

Teredines (or shipworm) are molluscs whose newly hatched larvae bore into piles, then tunnel extensively, growing larger as they go.

Their rate of attack is very fast and there are reports from Eastern Australia of piles being eaten away in three months.

In W.A., a jarrah jetty pile in the Swan River, 5k from the ocean, was completely destroyed in 12 months.

The Kwinana trial shows that hardwood samples do not perform as well as pine.

The test frames with the samples attached are suspended from the outer wharf.

The trials started 26 years ago.

John Barnacle's particular interest is marine borers and their effect on timber - and he is philosophic about the name association.

Creosote treatment has not been effective.

The C.S.I.R.O. has maintained this trial in W.A. (as well as a sleeper trial) for many years, but recent policy changes in their organization means the future of such investigations is doubtful.

Professional rivalries and the territorial imperatives of the past can have no place in this scene.

I must say that I am delighted at the friendly and professional approaches which are already emerging.

Indeed, I regard the fire management challenge as potentially a great cementing agent for staff in the new Department, rather than the reverse, as some commentators have suggested. I hope you share, or will come to share, my view.

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One of the most important conservation and management issues in the new Department is fire.

In many discussions with regional and operations staff, with research officers and planners and specialists over the last few months, I have found that the question of 'the right' approach to fire always crops up as the second greatest concern stemming from the amalgamation.

(Industrial anomalies are the first.)

There is debate about using fire for fuel reduction, and about not using it; about fire suppression methods; about the adequacy, focus and meaning of research; about the priority, format and content of fire management plans; about the relative importance of conservation interests and neighbour's interests; about the competing fire management needs of compatible land uses; about fire pre-history, fire prevention and fire legislation.

I believe that the breadth of views on these issues, and the intensity of interest, reflects three main things:

Firstly: The wide variety of ecosystems for which we are responsible. Clearly, it is not sensible to expect to apply a fire management system developed for the jarrah forest to southcoast heathlands, goldfields woodlands, spinifex plains or metropolitan parks.

Secondly: The state of the art. There is still a tremendous amount of research to be done in this whole area, ranging from traditional scientific studies into fire and fire effects, to the development of detection and suppression techniques and biological research into problems such as communities and fire prevention.

Thirdly: The high interest in this subject reflects the very high level of environmental awareness and of social responsibility to be found in all levels of Departmental personnel. This is very satisfying, because it is the nub of the Departmental challenge.

to develop and implement appropriate fire management systems for all Departmental land. By means systems which will truly take account of local and conservation values as well as satisfactory requirements and community expectations protection from wildfire.

The new Department has brought together scientists, managers and administrators, with a great deal of accumulated wisdom, learning and experience.

The challenge is to open effective lines of communication, to identify priorities for research, and to encourage active and constructive collaboration on fire management plans.

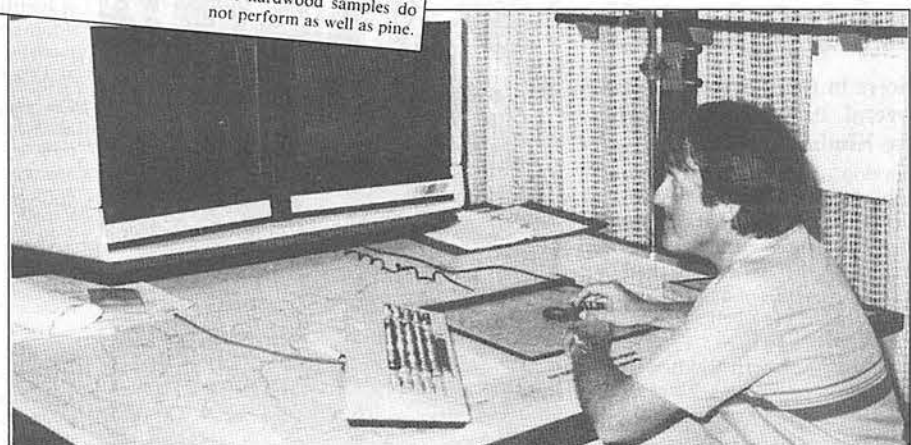
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ROGER UNDERWOOD
General Manager

Syd Shea was at a Concom meeting at Norfolk Island when this edition was printed.



• Peter Bowen at work with the Department's Intergraph Computer.

CADET TRAINING UPDATE

WITH the recent proclamation of the Department of Conservation and Land Management some changes in the field cadet training scheme can be expected.

Bald Island – possible new home for Gilbert's potoroos

A plan to translocate Australia's most critically endangered mammal, the Gilbert's potaroo, to an island near Albany is being considered.

Less than 40 potoroos (*Potorous gilbertii*) live on the slopes of Mt Gardner in Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve, near Albany.

A research team led by CALM Principal Research Scientist, Tony Friend, has completed a five-week trial involving the translocation of a male and a female potaroo to Bald Island Nature Reserve, off the south coast, east of Albany.

The island's climate is similar to Two Peoples Nature Reserve, its habitat is potentially suitable, and it's free of foxes and cats.

"The trial involved monitoring the potoroos' movements and condition to determine whether they could successfully live in the new environment," Tony said.

"The animals were fitted with activity-sensing tail transmitters and our team – Technical Officers, Stephanie Hill and Tim Button, and myself – monitored them by daily radio tracking and occasional trapping."

The animals initially lost weight, but replaced it after a short time, feeding mainly on stone truffles.

"As the trial progressed both animals became harder to catch, and after four weeks the male dropped his transmitter and things got a little tricky!" Tony said.

After much effort, a week later both animals were recaptured and brought back to the Two Peoples Bay captive colony.

"The exercise was a great success," Tony said.

"The potoroos showed that they could make it on Bald Island in the worst time of year for fungi-eaters. They have shown us the habitat they liked, where to find fungi and what species they wanted to eat.

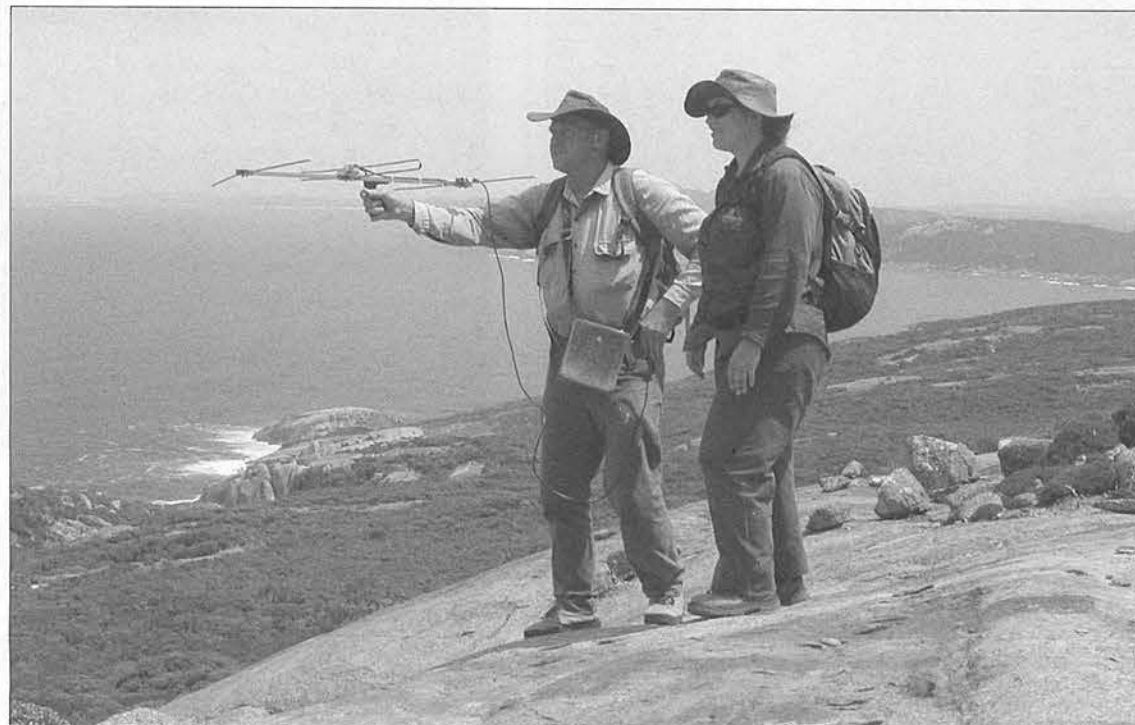
"They even showed us they liked to hang out together, which was a very good outcome."

Tony, Stephanie and Tim lived on the island and learned about other Bald Island inhabitants, including quokkas and great-winged petrels.

Tony thanked Albany District Fauna Conservation Officer, Peter Collins, for getting team members to and from the island, and Sara Hands who took on extra potaroo duties at Two Peoples Bay in their absence.



Tony Friend, Stephanie Hill and Tim Button with their water supply.



Stephanie Hill and Tony Friend use the radio tracker to search for the potoroos on Bald Island.

Rediscovery of Gilbert's potaroo

THE Gilbert's potaroo was rediscovered by a UWA PhD student in 1994 after being thought to be extinct for 120 years.

Since then, significant research has been undertaken into the animal's conservation needs and towards locating other populations. So far none has been found.

Gilbert's potoroos weigh about a kilogram and are related to kangaroos. They feed almost exclusively on underground fungi.

Their snouts are slender and slightly curved downwards and their faces have heavy, furry jowls. The forefeet have long curved claws for digging and the tail is lightly furred, curling up tightly when the animal is at rest.

The preferred habitat of the species at Two Peoples Bay is in dense sedges among melaleuca heaths where underground fungi are abundant. These marsupials are nocturnal and the female holds her single young in a pouch for up to four months before weaning.

Strange find in Jurien Bay

by Rhianna Mooney

FINDING a stranded mature loggerhead turtle at Jurien Bay earlier this year was definitely unusual, but it was discoveries made later that really fascinated local CALM staff.

The turtle was reported on the beach at Island Point by a member of the public, but was dead when found by CALM staff.

Loggerhead turtles are considered the most endangered turtle species that nest in Australian waters and are protected under the Wildlife Conservation Act and Commonwealth legislation and international conventions.

Shark Bay is the most southern extent of the range of the loggerheads so it was obvious that, even before the turtle died, something was amiss.

Marine Park Coordinator, Kevin Crane, and Marine Park Ranger, Lee Butcher, recovered the large female and brought it back to the Jurien Bay depot yard where Marine Park Ranger, Greg Inglis, conducted a necropsy (assisted by Kevin and Lee) to determine the cause of death.

Greg said unless there were physical signs of trauma, it was not always easy to find an obvious cause of death.

"It was a very large turtle, the carapace was more than a metre long, and it didn't show any signs of external injuries," Greg said.

"But, it was extremely underweight and the autopsy revealed that it was carrying a number of massive tumours throughout the internal organs.

"One tumour, on the right hand lobe of the liver, was 20 cm long and 15 cm in depth and shaped like a football."

Greg said samples of the large tumour were preserved for future research.

"We sent tissue samples to scientists at Murdoch University for analysis," he said.

35 years' service and many interesting stories

by John Hunter and Tracy Peacock

BOB Mitchell has completed 35 years of service with the State Government, and has been with CALM since its inception.

He's now the Corporate Information Section's Records Retention and Disposal Officer.

Back in 1969, Bob joined the Lands and Surveys Department straight from high school as a records clerk.

He transferred to the National Parks Board in 1972 and was a vital source of information when the State Government of the day created the National Parks Authority in 1976. In those two departments he occupied a variety of roles including records, paymaster and stores clerk.

The records system of the National Parks Authority was meticulously kept and it was 'Bob's Baby' not because he was the only records officer there, but because he knew of everything and anything that was in action in the Department at any time.

Bob describes his current section's win of an Australian Excellence Award in Records Management in 2000, as a highlight of his career.

On the sporting arena, Bob has also had some career highlights.

He's played club lawn bowls since 1971, represented WA in 2000 and

"There are no other footy teams," he has been heard to mutter.

All in all though, it's nice to know that should any of us ask for help, Bob Mitchell has never been backward in coming forward.

This is another story in a series to be run during CALM's 20th anniversary year about people who have been with CALM since it was established.



Bob Mitchell - a long-standing CALM staff member.

Clean-up for Goldfields pastoral stations

by Julie Patten and Steve Toole

FOURTEEN Australian Conservation Volunteers (CVA) recently assisted CALM Goldfields Regional staff in clean-up programs at former pastoral stations, Lorna Glen and Lake Mason.

Local volunteers were joined by others from Japan, England, Wales, France and Scotland.

A two-week clean-up program was carried out at each station.

Tasks achieved at Lake Mason, about 50 km north of Sandstone, included:

- removing 11 km of fencing;
- clean-up of scattered rubbish (tins, beer bottles etc) from the rubbish tip and a reduction in the size of the tip from 30 ha to 15 ha;
- removing mill infrastructure, stock yards and old camping rubbish at 22 mill sites; and
- installing covers and name signs at wells.

Tasks achieved at Lorna Glen, about 150 km north east of Wiluna, included:

- removing seven km of fencing;
- removing four cattle grids;
- assisting with a biological survey;
- installing two station signs;
- clean-up of scattered rubbish (tins, bottles, pipe etc) from several sites; and
- assisting in a wildlife rescue (snakes from the bottom of a well).

The volunteers made a valuable contribution to the environment plus they also experienced flies, heat, cooking over campfires and some pretty spectacular arid environments.

The Goldfields Region plans to continue working with the CVA on a number of projects over the next few years.



The clean-up crew that helped out at Lorna Glen and Lake Mason.

Feral pigs a big problem

by Tracy Peacock

ABOUT 70 CALM staff focused on the growing problem of feral pigs in WA at a recent specially-convened information day.

"The objective of the day was to provide current information on feral pig control and research, a forum for exchanging ideas and an opportunity for staff to network," said John Asher, the Department's Acting Senior Environmental Protection Officer.

"The day was planned following an apparent need by Regional Services staff for information and for standardised practices across CALM districts and regions."

John said it had been pleasing to see that most of the attendees at the information day were staff from across the Department.

The day was planned and conducted by CALM staff Tammie Reid, Lorraine Doherty and John Asher plus the Department of Agriculture's Simon Merewether.

"Presenters from the Department of Agriculture, Murdoch University and CALM provided excellent presentations," John said.

"There were also information exchange sessions throughout the day giving attendees the opportunity to speak with presenters and exchange ideas with other CALM staff."

Topics covered included genetic studies of feral pigs in WA, volunteer pig hunting, CALM's feral pig strategy, current pig control research and feral pig diseases and parasites.

Feral cats under examination

CALM research on feral cats has led to an international collaboration with animal physiologists from the Goethe-University in Frankfurt, Germany.

Zoology lecturer, Dr Elke Schleucher, and diploma (honours) student, Stefanie Hilmer, are in WA studying the energetics and body temperature of feral cats to see if these factors have a bearing on their rapid and successful invasion of the continent.

Since October 2004, an experiment that measures the metabolic turnover of cats via oxygen consumption has been running in a laboratory at the Wildlife Research Centre, Woodvale.

Surgically implanted temperature loggers are collecting data on the cats' body temperatures under laboratory and field conditions.

For the field data, feral cats were trapped at Lorna Glen, 150 km north-east of Wiluna, and implanted with temperature-sensitive loggers that store data. They will roam the desert region until the device is retrieved.

Elke and Stefanie believe the energy turnover rates and thermoregulatory capacities of the cats are key characteristics in their successful colonisation of Australia, and that information could aid the refinement and improvement of control management strategies.

by Dave Algar

Feral cats are physiologically well adapted to hot and arid conditions, but the main features of their physiology have not been thoroughly investigated to date.



Goethe-University student, Stefanie Hilmer, and zoology lecturer, Dr Elke Schleucher, capturing feral cats during a recent field trip to Lorna Glen Station.

For instance, cats occur in regions without access to free water, which is a striking characteristic, especially in comparison to foxes and dingoes, the other two main introduced predators.

The University's preliminary studies on domestic cats in Germany as well as six feral cats from desert regions of WA show that their energy requirements are 50 per cent lower than expected for a mammal of their body mass.

This is a physiological characteristic typical for desert species, as a low energy turnover rate is associated with minimised heat production and water loss, which is an advantage in hot and arid conditions.

The group also plans to examine the cats' patterns of physiological adaptation by analysing kidney, skeletal and body morphology.

Stefanie is planning to start her PhD thesis later this year, continuing research initiated during her diploma studies.

The main aim of this project will be to examine potential physiological differences between feral cat populations from different ecological backgrounds, such as arid versus temperate and mainland versus island populations.

Data from these studies are expected to help in understanding the dynamics of feral cat invasion into Australia's arid zone.

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

Contract

Tania Jackson, Planning Officer, Regional Parks, Fremantle; Murray Carter, Policy Officer, Minister's Office; Rebecca Coyle, Administration Assistant, Forest Management Branch, Kensington; Sara Hands, Seasonal Ranger, South Coast Region, Albany; Susan Harris, Interpretation Officer, Planning and Visitor Service Branch, Kensington; Nerida Haynes, Field Officer, Kirup; Kylie Connell, Finance and Administration Officer, Wildlife Branch, Kensington; Maria Dumitro, Customer Service Officer, Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs, Kensington; Yvonne Greenhow, Customer Service Officer, Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs, Kensington; Craig Steadman, Systems Development Officer, Parks and Visitor Services Section, Kensington; Sarah Davis,

Officer, Wildlife Research Centre, Woodvale; Maurice Agale, Assistant Employment Relations Officer, People Services Branch, Kensington; Timothy Brett, Recovery Catchment Technical Officer, South Coast Region, Esperance; Stephen Pashby, Research Officer (Strategic Roading), Output Coordination Branch, Kensington; Marissa Speirs, Field Officer, Swan Region, Wanneroo.

Promotion

Julie Davies, Administration Assistant, Parks Policy and Tourism, Kensington; Steven Jones, Spatial Database Administrator, Information Management Branch, Kensington.

Permanent

Alan Kendrick, Marine Parks Coordinator, Denham District; Karen Abel, Administration Assistant, Parks Policy and Tourism, Kensington; Neal Henshaw, Field Officer,

Narrogin District; Shammara Roche, Clerical Officer, Donnelly District, Manjimup; Paul Joyce, Reserves Officer, Narrogin District.

Secondment

Christina Gilbert, National Park Ranger, Wellington District, Collie.

Transfer

Wayne Taylor, Ranger, Swan Coastal District (Penguin Island) from Swan Regional Headquarters, Kensington.

Temporary transfer

Gerard Ots, Conservation Estate Officer, Parks and Visitor Services Section, Kensington; Tammie Wrangmore, RTO Compliance Officer, People Services Section, Dwellingup.

Temporary deployment

Cherylene Ehlers, Field Officer, Perth Hills District, Dwellingup Work Centre; Michelle Anderson, Conservation Estate Officer, Park

Policy and Tourism, Kensington; Barbara Slade, Administration Assistant, People Services Branch, Kensington; Kaylene Carter, Nature Conservation Officer, Nature Conservation, Crawley.

Contract ceased

Joanne Lipinski, Customer Service Officer, Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs, Kensington; Tristan Paul Farmer, Field Officer, Walpole District; Clare Martin, Senior Graphic Designer, Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs.

Resignation

Liz McGuire, Reserves Officer, Shark Bay District; Gregory James Voigt, Operations Officer, South West Region, Busselton; Laurence Jose Radin, Assistant Nature Conservation Officer, Wellington District, Collie.