



Conservation News

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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

FEBRUARY 2006

New fire management a big success

A bushfire that started in the Murray Valley and nearly reached Waroona and Yarloop last month burnt more than 11,000 ha of forest and pasture before it was brought under control.

Two of CALM's six integrated pre-formed fire incident management teams – the Black Team and the Gold Team – were called in to Collie to manage the staff and resources deployed to the fire.

The pre-formed teams, whose members knew each other through training together, provided a streamlined approach to fire management, bringing together fire crews and their support services – caterers, heavy equipment contractors, accommodation providers and others.

An Incident Control Team comprising mostly staff from Perth Hills and Wellington Districts managed the day and night shifts on the first two days of the fire.

As the fire took hold on 22 January, the Black Team was called to active duty to become a guinea pig in this new form of fire management.

The team

Black Team leaders – Incident Controller Peter Keppel, his deputy, Neil Worrell, Planning Officer Peter Bidwell, his deputy Mal Grant, Logistics Officer Rod Simmonds and his deputy, Kim Kershaw and Operations Officer Mark Read – led a 50-strong CALM Incident Management Team for five successive shifts of more than 12 hours. The team was in charge of operations, planning and logistics for the CALM staff, Forest Products Commission staff and volunteers at the fire front.

Operating on 12-hour shifts, fire crews and the Incident Control Teams worked diligently to get the fire under control. On 25 January another pre-formed team (the Gold Team) was mobilised for the night shift to help with fatigue management.

Peter Keppel said one of the principal benefits of the pre-formed team was the fact that everyone knew each other and the various functions were well integrated.

The fire – the work of an arsonist – began on Sunday morning on private property near a bluegum plantation adjacent to the Lane Poole Reserve. The fire accelerated overnight and by Monday morning had travelled 10 km north-west along the Murray River before turning west under an easterly wind change.

A major fire run to the west took place during the next 36 hours as the blaze travelled 25 km to farmland on the Darling Scarp. Two sheds, some fencing and minor damage to ALCOA minesite infrastructure were the only losses.

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The Black Team leaders (from left) were Rod Simmonds, Peter Keppel, Kim Kershaw, Neil Worrell, Peter Bidwell and Mal Grant. Photo – Sue McKenna

New Environment Minister for CALM

MARK McGowan MLA was appointed as the new State Minister for the Environment this month.

He replaces Dr Judy Edwards, who resigned as Minister for personal reasons.

Mr McGowan began his career in public life by being elected as a councillor to the Rockingham City Council in 1994, becoming Deputy Mayor of the city before being elected as the State Member for Rockingham in 1996.

Before joining politics he was an officer in the Royal Australian Navy at HMAS Stirling. He also holds the Governor General's Commendation for Bravery for actions he took as a naval officer in 1995, rescuing an unconscious driver from a burning car.

Since being elected to Parliament he has been Labor Spokesperson for Local Government, Sport and Recreation, and Tourism and Heritage.

Between 2001 and 2005 he was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier during which time he assisted with the organisation of the Bali Memorial in Kings Park. He also chaired the ANZAC Committee and the WA 175th Anniversary Committee before becoming the Minister for Tourism; Racing and Gaming; Youth; Peel and the South West in 2005.

He remains a patron or member of sporting and social clubs in Rockingham.

For more, see page 2.



Mark McGowan MLA.

Help us fight an alien invasion...

THAT'S the catchcry of an innovative \$500,000 community awareness campaign launched last month as part of CALM's continuing battle to stop cane toads from becoming established in Western Australia.

CALM has been working closely with community groups to trap and catch the noxious pests before they reach the Northern Territory-WA border.

The campaign's aim is to maximise the number of people CALM can reach and inform them why the cane toad is a major threat to our biodiversity and lifestyle.

It includes television and radio advertisements, which are already airing in the north of the State and will be shown in Perth and the south-west later this year as some people make their plans to head north to escape the southern winter.

There is also a series of print advertisements as well as the distribution of posters and brochures to roadhouses, caravan parks, hotels and clubs, schools and the quarantine checkpoint near Kununurra on the NT-WA border.

There's a new website too,

by Jan Martin

www.canetoadbattle.com that contains important information about correctly distinguishing cane toads from native frogs. You can also listen to the cane toad's distinctive call or link to other relevant websites.

Meanwhile, the wet season is well under way in WA's north and the number of toads being caught has increased dramatically.

Working in tandem with groups such as Kimberley Toad Busters, CALM staff based at Kununurra continue to hand collect toads at night to control existing populations near the Victoria River in the NT, about 250 km from Kununurra. They also service cane toad traps set at strategic locations, investigate the current spread of toads and respond to reported cane toad sightings both in WA and the NT.

As of 6 February, there were 74 CALM traps in place. To date, CALM employees have caught and disposed of 3033 cane toads. These have all been caught in the vicinity of the Victoria River bridge.

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Dr Judy Edwards retires

Dr Judy Edwards retired this month after almost five years as Minister, the longest continuous period served by an Environment Minister in WA. (Ron Davies served five and a half years under two terms of Government in the 1970s and 1980s.)

Dr Edwards was farewelled at a ceremony at CALM headquarters at Crawley. She thanked CALM people for their support and help.

Executive Director Keiran McNamara presented Dr Edwards with a photographic record of her time as Minister for the Environment.

Working Together

At the start of February we welcomed Hon Mark McGowan MLA as the new Environment Minister. In the meetings I have had with him, Mr McGowan has expressed his enthusiasm for the portfolio and his desire to get into the field and be directly involved in CALM's biodiversity conservation, park management and other work. CALM's Director of Parks and Visitor Services, Jim Sharp and I have already had the opportunity to accompany Mr McGowan on a two-day visit to Ningaloo and Cape Range, which provided a great opportunity for the Minister to meet our regional staff and discuss management issues in the parks.

Mr McGowan's appointment followed the decision by Dr Judy Edwards to step down from the Ministry. At a farewell at our Crawley office on 1 February, I thanked Dr Edwards for her enthusiasm and support over the last five years. Many CALM staff had the opportunity to meet Dr Edwards as she travelled widely across the State, and in her remarks at the farewell Dr Edwards made special mention of the quality and dedication of the people who work for CALM.

Finally, congratulations to Gordon Wyre whose appointment to the position of Director of Nature Conservation was announced in late January.

Keiran McNamara
Executive Director



Taking a dip into conservation



CONSERVATION was never far from the surface when new Environment Minister Mark McGowan MLA took his first official Ministerial dip into Ningaloo waters.

In his inaugural official trip in mid-February he discovered the natural wonders of Ningaloo Marine Park first hand by

spending two hours snorkelling with CALM staff at Tantabiddi.

Exmouth District Manager Jennie Cary, pictured with the Minister (above), Marine Planning Officer Alan Kendrick, Parks and Visitor Services Coordinator Arvid Hogstrom and Pilbara Regional Manager Ian Walker took Mr McGowan swimming on the reef.

The snorkel was followed by a look at Cape Range National Park's wildlife during a boat cruise up Yardie Creek, where Mr McGowan saw a threatened rock wallaby and signs advising the public about a feral goat control program in the park.

The Minister also visited one of the region's most beautiful areas, Turquoise Bay, and the Jurabi Turtle Centre to learn about the turtle monitoring program. The shade sails above the centre that were removed before the recent cyclones were re-installed just in time!

During the two-day visit Mr McGowan met CALM staff, Exmouth Shire councillors, local residents, tour operators, business owners and pastoralists to get first hand knowledge of how people felt about the Cape Range National Park Draft Management Plan and the proposed World Heritage Listing for Ningaloo and North West Cape.

Travelling with Executive Director Keiran McNamara, Parks and Visitor Services Director, Jim Sharp, and Ministerial staff, Mr McGowan also visited the Milyering Visitor Centre, CALM's Exmouth Office, the Monck Head boating facility site, the Coral Bay foreshore and the town of Exmouth.

He announced the next phase of community consultation on the proposed World Heritage listing, released the Cape Range National Park Draft Management Plan, and announced progress with the development of the Ningaloo research program.

Mr McNamara said the trip was a great success and gave the Minister a marvellous look at how CALM conserved one of the State's most valuable areas.

"The Minister was very open and very interested in conservation, and was relaxed in dealing with CALM and its staff. He also spoke about the passion and dedication of our people," he said.

Noisy scrub-bird habitats burnt

CALM researchers will travel to four burnt sites near the Darling Range's Mount William area in May to see if translocated endangered noisy scrub-birds survived the fire.

Three sites – King Jarrah West, Tiger Road and Chasede – were razed in the Murray Valley fire, while a fourth site known as Sixty-one Form had approximately one quarter of its area burnt.

"We were all very upset when we realised that the release sites were in the path of this wildfire, because scrub-birds cannot fly and the success of the Darling Range translocation is still hinging on successful breeding in this area," CALM Ecologist Sarah Comer said.

Sarah was the Predictions Officer (in training) in the Black Team's Planning Team, and watched the fire advance quickly to release sites where 80 noisy scrub-birds had been translocated from Mount Gardner, Mount Manypeaks, and the Angove water reserve near Albany.

The translocations took place between 1997 and 2003, and were supported by enormous efforts from volunteers, CALM Wellington and Dwellingup staff and ALCOA Alumina.

Sarah said each year the release sites were surveyed by recording the distinctive singing males.

"We start the autumn survey in May when the calling increases at the beginning of the breeding season. Sites are revisited a number of times during the winter, and local CALM staff also assist with these surveys.

"Scrub-bird habitat is found in the creek systems and riparian ecotone – vegetation between wetter gullies and upland jarrah country."

Sarah said after the fire, two reports came in of calling male scrub-birds.

"These reports were from areas previously not recorded as having scrub-birds, and will be some of the first to be investigated this survey season," Sarah said.

Staff will assess the remaining habitat in the next two months to see which areas have unburnt pockets of suitable scrub-bird habitat remaining.

"This fire was a great example of where nature conservation input into fire management is critical. The opportunity to have input in this fire through my role in the planning team was greatly appreciated!" she said.

Map makers plot the fire path

WHEN Peter Murray, Tilo Massenbaer and Sarah Comer next get together you can bet they'll be talking more than plants and animals.

The three – respectively a Forest Management Branch Sustainable Resources Officer, an Esperance Recovery Catchment Officer and an Ecologist – joined forces at Collie to become the Team's Situations Unit in charge of mapping.

"We were looking at where the fire was going, where it was likely to go, the values

which may have been compromised and other factors," Sarah said.

Peter and Tilo generated maps while Sarah followed and plotted the fire's path.

"We even pinched a plotter from ALCOA," Peter said.

Members of the Planning Team were Situation Unit Leader Ian Wilson (front left) and Planning Officer Peter Bidwell (front right) with (back row, from left) Sarah, Mal Grant, Tilo, Peter and Neil Worrell.



from page 1

Waroona Dam Caravan Park was closed and visitors asked to leave, while radio announcements warned people between Waroona and Yarloop to be prepared to defend their properties or make arrangements to leave well before the fire got close.

Executive Director Keiran McNamara thanked the 450 CALM staff, 38 FPC staff and 100 bushfire brigade volunteers working on the firefront, saying they had had significant disruption to their personal and family interests, and other work priorities.

He said the fire covered 11,090 ha, 9863 ha of which were CALM-managed lands with the balance being private property and other land.

"At various stages, the towns of Yarloop, Waroona and Hamel were threatened, as were major infrastructure assets," he said.

In one of her last acts as Minister for the Environment, Dr Judy Edwards visit-

ed the smoked-out operations point and fire scene with Acting Premier Eric Ripper. Both acknowledged the professionalism of staff and volunteers. Mr Ripper also praised the cooperation between participating agencies.

Peter Keppel said the highest priority had always been the safety of firefighters, particularly since some areas in the path of the fire carried very flammable fuels and the fire behaviour was intense.

"This resulted in more long distance 'spotting' in front of the main fire," he said.

Conservation News arrived on the fifth day, just before the Black Team handed over the dayshift roster to the Gold Team. Staff were tired and looking forward to getting home. The fire was contained and mopping up was under way.

The success of the pre-formed teams has paved the way for future fire management and the regular use of the six pre-formed teams during major fires.

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Twenty years ago this month. . . February 1986



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Youngsters on the job



TRAINEE SCHEME KICKS OFF

THE FIRST group of 150 CALM trainees have been selected and are now learning office and land management skills.

Fifteen young people are based in offices in the metropolitan area to receive training in office skills.

Twenty office trainees began work in district and regional offices on January 6.

Thirty land management trainees attended one week of technical college training at

either Midland and Bunbury in mid January, then began work in the various districts and regions.

The balance of the trainees, numbering 55, will start in April.

Some of the trainees who started in the metropolitan area are (pictured above from left to right, back row) Maria Lee, Caroline McNoe, Natalie McBeth, and Malcolm Kininmonth, and Wendyl Tennent (front).

MEETING SOUTH COAST COMMITMENTS

By COLLEEN HENRY-HALL

ACCESS to the south coast, woodchipping licences and education of the public were three of a long list of subjects the Karri-D'Entrecasteaux Region Advisory Committee have identified for future consideration.

The committee, coordinated by CALM, met for the first time on January 23 at Manjimup to discuss its role in CALM's public participation programme for the area.

The meeting was attended by Executive Director Syd Shea and National Parks Director Chris Haynes.

Warren MLA Dave Evans chairs the committee, which comprises 13 people representing local shires, business and interest groups.

Manjimup Regional Manager Alan Walker is CALM's representative. Alan said the most important current role was to advise CALM on the preparation of management plans for the area, a function which would head the agenda at quite a few of the coming meetings.

Richard McKeller, on contract with CALM to set up the committee, said members were chosen by identifying the issues in the region and the groups of people wanting access to CALM lands.

He said those groups include recreation, conserva-

tion, education and youth, rural land holders, tourism, business and shires.

In welcoming the committee, Syd Shea said the Department was committed to public involvement in land management because it had no right to impose on the public its value judgements.

He said the committee approach had proven successful in the past because when people are able to discuss something, they often end up working together to find a solution acceptable to all involved.

The committee will meet once a month to provide advice on issues referred to it and to bring to CALM's attention matters of concern or interest to its responsibilities.

The committee will also help CALM get information to the public and provide a liaison between CALM, local government and the community.

Other subjects identified for future consideration include: an inquiry into the timber industry; understanding of the area's biology and environment; fire and other protection policies; security of tenure for all uses of CALM land; provision of recreational facilities; pine afforestation; and levels of use in forests and parks.

GANDY TIMBER Pty Ltd of Manjimup has secured a contract with CALM worth \$1.4 million a year for five years for the production of about 20,000 cubic metres of small sawlogs and 40,000 cubic metres of other small logs.

Don Keene, Manager Timber Production, said the value of the contract was \$7.5 million in current prices.

The karri and marri logs will be from thinnings of regrowth resulting from previous selective cutting and there will be some pre-logging in areas to be clearfelled later.

Vasse bird survey

A RECENT survey of the Vasse and Wonnerup estuaries near Busselton has proven the area's importance to waterbirds.

The survey, by members of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union (RAOU), was funded by CALM.

Roger Jaensch, Field Officer for RAOU Waterbird Studies, said the area's importance was reflected in the number of birds and the numbers of species found using the estuary system.

He said more than 33,000 waterbirds were using the estuaries for feeding and shelter, making the area one of the most important habitats for waterbirds among those surveyed by the RAOU.

The number of species recorded was 68, 18 more than found during previous surveys.

There are 19 species on the Vasse-Wonnerup Estuary protected by the Japan-Australia Migratory and Endangered Birds Agreement (JAMBA), a treaty protecting birds that stop in Australia and Japan during migration.

Previous surveys had found nine species protected under JAMBA.

Survey counts of the Yellow-billed Spoonbill and the Wood Sandpiper were the highest counts recorded for the species in RAOU studies since 1981.

Also 44 Long-toed Stints were counted, one of the highest for this species which is regarded as rare in Australia.

Protecting fauna from fire

"SOME populations of fauna on small nature reserves could be obliterated by uncontrolled fires, so it's important to know how to manage fire for their protection," said Gordon Friend, CALM Research Officer in fire ecology at the Wildlife Research Centre.

Gordon, along with Technical Officer David Mitchell, will be conducting research on the effects of fire on animals with particular emphasis on the wheatbelt nature reserves

where little faunal information has been gathered.

Litter dwelling reptiles and invertebrates will be the main groups studied.

The first step for the two is to compile data on an

area for several years before it is burned.

Problems with fire ecology research have arisen in the past because most studies have begun after the fires and assumed a pre-fire similarity between different areas.

Gordon gained a PhD from Melbourne University in zoology, researching the effects of pine plantations on flora and fauna.

He then joined the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Rangelands Research in the Northern Territory, where he worked for seven years before becoming CALM's first fire ecology research officer.

David has just completed a double major BSc in biology and environmental science at Murdoch University.

Gordon is interested in Tutanning Nature Reserve, a comparatively large wheatbelt reserve east of Perth where Angus Hopkins, Research Officer at the Wildlife Research Centre, has studied the effects of fire on flora for several years.

Information on the effects on fauna should give a better understanding of fire ecology in the region, Gordon said.

Work also will be carried out on wheatbelt reserves

near Kellerberrin in conjunction with CSIRO, and on some experimental fire ecology plots in the Perup Management Priority Area, set up by staff from the Manjimup Research Office.

Little research has been done on the sampling methodology of pit traps, so Gordon and David also are experimenting with the design of pit traps to enable efficient sampling of litter-dwelling animals.

Gordon has just finished the draft of his research proposal, outlining what he intends to do over the next six years as Fire Ecology Research Officer.



GORDON FRIEND, (left) and David Mitchell study a pit tap design at the Wildlife Research Centre, Woodvale.

AWARD WINNER

GARY INIONS, a recent graduate of the Australian National University and now a forest officer at Manjimup research, received an award in recognition of being the year's graduate student with the most promise.

The Schlich Medal is a memorial prize awarded each year to a worthy graduate of ANU.

The award is after Sir William Schlich, a former professor of Forestry at Oxford University.

Gary received a degree in forestry with concurrent honours for a study on the interaction of possums, habitat trees and fire.

His study also was nominated for a separate award which is still unawarded.

At present, he is doing research in karri silviculture at Manjimup.



GARY INIONS with his radiotracking equipment.



From my Desk

BAD PRESS

IT IS inevitable, and I believe desirable, that CALM receives its share of media coverage. After all we are managing public land, and one of the major sources of information for the public is the media. Inevitably CALM will receive 'bad press'. Sometimes it will be justified, but often it will be unfair. During the last few weeks there have been numerous articles and letters to the editor in State or local newspapers which have been less than kind. I am aware that unfair criticism does affect staff morale, but there is no way we can stop it from being published. Wherever possible we have responded, but often the response is not published. In some cases we have not responded because to do so would only give further publicity to the critics and their cause. However, we can ensure that the public knows of the initiatives we are undertaking. We have issued, and have had published, many press releases and over the next 12 months we will be even more active. We are also looking at a whole range of different methods of communicating our work to the public. But no matter what we do, we will always get some bad press and the only solution is to 'cultivate a tough hide'.

FIRE EMERGENCY

Few people realised how serious the fire situation was during the last heatwave. CALM forces were stretched to the limit and we would have had difficulty handling another fire. This was the first test of the new Department in a fire emergency situation and my assessment, and that of many outside observers, was that we passed it extremely well.

TRAINEESHIPS

The CALM Traineeship scheme was officially launched last month at Bunbury. Our scheme is one of the first to be established in Australia and considerable credit goes to the Department and the trainees. I believe it is an excellent scheme. Everybody knows what it is like to start a first job, so I hope that if the opportunity helps the trainees adjust to their new

SYD SHEA
Executive Director

BUSHFIRE OUTBREAKS TEST OUR RESOURCES

By COLLEEN HENRY-HALL
TEMPERATURES had been in the 40s for five days.

The air was so dry and hot that trees, grass and bushes seemed to crackle in the wind. Conditions were perfect for a fire and all that was needed was one small spark. That "spark" is suspected to have been deliberately lit, northeast of the Yancheep pine plantation on Tuesday, January 21. Wanneroo fire crews moved into action. Because of the important pine plantations in the dis-

CALM fire crews battled 13 bush fires in the Mundaring District in the first two weeks of the year. Officers from the Wildlife Research Centre at Woodvale were on standby to staff a large fire organisation, if necessary, and National Park Rangers joined with fire crews from Mundaring, Wanneroo and Jarrahdale in what was a real team effort. The fire fighting effort was so effective that most of the fires were controlled before they got larger than 10ha. Lightning from three storms in the area was the major cause of the fires, although five are suspected of having been deliberately lit.



Caravan bug captures John

JOHN SAVORY, a mobile park ranger for eight and a half years, has given up his official wandering in a caravan to take up leisurely wandering in a caravan. John said he "really loved the life, enjoyed every minute of following the seasons and the tourists as a mobile ranger with CALM. Now that retirement has come, "I'll do the same thing under my own power" as he and his wife visit family throughout the State.

Trainees welcomed at Bunbury college

CALM Executive Director Syd Shea and the Minister for Employment and Training, Peter Dowding, welcomed 30 land management trainees to the South West College of TAFE at Bunbury on January 23.

The trainees, parents and college and government officials attended the opening of the CALM traineeship scheme, which is one of the first of its kind in Australia. Syd told the group: "I know CALM offers the greatest range of educational opportunities of any government department I can think of. "Your year will be a hard and tough time, but I can guarantee you will enjoy it." The trainees spent a week at the college learning safety rules and basic land management policies. Mr Dowding, said, "It is my own belief that we don't solve problems of unemployment by putting people into \$100 a week jobs cleaning offices or working a check out stand. "We needed to offer opportunities to young people to educate themselves and thus enable them to get better jobs." Syd and Mr Dowding lauded the efforts of many people from the Department of Employment and Training, CALM, the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, TAFE and the South West College of TAFE, in getting the programme started. Syd particularly thanked Trevor Hislop, who had been seconded from the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, for organising CALM's scheme. The trainees and where they are based: LAND MANAGEMENT TRAINEES Kirup: David Glover, Dwayne Henderson, Simon Watkin, Philip Mincham, Esperance: Matthews Bonnitche, Harvey: Robert Murfit, Russel Duffield, Sean Patterson, Stuart Cassie, Michael Lang, Bunbury Region: Ian McRobert, Gascoyne (Karratha): Andrew Horan, Manjimup: Mario Pessotto, David Manix, Martin Coulter, Karen Anderson, Richard Bruton, Collier: Wayne Simmons, Christopher Trigwell, Mundaring: David Bloomfield, Geoffrey King, Craig Yeoman, Roderick Kelson, Eric Bowley, Wheatbelt (Narrogin): Graeme Wilson, Dwellingup: Paul Halford, Melanie Mounsey, Paul Lupton, Glen Layton, Pemberton: David Evans, Peter Bamess, Michael Hordienko, Miles Harrison, Ian Jackson, Walpole: Richard Garbellini, Mitchell Bone, Geoffrey Passmore, Busselton: Craig Bell, Ashley Chitty, Shaun Eakin, Nannup: Stephen Jay, Gareth Wright, Sean England, Matthew Timms, Metropolitan (Murdoch House): Jeff Brooks, Wanneroo: Sharon Fraser, Owen Donovan, Craig Rogers, Damian Gardiner, Brett Ellis, Jarrahdale: John McDonald, Jeffry Poad, Andrew White, Caroline Brocx, Shayne Boyle. OFFICE TRAINEES South Coast: Melissa Tew, Northern Forest: Bronwyn Lebrasse, Manjimup District: Coralie Franke, Manjimup Region: Linda Dean, Pin-

al Park, which also threatened lives in the Quinns Rock area. This fire was contained through the combined efforts of CALM and fire brigades from Wanneroo Shire. A final account of the major fire was provided by Keith Slater. Wanneroo had 70 employees, 11 officers and eight heavy duty units committed to the fire and 18 people at Wanneroo District Office. The rest of the Northern Region contributed 32 employees, eight officers and four heavy duties. From outside the region came 27 employees, eight officers and two heavy duties. Twelve bulldozers, seven graders, 14 tankers, five loaders and two heavy duties were contracted for the fire. They also had the help of seven volunteer bush fire brigades, the army, police and St John's Ambulance Association. Alan had high praise for the Salvation Army and the Country Women's Association, who provided food and drinks during the emergency. The area burnt by the major fire was 10,488ha, and the small fire that flared up two days later burned 870ha.



Syd Shea (left) and Peter Dowding, (right), joined land management trainees in Bunbury for the official launch of the traineeship scheme. Also pictured are Michael Cross, Executive Director of the Department of Employment and Training and Anne Evans, Acting State Director of the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations.



Don Keene (left), Peter Bowen, Jock Smart, Brian Cornell, Police Supt. Alan Hough, Ric Sneeuwjagt and Kevin Goss review the path of the Yancheep-Guilderton fire on January 22.

Singing from the songsheet

PAUL Gioia sees many connections between his work at CALM and his passion for music.

The senior research scientist is known for his jazz and blues piano playing and original music.

In fact, his lyrics often reflect his conservation values and increasingly he's drawing inspiration from his work.

"I've written a Celtic reel called the Kwongan Reel which is about getting out of the forests and into the heathlands," he said.

More recently he's written a song about climate change.

"It came out of a nightmare that my 10-year-old son was having and he asked me whether we were going to get swallowed up by the sea," he said.

Paul said he doesn't preach through his lyrics, but uses humour to make his point.

"You've got to let people think about these issues for themselves," he said.

And it's here that he sees the parallel between his music and professional life.

He's responsible for managing biodiversity data within the Science Division and is keen to see good information distributed to those who need it.

"In both areas I like to think I'm helping people make better decisions, but with my music it's much more subtle," Paul said.

Paul recently received \$120,000 worth of CALM funding for the NatureMap project.

NatureMap will address some of the most common questions people have about our plants and animals, like "what is where?" and "where is what?"

Users will be able to do online mapping, answer queries and download information based on survey data, herbarium records and, possibly, museum records.

Access to NatureMap will be through CALM's NatureBase website.

Paul expects NatureMap to go live in June 2006 and hopes it will be used by not only CALM staff but also other government agencies, community groups, scientists and the public.



Star letter to Moora District

T'WAS the week after Xmas and we came to visit.

We came to Jurien and drove the new circuit road through Lesueur National Park. Twice. The drive has obviously been well planned with a diverse range of the habitats exposed by the drive and the planning for a picnic area is well developed. Obviously whoever planned the road has studied the park and knows (can you say loves?) the areas of Lesueur.

We speculated on the interpretation that was going to be placed in each lay-by. We stopped and looked about. We had a great time driving through an area that we have enjoyed for the past 15 years, but have not seen this way, so easily. We look forward to coming back to cruise the park as it develops.

There is a lot of thought going into this and we congratulate all involved.

*Rick McCracken and Helen Clarke
Perth*

City slicker Vanessa Clarke was lured to the Goldfields by the natural beauty of the outback, reports Simon Frazer from the Kalgoorlie Miner. An extract of this story is reproduced courtesy of the paper.

Big backyard to play in

A love of plants has transformed Vanessa Clarke from a Perth-born city slicker into a bush baby who relishes her outdoor life based out of Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Moving to the Goldfields 18 months ago to work as a conservation officer with CALM, botanist Ms Clarke said she had soon warmed to the town and the natural beauty nearby.

"I actually wasn't sure that I would like it when I moved out here but I've had a great time," Ms Clarke said.

Despite her Perth background Ms Clarke said Kalgoorlie-Boulder was the perfect sized town, with most things within easy walking distance.

"It's not too small but not too big a town," she said.

"The only thing I miss is the beach."

Even though she's only been based permanently in the Goldfields for less than two years she had previously spent a lot of time in the region as an environmental consultant for mining companies.

With the CALM Goldfields region taking up about one third of the State, she spends almost half of her working life in the field.

"It's a big backyard," she said.

Ms Clarke said field trips usually took a week but could be as long as two and involved travelling by 4WD with all supplies because there was no time to travel in and out of town.

She said she loved the outdoor life and the chance to sleep out under the stars.

"That's the best part about it," she said.

While she is happy to go on day trips alone, Ms Clarke said at least one other person always came on overnight trips because of the work involved and also for safety.

Much of the plant life in the Goldfields is unique and Ms Clarke said it was also a region that was relatively undiscovered.

"New species are always being discovered," she said.

A lot of Ms Clarke's focus has been on rare flora in the Yilgarn Shire west of Kalgoorlie. She said that the area's five banded ironstone ranges each contained unique flora.

Ms Clarke said she was also working to start cooperative projects in the central ranges between CALM and the local Ngaanyatjarra people.



Vanessa at work. Photo - Mary Mills, Kalgoorlie Miner.

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Kimberley Toad Busters have also caught and killed 3990 cane toads in the same area. Almost half of the toads were female and most were gravid, meaning full of eggs and ready for mating.

The Stop The Toad Foundation (STTF) has also been very busy. The Foundation has appointed Frogwatch NT cane toad expert Graeme Sawyer as its Regional Coordinator, who will direct STTF's entire on-ground activities in WA's north. Derek Monks has been appointed Assistant Regional Coordinator and will be based in CALM's Kununurra office. Part of Derek's job is to liaise with CALM so that all efforts are integrated and complementary. To that end, CALM and STTF have each contributed half of the salary for his position.

Beekeeping committee still buzzing

by Sean Bryce

THE Beekeeping Consultative Committee (BCC) turns 20 this month.

Formed to provide a forum to discuss matters affecting the industry between CALM, related government agencies and the beekeeping industry, the committee held its first meeting on 10 February 1986.

The inaugural committee consisted of John Blyth (1986-90) and Dave Hampton (1986-98) as Joint Chairpersons, Norm Caporn as Secretary, Bob Burking and Alan Kessell from the Department of Agriculture, Ian Baile, John Davies and Peter Detchon from the Primary Industry Association and Jack Lethlean of the WA Apiarists' Society.

The first meeting discussed issues related to the Beekeepers' Reserve, near the coast north of Perth, plans to hold a beekeepers' workshop, biological control of Paterson's curse, apiary site rentals, the development of CALM's policy on beekeeping, the vesting of Lesueur National Park and the number of sites that may be held in

relation to the number of hives owned by apiarists.

Past chairpersons from CALM have been Les Marrable (1988-1989), Dr Barry Wilson (1989-1991), Dr Ken Atkins (1991-1993), Keiran McNamara (1992) and Colin Ingram (1996-2002). Since 2002, Tracy Shea has chaired the committee. Past secretaries from CALM have included Norm Caporn, Dave Hampton, Malcolm Briggs and Sonja Tasovac. The present secretary is Sean Bryce.

For about 15 years the committee included representatives from CALM, the Department of Agriculture, the honey production groups and the WA Apiarists' Society. When the membership was expanded, several organisations were represented. They were the WA Farmers Federation (Kim Fewster since 1999); the WA Pollination Association (Rod Pavy since 1999), the WA Beekeepers Association (Wayne Ridley since

1994), the Swan Settlers Beekeepers (Harry East 1988-2005), Wescobee Limited (Deane Spurge since 1988), the WA Apiarists' Society (Alan Kessell since 1986), the Water Corporation (Kathy Blakeway since 2002), the Pastoral Lands Board (Brian Lloyd since 2003) and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association (Edgar Richardson since 2001).

Over the years CALM has organised many guest speakers at meetings to discuss a range of issues including dieback hygiene, climate change and a feral bee control strategy.

The BCC has worked hard to develop and maintain a good working relationship with the beekeeping industry and the Department looks forward to continuing that relationship.

Other industry members who have contributed considerable time and effort to the committee include Ron Pollard (1988-2004), Lee Allan (retired officer of Department of Agriculture 1989-2002), Ian Baile (1986-2000) and John Davies (1986-1999).

Alan packs up stumps

IT was with a mixture of sadness and fond memories that we farewelled Alan Hatfield, who retired in December after 40 years of service with CALM and the former Forests Department.

Alan started with the Forests Department in 1956 as a Towerman on the Mt Frankland lookout tower, near Walpole.

After a short time with the Main Roads Department, Alan gained a permanent position back with the Forests Department in 1965 as a Forestry Worker, operating bulldozers for road and firebreak construction.

Alan worked on the trial plots near the Shannon townsite in the late 1960s and operated a variety of heavy machinery during fire control, burn

by Mark Virgo

preparation and other forestry operations around the Walpole area.

When asked what he liked most about his long career with CALM, Alan said: "Being regularly presented with new machinery and equipment over the years. During my time with the Department I received two new D6 bulldozers, two new gang trucks, a new heavy duty and three new utilities."

And it must be said that although Hatty outlasted all these vehicles, every truck and machine he managed always finished in close to as good a condition as when he first received them.

In 1985 Alan was appointed as an

overseer in Walpole District where, in addition to other duties, he provided field experience to junior staff and new employees in fire control and prescribed burning techniques.

He continued in that position for more than 19 years before finishing his career as a Parks Maintenance Overseer.

Alan said he had enjoyed all of his time with CALM and the Forests Department.

On behalf of all of the staff at Frankland District and everyone else within CALM who has known or worked with Alan over the years, we wish him well for his retirement and thank him for his many years of devotion and dedication to the Department.



Alan Hatfield. Photo - Mark Virgo

Desert drought breaks

THE Northern Goldfields experienced a lot more than it bargained for from tropical cyclone Clare and local scattered thunderstorms.

Lorna Glen Station, 150 km north-east of Wiluna, was awash with water following days of heavy rain.

Bought by CALM in August 2000 under the Gascoyne Murchison Strategy, Lorna Glen received 214 mm of rain between 30 December and 12 January. The rain was much needed after a 2005 drought season and an annual rainfall of 122 mm.

On Friday 6 January, in less than an hour, between 4pm and 5pm, Lorna Glen received 49.5 mm of rain.

Caretakers Peter Brown and Dean Rivett, who are a part of CALM's Volunteer Campground Host Program, said that seeing a river running behind the homestead was amazing.

The good season will bring with it a flush of vegetation growth and the filling of Lorna Glen's lake systems.

Lorna Glen has been part of a trial for a feral cat research program for the past three years. The extra rain will provide an opportunity to further test the ability to control feral cats by covering the full range of seasonal conditions for bait use.



A rare sight of a lake in the desert. This photograph was taken at sunset from the back door of Lorna Glen Station. Photo - CALM

Conservation briefs

Obituary

A founding member of the Albany Wildflower Society, Eileen Croxford (93) passed away last month.

Known as a living legend on native plants of Albany and other South Coast areas for more than 40 years, she was, until recently, still actively involved in the joint CALM-Albany Wildflower Society Herbarium at CALM's Albany office.

Her extensive botanical collection of more than 8500 specimens made an invaluable contribution to improving knowledge of WA's South Coast flora.

Career moves

If you're looking to move careers within the public service, you may be interested in two new workshops being run by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Application skills courses will be run on 23 February and 6 March, while courses about interview techniques will be held on 2, 29 and 30 March.

For more information email Fiona Robinson on frobinson@dpc.wa.gov.au

Erratum

The December 2005 issue's story titled *Dieback - the biological bulldozer* said a seed orchard near Albany had been established under the direction of CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre. It was established under the direction of CALM Threatened Flora Officer, Sarah Barrett, and the Albany District.

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

Senior appointment

Gordon Wyre, Director, Nature Conservation Division, Crawley.

Contract

Craig Mills, Technical Officer, Regional Services, Kimberley Region; Amanda Schell, Project Officer, Swan Coastal District, Fremantle; Gregory Byrne, Resource Assistant, Forest Management Branch, Manjimup; Todd Benson, Conservation Officer, Midwest Region, Jurien Bay; Conor O'Neill, Licensing Officer, Wildlife Protection Branch, Kensington; Sheridan Lewis, Clerical Officer, Karratha; Brooke Halkyard, Marine Conservation Officer, Marine Conservation Branch, Fremantle; Jacqui Hay, Project Officer, Wildlife Administration, Kensington; Errol Kruger, Project Manager, Kununurra; Jessica Scott, Research Officer (GIS), Midwest Region, Geraldton; Ashley Millar, Learning and Development Officer, People Services Branch, Dwellingup; Jesse Graham, Technical Officer, Kununurra; Wayne O'Sullivan, Research Scientist, Wildlife Administration, Kensington; Emma Reksmiss,

Community Liaison and Administration Officer, Regional Parks, Fremantle; Simon Cherriman, Project Officer, Swan Region; Peta Wait, Project Officer, Swan Region, Mundaring; Jen Hollis, Technical Officer, Manjimup Research Centre.

Reclassification

Drew Griffiths, District Manager, Wellington District, Collie.

Promotion

Mark Moore, Senior Ranger, Fitzgerald River National Park, Albany; Roger Syme, Operations Officer, Shark Bay District, Denham to Wheatbelt Region, Merredin; Beverley Gardiner, Ranger, Jurien Bay to Harvey Work Centre.

Criteria progression

Richard Robinson, Senior Research Scientist, Manjimup Research Centre.

Permanent

Neil Hamilton, Senior Technical Officer, Wildlife Research Centre, Woodvale; Kimberley Onton, Nature Conservation Officer, Exmouth District; Suzanne Sayers, Field Officer, Midwest Region, Denham;

Ryan Vogwill, Hydrologist, Natural Resources Branch, Kensington.

Temporary deployment

Catherine Zwick, Senior Ranger, Shark Bay District, Denham; Deon Utber, Biodiversity Investment Support Officer, South Coast Region, Albany; Donna Gosatti, Clerical Officer, Fire Management Services, Kensington; Heather Taylor, Coastal and Marine Facilitator, Regional Services Division, Karratha; Pauline Southgate, Project Officer, Organisational Learning and Development, Dwellingup.

Resignation

Kim Cream, Visitor Services Officer, Yanchep National Park; Neville Marchant, Manager, WA Herbarium; Derek Monks, Technical Officer, Kununurra Work Centre; Melissa Robinson, Cartographic Officer, Information Management Branch, Kensington; Anthony Raudino, Operations Officer, Midwest Region, Geraldton; Jennifer Kastner, Officer, Kalgoorlie.

Contract ceased

Robert Hill, Technical Officer, Dwellingup Research Centre; Lydia Lange, Project

Officer, Regional Parks, Fremantle; Michelle Reid, National Park Ranger, Exmouth District; Ryan Donegan, Marine Reserves Officer, Exmouth District.

Leave without pay

Caroline Brocx, Forest Ranger, Collie; Jane Sampson, Research Scientist, Science Division, Kensington; Nicole Ireland, Project Officer, Financial Services, Kensington; Kylie Ryan, Conservation Officer (Marine), Swan Coastal District, Fremantle.

Transfer

Shawn Councillor, Regional Indigenous Liaison Officer, Manjimup to Karratha; Bradley Barton, Regional Leader Nature Conservation, Goldfields Region to Manjimup Regional Headquarters; Clive Cosham, On-line Services Officer, People Services Branch, Kensington to Office of Shared Services; Mike Fielden, District Fire Coordinator, Harvey Work Centre to Forest Products Commission.

Temporary transfer

Catherine Page, Conservation Officer, Forest Management Branch, Manjimup to Midwest Region, Geraldton.