

Volunteers form vital 'alliance'

BETTER marketing and research into communicating the "volunteering in the environment" message was one of the challenges recognised by participants in a workshop held at CALM's WA Herbarium in April.

The half-day workshop on Volunteering for the Environment was part of the Fifth National Conference on Volunteering held in Perth from April 5 to 8.

CALM speakers included Executive Director Syd Shea, and Acting Curator of CALM's WA Herbarium Dr Neville Marchant.

Dr Marchant, who chaired the workshop, welcomed guests and gave them an introductory talk that included background on the speakers for the morning, followed by an overview of the kind of work carried out by volunteers working with CALM.

Dr Shea showed participants a video and colour transparencies that depicted the vital role played by Western Australian volunteers working with CALM.

He said that CALM managed about 20 million hectares of lands and waters, an area slightly bigger than half the size of Japan, and was responsible for the wildlife, plants and animals throughout the State including those on some private land.

"These lands and waters and the wildlife in them form what used to be called 'The CALM estate' but they don't belong to CALM," Dr Shea said.

"Everybody in Western Australia owns that 20 million hectares of land and waters and their biota."

Dr Shea said WA was 2 500 million years old — one of the most ancient lands in the world — with a great diversity of ecosystems existing in some bizarre environments.

"This has created some of the most unusual adaptations in our plants and animals and produced a rich variety of biota," he said.

"This means there's also a great diversity of projects, and volunteers can and do often make the difference between urgent

projects being embarked upon, or existing ones continued.

He described the recent discovery of a possible cure for the HIV virus, the pharmaceutical chemical concurvone, an extract from the smoke bush plant found only in Western Australia.

"This find is only the tip of the iceberg and I believe it to be highly unlikely that we couldn't pull from WA's biota an elixir of chemicals that could hold the key to cures for cancer and even heart disease," he said.

"But human and financial resources for this research are pretty thin and likely to become more so, and this is where volunteers from the general community can help to bring about such discoveries sooner.

1500 volunteers

Dr Shea said CALM WA's 1500 volunteers were already carrying out significant work on many other projects that included:

- Control of feral animals, the present emphasis being on the fox.
- Land reclamation and rehabilitation
- Emergencies—rescuing seals and whales.
- Nature-based tourism — a future export income earner.

Dr Shea said there was one area that agencies, including CALM, could do better and that was in the methods of recognition of the valuable contribution made by volunteers.

"We've heard from Dr Marchant how volunteers working at the Herbarium are treated with the same respect and consideration as that shown to staff — even down to getting the same memos," he said.

"Scarce human and financial resources prevent us from recognising volunteers in a tangible way, but to keep those we already have, and to attract more, we first need to ask questions.

"For example, why do volunteers do it?"

"Agencies such as CALM need to know the reasons and that's where volunteers here today can help by telling us.

"My theory is that

people volunteer because there's a challenge they wish to meet, for the sheer enjoyment of the activity or for the satisfaction of knowing they're being helpful.

"But probably the most important force motivating volunteers is the fact that they are doing something they believe in.

Marketing

"The next step for us is to build into the work we need volunteers to carry out these same stimuli and satisfactions — and market them out there in the community.

"In this tough and arid Western Australian environment many plants and animals have formed strategic alliances; loners don't survive!

"The same can be said for human communities; we must break down barriers and form 'strategic alliances' to provide solutions to the twin problems of the environment and the economy.

Public owners

Dr Shea said there was a need to communicate to the wider community the reality of public ownership of environmental issues.

"Meanwhile managements in the private and the public sector must continue to work towards more effective industrial relations, to cultivate a team spirit among our workers and inspire them with the same enthusiasm found among volunteers."

Other speakers at the Conference were: Community Involvement Co-ordinator with the Department of Environmental Protection Margo O'Byrne; Director of Kings Park Dr Steve Hopper; Manager of Underwater World Dean Lea; and Manager, Education and Community Relations - Rottnest Island Mike Flood.

The National Conference on Volunteering is held every two years in a different State capital.

This was the first year for Perth and CALM took a leading role, with co-ordinator of volunteers Terry Hales hosting the Volunteering for the Environment workshop at the Herbarium.



Dr Syd Shea (centre) enjoys a tea break with participants in the Volunteering for the Environment workshop. They are, left to right, CALM volunteers Nora and Brian Best, Dr Shea, Joy Noble from the Volunteers Centre of South Australia and Trees for Life, and Mike Flood, Rottnest Island Volunteers Co-ordinator. The half-day workshop was part of the Fifth National Conference of Volunteers held in Perth from April 5-8.

Story and photo by Verna Costello

The talents of Warren



The family name of Warren has a long association with forestry at Dwellingup.

CALM contract gardener Geoff Warren believes there is a combined total of at least 430 years that he and his relatives have put in.

They have worked in a wide range of occupations — Overseers uncle Tom and uncle Jim, grader driver uncle Arthur, administration and, later, lab assistant cousin Heather, and Mount Wells fire tower operator cousin Rebecca Beach.

Geoff's parents make up the rest of the family input with his mother Val as cadet-school cook, and Bob, his father, a forest workman in research.

Geoff is continuing the family tradition in more than one capacity.

He was a contract towerman at Mount Wells throughout the recent fire

by
Tammie Reid

season, a part-time fee collector at Lane Poole Reserve and contract gardener at Dwellingup's office grounds, a job he does with considerable flair.

He is also the local school gardener and is renowned for his fabulous hedge sculptures.

Geoff recently completed a Certificate of Horticultural Practice which has stood him in good stead with his new lawn mowing and garden contracting business — a far cry from the certified wood machinist career he embarked upon in 1980.

For a while, Geoff was making a living selling wooden toys.

Now, with all the jobs, study, and hectic responsibilities that come with being a parent he's lucky to get the time to make toys for his two children, Robert (5) and Megan (7).

(Left) Geoff Warren.
Photo by Tammie Reid



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