

Move over Crocodile Dundee ...

... and make way for 'Crocodile Derschow', otherwise known as Yanchep National Park ranger Hardy Derschow.

Hardy earned the 'Crocodile' title when he was in the United Kingdom for the World Travel Market held recently at Earl's Court in London.

An elderly woman had been knocked over in an underground train station and her handbag snatched. Her screams for help reached Hardy who quickly spotted the assailant heading his way, and blocked progress.

Calling on some of his former boxing skills, Hardy swiftly downed the would-be thief and retrieved the woman's handbag.

by Verna Costello

"The guy went down like a sack of potatoes and must have pulled a muscle or sprained an ankle in the process," Hardy said.

"He was last seen with a pronounced limp as he beat a hasty retreat out of the underground."

Ignoring the woman's pleas for help, passers by had left her bruised and severely shaken. Hardy set her on her feet and saw her not only to the train to take her home, but up to her front door.

On the way, he told her the purpose of his visit to London and, not one to lose an opportunity to sing the praises of his beloved WA,

he plied her with a glowing account of CALM's role as a pro-active guardian of its natural wonders.

The woman was obviously mightily impressed, not only with Hardy's gallantry, but also his enthusiasm for his calling, and word travelled swiftly to the Australian Tourism Commission and the media.

Soon, Hardy had hit the headlines of the British national newspaper *The Sun*, and his photograph, complete with Akubra hat, and plastic blow-up crocodile, appeared with the story of the WA Aboriginal version of Crocodile Dundee.

Word of Hardy's exploits swiftly reached Perth and ABC radio's Peter

Holland, who interviewed him by phone in London.

Hardy says he found his trip a learning experience as well as a great opportunity to tell the world why tourists should visit WA.

"For example, I discovered results of a survey of visitors to the World Travel Market showed that, worldwide, the most popular places to visit are national parks, followed by beaches and islands, while the most popular activity, diving, came third," Hardy said.

"WA is abundant in all of these, so is well-placed when competing for the attention of tourists.

"All we have to do now is get out there and promote it for all we're worth."

Hardy was invited to attend the World Travel Market by Maggie Edmonds, Principal of inbound tour operator Perth and Beyond.

Maggie believes Aboriginal culture and national parks are of prime interest to international tourists.

She had seen Hardy in action, escorting tours around Yanchep National Park and demonstrating various aspects of Aboriginal culture.

"His breadth and depth of knowledge makes him a valuable asset to WA tourism and I was delighted to have him with me at the World Travel Market, where he was a great hit with its visitors," Maggie said.

Organisers claim the annual travel market to be the world's biggest, with 3600 exhibitors representing 157 countries.



Hardy obligingly poses with 'genuine plastic crocodile' and an assortment of handbags for British newspaper *The Sun*. The photo accompanied the story of Hardy's gallant rescue of an elderly woman and her handbag. Photo courtesy *The Sun*

Hardy now hopes to accompany Maggie to the World Travel Fair in Johannesburg, South Africa, in April, where they intend to improve on the successes they enjoyed in London.

For those not familiar with the movie, there is a now-famous scene in which actor Paul Hogan's character, Crocodile Dundee, is confronted by a would-be attacker and thief who

threatens him with a knife. Drawing a much longer and broader blade, Dundee drawls "Call that a knife? **This** is a knife." Much impressed, the assailant flees.



Hardy Derschow, left, with WA Agent General Bill Hassell and Australian Tourism Commission's Manager of Market Development, Europe, Jonathan Campbell as they sample some bush tucker at the World Travel Market. Photo by Maggie Edmonds.



100% Page 5

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