

# The field graduates - keeping track of them

by Megan Hughes

**THE outstanding link between the careers of the graduates interviewed so far is the great diversity they find in the work they are required to do; it seems that CALM field officers need to develop a myriad of skills to perform the wide variety of tasks required of them.**

It is in developing a basis for these skills that the graduates have found their fourteen weeks of skills-based training most helpful.

Continuing from the last issue, we look at two more field officers who have completed the Field Officer Skills-Based Training Course.

They are Perth District's Dave Guille and Blackwood District's Rob Turner.

**D**avid is a forest ranger with Forest Management Branch and can be found at Perth District's Wanneroo premises.

His time is divided in varying proportions between Nature Conservation, CALMfire and the Softwood Business Unit, depending on District priorities at any given time.

His Nature Conservation work incorporates a wide range of activities that focus predominantly on general reserve management.

Duties include the planning and implementation of weed and feral animal control programs, monitoring populations, as well as taking care of general periodic maintenance require-

ments. In addition to these duties, Dave's work with CALMfire sees him involved with the preparation of burn prescriptions and firebreak plans as well as taking an active role in burning and suppression operations.

Finally, rounding out David's highly diverse works program, is the time committed to the Softwood Business Unit. The festive season saw him running the annual Christmas Tree Harvest and Supply Operation.

David has a Bachelor of Applied Science in Environmental Management from Edith Cowan University.

However, his interest in land management stems from well before then.

"Being born and raised in 'God's own country' (Frankland, to the uninformed), I fostered from an early age a keen interest in ethical land management practices," David said.

However, despite his long-term interest in environmental resource management, David's entry into CALM was not smooth.

He first applied for a field officer cadetship when he was barely out of high school, but was unsuccessful.

His subsequent completion of an Associate Diploma in Environmental Management also failed to yield results on the employment front.

As a result, David found himself working as an itinerant labourer on

drilling rigs, tractors and in shearing sheds.

"Finally, after two years, Edith Cowan University developed their Degree in Environmental Management so I went back for another go," said David.

"After a further 18 months' study, and almost a year of looking around, I broke into the big league, landing a contract position as a dieback interpreter with CALM's Kelmescott Forest Management Branch."

"After two years as an interpreter, the introduction of the new Field Officer Skills-based Training Course gave me the opportunity to enter the mainstream of CALM operations, as well as providing greater opportunities for career development."

Given the range of David's tasks within CALM, his reply when asked what he enjoyed most about his work was:

"I very much enjoy the great variety in my works program.

"It means I'm constantly challenged, and it's the challenges that make work so stimulating.

"Also, I meet a wide variety of interesting people, and I have a great working environment."

David enjoyed the fourteen weeks of skills-based training each of the new recruits receives in their first two years of employment.

Commenting on the course, David said:

"The relatively short stints at Dwellingup proved to be quite physically taxing.

"Participants attempted to compress the same level of 'social interaction' into those few weeks as the previous cadetship officers had experienced in a full year.

"However, the skills and knowledge acquired during that brief period, as well as the networks developed between the recruits, have since proved to be extremely valuable.

**R**ob Turner is located at Nannup, where his work is mainly with Nature Conservation and the Hardwood Business Unit. However, some of his time is also devoted to his role as a Health and Safety Co-ordinator and to CALMfire.

He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from Murdoch University.

Having grown up in Harvey, Rob



Rob Turner. Photo by Jim Green

has a family history steeped in the forest:

"One grandfather was a builder, but in his spare time he was an amateur minerals prospector, and the other was a forester with the Forests Department," Rob said.

"I think it was their influence that initially gave me an interest in CALM.

"Also, after university, I worked for several months with an oil pipe maintenance crew on Barrow Island, where I developed an interest in the natural habitat of the north-west.

"Eventually, I would like to see my career with CALM take me into that area, and be based somewhere like Derby or Kununurra, but I suppose many others have similar aspirations."

Rob began working with CALM at Nannup in 1995, where he still based today.

"Being based in Nannup, I have enormous diversity in my work," Rob said, with some degree of understatement.

His responsibilities with Nature Conservation alone illustrate this point.

Rob's work involves biophysical surveying, rare flora and fauna management, feral animal and weed control and reserve management.

He also has responsibility for the management of the flora industry carried on in the District.

An equal proportion of Rob's time is devoted to his work supporting the Hardwood Business Unit.

In this role, Rob's duties involve the planning and implementation of coupe setups, including coupe demarcation and treemarking.

Along with Nature Conservation, these activities account for about 8% per cent of Rob's time.

Interestingly, he lists his work as co-ordinator of the Health and Safety Program for the Blackwood District as taking up the remaining 20 per cent of his time.

However, somewhere in this mountain of duties, Rob also manages to find time to work with CALMfire, operating as a sector commander, helping with communications and ground support at both wildfires and prescribed burns.

However, when asked what he enjoyed most, Rob, like David Guille, listed his job's diversity as one of its best features.

"The thing I enjoy most about my work is getting outdoors and experiencing a wide variety of locations.

"Depending on the task I'm performing, I may find myself working by a river, in a forest, or even on the coast.

"I also enjoy the freedom I'm given to determine my own weekly works programs, and being responsible for the implementation of these programs with minimal supervision."

With regard to how the Field Officer Skills-based Training Course had helped him with his work, Rob had this to say:

"The training has been comprehensive and well organised; it has helped me to successfully bridge the gap between university and the often out-of-the-ordinary tasks required to be performed by CALM field staff—such as fire-fighting and coupe management."



David Guille. Photo by Ken Borland



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Dave Guille (left) + Clayton Sands



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Rob Turner