

Following up on field graduates: Anthony and Brett

By Megan Hughes

SINCE beginning this series of articles on the first graduates of CALM's Field Officer Skills-Based Training Course, one fact has become clear.

That is, the desire in a person to develop a career in natural resource management does not always occur suddenly. Many factors contribute to nurture it.

This issue of CALM NEWS looks at two graduates whose stories clearly illustrate this point.

Anthony Desmond credits his family and the surroundings in which he was raised with fostering his interest in working with the natural environment.

Raised in Geraldton, 'with bush and coast on the doorstep', his youth was spent diving, bushwalking, reef walking and on family camps

in the Murchison. This all led Anthony to realise where his future career lay at an early age.

A father who often brought home things he found in the bush, such as frogs' eggs, only served to confirm Anthony's future.

Anthony is currently based in the Narrogin District, where his work is centred largely on public recreation and education.

Varying amounts of his time are also devoted to timber production duties and CALMfire.

Most of his time is taken up with upgrading facilities at Wave Rock, in a recoup project for the Kondinin Shire, the construction of a campground in Dryandra Woodland, and conducting

and promoting ecotourism tours of Dryandra.

Anthony's path into CALM was not a smooth transition from university.

Honours degree

A biology honours degree from Murdoch University and a lack of suitable work led him to a variety of occupations including those of bottleneck attendant and deckhand.

To improve his chances of finding more suitable work, Anthony worked as a volunteer at the Geraldton Branch of the WA Museum.

This soon led to paid employment conducting school holiday programs, and as a gallery attendant.

This eventually led to Anthony being employed as a herpetologist (the study of reptiles) on the joint Museum-CALM Carnarvon Basin Survey.

Recruitment into CALM soon followed.

A happy outcome

Certainly a long and hard road to join the department, but to hear Anthony describe his work, it seems he is more than happy with the outcome.

"A large proportion of my time is spent working in Dryandra Woodland, providing ecotourism services and conducting school holiday programs," Anthony said.

"To be honest, I enjoy this part of my job so much that for most of the time it's actually more like fun than work."

With regard to his skills-based training course, Anthony recognises the value of providing new CALM recruits with a broad knowledge base.

"Some aspects of the training don't appear to be relevant to me in my current position, but I find when I'm conducting ecotourism and educational talks, that I'm continually challenged on, for example,

CALM's burning and forestry practices," he said.

"Without the broad knowledge that the training provided, I would have to give a lot of 'sorry, I don't know' answers."

A cause for pride

Anthony also praises the training presenters, saying "the knowledge and ability of the various course presenters is something CALM should take pride in, with some of them standing out as more prepared and better communicators than many university lecturers I've encountered."

Brett Fitzgerald currently works in Kirup, the town in which he was raised, and worked for CALM when he was still at high school.

His family history with Kirup dates back to 1924, when his grandfather joined the Forests Department as a cadet with the first intake at the Forestry School in Ludlow, later becoming chief timber inspector for Kirup.

Brett's father also worked for 44 years with the Forests Department—before it became part of CALM—as the Kirup administration officer.

Currently, Brett's main duties at the Kirup Work Centre in the Blackwood District focus on the district's Nature Conservation Program.

In addition, he helps the State Forest Resources Business Unit with tree marking and he also helps with prescribed burning and wildfire suppression when required.

Recently Brett's duties have focused on the commencement of the Western Shield predator control program and the implementation of the new MAPINFO flora database in the Blackwood District.

However, his work also sees him involved in tasks as wide



Brett Fitzgerald, setting a fauna trap, as part of his animal monitoring duties. Photo by Don Boothey

ranging as mining industry liaison, conducting schools programs, liaising with community groups and reserve management.

Much to Brett's satisfaction, his work in the Blackwood area allows him to be involved in the management of a range of different land types.

"The Blackwood District tenure varies from jarrah forest to karri bush, and from easterly wandoo reserves to coastal areas such as Lake Jasper and Black Point," he said.

Brett joined CALM in 1995, after completing a degree in Environmental Biology at Curtin University.

Honours project on jarrah

He continued his studies on a part-time basis, completing his honours project on the effects of thinning and fertiliser on jarrah stands.

This was carried out with the assistance of the CALM Dwellingup research team, and with senior research scientist Geoff Stoneman as one of his supervisors.

Like most of the CALM Skills-based Training Course graduates interviewed so far, Brett names one of the most valuable aspects of his training as the chance to meet other CALM staff.

Value of social interaction

"It seems that a large part of the learning experience comes, not only from the training sessions, but also from the social interaction between the participants themselves and between them and the trainers," he said.

Brett probably best explains the value graduates place on the friendships formed during that time when he says:

"Roll on the first reunion!"



"Come on, give us a kiss" seems to be what this carpet python might be saying, as it heads towards Anthony Desmond's face. Photo by Michelle Boothey

