

## BELTING WEST CAPE HOWE

Park managers have come up with a novel method to overcome degradation at West Cape Howe, one of the State's most spectacular coastal national parks.

Because of unmanaged access in the past, four-wheel-drive tracks snaked through the sandhills of the South Coast park, forming an unsightly network of spaghetti strands.

Department of Conservation and Land Management Ranger Richard Pemberton designed a system of track rehabilitation and stabilisation, using a combination of old rubber conveyor belting from Alcoa of Australia and concreting.

"We got in touch with the mine manager of Alcoa to see whether disused conveyor belting could be used for a trial

on the Lake William Road. It worked and we have now used three kilometres of belt to stabilise one-and-a-half kilometres of hill sites. It is much cheaper than palleting and re-uses the rubber. The idea is to keep traffic off the ground and stop vehicles digging into the sandhills," he said.

Belting is held in place with 50 cm pegs that cost about a dollar each to manufacture. Cockburn Cement also donated 32 tonnes of second grade cement that was used to compact with sand to stabilise tracks on level sections.

Richard said 70 per cent of old tracks in the park had now been rehabilitated, with funds from the Australian Nature Conservation Agency. The funding enabled CALM to employ two local Nyoongar



men, Mal Roberts and Ron Coyne, who were involved throughout the project. Help was also received from the West Cape Howe Association, Albany Angling Club, Albany Scouts, Greenskills, local school groups and other volunteers.

Richard said he had written a report on the belting and concreting system and it had potential to be used across the South Coast and throughout WA for rehabilitation projects.

*Belting on the degraded tracks at West Cape Howe*  
Photo - Richard Pemberton

He said CALM was planning to use belting in the Fitzgerald River National Park next year. Belting allowed access to the coast without the problems of water and wind erosion and the spread of dieback disease. It also allowed the rehabilitation of disused tracks, which improves the park's landscape.

## BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Two chicks found in a sand quarry being excavated at Kangaroo Hills Timber Reserve near Coolgardie were taken under the wing of a local wildlife carer.

CALM regional ecologist Andy Chapman confidently identified them as rainbow bee-eaters, because of the shape of their beaks and the fact that they came from a burrow.

The chicks were duly installed in a hospital box kept at 25°C and fed mealworms and a specially prepared insectivore mix every three to four hours by wildlife carer Pam Chapman.

They thrived on this diet, grew very fast and developed demanding and aggressive table manners, frequently "biting the hand that fed them" in their frenzy to eat. They called for their food with a repetitive, high-pitched grinding call. But as they grew, the disproportionate size of

their head and beaks puzzled Andy, who began to doubt his identification.

As the plumage developed it became clear they were anything but rainbow bee-eaters; the turquoise wings, red rumps, enormous square heads and formidable beaks indicated beyond a doubt that they were red-backed kingfishers.

After about four weeks the chicks began to show an interest in flight and were transferred to an outside aviary where they practised perching and began to feed themselves on a range of insects.

After being nurtured for seven weeks, the kingfishers were vigorously flying up and down their aviary and it was becoming difficult to satisfy their voracious appetites. On the day of their release they sat huddled together on a nearby TV aerial before exploring their immediate vicinity and feed

on insects off the ground.

For the next five days they were repeatedly seen together in the mornings, disappearing later in the day. On the sixth day they did not return from their afternoon foray and it is assumed they had successfully returned to the wild.

The red-backed kingfisher is a spring-summer visitor to the Eastern Goldfields. At Coolgardie they are at the edge

of their range. The closely related sacred kingfisher occurs in the south-west of WA and both species occur in the north-west and north of the State. Their presence also adds to the biological knowledge of Kangaroo Hills Timber Reserve.

*These two red-backed kingfishers were hand-raised by Kalgoorlie wildlife carer Pam Chapman.*  
Photo - Andy Chapman



# LANDSCOPE

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*Hand in hand with nature. This brushtail possum is just one of the animals studied during fauna surveys of the Batalling Forest. See page 16.*



*Lush vegetation and a welcoming smile greet you as you arrive at Mt Hart Homestead, the 'Oasis in the Leopolds'. See page 48.*



*'Fire, Wind and Water', on page 42, tells of recent research into the rehabilitation of exploration tracks in the Rudall River area of the Little Sandy Desert.*



*Deep beneath the Southern Ocean lies the wreck of the Sanko Harvest. This rotting hull is now an artificial reef attracting marine life and divers alike. See page 23.*



*Plantations of brown mallet in the early 1900's began a chain of events that resulted in the 'Woodland Wonderland' of Dryandra. See page 28.*

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## COVER

Woylies prefer clumped, relatively open vegetation with sandy soils that are easy to dig. They are found, among other places, at Batalling Forest and the Dryandra Woodland. See stories on pages 16 and 28.

*The illustration is by Philippa Nikulinsky.*



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