

In collaboration



Four-wheel-drive champions

Volunteers from four-wheel-drive clubs around the State have joined Parks and Wildlife on a number of projects to improve and conserve off-road vehicle tracks, historic sites and the surrounding environment.

by Danielle Stone and Karla Graham

Heading into the bush in your free time with a four-wheel drive loaded with construction material for a day of hard work requires dedication and determination. That's exactly what members of Track Care WA and the Western Australian Four Wheel Drive Association – peak bodies for four-wheel-drive groups – have been doing since the 1990s to help maintain the tracks they love using.

This work is carried out by volunteers as part of Parks and Wildlife's *Track Adoption* program, coordinated by the department's Recreation and Trails Unit. The program enables groups to 'adopt' a track, an area or facilities to look after, in partnership with Parks and Wildlife.

The program encourages groups to become actively involved in conservation and recreation projects that support sustainable off-roading practices in WA. In turn, this maintains public access to the tracks while helping Parks and Wildlife minimise issues such as environmental impact, user-created tracks, illegal use of management tracks and other trails, damage to cultural sites and visitor risk. To date, it has helped many people with diverse backgrounds and interests make



meaningful, and sometimes challenging, contributions to unique and special places throughout WA.

MORE THAN TRACK MAINTENANCE

The Land Rover Owners Club of Western Australia is one of the longest-running partners of the program. For more than 15 years, club members have been working with staff in Parks and Wildlife's Donnelly District on projects in and around D'Entrecasteaux National Park. Most recently, they assisted with a project to rehabilitate dunes on the Yeagarup and Warren beach tracks. Club members installed wind fences to catch the sand and

stabilise dunes. They also help to provide invaluable education to the broader four-wheel-drive community.

As well as helping to protect the environment and maintain tracks, many clubs also assist in conserving relics of WA's settlement heritage by restoring dilapidated homesteads, shearing quarters and other buildings on ex-pastoral station country. Track Care WA has completed a three-year project at Woolgorong Station in the mid-west, with volunteers working tirelessly to restore the old homestead which is more than 100 years old. Woolgorong, 170km north-east of Geraldton, was one of the earliest leases in the area taken up by Michael Morrissey in 1873 and later by Sir James Lee-Steere.



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Main Four-wheel-drive road in King Leopold Ranges Conservation Park.

Photo – Tourism WA

Insets top to bottom A member of the Armadale Four Wheel Drive Club assesses Captain Fawcett Track.

Alan and Jan Salter from the Toyota Landcruiser Club.

Photos – Danielle Stone/Parks and Wildlife

Above left and above Woolgorong Station before and after. Volunteers blended the old with the new, installing new windows and doors alongside the original mud bricks, and reconstructing the existing walls and roof.
Photo – Track Care WA

Left Members of the Toyota Landcruiser Club work on a replica of the historic Congelin Stockyards.

Photo – Danielle Stone/Parks and Wildlife



Above South West Four Wheel Drive Club president Matthew Howard signs an adoption agreement for Lennard Track at Collie Dam with Parks and Wildlife ranger Jamie Gault.
Photo – South West Four Wheel Drive Club

Right Volunteers from the Land Rover Owners Club install wind fencing at Warren Beach Track, D’Entrecasteaux National Park.
Photo – Land Rover Owners Club

Below right Members of the Red Dog Four Wheel Drive Club construct a sign for Mount Meharry in the Pilbara.
Photo – Red Dog Four Wheel Drive Club

The homestead was built in 1912 and housed the Murchison Roads Board from 1919 to 1921. During one of the club’s restoration trips in 2012, members of the team were busily working under an unseasonably hot sun when a man stopped in with his niece and her daughter during a trip to show them some of their country. His grandmother had lived in the homestead when the station was mustering sheep, and he was interested to see it being restored.

THE PROGRAM EXPANDS

The program has grown considerably since its beginnings in the 1990s, with many more clubs coming on board. The Red Dog Four Wheel Drive Club works with Parks and Wildlife staff in the Pilbara Region to undertake maintenance on the Mount Meharry Four Wheel Drive track before the dry season. While, in



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Lane Poole Reserve south of Perth, the Armadale Four Wheel Drive Club has been trained to assess tracks, and club members are now skilled in spotting issues on the Captain Fawcett Track and are working with local staff to develop a maintenance program to keep the track in good shape. The Dryandra area in the Wheatbelt has been adopted by the Toyota Landcruiser Club, whose members not only help with four-wheel-drive track maintenance, but maintain walk trails and promote the history of the area. Their current project is building a replica of the historic Congelin Stockyards.

The South West Four Wheel Drive Club recently signed a five-year adoption of Lennard Track near Collie. Already, the club and staff from Parks and Wildlife’s Wellington District have installed new picnic sites, conducted track maintenance and saved a 200-year-old grasstree in Wellington National Park. And volunteers from a number of clubs recently spent a week working on the beautiful Dirk Hartog Island with staff from the Parks and Wildlife Shark Bay District (see ‘Turning back time on Dirk Hartog Island’, *LANDSCOPE*, Spring 2014).

Whether it’s conserving heritage by rebuilding a 100-year-old homestead on an ex-pastoral station, or protecting the environment around a track, what really makes the program work is the people. All the individuals involved, whether

they are four-wheel-drive enthusiasts or Parks and Wildlife employees, share a common love for this amazing and diverse State, and recognise that it’s all about striking a balance between recreation and conservation. And what a great way to spend time – with friends, at the end of a long but productive day in a spectacular location.



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For more information or to get involved, contact the Western Australian Four Wheel Drive Association at www.wa4wda.com.au or by email (secretary@wa4wda.com.au) or Track Care WA at www.trackcare.com.au or by email (info@trackcare.com.au).