

# People power

celebrating 30 years of volunteers

Thirty years ago, the former Department of Conservation and Land Management began its formal volunteer program. Since then, thousands of volunteers have contributed millions of hours to projects and programs that help to conserve and manage the State's natural areas and protect its precious plants and animals.

by Lee Hollingsworth and Rhianna King

30  
years of  
volunteers  
1989-2019





## So you want to be a volunteer?

by Estelle Leyland

If you have time to spare, have skills or abilities and love nature, CALM needs you as a volunteer. But before you race off to sign on, there are several things to consider.

Working as a volunteer in our national parks is not all sunshine, scenery and bushwalks. Depending on your assignment, there can be long hours of work, mentally and physically. Extremes of weather can be trying, so if you aren't used to very hot or freezing cold areas, don't consider working in them.

Isolation is another problem, as many of our national parks are far from any towns, and you may have to live alone or in a tiny community. Self-sufficiency is important, as you are there to lighten the ranger's workload, not increase it.

Although you will be expected to plan a lot of your own program, you should be willing to take orders from the ranger-in-charge, as he is responsible for all workers

in his area. You must also observe park regulations.

Now for the best part! The advantages of volunteer work far outweigh all other considerations. The satisfaction you get depends mainly on your love of our environment and natural treasures. To

live and work on a day-to-day basis in our Australian bush is an experience beyond any man-made pleasure. As 'progress' encroaches more and more into our natural habitation, the time must come when our national parks are the last remaining refuge

of our unique flora and fauna. What tremendous satisfaction there is in contributing to their preservation.

CALM provides training, equipment and support - in fact almost all you need. But the most important prerequisite is enthusiasm. Your time and effort will be of help to our national parks, but the one who will profit the most will be you! I know, I'm a volunteer.

*Estelle Leyland has been working as a volunteer with CALM at Millstream National Park since March this year. Estelle's role has been to collect information on the resources of the Park. So far Estelle has written a draft publication on geology and almost completed a comprehensive study of the exotic weeds of Millstream. She has also managed to add 30 more birds to the current Millstream bird list. In addition, Estelle has been collecting plant specimens for the local and State Herbaria.*

Western Australia's national parks and other reserves are as diverse as they are dispersed, and the rangers who are charged with looking after these areas often have thousands of square kilometres under their care which, in some cases, are visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year. In 1988, the then Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) identified an opportunity to help support the work of the rangers in WA's national parks and reserves by enlisting the help of volunteers to be the first point of contact for visitors.

The Western Australian 'Campground Host' program was modelled on one being run successfully by the National Parks Service in the United States. After a period of planning, including getting the necessary union endorsements, the first recruits were deployed to Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, Lane Poole Reserve and Cape Range National Park in 1989 on a trial basis. The volunteers acted as a 'meet and greet' to visitors, provided information about the local sites and facilities, collected camping and park fees and carried out general maintenance tasks. The trial was a resounding success, and the initiative was soon rolled out to other parts of the State.

Since then, the Campground Host program has been expanded to 65 locations throughout the State and



### Hear about the volunteer program

Scan this QR code or visit Parks and Wildlife Service's 'LANDSCOPE' playlist on YouTube.



is supported by 240 campground hosts. The 1989 trial also heralded the beginning of the former department's formal volunteer program, which has expanded to contribute millions of volunteer hours to countless conservation and land management projects across WA.

### STEP BACK IN TIME

Shortly after the formal volunteer program was launched, the department began producing *Volunteer News*. One 1990 edition contained an advertisement, written by volunteer Estelle Leyland, which called for new volunteers. In it, Estelle earnestly cautions that volunteering is "not all sunshine, scenery and bushwalks" and there are some things for would-be volunteers to consider, such as "extreme weather", "isolation", the need to be self-sufficient, and the requirement to take "orders" from the ranger-in-charge and abide by park regulations. But she goes on

Previous page

Main Volunteers contribute to the Ningaloo Turtle Program.

Inset WA Herbarium volunteers play an important role in the description and documentation of WA plant species.

Photos - DBCA

Above left Campground Hosts are stationed throughout the State, including at Kennedy Range National Park.

Photo - Barrie Russell

Above A 1990 edition of *Volunteer News* advertises for new volunteers.

to describe that "to live and work on a day-to-day basis in our Australian bush is an experience beyond any man-made pleasure". She also points out that "CALM provides training, equipment and support - in fact almost all you need. But the most important prerequisite is enthusiasm". She concludes her piece by stating that "your time and effort will be of help to our national parks, but the one who will profit the most will be you!".

Plenty has changed in the past 30 years for the department and the way it operates (flicking through old copies of *Volunteer News*, which contains the odd black and white photo taken on film or transparency and has a notable absence of website or email addresses (even the phone numbers are without a '9' prefix),



## Volunteering with kids

Recent changes to RiskCover's insurance for volunteers have lifted age restrictions on volunteering with the department. This means that kids under 16 can register and volunteer on department projects with the support and supervision of their parent or guardian and with the approval of the project supervisors, who will carry out a risk assessment and determine the project's suitability for young volunteers on a case-by-case basis.



is testament to that). But much of what Estelle wrote remains true today. While many volunteers are skilled and bring great experience and knowledge to the programs, many projects require no specific skills other than enthusiasm and passion for protecting and conserving wildlife and the environment, and the volunteers themselves get a great deal out of the experience.

## CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

Nowadays, members of the public who are interested in volunteering can access an interactive map on DBCA Parks and Wildlife Service's website ([dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities)), which is reproduced on page 40, to see where and what volunteering opportunities are available.

As well as being a helpful resource, the map is an impressive depiction of the range of opportunities on offer. Through the program, volunteers get the chance to take part in 'real' environmental and conservation work. Projects include turtle tagging on remote north-west islands, flora monitoring in the heart of the rangelands, maintaining WA's world-class walking and cycling trails and, of course, the ever-enduring and always popular Campground Host program, just to name a few. There are also opportunities to volunteer at Perth Zoo, Kings Park and Bold Park, and at Rottne Island.



**Top left** Campground Hosts Patricia and Albert in Shark Bay.

**Top** Volunteering opportunities are available for kids under 16.  
*Photos - DBCA*

**Above centre** Hundreds of volunteers give their time in Kings Park to take visitors on guided walks.  
*Photo - Jason Thomas*

**Above** Volunteer Halina holding a pelican.  
*Photo - WA Seabird Rescue*

## A numbers game



**16,000**  
volunteers

The department has 16,000 registered volunteers, of whom 5700 were active in 2017-18.



The number of volunteers has steadily grown from the program's inception.



**8,470,000** hours

In the last financial year, volunteers contributed more than 780,000 hours to more than 200 Parks and Wildlife Service projects across WA.

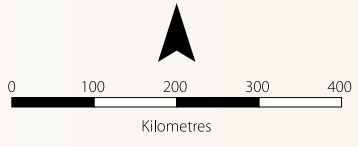
Since 1999 (when official recording began), Parks and Wildlife Service volunteers have contributed more than 8,470,000 hours to conservation projects.



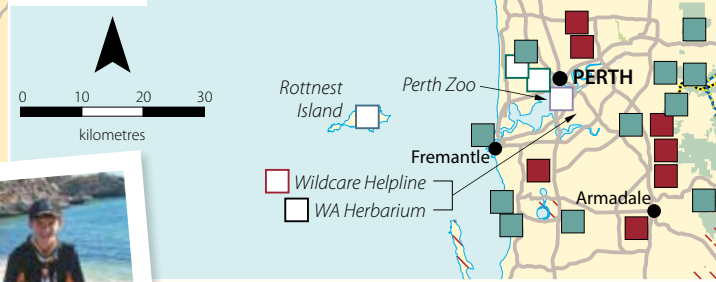
# Volunteer opportunities around the State

**Legend**

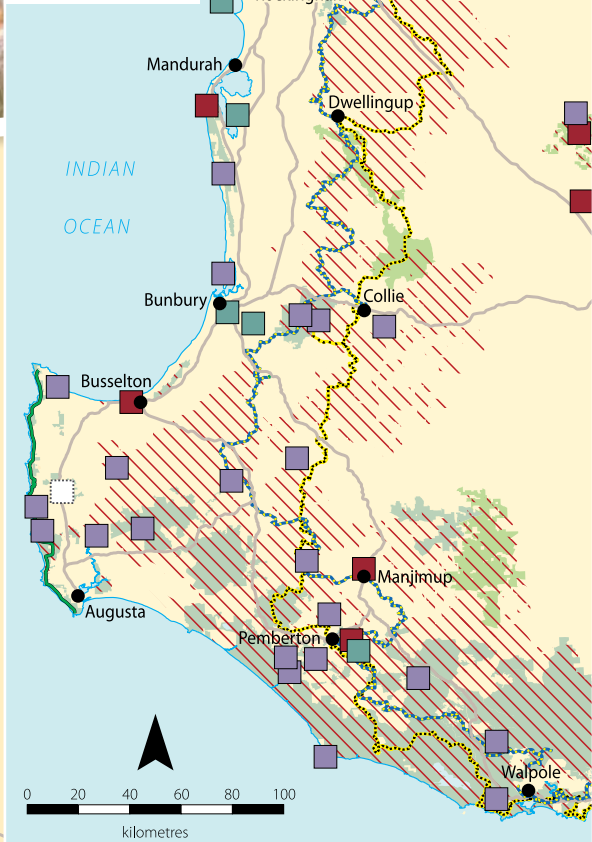
- Campground Host
- 'Friends of' groups
- Kings Park and Bold Park
- Perth Zoo
- Rottnest Island
- Turtle monitoring
- WA Herbarium
- Wildcare Helpline
- Walk and cycle track maintenance
- Western Shield wildlife research and recovery sites
- Wildlife rehabilitation
- Road
- Bibbulmun Track
- Munda Biddi Trail
- Cape to Cape Track
- National park
- Conservation park
- Reserve



INSET 1 Perth



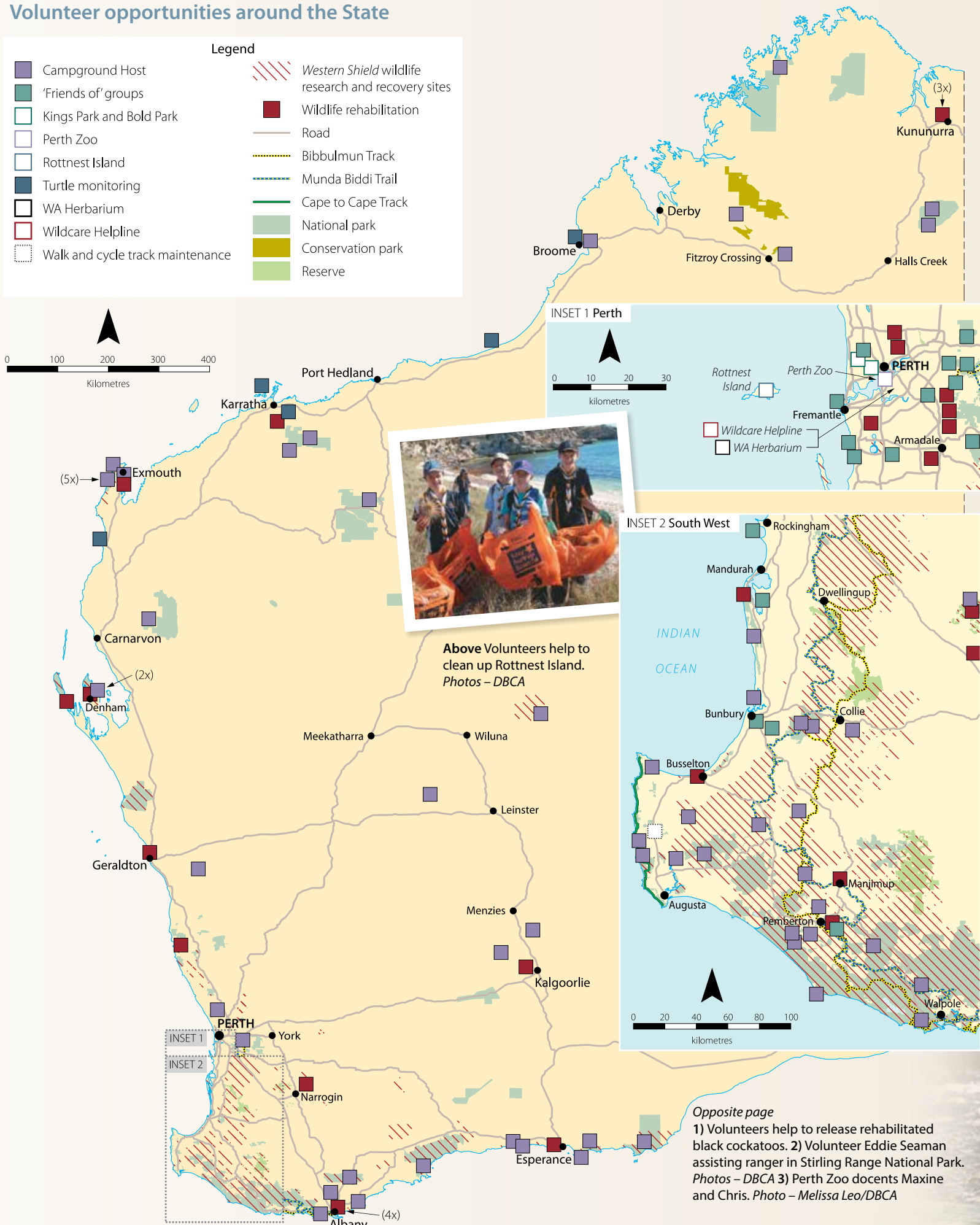
INSET 2 South West



Above Volunteers help to clean up Rottnest Island. Photos - DBCA

Opposite page

1) Volunteers help to release rehabilitated black cockatoos. 2) Volunteer Eddie Seaman assisting ranger in Stirling Range National Park. Photos - DBCA 3) Perth Zoo docents Maxine and Chris. Photo - Melissa Leo/DBCA



## **■ Campground Host program**

The first formal, and probably the best-known of the department's volunteer programs, the Campground Host program, operates at 65 locations and is supported by 240 Campground Hosts. Volunteers 'meet and greet' campers and visitors to the park, provide invaluable visitor services and basic cleaning and maintenance tasks. For more information, visit [pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities)

## **■ 'Friends of' groups**

There are a number of 'Friends of' groups that operate in natural areas around the State. The volunteers carry out a range of projects to help preserve these areas, including weed control, fencing and playing a valuable role in raising awareness of biodiversity values and of natural areas in their local community. Visit [bushlandperth.org.au/groups](http://bushlandperth.org.au/groups) for information about 'Friends of' groups.

## **□ Kings Park and Bold Park**

Hundreds of Western Australians generously give their time in a variety of volunteer roles in Kings Park and Bold Park. They help to care for the natural environment, welcome visitors, advance science and preserve Western Australian history. For more information, visit [bgpa.wa.gov.au/kings-park/visit/volunteers-and-support](http://bgpa.wa.gov.au/kings-park/visit/volunteers-and-support)

## **□ Perth Zoo**

Volunteers who love people as much as they love wildlife can apply to be a volunteer Perth Zoo Docent. For more information, visit [perthzoo.wa.gov.au/about-perth-zoo/working-us/volunteering](http://perthzoo.wa.gov.au/about-perth-zoo/working-us/volunteering)

## **□ Rottnest Island**

A large number of independent voluntary groups undertake a variety of important tasks on Rottnest Island throughout the year. For more information about these programs, visit [ria.wa.gov.au/volunteering-and-partnership](http://ria.wa.gov.au/volunteering-and-partnership)

## **■ Turtle monitoring**

There are a number of volunteering opportunities throughout the State for people to take part in turtle monitoring. These opportunities are seasonally based, and volunteers collect data that contribute to us learning more about the elusive sea turtles that nest on WA beaches. For more information, visit [pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities)

## **□ WA Herbarium**

Volunteers play an integral role in the description and documentation of samples of Western Australian plants. Volunteers are involved in many aspects of Herbarium work, ranging from mounting, incorporating and identifying specimens, processing images for FloraBase, creating electronic keys and maintaining the Reference Herbarium. They also carry out important work in regional herbaria around the State. For more information, visit [pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities)

## **□ Walk and cycle track maintenance**

People who enjoy getting out in the great outdoors and like hiking or cycling, can volunteer to help maintain and improve the State's premier trails. The Munda Biddi Foundation, Bibbulmun Track Foundation and Friends of the Cape to Cape Track run volunteer programs.



For more information, visit [mundabiddi.org.au](http://mundabiddi.org.au), [bibbulmuntrack.org.au](http://bibbulmuntrack.org.au) and [capetocapetrack.com.au](http://capetocapetrack.com.au)

## **▨ Western Shield**

*Western Shield* is a State-wide threat abatement and fauna conservation program. Volunteers are involved in the monitoring component of the program, including the use of automated wildlife cameras, animal trapping and other fauna observational activities, used to assess the success of current management. For more information, visit [pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities)

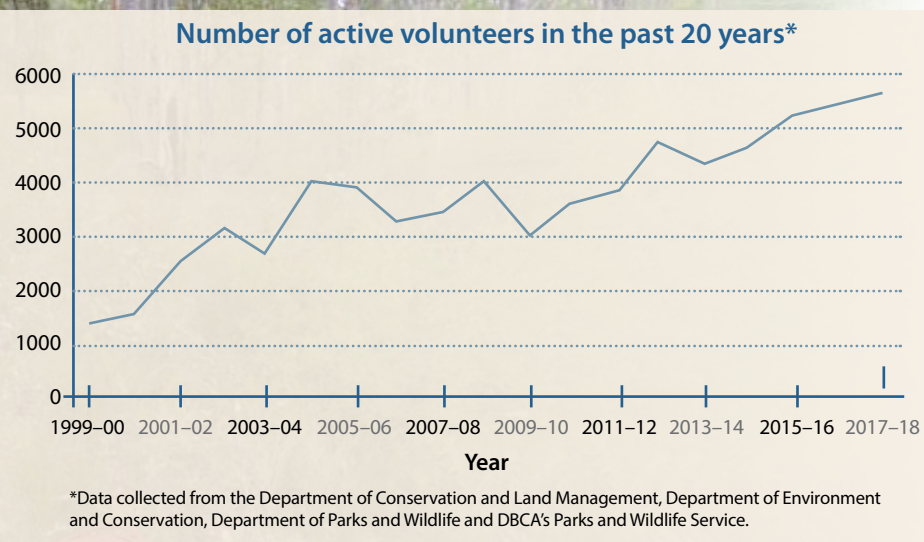
## **□ Wildcare Helpline**

The Wildcare Helpline is a telephone support service that receives more than 13,000 calls each year from members of the public looking for help with sick or injured wildlife. Volunteers take calls and are trained in how to triage, keeping distressed callers calm, offering advice and referring to a further network of volunteers for assistance. For more information, visit [pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities)

## **■ Wildlife rehabilitation**

The department supports several major wildlife rehabilitation centres in WA. Most are not-for-profit organisations that rely heavily on the work of volunteers. Visit [pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities) to find information about opportunities.





“Talk to volunteers, and they’ll almost unanimously tell you that they enjoy the work they do.”

### WIN-WIN FOR EVERYONE

There’s plenty of data to indicate that volunteering benefits the volunteer, as well as the community or program they’re contributing to. It helps individuals become and stay connected to their communities and improves physical and mental health.

Dr Chrissy Sharp has spent her career advocating for the protection of the environment, a role that led to her being appointed to the Environmental Protection Authority and elected to the Legislative Council. Chrissy and her partner Andrew Thamo now live in Balingup, where they have created an arboretum – the Golden Valley Tree Park.

“Volunteering for DBCA is a classic case of the more you give, the more you get back,” she said.

“In our case, Andrew and I have been enormously privileged to have had the opportunity to contribute a useful role towards creating an arboretum in the south-west.

“Starting out nearly 40 years ago, I guess we played a part in pioneering the department’s volunteer program. To be involved in protecting and managing the parks and wildlife of WA has been deeply rewarding. It has kept our lives very interesting – we are busy and engaged in something bigger than our individual lives. Isn’t that the secret of happiness?”

Students also benefit from the opportunity to work alongside department

staff. They gain industry experience and make invaluable contacts, while carrying out meaningful work in some of WA’s most spectacular areas and studying some of the State’s most fascinating plants and animals.

For DBCA research scientist Judy Dunlop, volunteering with the department after she finished university gave her the opportunity to take part in several projects at a number of different locations and, ultimately, helped her gain employment.

“Before I volunteered with the department, I’d never been north of Jurien Bay. But, through volunteering, I had the opportunity to help with turtle tagging in the north-west, trap olive pythons in the Pilbara and search for numbats in the jarrah forest,” she said.

“I got to visit some of the most spectacular and remote areas of the State and had the opportunity to experience different types of research, which helped me to refine what really interested me.

“And it was great fun.”



**Above left** Volunteers help with radio tracking and other activities associated with *Western Shield*.

**Top** Research scientist Judy Dunlop began her career at the department as a volunteer.

**Above** Andrew Thamo (left) and Dr Chrissy Sharp are long-time volunteers with the department and received the 2018 Volunteer of the Year Award. They were nominated by DBCA ranger Gilbert Stokman (centre).  
*Photos – DBCA*

Talk to volunteers, and they’ll almost unanimously tell you that they enjoy the work they do. They cherish the opportunity to contribute to the conservation of WA’s natural areas and the species that inhabit them, and the opportunity to spend time in some of the State’s most beautiful areas. And without them, much of the work we do wouldn’t be possible.

**Lee Hollingsworth** is DBCA’s Parks and Wildlife Service’s volunteer program coordinator. Lee has been a volunteer in several countries and began his career at DBCA as a Wildcare Helpline volunteer. He can be contacted on (08) 9219 8582 or by email ([lee.hollingsworth@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:lee.hollingsworth@dbca.wa.gov.au)).

**Rhianna King** is a *LANDSCOPE* editor. She can be contacted by email ([rhianna.king@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:rhianna.king@dbca.wa.gov.au)).

For more information about volunteering with DBCA’s Parks and Wildlife Service, please visit [pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities](http://pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/get-involved/volunteering-opportunities) or email [PWSVolunteers@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:PWSVolunteers@dbca.wa.gov.au).

For information about volunteering at Perth Zoo visit [perthzoo.wa.gov.au](http://perthzoo.wa.gov.au), Kings Park and Bold Park visit [bgpa.wa.gov.au](http://bgpa.wa.gov.au) and Rottneest Island visit [ria.wa.gov.au](http://ria.wa.gov.au).

For more information about Golden Valley Tree Park visit [www.goldenvalleytreepark.org.au](http://www.goldenvalleytreepark.org.au).