

Volunteer News

Department of Conservation and Land Management

June 1990

Volunteers play vital role in conservation

Volunteers working side by side with the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) is the key to achieving Western Australia's conservation goals, according to Minister for the Environment Bob Pearce.

Mr Pearce said that volunteers play a vital role in helping CALM conserve WA's natural flora and fauna, and assist in the management of national parks, nature reserves, marine parks and state forests.

"The value of volunteers is only just being realised in WA," he said. "Several projects have already been run successfully by the department, including the re-establishment of park facilities in the fire-damaged Fitzgerald River National Park earlier this year."

In the Eastern States, particularly South Australia and Victoria, more than 2000 volunteers in each state volunteer through Friends of National Park groups, helping conservation authorities in those states manage and plan parks.

In the United States, volunteers have helped shape the way national parks and nature reserves are managed and presented to the public.

CALM's community involvement program began last year with the appointment of former park ranger Colin Ingram as state volunteer coordinator. Colin coordinates CALM's volunteer projects within the State. He identifies and initiates opportunities for volunteers, promotes community involvement throughout CALM, trains supervisors and trainers of volunteers and maintains a register of volunteers and voluntary projects.

Before Colin's appointment, a draft policy on volunteers and draft operational guidelines for volunteer activities was produced.

This policy has set the framework for how volunteers will operate within the department.

Individuals, organisations and interest groups are becoming involved in a range of activities that will not only help CALM achieve its conservation goals, but also increase community awareness and appreciation for environmental issues and lead to a better understanding of CALM's role.

Colin can be contacted at CALM's Murdoch House office on (09) 364 0703.

Photographed working in Fitzgerald River National Park are Phil Gray (CALM, Esperance), Anne and Peter Resch (Trigg), Diane Auckland (Roleystone), Helen Smalley (Subiaco), Ralph and Monica Cooper (Hopetoun), Alex Scorer (Fremantle).

New publication

Welcome to CALM's new publication - Volunteer News - a newsletter for you, the Western Australian who cares about our environment.

Volunteers work around our State - helping scientists save endangered species, stabilising eroding or salt-affected land, planting trees on cleared land that will grow into natural bush woodlands and provide habitat for native wildlife.

Volunteer News will be published four times a year, keeping you informed of these projects and volunteers' achievement and news of others planned by the department.

We hope you enjoy it.



PENGUIN ISLAND

Penguin Island, less than one kilometre from the Rockingham mainland, attracts up to 3000 visitors on a summer weekend.

With its colonies of breeding Fairy Penguins, Terns and Silver Gulls, as well as visits by 30 other species of sea and terrestrial birds, Penguin Island is one of the most important bird sanctuaries in the metropolitan area.

The island's flora has adapted to the harsh coastal conditions to provide shelter and nesting areas.

Visitors to Penguin Island are learning to treat this fragile environment with respect while still enjoying their visit.

To help CALM educate and inform the public about the island, a volunteer group has been established.

The volunteers love nature and are concerned about the environment.

Two of the Penguin Island volunteers, local residents Pat and Sid Gammon, have an obvious love of Penguin Island and want to be involved in maintaining this important natural resource.

While many visitors are vague about the island's status, they become interested and concerned as they learn about the area's importance and cooperate by following a few guidelines to protect the flora and fauna.

In past years visitors could roam around the island, unintentionally causing damage to the flora and disturb nesting birds.

Fire and overnight camping also had an impact on the island's fragile environment.

Now Penguin Island Ranger Gerry Deegan, with the assistance of volunteers, is helping to protect the island while ensuring visitors enjoy their stay.

The island's Information Centre is managed entirely by volunteers.

Here visitors can use many reference books to identify birds, plants, shells and fish that are found either on the island or in the surrounding waters.

Volunteers help protect island and ensure visitor enjoyment

The Island's natural history comes alive when visitors know what to look for and where to find it.

The volunteers also provide information on subjects ranging from the location of a fresh water tap, to where Penguins might be spotted under the wooden walkways.

They can direct visitors to the best snorkelling areas and to sheltered spots to picnic.

The 20 people involved in the Penguin Island Volunteer Program are committed to the scheme; all have completed a training program which covers first aid, the social history of the Island and of course, its natural history.

CALM's Metro co-ordinator, Rae Burrows, and other CALM officers provide support to the volunteers.

The group is now well organised and established and continues to help enrich the visitors' experience at Penguin Island while at the same time, actively contribute to maintaining our threatened environment.

For further information on the Penguin Island Volunteer Group, please contact Rae Burrows, tel. 364-0719.



A volunteer at work on Penguin Island.



The Milyering Visitor Information Centre.

Milyering scheme

Ningaloo Marine Park is a wild and wonderful place.

Visited by more than 50,000 people a year who fish its rich waters, dive on its beautiful reefs, and explore its shipwrecks.

Other people like to birdwatch or admire the natural wonders of one of Australia's great coral reefs.

In 1988, as part of Australia's Bicentenary Program, a visitors' centre was built at Milyering in the Cape Range National Park, about 50km from Exmouth.

This high-tech. centre with its displays, audiovisual facility, library and videodisc index, is helping CALM inform visitors about Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park and the natural resources and recreational facilities that are provided.

Marg Myers is the leader of the 12 volunteers who help run the Information Centre at Milyering.

With the help of Ningaloo Marine Park Manager, Sue Osborne and Lucille Hind, Marg has coordinated a volunteer scheme at Milyering.

They are recruited through public notices in local papers and at schools.

The volunteers, who spend a day a week at Milyering, come from all walks of life.

With up to 300 visitors a day, the volunteers are kept very busy.

CAMPGROUND HOSTS

Many Western Australians spend a great deal of time outdoors.

Some bushwalk, others camp. All care for their environment.

Now these people have the opportunity to continue to enjoy their outdoor activities while at the same time contribute to the enjoyment of others.

They can do this by acting as Campground Hosts.

Campground Hosts support National Park Rangers who, because of the size of their parks and the diversity of their duties, cannot always be present at camping areas.

Campground Host liaise between the campers and the Rangers.

Hosts deal with the questions that concern campers, such as the whereabouts of the toilets, the availability of fresh water, where to pitch tents and park vehicles, and how to get to the beach.

Their presence at a camp ground ensures that people are able to get information easy and can contact the Ranger if he is needed.

It also reduces the risk of vandalism while a hosts presence is also a comfort to those who are not familiar with a particular area and the local wildlife.

Campground Host schemes are very popular in the US and in other states in Australia. However, they are new to Western Australia with the first Hosts scheme operating in the Lane Poole Reserve near Dwellingup.

A second scheme is under way at Contos Field in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. The Rangers, the Hosts and campers all seem to have benefited greatly and enjoyed the experience.

Norm Cole was the first of the Campground Hosts to complete a one -week stint at Contos Field.

Norm received a good response from the campers.

Most were regular national park campers and were extremely interested in the idea of Campground Hosts and felt it was a much needed service.

Families, young and old people contacted the Hosts with their questions and problems.

Some campers from the Eastern States commented on the existing Host schemes there and how pleased they were to see it operating in WA.

Norm's only complaint - a week wasn't long enough.

He felt the was only getting into the swing of things by the third day by which time he was more familiar with the area and had met all the Rangers.

He certainly had a wonderful week and is very enthusiastic about the scheme.

Norm is looking forward to acting as a Campground Host again and his enthusiasm will no doubt make others interested in volunteering as Campground

Volunteer co-ordinators

Ken Wallace, Wheatbelt, (098) 811113; Cliff Winfield, Southern Forests, (097) 711988; Andrew Chapman, Goldfields, (090) 212677; Terry Passmore, South Coast, (098) 417133; Rae Burrows, Metropolitan (09) 3640719; Terry Hales, Northern Forest, (09) 4051222; Klm Williams, Neil Taylor, Central Forest, (097) 254300; Vicki Hambly, Herbarium, (09) 3670500; David Mitchell, Woodvale, (09) 4055100; Neil Burrows, Como Research, (09) 3670302; Sue Osborne, Gascoyne, Greenough, (099) 491676.



Tagging turtles. Photograph courtesy The West Australian.

Turtle tagging

Working on soft white beaches or in the warm waters of Ningaloo Marine Park with gentle sea turtles might seem like an idyllic past-time.

Not so according to CALM senior research scientist Bob Prince who heads the department's turtle research project.

Volunteers involved in the program work long hours during the night tagging large and heavy marine turtles.

But for those with interested in wildlife research and particularly turtles, the rewards are great.

The project assesses the behaviour and movements of marine turtles, in particular the Green Turtle.

A number of science undergraduates volunteered for the two-month long stint at Ningaloo Marine Park near Exmouth, under the direction of Technical Officer Andy Williams.

The tagging program coincides with the turtles' annual breeding program.

People living in Exmouth have also assisted in the tagging program and have played a major role in beach surveillance.

Local volunteers monitor beaches regularly throughout summer evenings to check on remigrant turtles tagged in previous years' programs.

Bob hopes this information will eventually provide a picture of the breeding, feeding and migration behaviour of the Green Turtle in our northern waters.

A bird in the hand aids park planning process

Without information, management for nature conservation, like many other fields, remains guesswork.

However, information can take time to collect, organise and present in a manner that allows management to proceed on a rational basis.

Many people can, however, speed up this process.

There are many skilled observers and interested people in local areas who have a direct interest in seeking the best for the national park from which they gain so much pleasure.

The start of the survey of the Walpole-Nornalup National Park in 1985 heralded a major contribution from local volunteers, including volunteer co-ordinators like Lola Broadhurst, Leslie Harrison and Angela Wardell-Johnson.

Many skills were employed in bird counting.

Volunteers were required to count the numbers of birds by sight and sound in distance categories away

from the observer in 90 predefined and marked census locations. CALM observers also with wide experience, counted the birds at the same location to allow calibration.

Thus several counts were carried out at each location in each season.

The aim was to determine changes in the composition of sites in relation to community types or structure and to monitor the response of the community following fire.

Observers carried out counts in all seasons over two years, providing much important calibrated information on the bird communities in the Walpole-Nornalup National Park.

Each of the volunteers travelled many hundreds of kilometres during the survey work. The volunteers were involved in other surveys besides the bird count

More effective management based on information will be a tribute to the many hours of freely given help by these people in the Walpole-Nornalup National Park.

Yanchep blossoms

Western Australia is famous for its wildflowers, and many groups work to ensure their survival.

At Yanchep National Park the Northern Suburbs Branch of the WA Wildflower Society are restoring the park's wildflower gardens.

The group aims to plant beds of indigenous species that represent the State's specific botanical regions. The public will then be able to walk through the gardens and identify native plants and gain an appreciation of their beauty, so often hidden by dense undergrowth.

The group's major battle is against weeds which threaten to engulf the beds.

Weeding is done on a regular basis and, like in most gardens, the weeds thrive where they are not wanted. Because the seeds of some plants are rare, the group depends on donations from their members and other interested parties.

There is funding from CALM for plants and seeds, but this does not cover all their needs. The Wildflower Group has more than 100 members. Not all are involved in the Yanchep project.

Usually six people go to Yanchep once a month to weed and maintain the gardens. Most of the planting is done in autumn by larger groups.

The park's rangers are also helpful, spraying, removing trees and rubbish and helping with watering and loaning equipment.

The Yanchep Wildflower Garden Group would be extremely grateful for seed and plant donations.

If you can help, get in touch with them through the Northern Suburbs Branch of the West Australian Wildflower Society.