

the study over 25 years.
 "The orchid flowers have evolved to resemble female wasps to encourage males to pollinate them," Andrew said.
 "They have a lip – a modified petal called a labellum – that resembles a flightless female wasp and emits a scent that matches that of the female wasp.

"We were aware that some species emit pheromones, but to find species that actually take on certain physical similarities to wasps is remarkable.

"It is both biologically bizarre and complex."

The study focused on all 10 hammer orchids in the genus, which is endemic to the south-west floristic region, six of which were previously unnamed.

The six new species are *Drakaea andrewsiae*, *Drakaea concolor*, *Drakaea confluens*, *Drakaea gracilis*, *Drakaea isolata* and *Drakaea micrantha*. Several of the orchids are threatened with extinction.

"We also discovered that the wasp that pollinated one species of hammer orchid did not go to any of the other species of hammer

their actions provided the clue to the previously unobserved differences between the different orchids," he said.

"This is an exciting discovery because it highlights that so much of our natural environment is yet to be discovered and documented."

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Teachers at the Waste Wise Schools Program professional development workshop with their worm farms. Photo – Emma Pointon

Albany folk have their say

DEC's Albany District and the Conservation Commission of Western Australia have reinvigorated community input into the planning for management of national parks and nature reserves.

A community advisory committee has been created to provide advice on management plans for several national parks and nature reserves around Albany. Two new community working groups have also been established following the recent vesting of Gull Rock National Park and Mt Martin Botanic Park/Voyager Park in the Conservation Commission.

DEC South Coast Regional Manager John Watson said the groups would play an important role in ensuring community input into the management planning process.

He said protected areas were a community asset treasured for their scenic, recreational and biodiversity values.

"Protected areas can really mean a lot to the local community so we welcome the community's involvement in planning for the future of our national parks," he said.

"Residents are not only passionate about such areas, but also often possess a wealth of information about their history and other values."

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Improving wetland knowledge

As part of a joint initiative between the State and Federal governments, DEC is undertaking the project 'Mapping, Classification and Evaluation of Wetlands, South West Western Australia'.

The project aims to provide mapping, classification and evaluation of wetlands within high priority areas that currently have little or no digitised data.

DEC Wetlands Program Environmental Officer Mia Morley said study areas were chosen after consultation with regional DEC staff and included the Leeuwin-Naturaliste ridge.

"This area was chosen due to increasing pressure from development and visitation, the presence of wetland-associated

threatened ecological communities and the presence of a critically endangered snail species," she said.

"An area south of Boyanup and east of Nannup was also chosen, as wetlands at the northern end of this area have the potential to be affected by water extraction and also because the monitoring will complete wetland mapping of the Blackwood Plateau."

The project will also monitor 30 wetland sites on the Swan Coastal Plain and in an area east of Margaret River.

"Sites have been selected according to the wetlands' social and ecological values and representativeness, or how well the sample sites represent the wetlands in the area," Mia said.

"They will be monitored in early and late spring this year and autumn next year."

Monitoring will measure a range of water quality parameters, phytoplankton, macroinvertebrates, wetland birds, vegetation and catchment and hydrological disturbance.

By providing better data resources, the project will assist regional and local decision making affecting wetlands, leading to better wetland management and protection.

The project is administered by the South West Catchments Council and is funded under the Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.



DEC's Mia Morley (left) and Department of Water's Kelli O'Neill undertaking water quality analysis training. Photo – Dominic Heald