

July/August 2008

A team effort brings new DEC website to life



The web team – David Gough (back left), Donna Weston, Nitin Solanki (front left) and Ryan Scott. Photo – Joanna Moore

THE Department of Environment and Conservation has a fresh new face on the internet.

The launch of www.dec.wa.gov.au on Tuesday 22 July marked the end of the first phase of a mammoth communications and technological challenge to bring together all the content, services and applications of the former Department of Environment and Department of Conservation and Land Management internet sites into a single DEC website.

The new website contains thousands of pages of content that range from protected area management plans, technical reports and current industry licences to the latest news on activity programs and visitor facilities in national parks, school programs and education services offered by DEC and the science and research activities of the department.

Director of Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs Ron Kawalilak said while much of the site was an update of the content that existed on previous DEC sites, it also contained new content and features.

“These include a marine parks education and activity site for kids, improved e-commerce facilities and access to a range of licensing and permit applications,” he said.

“An effective web presence is absolutely essential if DEC is to provide its many stakeholders and the wider community with the information and services they are looking for.

“The community is growing increasingly sophisticated in its use of the web and DEC needs to keep up with this.”

Recognising the diverse cultural and ethnic nature of our community and users of the internet in general, content on DEC’s website is available in 11 major languages including Arabic, French, Japanese and Russian.

Ron said the web team – Donna Weston, David Gough, Ryan Scott and Nitin Solanki, working with Manager Corporate Communications Kaye Verboon and Senior Graphic Designer Natalie Jolakoski – had done a terrific job.

“I applaud them for their great work in developing a website that is also fresh, appealing and easy to use,” he said.

“The cooperation and technical assistance of the Information Services Section in recent months has also been very important in getting us to this point. The assistance from Norman Van Boeyen, Brian Ross and Michael O’Sullivan has been much appreciated.”

The next phase of the web project will be for the web team to work with all the business and content areas of the department to ensure they are adequately represented on the website.

Anyone who wants to update their content on www.dec.wa.gov.au should email their request to webcontent@dec.wa.gov.au. Questions, comments and even compliments may be sent to this address.

WA crews boost US fire fight

SEVEN DEC staff arrived home safely on 20 August after spending a month in the United States helping fight bushfires raging in California.

The team was led by John Carter from Busselton and included Sam Hurd from Jurien Bay, Jeremy Chick from Kirup, Greg Simpson and Carl Cicchini from Manjimup and Steve Gunn from Mundaring. Tammie Reid from Bunbury was also part of the team carrying out an information services role during the fires in July and August.

Fire and Emergency Services Authority officer Steve McDonald from Geraldton and Forest Products Commission officer Ben Sawyer from Harvey were also part of the Western Australian team that helped make up the 44-strong Australia-New Zealand contingent called on to provide relief to American fire crews.

DEC Principal Fire Operations Officer Terry Maher said the fire management specialists supported efforts by locals, State and national firefighters.

“They served in a variety of key management roles including divisional commander, task force leader, helicopter manager and field liaison officer,” he said.

Terry said WA was known internationally for its fire management expertise and skills and had previously helped the US battle big fires.

“This is the fifth deployment of ANZ fire leaders to the US since the first 119-strong contingent assisted with the US fires in 2000,” he said.

“Our local fire crews are experienced in these types of situations, particularly after last year’s fire season in WA in which a bushfire emergency period was declared as hundreds of bushfires raged across the State.

“The fact that the US can call on WA to assist during wildfires reflects the high standard of professionalism and ability of our fire crews.”

Terry said WA fire officers who had taken part in previous deployments had benefited from the experience.

“Giving our fire managers the opportunity to practise their skills in a major incident working with experienced firefighters in other states and countries enhances their skills when they return home and tackle fires here in WA,” he said.

Susan welcomed to DEC

MOVING to a department with more than 2,000 staff from one with just 200 is a big jump, even if the latter also included 2,000 zoo animals.

DEC’s new Deputy Director General Environment Susan Hunt is enjoying the challenges of her new role.

Susan is the CEO of Perth Zoo and has brought into DEC well-developed skills in organisational management and corporate change to help areas of the department operate in a more integrated way.

Susan graduated with an Honours degree in History from Murdoch University in 1978, before completing her Masters in History at The University of Western Australia. She also spent time as a Graduate Fellow at The University of California in Santa Cruz and was a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Women’s Studies at The University of Toronto.

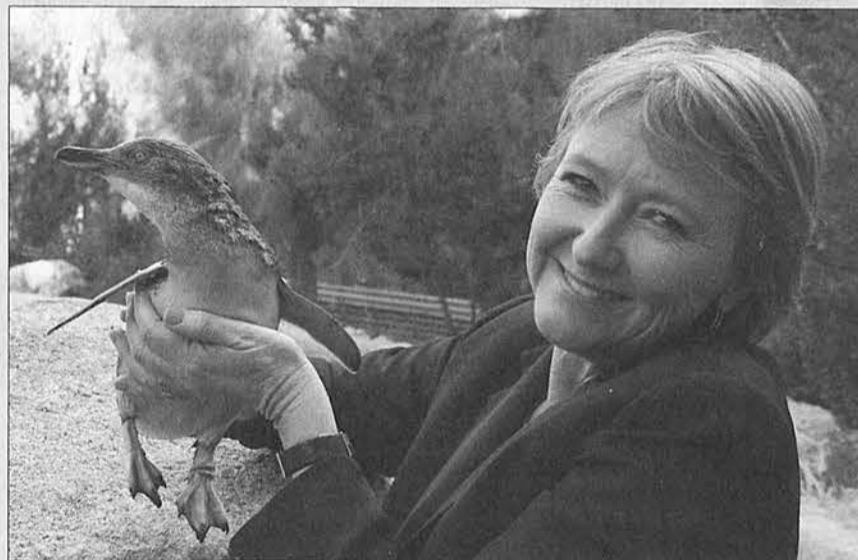
“An arts degree is a great training tool for working with policy and for understanding the complexities of the operational environment,” Susan said.

“As well as highly valuing social justice and equity, I see great importance in adding value to the community and the environment.”

Before spending eight years at the zoo, including four in the top job, Susan was Conservation and Planning Director at the Rottne Island Authority. She has also worked in departmental and Ministerial policy advisory roles in Indigenous affairs.

She is the President of the Australasian Zoo Association, a member of the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and is the Australasian representative on the Amphibian Ark, a global campaign to address the global amphibian crisis.

Whilst in DEC Susan has been responsible for the areas of Environmental Regulation, Sustainability, the Environmental Impact Assessment Division, Air Quality, Environmental Enforcement and Legal Services. This also



Susan holds a fairy penguin at the zoo. Photo – Deb Read/Perth Zoo.

includes responsibility for four separate statutory bodies: the Environmental Protection Authority; the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, the Contaminated Sites Committee and the newly established Waste Authority.

“There remain issues of cultural and functional integration within the department and this has been a large part of my focus since I started in the role,” she said.

“Working to improve ways the environmental services groups work with regional offices and communicate across the department are important priorities for me in this role. It is also very evident that the workload and resultant impact on staff across the department is extremely high given the growth in the development and resource sector. This is also impacting on retention of staff.

“Coming from a small and discrete business I have been struck by the complexity of DEC activities and of course the quality and commitment of staff. Despite the differences of the size and nature of the businesses, there are however key similar issues between DEC and Perth Zoo.

“The key requirements of promoting a clear corporate intent, good communication systems, quality training programs, and the creation of a supportive work environment are central to an effective organisation. During my time here I hope that I have been able to add some value in working and advising on how we can improve our systems and communication.

“I have presented to several staff consultative groups and I am particularly supportive of the DEcrease program, because I believe that DEC should be leading the way in environmental practice.

“It is vital for all our staff to model ‘green’ behaviours – such as adopting green and smart work practices in our offices, other workplaces and our homes. We need to ‘walk the talk’.”

Susan has also been working on several cultural change issues in DEC, issues occurring as a result of the corporate governance arrangements around the creation of the new Waste Authority; assisting with issues arising from the ‘Short’ review; and the Retention and Attraction Survey.

Working Together

A highlight of the last couple of months was an eight-day trip from Port Hedland to Shark Bay, with stops at many points along the way. One of the most important things for CEOs and leaders to do is to get out and visit staff and their workplaces, both in their offices and in the field. It's a particular challenge to achieve this in a State the size of Western Australia, with our 2,000 staff spread across more than 60 work locations and working in the field in every corner of the State. Nevertheless, it is a need that I have emphasised to DEC's Directors, and is also something that I hope to spend more time doing in future.

There is no substitute for seeing things first hand to understand both the challenges staff are facing and the advances being achieved. The trip illustrated the extraordinary industrial development in the Pilbara (demonstrated by the growth in shipping of iron ore through Port Hedland, the intensity of activity at Karratha and on the Burrup, and oil exploration off Onslow); the excellent on-ground management being delivered at Ningaloo/Cape Range and Shark Bay; and the conservation outcomes that we will be able to deliver in the long term on purchased former pastoral leases such as Cane River and Giralia.

Sometimes staff can be so close to day-to-day issues and their challenges that they don't get to reflect on their achievements. At Coral Bay, both DEC's mooring strategy and the new boat ramp were contentious, but the outcome is clearly one that is better for conservation, visitor safety and public amenity.

On this trip, and another to Ningaloo the following week, we saw plenty of humpback whales, whereas when I used to participate in aerial surveys on the east coast in the late 1970s we were lucky to average about one humpback a day. Indeed, the population of humpbacks that migrates along our west coast each year has recovered to an estimated 16,000 from just a few hundred when humpbacks were protected 45 years ago. The benefits of conservation actions often take a long time to come to fruition, but are worth the effort.

Keiran McNamara, Director General



Workshop shows damage from acid sulfate soils

DEC's Contaminated Sites Branch took its acid sulfate soils workshop on the road during May to visit Mandurah and South Yunderup.

The workshop, targeting landcare groups, local and State Government agencies and industry representatives, was one of a series of community-based forums to promote better awareness of acid sulfate soils.

Manager of DEC's Acid Sulfate Soils Section Stephen Wong said the Peel region, like many coastal regions of Western Australia, was a high risk acid sulfate soils area and faced potential environmental damage if not managed properly.

Acid sulfate soils are naturally occurring soils that contain iron sulfides – harmless when left undisturbed but when exposed to air they react with oxygen and water to produce iron compounds and sulphuric acid. This can lead to fish kills, contamination of surface and groundwater by acids, arsenic and heavy metals and corrosion of concrete and steel infrastructure.

"Much of the exposure of acid sulfate soils in the Peel region has occurred following successive urban and canal developments and maintenance dredging operations," Stephen said.

"These activities have caused acid sulfate soils to oxidise and produce acidic conditions in the soils and groundwater."

The workshop included a field trip in the

South Yunderup area where participants could see the damage caused by acid sulfate soil landscapes.

"We want people to recognise the symptoms of acid sulfate soils, which are becoming a major environmental issue in coastal areas of Western Australia," Stephen said.

Stephen said disturbance of acid sulfate soils should be avoided wherever possible.

Where disturbance could not be avoided, development in high risk acid sulfate soils areas had to be managed correctly to prevent serious environmental problems.

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CleanRun helping drivers reduce emissions



CleanRun Community Education Coordinator Gareth MacRae (left) with drivers Alan Dunne, Paul Halton, Hayley Spice, Peter Bird, Justin Perry and Kerrin Gleeson pointing out anti-idle signs on Toll-IPEC trucks. Photo – Tina Stockport

TRANSPORT companies can now significantly reduce their environmental impact simply and cheaply, thanks to a new driver behaviour change program developed by DEC's CleanRun team.

CleanRun staff have completed a trial that was successful in reducing diesel emissions by working with truck drivers to voluntarily reduce the idling of their vehicles. Based on the trial outcomes, CleanRun has designed a program 'by drivers, for drivers' that is now rolling out with major transport companies.

The trial showed that drivers could reduce idling times by an average of three hours each week during pick-ups, deliveries and while waiting in line.

In one year, drivers of a three-tonne truck could save 200 litres of diesel emissions from polluting the air, including half a tonne of carbon dioxide. Extrapolated across Perth's 40,000 light commercial vehicles, this would amount to savings of eight million litres of diesel fuel and more than 22,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

CleanRun Community Education

Coordinator Gareth MacRae is excited by the results of the trial, believed to be the first time community-based social marketing methodology has been used to reduce vehicle idling by Australian truck drivers.

"The anti-idling program achieves the dual purpose of educating drivers to change their behaviour and cost-effectively reducing emissions from the transport industry," Gareth said.

"We estimate the cost to DEC of implementing this program is equivalent to \$500 for each tonne of carbon dioxide reduced, which is a fraction of the cost per tonne of some other carbon dioxide reduction measures."

CleanRun worked with staff from international transport company Toll IPEC to design the program and were impressed with the drivers' enthusiasm for the initiative – more than half the company's drivers volunteered to take part and contribute to the program's development.

For more information contact Gareth on 6467 5123 or email gareth.macrae@dec.wa.gov.au.

Identifying Perth fungi now easier

A REVAMPED Perth Urban Bushland Fungi (PUBF) website has been launched.

The website includes an improved, easier-to-use version of the Fungi Field Book to help budding mycologists identify local fungi.

The launch at the Cockburn Wetland Education Centre also highlighted the fungi surveys and reports completed by PUBF for 48 bushlands in the Perth region.

Despite the 3,000 fungi which have been documented in the Perth area, it is estimated that fewer than 10 per cent of our fungi species have been discovered and named.

The website is part of the Perth Urban Bushland Fungi Project (PUBFP) which was started four years ago by the Western Australian Naturalists' Club in collaboration with the Urban Bushland Council and DEC's WA Herbarium.

The original website was designed by volunteer John Weaver and has been upgraded by DEC's Brett Glossop and PUBF's Sarah de Bueger with input from DEC mycologist Neale Bougher.

The aim was to raise awareness of the importance of the third great natural kingdom and to encourage the collection and study of local fungi.

PUBF Community Education Officer at the WA Herbarium Roz Hart said there was a lot to learn about the role of fungi in terms of bushland management and, in particular, their importance in sustaining natural bushland ecosystems.

"PUBFP is part of the means to address this gap. Through the involvement of community groups in fungi forays in local bushlands, the project has produced reports and collected many fungi specimens, thereby greatly enhancing the collection at the WA Herbarium," she said.

Roz said the website had a big role to play in providing access to information and facilitating collaboration.

As well as the online field guide, the website has news items, information about free public events to be held in local bushlands this winter and fungi survey reports.

Visit the website at www.fungiperth.org.au.

Agenda for Action released on International Day for Biological Diversity

NATIONAL parks and other protected areas will be crucial in fighting the effects of climate change on biodiversity, Conservation Commission of WA Chairman John Bailey said when releasing the Agenda for Action produced from last year's Parks and Protected Areas Forum.

As forum chair, John said the agenda was released on International Biodiversity Day on 22 May to highlight the importance of parks and protected areas in maintaining the diversity of plant and animal life and conserving natural landscapes.

"The Parks and Protected Areas Forum recognised that climate change is a major threat to the world's environment and society and is expected to have profound impacts on Australia's unique biodiversity," John said.

"Parks and protected areas are essential refuges for species affected by the impact of climate change.

"They contribute to moderating the impacts of climate

change and serve as indicators of change.

"Parks and protected areas are important for many other reasons as well. They are often places where Indigenous people can maintain their cultural values and give all of us a chance to experience and connect with the natural world.

"They also help regulate the climate and moderate weather, giving us clean air and water, retaining soil and recycling soil nutrients, protecting water catchments and storing carbon."

John said the Agenda for Action set out the key actions identified by forum participants to protect and enhance WA's network of protected areas.

These included pursuing a minimum target for a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of terrestrial parks and protected areas of about 15 per cent by 2018; giving priority to the expansion of marine protected areas; reflecting the rights, needs and aspirations of Indigenous people; increasing resources for parks and

protected areas; and considering the rights, needs and aspirations of local communities and neighbours.

"With the world's natural environments in decline from activities such as habitat loss, land degradation, urban development, introduced species and pollution, and now the impacts of climate change, the importance of parks and protected areas has never been greater," John said.

The 2007 Parks and Protected Areas Forum was held in Fremantle and hosted by the Conservation Commission, DEC, the Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-Tourism, the Conservation Council of WA, the World Commission on Protected Areas, Parks Forum and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority.

The Agenda for Action is available from the Conservation Commission's website at www.conservation.wa.gov.au. It will be taken up at the Australian Protected Area Congress 2008, in Queensland in November.

For more information contact John on 9389 1766.

DEC on display at Australian Tourism Exchange

DEC's interactive display with marsupials, reptiles and birds of prey proved irresistible to national and international visitors at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) 2008 held at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre in June.

DEC's Parks and Visitor Services Marketing Officer Stefanie McBurney said hundreds of delegates took the opportunity to see, and have their photos taken with, the native animals.

"ATE is the largest tourism trade show of its kind in the

southern hemisphere and the most important event on Australia's tourism calendar," she said.

"About 1,700 Australian delegates from 630 companies met with 600 key buyers from more than 40 countries."

The event presented Perth and Western Australia with an opportunity to showcase the State and city to the world's tourism buyers.

It also provided a forum for Australian tourism sellers to showcase their products to the global distribution network and

buyers to experience Australia first-hand.

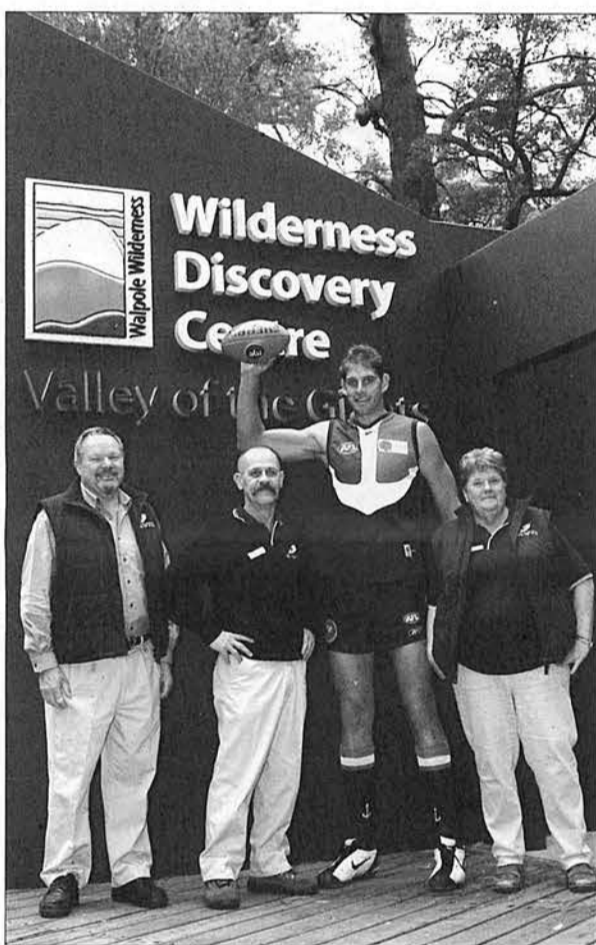
"ATE provided a fantastic opportunity to promote the professionalism of the department to the world through pre- and post-familiarisation programs which visited many DEC-managed lands and attractions throughout the State," Stefanie said.

About 40 international and 20 Australian tourism and trade journalists attended ATE to report to thousands of people worldwide on what's new in the Australian travel and tourism industry.



DEC Aboriginal Heritage Officer Delvene Cornwall (left) with Liz Appelt and Mark Grey from Chidlow Marsupial Hospital. Photo - Sarah Melville

GIANT of the AFL meets the giants of the forest



Aaron Sandilands with Frankland District Manager Peter Bidwell (left) and visitor centre assistants Tony Duckett and Terri Ebbett. Photo - DEC

ONE of the giants of Australian Rules Football, Aaron Sandilands of the Fremantle Dockers, has joined the team at the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk to promote the walk and the Walpole-Nornalup region.

DEC Deputy Director General Parks and Conservation Jim Sharp said the latest marketing initiative involving Aaron with the popular visitor facility in the Valley of the Giants would have spin-offs for the local community and businesses.

"Aaron is the tallest AFL player - he stands 211cm tall and wears a size 18 shoe - and is a perfect person to be part of the 'Giant meets the Giants' campaign," Jim said.

"The partnership with Aaron will provide a welcome boost to the profile of the Tree Top Walk as well as creating economic flow-on benefits for local businesses and operators.

"The Tree Top Walk is one of the icons of the local region and one of the most sustainable forest tourism facilities in the world. It impacts on just three square metres of the forest floor and yet has attracted 2.2 million visitors since it was opened in 1996."

Jim said Aaron would be involved with a range of activities at the walk during the year and his image would be used in promotions.

"The local community has embraced the idea of Aaron being an ambassador for the walk and the region. In recognition of this, the local Walpole Primary School coordinated an art competition featuring the 'Giant meets the Giants,'" he said.

"The winning entry by Bryce Aggiss, aged 10, will be incorporated into the campaign."

Jim said Aaron also would attend the Denmark Walpole Giants football training session linking in with the theme of giants.

Plan released for important wetland

By Joanna Moore

LAKE McLarty Nature Reserve - part of an internationally recognised wetland system - now has a final management plan.

The plan was prepared by DEC on behalf of the Conservation Commission of WA and developed in consultation with the local community, the Peel Preservation Group and the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council.

The 220-hectare reserve, about 20 kilometres south of Mandurah, is part of the Peel-Yalgroop System, one of the largest and most diverse estuarine complexes in Western Australia.

DEC Planning Officer Kathryn McGuane said Lake McLarty was a major refuge for migratory waterbirds, especially some rarer species that favoured freshwater wetlands.

"Many waterbirds fly up to 14,000 kilometres across vast expanses of ocean to rest and feed at Lake McLarty - red-necked, long-toed and little stints, sharp-tailed, curlew, marsh, wood and pectoral sandpipers, black-tailed godwits, common greenshanks, wood sandpipers, little ringed plovers, Asian dowitchers, ruffs and

Oriental pratincoles," she said. "It is also one of the few remaining natural or near-natural wetlands that were once widespread on the Swan Coastal Plain."

Lake McLarty contains native vegetation that is now restricted in its range because of urban, industrial and agricultural development.

Kathryn said conservation of the lake attracted a high degree of community support, with many local people volunteering to undertake work and monitor the lake environment.

"Addressing many of the ecological pressures on Lake McLarty and other lakes on the Swan Coastal Plain requires a whole-of-catchment management approach," she said.

The plan includes strategies for conserving the natural environment while providing for sustainable and low-impact visitor activities.

Copies of the plan are available from DEC offices in Mandurah and Kensington, or DEC's website at www.dec.wa.gov.au/landmanagementplanning.

New signs to combat spread of *Phytophthora* dieback

PROJECT Dieback, a cross-regional natural resource management project, has worked closely with TAFE and DEC to develop a new system of standardised *Phytophthora* dieback awareness signs.

The signs will be installed in the south-west of Western Australia to protect native flora and fauna against the deadly effects of the plant disease *Phytophthora* dieback.

They can be displayed in parks, reserves, on walking trails, roadsides, private properties, mining leases and infrastructure corridors and will let people know whether sites are dieback free, dieback infested or if disease presence cannot be determined.

DEC Dieback Project Officer Michael Pez said the signage system grew out of an initiative by Project Dieback Manager Joanna Young and Communications Officer Gary Muir who put out a challenge to students at Great Southern TAFE in Albany to come up with a design.

"Taking the initial design work developed by the students, Project Dieback collaborated with the Dieback Response Group, the Dieback Working Group, the Dieback Consultative Council and DEC to produce the signs," Michael said.

"DEC's Interpretation and Visitor Information Services Unit's Design Studio refined the signs in line with stakeholder comments. A specific set has

By Emma de Burgh

also been developed for inclusion in the DEC signage manual."

Dieback is caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, an introduced soil-borne micro-organism that spreads through water, soil and plant tissue. It attacks the root systems of plants and kills them, which in turn causes the destruction of habitats for native wildlife.

About 2,300 of the south-west's 5,700 flora species are susceptible to *Phytophthora* and the disease is considered a major threat to the State's biodiversity.

"*Phytophthora* dieback was introduced more than a century ago but there are still areas that are free from the disease and protecting them will be a worthy investment for future generations," Michael said.

The standardised dieback signage system will raise public awareness and encourage people to take precautions to prevent further distribution of the disease, which is spread by the movement of people and animals.

Several councils and groups have already ordered the signs, including the cities of Stirling, Armadale and Albany, the Shire of Ravensthorpe, Iluka Resources Ltd and the Twin Creeks Community Conservation Area. DEC will adopt the standard for its own signage.



(left) Project Dieback Communications Officer Gary Muir, DEC Director Nature Conservation Gordon Wyre, Project Dieback Manager Joanna Young and DEC Dieback Project Officer Michael Pez. Photo - Joanna Moore

Wildlife officers on track

NINE DEC wildlife officers from the Nature Protection Branch honed their investigation skills at a tracking course in July.

The branch's wildlife officers perform compliance and enforcement functions for DEC's Parks and Conservation Services. Some of their compliance activities include regulating the State's wildlife-based industries, such as the kangaroo industry and the bird and reptile trade, and regulating the wildflower industry and commercial tour operators.

Their enforcement activities include investigating offences such as the unlawful taking or possession of protected fauna, the keeping of native animals without authority and illegal firewood collection in conservation areas. They also investigate people operating off-road vehicles damaging the environment on DEC-managed land, taking flora without licences and the illegal trafficking of protected fauna and prohibited exotic species.

Wildlife Officer Allan Madgwick said the course could be used for the search and rescue of people lost in the bush or the investigation of suspected illegal activities.

"Through a set-up scenario of an abandoned car in the bush we learnt about treating all such situations as potential crime scenes and therefore not inadvertently disrupting

evidence," Allan said.

"Many of the skills were crime scene investigation techniques, for example gathering information and evidence to develop an understanding of what transpired at the scene, footprint identification, checking car registrations and investigative photography techniques.

"We learnt how to find, record and estimate the relative age of boot prints and how to work as a team to track them across different surface conditions including sand, soil covered in leaf litter and stony ground.

"The assessment involved tracking two people for eight kilometres in remote station country and interpreting the clues found along the way.

"We also reviewed our outdoor survival skills and rescue techniques, including constructing and lighting a signal fire using flint, bush navigation and night navigation.

"The week-long course was a great team building and leadership exercise and also provided an opportunity to practise our plant and animal identification skills, which benefits many areas of our work."

The tracking course was held at Eurardy Reserve, a 30,000-hectare Bush Heritage Wilderness Park about 150 kilometres north of Geraldton.



(Back row) DEC wildlife officers Allan Madgwick, Daniel Hunter, Matt Swan and Alex Bowlay, Eurardy Station Manager Paul Hales, Bob Cooper, who ran the training course, Principal Compliance Coordinator Kevin Morrison, Senior Wildlife Officer Doug Coughran, (front row) Regional Compliance Coordinator Peter Lambert, Senior Investigator Rick Dawson and Manager Nature Protection Branch Dave Mell. Photo - DEC

Farewell to a special DEC team member

DEC people will be saddened to hear of the death of Michelle Griffin's guide dog, Piper. Michelle is our most experienced Kensington telephonist and is blind. Piper was Michelle's first guide dog and they were together for almost five years.

Guide dogs and their owners take one to two years to really become a team and Michelle expected Piper to be her guide, companion and protector until Piper was retired at about 10 years old.

Piper was a free-willed labrador (possibly a little too free-willed!) and Michelle affectionately referred to her as her little 'rev head'. Occasional escapes while off her harness lead (relax times), including one break-out from the Kensington fitness circuit, led to worried chases of the \$30,000 worth of escapee dog. We got her back (twice).

Despite her occasional lapses, Piper provided Michelle with independence, confidence and a lot of affection. Guiding Michelle to her bus through the Beirut-like Kensington building site was Piper's biggest test. At one stage she had to walk

By David Hampton

along a path right next to a steamroller heading in the same direction. Well done Piper.

Michelle and Piper attended my sixtieth birthday where I had assembled a collection of dogs I had minded over the years. The dog party was to have been a lovely 'off the lead' frolic for the working girl Piper, but it became almost immediately obvious that she was not her usual self. One free-spirited run around my backyard with one of her doggy mates was all she could manage.

Diagnosis by the Murdoch University veterinary hospital revealed an aggressive adrenal cancer that was unlikely to be treatable. Piper needed to be euthanased just three weeks after being diagnosed with cancer.

Without Piper, Michelle had to go back to relying on her cane to help her move around. Numerous falls were suffered, on top of the sad sense of the loss of Piper.

Relying only on her cane, Michelle could not walk unaided through the Kensington site and shopping was difficult.

Happily, Michelle has now taken ownership of a young, Sydney-bred labrador named Amos and she and her new bloke have settled in beautifully. Kensington-ites will again see Michelle and her guide dog walking to the bus, with Amos gently wagging his tail as he guides her.

It is important to remember that guide dogs like Amos are working dogs, not pets. There are three main things that DEC staff should be mindful of to help Michelle and Amos work together as a team: please do not talk, pat or feed Amos when he's working.

Michelle and Amos are working examples of DEC's commitment to be an equal opportunity employer, in line with our *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2007-2012 and Equity and Diversity Management Plan 2007-2012*.



Michelle Griffin with Piper. Photo - DEC

Journey of a decade begins

TEN walkers left Albany on Wednesday 16 July on an end-to-end hike of the Bibbulmun Track, the official celebration of the track's tenth anniversary.

On 13 September 1998, the 'new' full-length Bibbulmun Track was formally opened. The 963-kilometre track is one of the longest continuously marked trails in Australia and passes through a wide variety of jarrah, marri, karri and tingle forests, interspersed with

sections of coastal peppermint and heathlands in the heart of the scenic south west.

Ten years on, a send-off ceremony was held at the track's southern terminus in Albany to farewell the end-to-enders on their eight week hike.

Invited guests including the Mayor of Albany Milton Evans joined people who had been involved in building the track, in volunteering to maintain it and, of course, those who had walked it.

A Nyoongar elder provided a welcome to the country at the southern terminus before the group headed off. Although faced with a very wet, cold and windy walk ahead, the group formed a happy bunch as they were accompanied by a big group of friends, family and supporters for the first seven kilometres.

Many people will join the official party to walk a section of the track and community events will be held at each of the eight towns the track passes through.

The event not only celebrates the Bibbulmun Track being 10 years old but also the efforts of the regional communities, businesses and volunteers who have supported both the Bibbulmun Track Foundation and DEC to make the track what it is today.

The walkers will finish their journey on Saturday 13 September at the track's northern terminus in Kalamunda.



A group of walkers braved the wet to embark on an eight-week end-to-end walk.

Celebrating NAIDOC

NAIDOC celebrations were held across the department during July, including at DEC's Aboriginal Heritage Unit (AHU) Wankinying mia mia (talking place) at Kensington.

About 30 DEC staff watched traditional fire-making, made from balga borna (stems from the balga bush), fluff from the zamia palm and cob (charcoal).

Cultural and Community Coordinator Koodah Cornwall said the purpose of the fire was "to put a spark in your heart for your own understanding and personal connection to everything that mother earth provides and where you personally fit in the bigger picture".

Aboriginal Heritage Officer Eddie Wilkes spoke about the didgeridoo and played a tune. Koodah talked about the uses of the kodj (axe) and the taap (bush knife) and Aboriginal Heritage Officer Delvene Cornwall talked about the banksia cone being used as a torch or bush incense.

AHU school-based trainee Acacia Collard also brought in her Aboriginal

By Denise Griffith

artwork for viewing. Staff enjoyed traditionally cooked yonga darch (kangaroo stew), yonga curry, yonga tails and damper with quondong jam and cream.



Koodah Cornwall (second from left) and Eddie Wilkes (centre) demonstrate traditional fire-making to staff, community and family. Photo - Denise Griffith

Graduate Development Program breeds new class of DEC employees

THE Graduation and Awards ceremony marked the end of a two-year journey for 23 graduates of DEC's Graduate Development Program, who studied a range of topics – from cross cultural awareness to occupational healthy and safety.

The graduates received 12 weeks of training in the program which is designed to provide DEC with leaders for the future and middle managers with training in a range of fields.

DEC Director General Keiran McNamara said the graduates, who were selected from 255 applicants, could be very proud of their achievements.

"It is encouraging to see the enthusiasm of the young Western Australians graduating through DEC programs, who will play a crucial role in the State's conservation," he said.

"Since 1995 more than 300 people have come through the program of whom more than half are women."

The faces of DEC's future were on show at this year's Graduation and Awards ceremony held in June.

The ceremony celebrated the graduation of 23 men and women from DEC's Graduate Development Program and the achievements of 10 Aboriginal trainees and one tertiary cadet through the Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES).

It also acknowledged the recipients of study scholarships and awards. DEC Director General Keiran McNamara said he looked forward each year to the event, which celebrated DEC and its people.

"DEC has to foster a culture of continuous learning to respond to the demands of the department's broad and varied responsibilities," he said.

"For the graduates, this should be viewed as just the beginning and all staff should be encouraged to pursue continuous learning opportunities."

Stories – Rhianna King

Photos – Ron D'Raine



Pictured at the ceremony were (back row, left to right) Grant Eikelboom, Craig Douglas, Peter Wnuk, Allan Madgwick, Roger Whitelaw, Chris Stewart, (middle row, left to right) Judy Dunlop, Amanda Schnell, Tiffany Fowler, Teagan Johnston, Rebecca Coyle, Brooke Halkyard, (front row, left to right) Natalia Huang, Monica Hunter, Gaynor Owen, Joanna Moore, Chantelle Lusty, Judith White and Cally Uren. Graduates absent from the ceremony were Nikki Cowcher, Sara Hands, Conor O'Neill and Sam Tonkin.

Graduate at the top of her class

FROM day one of the Graduate Development Program it was obvious to Brooke Halkyard – this year's recipient of the Keynes Memorial Award – that she was on to a good thing.

Brooke was presented with the award for the graduate who demonstrated the highest level of practical and theoretical achievement throughout the program, which she said had provided her with many fantastic career opportunities.

"Since joining the department in 2006 I've had the opportunity to do some dream jobs and work alongside some inspiring people," she said.

"I have shared the journey of the Graduate Development Program with a group of amazing, dedicated and determined people who I consider friends as well as colleagues.

"It was an extremely challenging and rewarding experience."

Brooke is based in the Exmouth District as Nature Conservation Officer (Marine and Coastal) where she coordinates the district's feral animal control operations and facilitates several community-based fauna monitoring programs. She hopes to continue working on nature conservation programs in regional WA.

The Keynes Memorial Award is thanks to a bequest from Miss N J Keynes, who was very interested in land management issues and sister-in-law of a well-known graduate from the 1920s field officer recruit program, the late Mr Dick Perry.



Brooke Halkyard with the Keynes Memorial Award shield.

Rebecca and Chris: all-rounders



Chris Stewart and Rebecca Coyle with Director General Keiran McNamara.

THIS year's Director General's Merit Award (runner up to the Keynes Memorial Award) for the best all-round performance in the Graduate Development Program was jointly awarded to Rebecca Coyle and Chris Stewart.

When accepting the award, Rebecca, who is a Planning Officer (Policy and Practice) with Parks and Visitor Services working on the Ningaloo World Heritage nomination, said she viewed her four years with the department in two parts – before the program and after the program.

"When I joined the department I was overwhelmed by all the acronyms," she said. "I'm still learning acronyms but now feel part of a team of amazing and talented people."

Rebecca thanked the staff at the Dwellingup Training Centre for their support.

"It's impossible to talk about the Graduate Recruit Program without giving credit to those who give it life," she said.

Chris's affiliation with the department began when he took part in the Bush Rangers WA program in 1998. He now holds the position of Parks and Visitor Services Officer in the Frankland District and works in Walpole with DEC staff who he describes as "like a second family".

"I have been privileged to be in such a fantastic Graduate Recruit year and I loved every moment of it," he said.

"I know all the graduate recruits will have a huge future."

Scholarships for DEC staff

DIRECTOR General Keiran McNamara said DEC aimed to provide an environment of continuous learning and the department's scholarship program aimed to provide financial assistance to those furthering their education.

"Formalised learning programs and development opportunities are important for an organisation like DEC to respond to the community demands and the aspirations of its staff," he said.

"I commend the work of Richard McAlinden and his staff in the Dwellingup Training Centre for running these programs."

This year's Director General's Scholarship for Study Assistance was awarded to Jason Fletcher and Alexandra Dent. Jason – Frankland District's Nature Conservation Team Overseer – plans to complete certificates III and IV in Conservation and Land Management and enrol in the diploma level of the training package. Alex, who works as a Reserves Officer at Monkey Mia, will use her scholarship to complete her Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Restoration.

Kaylene Carter and Grant Hymus received The Sciences Scholarship in memory of Dr George Malajezuk, which provides continuing education opportunities in a range of science disciplines. Kaylene, a former Graduate Development Program graduate, will use her scholarship to begin a Masters of Science in Environmental Science. She hopes this will help her role in the Environmental Impact Assessment Division. Grant's scholarship will assist with his Graduate Diploma in Hydrogeology and Groundwater Management. He works in the Environmental Regulation Division.

Dr Kathleen Mulholland presented the leadership scholarship in memory of her

brother Seamus Mulholland to Kym Squires and Graeme Keals. The scholarship honours Seamus – a well-respected leader in the department – and supports continuing education in a range of management and leadership disciplines. Kym is currently coordinating the competency-based regulatory training and development programs in the Environmental Regulation Division and is enrolled in the Master of Human Resource Management. Graeme works as Regional Fire Coordinator for the Wheatbelt Region and will use the scholarship to complete a Bachelor of Business majoring in management.

Femina Metcalfe and Lynley Stone received this year's scholarship for DEC women in honour of June Craig. June Craig was WA's first female Minister with a conservation-related portfolio and second ever female Cabinet Minister and the scholarship encourages and supports women in DEC to enhance and develop their careers and increase their contribution to the department's mission. Femina works as the Business Integration Manager with the Fire Management Branch and the scholarship will support her PhD study on spatially explicit modelling of prescribed fire mosaics of the south-west forest ecosystem and a planned study tour to the USA and Canada. Lynley has been part of the Science Division since 2004 where she has been working on a project funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for future farm industries. Lynley will use the scholarship to visit colleagues in the Northern Territory and attend the 16th Australian Weeds Conference in Cairns.

Tarek Hassan, Anne Greig, Mark Neilson, Paul Blechynden and Grant Phelan all received Director General's Career Development Scholarships which provide a support of up to \$500 a semester to complete undergraduate study programs.

Counting on your MATES

DEC's Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES) is just one of the ways the department is recruiting Aboriginal people into its workforce.

As part of the scheme, trainees undertake certificates II, III and IV in Conservation and Land Management over three years. Upon completion they are assessed for permanency in field officer positions in DEC – part of DEC's commitment to ensure 10 to 15 per cent of its workforce are Aboriginal people by 2016.

This year, four trainees graduated from Certificate II, three from Certificate III and three from Certificate IV.

DEC also supports Indigenous students under the National Indigenous Cadetship Project (NICP). These cadets receive funding support from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations while undertaking their tertiary studies.

Tina Bowers graduated as an NICP cadet and has been working as a Graduate Indigenous Officer with the Swan River

Trust's Riverbank Program project since January this year.

Tina, a former Bush Rangers cadet, said the NICP provided her with financial support to complete a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences majoring in Conservation Biology at Edith Cowan University.

"NICP also gave me the opportunity to carry out work experience with the department at Yanchep National Park, Dwellingup Research Centre and the Regional Parks Unit in Fremantle," she said.

"This has given me a great advantage as a lot of people find it hard to get jobs without experience," she said.

Tina said her involvement in DEC's Bush Rangers WA program had also given her a head start.

"If I hadn't been part of the Bush Rangers WA program I probably wouldn't be where I am today," she said.

"The camps and activities exposed me to conservation and encouraged my love for the bush and I have returned to my high school as a junior instructor."



Pictured at the ceremony were MATES trainees (back row, left to right) Shannon Dixon-Ryan, Nigel Johnston, Michael O'Dene, (front row, left to right) William Newchurch, Ryan Bellotti, Louise Grubb, Maria Cosmos and NICP cadet Tina Bowers.

'Kwabalitch' trainee and mentor

KWABALITCH is the Nyoongar word for excellent or good and the name of a new award to recognise a MATES trainee who has demonstrated tenacity, perseverance and dedication in their studies.

Fremantle Football Club sponsors the award which, this year, was presented to Craig Hart.

Fremantle Football Club Community Development Program Manager Wade Spilcker said his club was proud to be aligned with DEC's MATES program.

"At Fremantle Football Club we believe it's important to have Indigenous people playing a role in managing the State's environment and we're excited to be sponsoring this award," he said.

Craig began his traineeship in the Katanning District in 2005 and was appointed to a field officer position this



Fremantle Football Club Community Development Program Manager Wade Spilcker and Craig Hart.

year, making him responsible for nature conservation and parks and visitor services activities for reserves in the district.

Craig – a self-confessed man of few words – thanked everyone for their support, particularly his supervisor Mitchell Davies.

In recognition of his dedication to the MATES program, Mitchell also received the award for Aboriginal Trainee Supervisor of the Year.

"As all supervisors will tell you, supervising is a frustrating and rewarding experience," he said.

"I congratulate Craig for showing great achievement and perseverance.

"It isn't easy living off a trainee wage but I look forward to Craig graduating and developing his career with the department."



Aboriginal Trainee Supervisor of the year Mitchell Davies and Keiran McNamara.

MATES help with Karijini project

A GROUP of DEC Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES) trainees recently visited Karijini National Park to help build an Eco Tent.

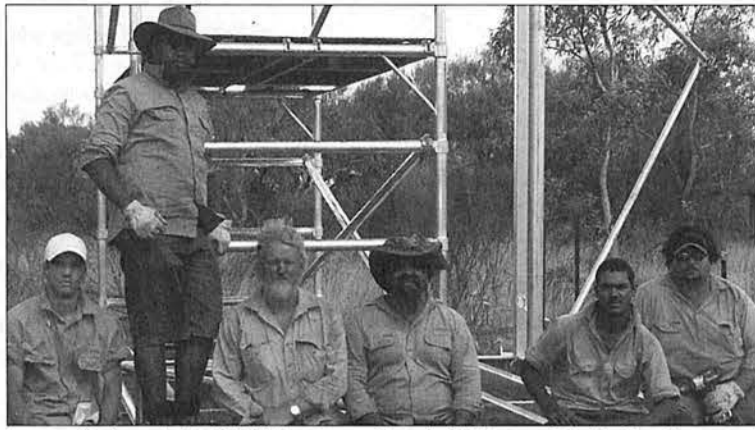
When the old campground host tent at Karijini was taken down, it was decided that an Eco Tent would replace it. The simple canvas and metal design of the Eco Tent has a similar style to new eco-accommodation used in the park.

South West Aboriginal Training Supervisor Karim Khan said the Eco Tent, which arrived in kit form, consisted of a steel frame over which a heavy duty canvas cover was attached.

"The canvas has large areas which can be rolled up to allow air to flow through shade cloth windows and doors," he said.

The structure is also built on steel stumps which raise it off the ground, allowing air to flow underneath the floor boards.

"After talks with Karijini rangers



(Left to right) MATES trainees Jarrah Philips and Colin Narrier; Construction Supervisor Doug Hovell, Aboriginal Training Supervisor Karim Khan and MATES trainees Ranahl Jimbidie and Glen Camille.

Peter Morris and Johlene Shalders it was decided getting involved in the construction would be a great opportunity for the MATES trainees," Karim said.

"The project enabled the trainees to gain skills in the use of small machinery, tools and construction techniques.

"These skills were readily

passed on by South West Region Construction Supervisor Doug Hovell, who was seconded to the project for his knowledge and expertise."

The project took two weeks to complete and is now a great place for DEC's campground host volunteers to reside when helping in the management of the national park.

Review of native vegetation clearing

A REVIEW of the State's native vegetation clearing legislation to improve processes and environmental outcomes is being carried out.

An independent committee is reviewing the clearing provisions of the Environmental Protection Act and associated regulations which provide the regulatory framework to prevent inappropriate clearing and to minimise and mitigate the impacts of clearing to help ensure environmentally sustainable development for Western Australia. Under this legislation it is an offence to clear native vegetation unless a permit is granted or an exemption applies.

Acting Manager Native Vegetation Conservation Branch Kelly Faulkner said population growth and past agricultural expansion had put enormous pressure on

the environment, causing increased salinity and the loss of plants and animals through habitat destruction.

"This review will look at how we can minimise the loss of our vital natural resources while ensuring responsible development," she said.

"The legislation has been in place for four years and in this time of very significant growth, it's an appropriate opportunity to make any changes needed to help us achieve our objectives."

The review committee will look at the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislative framework, administrative processes and make recommendations for improvements. The committee will consult with key stakeholder groups.

The review started in July.

Ravensthorpe nickel mine opens



Swan Region Marketing and Promotions Officer Brenda Smith (left), South Coast Regional Manager Bruce Bone, Fitzgerald River National Park Senior Ranger Mark Moore, Director General Keiran McNamara and Senior Nature Conservation Officer Maria Lee in front of DEC's display at the official opening of the Ravensthorpe nickel mine. Photo - DEC

DEC staff recently attended the opening of BHP Billiton's new nickel mine at Ravensthorpe in the South Coast Region.

The two-day event included an official launch, which was attended by 500 invited guests, an employee opening and a community open day.

More than 2,000 community members traveled from the surrounding district to attend the open day and were encouraged to tour the mine and ride in a truck.

Before the mine's opening, DEC was involved in the impact assessment and approval of its operations and continues to have an active role in the issuing and monitoring of environmental licences.

DEC received 660 hectares of

By Joanna Moore

high-quality native vegetation from BHP Billiton as an environmental offset for the impacts associated with the project. The land is located in the nearby Bandalup corridor, which forms an important link between the Fitzgerald River National Park Biosphere and the woodlands of the southern Goldfields.

The company has also funded a three-year project to undertake a rare flora survey in the Ravensthorpe area which aims to confirm the conservation status of a number of species. Since it started in 2007, two DEC staff have been employed full-time on

the project. The team has made recommendations affecting the conservation status of eight species and are progressing the assessment of another 17 species.

DEC staff including South Coast Regional Manager Bruce Bone, Fitzgerald River National Park Senior Ranger Mark Moore and Senior Nature Conservation Officer at the department's Ravensthorpe Office Maria Lee attended the opening event and staffed DEC's display, where they provided information to the public.

Bruce said the event provided an important opportunity for DEC to interact with the local community, which is experiencing considerable change with the establishment of the resource project.

From factory to ferals...

By Joanna Moore

A \$425,000 expansion of DEC's bait manufacturing facility at Harvey will ensure the department continues to have a supply of baits for its *Western Shield* operations.

The facility produces more than 800,000 fox baits and 425,000 cat baits each year.

Through DEC's *Western Shield* wildlife recovery program, the 1080 baits are dropped by aircraft across almost four million hectares of Western Australia's national parks, State forests and rangelands from east of Esperance to Karratha.

Western Shield Coordinator Rob Brazell said that because the toxin sodium fluoroacetate contained in 1080 baits occurred naturally in a plant called *Gastrolobium*, or poison peas, native mammals had a higher resistance to it.

"Through our quarterly baiting program we hope to save native animals from extinction by reducing numbers of introduced predators such as the European fox and the feral cat," he said.

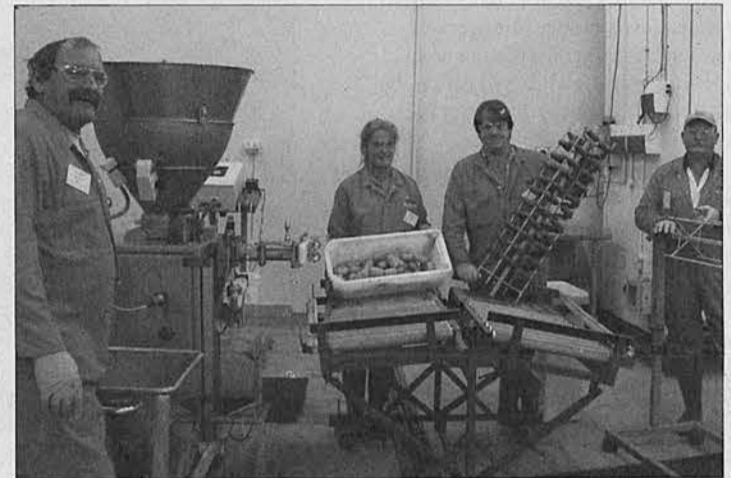
"In the past 100 years, 11 species have become extinct, five species have disappeared from the mainland but remain on a few offshore islands, and 23 species remain on the mainland and are threatened with extinction because their populations have declined significantly."

The Harvey bait manufacturing plant began operating in 1999. It was developed with a State Government investment of \$80,000 supported by more State Government funding of \$100,000 between 2004 and 2007. Its in-house production is now valued at \$725,000.

A small team of DEC staff at Harvey spent five years testing new techniques and creating new sausage-shaped baits.

Rob worked with former facility overseer Bruce Withnell on the initial research and development of the bait manufacturing operation, which is based on the salami-making process.

Rob said the facility used its new processes, including injecting baits electronically instead of by hand, to halve the cost of meat baits.



DEC conservation employees (left to right) Greg Johnston, Erin Davis, Acting Production Supervisor Dave Hawke and Mick Chambers.

Keeping the music live

DEC's Noise Regulation Branch is taking part in a project to support the live music industry through improving sound management and reducing the effects of noise on surrounding residents.

Increasingly people are being attracted to inner-city living where there is a risk of conflict between users, such as between residents and live music venues.

The Department of Culture and the Arts took a proactive approach to the issue and formed a working group that included representatives from DEC, other State and local government agencies, hotel and residents associations and live music venues. This formed the Sound Attenuation Support Program (SASP).

DEC Principal Environmental Noise Officer John Macpherson said it was very positive for the branch to be involved in finding a balance between the needs of residents and the needs of the live music industry which provided an estimated \$14.9 million annually in fees to musicians.

"Recent figures show that there are 433 live music venues operating across the State and these provide the environment for bands to develop their talent and build a strong audience base, vital to the success of our local music industry," John said.

"Live original music venues are often small, marginal venues that lack the resources to deal with noise complaints received by local governments and so they tend to give up and close.

"SASP gives them the support they need to secure their future while addressing their noise issues positively. It really is a win-win situation."

SASP runs an information series titled *Keeping it in the Mix* for live music venues, surrounding residents and the property sector about working together to get the right balance between keeping live original music venues open and minimising the effects of noise.

SASP also provides funding support for sound attenuation activities in venues (such as grants for insulation and improving acoustic design) and works with government agencies to find a mediatory approach to noise conflict resolution.

"The fact that DEC and the Department of Culture and the Arts are working closely with local government - who usually work directly with live music venues - means that we can all be working on the front foot," John said.

"In one case last year, where new management took over a venue and planned to stop its live music - supposedly because of noise complaints - we could say to the managers 'There's no need to close' and provide them with support and information to keep that aspect of the venue open.

"The program is a great example of agencies working together - and to save this important aspect of the contemporary music industry."

EcoEducation centre on Canning River opens

DEC and the City of Canning have worked together to build the Canning River EcoEducation Centre, which is now open.

Construction of the new \$2.5 million community facility and environmental education centre near the Kent Street Weir was overseen by DEC. The City of Canning contributed significantly towards planning the riverside facility and will manage it.

DEC Senior Planning Officer Jacinta Overman said the Canning River EcoEducation Centre would provide valuable information on the river and its environment to school students and visitors to the area.

"Learning about the environment will help visitors realise the importance of the Canning River and inspire them to look after it and make a positive contribution," she said.

By Leanne O'Rourke

The project had been a collaborative effort guided by a joint working group. In addition to DEC and the City of Canning, the working group included representatives from the local community, the Department of Education and Training, the Swan River Trust and the Department of Housing and Works.

"The comprehensive consultation process undertaken by the working group has resulted in an attractive, functional building that can be enjoyed and valued by the community," Jacinta said.

"Canning River Regional Park benefits greatly from a high level of community involvement through volunteers and

environment groups who help out with conservation and the general enhancement of the park. It makes sense that these people were also involved in shaping the way the centre looks and functions."

The building has a number of sustainable design features and includes an interpretive gallery, classroom, meeting room and office space and an area for a proposed cafe.

Its core function will be environmental education and the promotion of nature conservation.

"The centre will be a focal point for schools, environmental groups and the community to learn about the environment of the Canning River and how to best manage it in the future," Jacinta said.

For more information about the Canning River and other regional parks visit www.dec.wa.gov.au.

Joint management initiative gains momentum

SIGNIFICANT achievements have recently been made through a joint management initiative between DEC and the Miriuwung-Gajerrong people in Western Australia's far north.

The Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council was set up in 2006 following the Miriuwung-Gajerrong native title consent determination through which an Indigenous Land Use Agreement was developed, providing a range of benefits for the Miriuwung-Gajerrong people.

In December last year the first step towards developing a management plan for six new conservation areas near Kununurra was signed off by the Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council.

In parallel to the joint planning process, a strategy was developed to provide Miriuwung-Gajerrong people with employment and training opportunities to support the joint long-term management aspirations for the new conservation areas, which have a total area of about 160,000 hectares.

Carlene Davies started work with DEC as a business administration trainee through the not-for-profit organisation Kimberley Group Training in April. She will be trained in relevant skills to support

the new joint management project.

Additionally, eight Miriuwung-Gajerrong ranger trainees have been selected and started in June on a six-month trial.

The training program has been developed by TAFE, DEC and Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council and will be delivered in the region.

Park council chairperson Margaret Moore said the council was pleased with

the progress.

"It is good to see Miriuwung-Gajerrong people being employed and trained to take up key roles in the future management of the new conservation areas," she said.

"We want nothing less than to be the best in the country and have a model that other countrymen can aspire to."

For more information contact DEC Miriuwung-Gajerrong Joint Management Coordinator Scott Goodson in Kununurra on (08) 9168 4200.



Staff at DEC's Kununurra Work Centre – (left to right) Business Administration Trainee Carlene Davies, Administration Assistant Toni Bellingham, Clerical Officer Lauren Ash and Regional Business Manager Candice Davey. Photo – Scott Goodson

Grants for litter prevention

THE Keep Australia Beautiful Council (KABC) is providing financial support for projects that take on Western Australia's litter problem and result in lasting changes.

Littering and illegal dumping in public areas is an ongoing issue in WA and KABC WA has a \$100,000 grants program that provides funds for projects that aim to reduce litter and change littering behaviour.

Grants of up to \$10,000 each are available for regional projects and major initiatives and up to \$5,000 for single municipal projects or local area projects. Grants are available to local government authorities, small to medium enterprises, local associations, community groups and individuals.

KABC WA, supported by DEC, is keen to support projects that will develop a model for future initiatives and applications will be judged on issues such as the scope of the project, stakeholder engagement and innovation. Projects that address priority issues such as illegal dumping, discarded cigarette butts and roadside litter will be well regarded.

For grant guidelines, eligibility, assessment criteria and application kits go to www.kabc.wa.gov.au or contact Project Officer Anna McGlynn at KABC on 6467 5547.

Applications close 5pm Friday 26 September and the successful applicants will be announced in November.

'Michelin Man™' plant makes the top 10

A WESTERN Australian plant has made it into a top 10 listing of new species described in 2007.

The worldwide listing was released by the International Institute for Species Exploration at Arizona State University and an international committee of taxonomists – scientists who discover and classify new species. Nominations for the listing are based on criteria such as a species' unique attributes or peculiar name.

The Michelin Man™ plant (*Tecticornia bibenda*) was described by Research Scientist Kelly Shephard from the WA Herbarium, and Biogeography Program Leader and Partnerships Manager Stephen van Leeuwen after it was found in the Little Sandy Desert north of Wiluna.

Stephen said the succulent plant made it into the top 10 because of its charismatic appearance.

"The samphire species' bulging flesh resembles the Michelin Man™ – the tyre manufacturing company's historic emblem," he said.

"It is one of 298 new plant species described in Western Australia in 2007."

The listing of the top 10 new species from 2007 is released as part of the State of Observed Species report, which is issued annually by the international institute and summarises the number of species newly described in a calendar year.

There are about 1.8 million species that have been described since Linnaeus initiated the modern systems for naming plants and animals in the 18th century. Scientists estimate there are between two million and 100 million species on Earth, though most set the number closer to 10 million.

Rick receives Australian Fire Service Medal

FIRE Management Services Manager Rick Sneeuwjagt's 40 years of outstanding service has been recognised with an Australian Fire Service Medal.

The award recognises distinguished service by members of Australian fire services and is presented as part of the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Former Director of Regional Services Alan Walker said during his career, Rick had made a major contribution to the Australian community through his achievements at State, national and international levels in fire research, fire management and fire administration.

"Rick is internationally recognised for his extensive knowledge, experience and leadership in fire management and he is a meritorious recipient of this prestigious award," Alan said.

In his current position, which he has held since 1992, Rick is responsible for leading and coordinating the department's fire management activities on conservation and Crown lands covering about 114 million hectares. These activities include prevention, preparedness, prescribed burning, planning, suppression, training and recovery.

Before this role, Rick worked as Principal Fire Officer with the former Department of Conservation and Land Management, as Regional Leader in Forest Protection and Regeneration in the Southern Forest Region during the early 1980s and as Pemberton District Manager from 1977, both with the former Forests Department.

Rick's work with the Forests Department started as a Fire Research Scientist at Manjimup where he was



Floreat Primary School students were delighted to receive a visit from a real 'firey'. Rick Sneeuwjagt watched the Year 6 students deliver their presentations about fire and ecology. Photo – Rod Cohen

primarily responsible for the research and development of the Forest Fire Behaviour System, known colloquially as the 'Red Book', which is still in use in WA today.

Rick's interest in fire started at a young age. Following three summers as a seasonal firefighter, he studied at the Australian National University where he obtained his Bachelor of Science and then at the University of Washington in Seattle to gain a Master of Science in Fire Research.

He is now an Adjunct Professor and a Fellow of the Natural Resource Management Institute at the University of Notre Dame in Perth and has held more than a dozen leadership positions in fire and emergency

management at State and national levels.

Just a few of Rick's many significant achievements include the development of the department's Large Fire Organisation System and the Incident Management Systems, publishing more than 30 scientific papers and articles, developing a wide range of high level fire training courses and programs and leading deployments of firefighting teams to help overseas in wildfire emergencies. Rick has also guided the development of fire management regimes on DEC-managed lands that protect biodiversity.

Rick will receive the Australian Fire Service Medal at a ceremony at Government House on 12 September.