



Department of
Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future 

Munda Biddi Trail gets a \$3 million boost



REGIONAL Development Minister Brendon Grylls and Environment Minister Donna Faragher embarked on a short ride along the Munda Biddi Trail after the formal launch of \$3 million in Royalties for Regions funding for the trail in August.

The funding, combined with a \$1 million capital contribution from DEC, will enable the completion of the cycle trail through scenic forest and bushland from Nannup to Albany.

The trail is currently about 500 kilometres long, extending from Mundaring to Nannup, and will be more than 1,000 kilometres when completed within the next three years

World Parks Day

DEC is gearing up to join the global community in celebrating the second annual World Parks Day on Saturday 19 September 2009.

To mark the occasion this year, DEC will be granting free entry into at least six of its world-class parks on the day – Avon Valley, Serpentine, Walyunga, John Forrest, Yanchep and Cape Range national parks.

In addition, DEC's *Nearer to Nature* program will be offering fun family activities at the Perth Hills National Parks Centre, Yanchep staff will be conducting free guided walks and koala viewing and Barna Mia will provide the public with a 20 per cent discount on tours that night.

Healthy Parks, Healthy People program coordinator Cathy Gazey said this year's theme – 'Parks for Life' – aimed to promote the role of parks in people's lives which encouraged them to enjoy and appreciate their local green spaces.

"Parks provide people with so many benefits at various times during their lives whether as places of treasured childhood memories, for recreation and activities, or for connection with the natural world

and restoration away from our urbanised lives," Cathy said.

"They really do have something for everyone and can have a really positive impact on mental health, bringing people together and fostering community involvement.

"As places for environmental education, parks can connect young people to nature inspiring careers in natural resources and promoting a sense of responsibility for our environmental future.

"Getting out and about in a park is one of the best things you can do for your general health and well-being and what better time to do it than on World Parks Day when you can head to six of the best for free and take part in fun activities."

DEC is proud to support World Parks Day, an initiative of the Parks for Life: International Urban Parks and Green Space Alliance.

Anyone can take part by visiting a park, building awareness of park values among friends and colleagues and spreading the word. For more information visit www.dec.wa.gov.au.

Giant turtle swims home



Left to right: Wayne Moroney (DEC), Anna-Lena Janzen (Ocean Park), Duncan Thomson (Ocean Park), Ed Fenny (Ocean Park), Dave Holley (DEC) and Ross Mack (DEC) with the turtle before her release.

A METRE-LONG marine turtle has returned to its home in waters off the WA coast after being nursed back to health and released by DEC wildlife officers and Ocean Park ecotourism centre staff.

The female green turtle, estimated at up to 80 years of age, was discovered by a local resident and reported to DEC about a month ago in Shark Bay having strayed almost a kilometre from the coastal waters that it needs to survive.

DEC Shark Bay Marine Park Coordinator Dave Holley said it was picked up after swimming in on a high tide and being stranded when the tide receded.

"Marine turtles have existed in the world's oceans for more than 100 million years and they carry significant cultural, spiritual and economic importance for coastal Indigenous Australians," he said.

"Green turtles are the most common species seen in Western Australia with thousands of females nesting on our State's beaches between October and February each year.

"Monitoring and protecting these fascinating creatures is of vital importance and in this case we took some measurements and pictures before tagging the turtle for future identification.

"The joint operation between DEC and Ocean Park was the second successful release of a rehabilitated green turtle in the area in as many months and it was a fantastic outcome for the turtle.

Ocean Park Managing Director and marine scientist Ed Fenny said the turtle was in poor condition when it was picked up and it was unlikely that it would have been strong enough to reach the coast on its own.

"We transported the animal to our small tourist operation just south of Denham in Shark Bay which has ponds for fish and sharks and we were able to rehabilitate it there quite successfully," he said.

"After several weeks of care it was fit and healthy and we were absolutely delighted to release it last week to its natural home."

All marine turtles found in Australian waters are protected species at both State and Commonwealth levels.

Healthy book sales for DEC

MORE people are becoming informed about WA and its unique features after DEC's WA Naturally Publications experienced its best sales year ever.

In a year of economic downturn Marketing and Sales Manager Estelle de San Miguel said strong book sales in the 2008–09 financial year surpassed the previously recorded best year.

"If we consider our results over the past five years, the 2008–09 results are eight per cent greater than our best previous performance and a fabulous 26 per cent increase on 2007–08," she said.

DEC's Marketing and Publication Distribution Branch look after retail books selling direct to the public via phone, fax, email and the DEC website bookshop.

"We also wholesale publications to outlets that resell,

such as bookshops, tourist bureaus, camping shops and more – which is key to ensuring our products are available and accessible to a maximum audience," Estelle said.

The increases in sales have been strongly supported by the success of *Tuart Dwellers*, the department's new children's book, and strong general sales show a pleasing trend that indicates people are taking a stronger interest in local holidays and recreation activities.

"*Tuart Dwellers* was short listed in the Australian children book of the year awards and has had strong demand Australia-wide," Estelle said.

Estelle said the department's 'discovery' series of pocket size guides had also seen a 50 per cent increase

in sales, with new titles published in the range and some existing titles updated and reprinted. Strong continued sales in the BushBook series and continued growth in calendar sales have also added to the success.

The Western Australian 2010 Calendar, presented by *LANDSCOPE* Magazine, is available now for \$16.95.

"We suggest people order early this year, as last year we sold out by early December," Estelle said.

Staff and volunteers receive a 20 per cent discount on all DEC publications and can order through the Kensington reception on 9334 0481.

"The high level of customer service delivered by Sales and Distribution Officer Malcolm MacMillan and Publications Distribution Officer Neil Moore is one of the keys to our ongoing success," Estelle said.

Volunteers remove feral pigs from Merredin reserve

A FERAL pig eradication program in a Merredin reserve has been a continued success thanks to the help of Peel Hunting and Conservation volunteers.

DEC Wheatbelt Wildlife Officer Chris Phoebe said feral pigs had been an ongoing problem in the area, escaping from a private property east of Merredin, mating in the adjacent nature reserve and even wandering into town.

After looking into the problem, Chris and a local shire ranger found the pigs to be in very poor condition and alerted the RSPCA, which promptly took charge of the animals and determined the best course of

action was to humanely kill them.

"I was the only DEC officer with a gun license at the time and after going out a few times to shoot the feral pigs I soon realised that this was going to be a big job," Chris said.

"The danger involved in dealing with feral pigs is a very real one, with some of the animals coming up to waist height – they are very clever and good at evading people."

Chris contacted the President of the Peel Hunting and Conservation Inc, Merv Scully, who was more than happy to help rid the area of the feral animals.

"They couldn't get up here fast enough and after speaking with the property owners to get full access to the surrounding area, they got straight onto the task of hunting," Chris said.

The Peel Hunting and Conservation Inc members are well trained and carry out practical conservation work by targeting pest animals that are impacting on native flora and fauna.

After a lot of reconnaissance and effort over several months the group was successful in ridding the area of the animals and continue to check up on reserves in the area every few months.

"The assistance of the group has been invaluable. They have a strong interest in the conservation of native flora and fauna and were very experienced and professional," Chris said.

"Since then I have happily passed their details onto a contact in Merredin for help with feral cats and onto colleagues in Kalgoorlie should they ever need a similar service.

"Groups like the Peel Hunting and Conservation Inc provide quality services that assist DEC in various conservation activities and are to be commended on their dedicated service."

Infrared camera technology targets pigs

DEC has trialled infrared camera technology on a fixed wing aircraft to detect feral pigs in natural bushland in the Warren Region.

DEC Invasive Species Principal Coordinator John Asher said Paul Rampant of Fire Management Services sourced the infrared camera and provided technical information for the trial.

He said the camera was then fitted to a plane normally used for aerial fox baiting.

"We fitted the camera and flew over 16 feral pig traps between Pemberton and Walpole," John said.

"Unfortunately, someone had tampered with the traps so they were empty but the camera did pick up several animals near the traps that we believe were pigs.

"We could also clearly make out cows on the imaging sensor that were captured while flying over a paddock prior to the survey."

John said the trial was the first step in assessing the effectiveness of using such technology to determine the

numbers of feral animals in a particular region.

He said much more needed to be done to refine the camera's use.

"For example we need to get temperature readings from different animals so we can work out what animal is what, based on its temperate output," he said.

"We also need to experiment with flying at different altitudes, using different focal lengths on the camera and capturing infrared images at different times of the year, when surrounding temperatures differ."

John said the technology also had the potential to detect other feral animals such as camels and deer.

He hoped it could eventually be used during standard fox baiting flights to gather important data on feral animal numbers while keeping costs to a minimum.

"There's lots of potential but there's also a lot more work required to refine the camera's use," he said.

"We'll be looking at collaborating with different groups and sourcing funding to continue the trials and,

hopefully, to use the camera in pest animal survey work."

While similar technology has been used in helicopters, this trial is believed to be the first to use infrared cameras on a fixed wing aircraft.

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DEC's Peter Woods was part of a team of 40 DEC staff who took part in this year's City to Surf.

DEC team in City to Surf

A DEC team of 40 people hit the streets of Perth on August 30 for the annual City to Surf.

Five DEC employees completed the half marathon, 22 did the 12-kilometre run, 10 walked the 12 kilometres and three set out on the four-kilometre walk.

Native Vegetation Conservation Branch Executive Officer Loretta Shillinglaw won the half marathon in her division – women aged 65 to 99.

DEC Corporate Health Officer Nardi Ling, who completed the half marathon in under two hours, said the event was a huge success.

"It was a really great day. It didn't rain for a change and there was a really great atmosphere," she said.

"Some members of the DEC team were running for the first time and I think everyone felt a real sense of achievement.

"It is a great event to give people an incentive to train and keep fit – I think our team members can be really proud of their efforts."

After completing the course, about 30 of the DEC team gathered on the lawns at City Beach for a picnic, put on by DEC's Risk Management Section.

About 40,000 people took part in the City of Surf this year, with all money raised going to the Activ Foundation.

Air tests at Wagerup

DEC officers have been active over winter following through with commitments to the community on air quality management challenges in Wagerup.

Environmental officer Jodi Ariti said the Air Quality Management Branch had been proactive in extending understanding of air quality and had invested significant resources in testing new air quality measurement technologies including a Proton Transfer Reaction Mass Spectrometer.

"This research-grade instrument was purchased from an Austrian manufacturer and is capable of measuring a very large range of chemical compounds in the air at very low concentrations," she said.

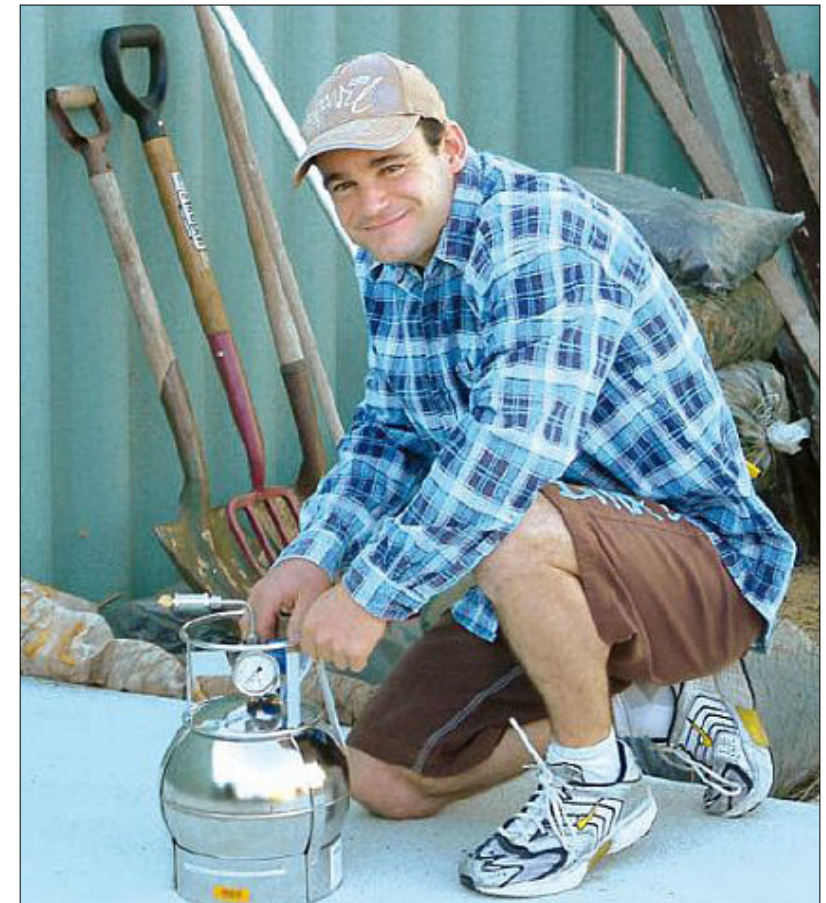
"There are only three of these instruments in Australia and DEC is the first government agency to be employing the tool for scientific and regulatory purposes."

Departmental scientists have been working very closely with researchers from The University of Western Australia, CSIRO and the Chemistry Centre WA to maximise the benefits from the leading edge technology.

The department has also installed a specialised air

monitoring facility at Cookernup and Yarloop to obtain additional data on air chemistry in these locations. Officers have undertaken a number of field surveys to measure odour and air chemistry in the vicinity of the Wagerup refinery.

Community members have been assisting the department with these investigations by taking canister samples and keeping a log of air quality events. This information has been integral in understanding the complex meteorology in the Wagerup area.



A member of the community with a SikoCan air sampling canister.