



World Heritage nomination for Ningaloo Coast

WESTERN Australia's Ningaloo Coast has been nominated for World Heritage listing in recognition of the area's outstanding natural beauty, biological richness and international geological significance.

Federal Environment, Heritage and the Arts Minister Peter Garrett announced that the Ningaloo Coast had been nominated for World Heritage listing by the Australian Government with the support of the WA Government.

WA Environment Minister Donna Faragher said the nomination was for an area of 710,000 hectares and included Ningaloo Reef, Cape Range, a coastal strip extending about 260 kilometres south to Red Bluff, as well as adjacent dunefields, marine areas and islands.

"The reef is part of a marine ecosystem that ranks seventh on the world's list of coral reef biodiversity 'hotspots' and is second in terms of the number of species to be found within a limited range," she said.

"The Cape Range peninsula is an evolutionary laboratory that emerged from the sea over 26 million years, built from the skeletons of ancient marine creatures.

"The Ningaloo Coast represents the best opportunity in the world to encounter whale sharks, the world's largest fish, together with globally significant populations of

manta rays, dugongs, marine turtles, humpbacks, other cetaceans, rays and sharks.

"This nomination is also recognition of the comprehensive management arrangements in place for the area based on a network of marine and terrestrial conservation reserves."

The State Government will remain principally responsible for management and decision making in the area, in consultation with local governments, pastoralists, landholders and the community.

"The various land tenures of the nominated property, if listed, will remain under the control of the State and Federal government jurisdictions; the shires of Exmouth and Carnarvon; and private land and lease holders," the Minister said.

Mrs Faragher said the State Government had worked closely with the Australian Government to identify an appropriate boundary for the nomination.

"World Heritage listing is the highest global recognition of a site's importance and if listed, Ningaloo Coast will be recognised with the greatest of the world's heritage sites such as the Grand Canyon, Egypt's Pyramids, Tanzania's Serengeti National Park and Stonehenge," she said.

"The reef and the adjoining Cape Range National Park attract more than 100,000 visitors a year, which results in an injection of approximately \$127 million into the Gascoyne region's economy."

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The nomination document is being sent to the World Heritage Centre in Paris, where it will be assessed during the next 18 months.

Shark Bay and Purnululu National Park are the only other Western Australian sites which are World Heritage listed.



DEC Whale Shark Project Officer based in Exmouth Jutta Wildforster knows that Ningaloo Marine Park is one of the best places to work and visit. Soon the rest of the world may know, following the area's nomination for World Heritage listing.





Mike Cantelo (centre front) with some of the fire practitioners he instructed in South Africa.

Mike helps answer burning questions

DEC Swan Coastal District Fire Coordinator Mike Cantelo recently shared his expert knowledge on prescribed burning during five trips to South Africa to train plantation managers.

The first trip was sponsored by DEC and Mike was accompanied by Wellington District Fire Coordinator Peter Gibson.

During the tour Mike and Peter aimed to demonstrate the practice of prescribed burning in pine plantations through a scientific approach and the introduction of aerial ignition.

The workshops consisted of discussions of theory, aerial burning demonstrations and the chance for feedback and questions about prescribed burning for the protection of pine plantations.

"Aerial ignition is a practical approach to broad-scale burning because it makes it possible to burn more hectares during the short periods of time when conditions are favourable," Mike said.

Mike said the WA fire management approach seemed to be highly applicable to the South African plantations, which cover a million hectares.

"The *Pinus* species are similar in characteristics to the plantations on DEC estate," Mike said.

"Most fire management activities also mirror that of DEC, but the absence of a major fuel reduction program makes South African plantations highly vulnerable to wildfire damage.

"In 2007, six people lost their lives in a single fire event that burnt 80,000 hectares."

DEC's approach is to limit the intensity of wildfire and therefore make it easier for fire fighters to control a wildfire when it first starts.

"In broad terms, this has meant maintaining forest fuel loading at or below six tonnes per hectare," Mike said.

"South Africa is aiming to reduce their fuel loads under pine to at or below six tonnes per hectare and have put in place a 20,000-hectare burn program for 2010."

The introduction of a broad-scale burning program using aerial ignition will greatly reduce the chance of loss of plantations and potential loss of life through wildfire.

Mike said the trips were a great opportunity to show the skills of DEC people overseas and to be ambassadors for WA's fire managers.

Mike also visited Chile during 2009 and hopes to travel to Argentina in 2010 to teach more people about prescribed burning techniques.

Investigating bushfire causes

DEC staff recently took part in a joint bushfire cause investigators' refresher course between the department, FESA and WA Police.

In the 2008–09 bushfire season, 1,468 bushfires were deliberately lit, accounting for 37 per cent of all bushfires, leaving an often devastating cost to communities.

Unfortunately, the blaze generally destroys evidence that may identify the perpetrators lighting these fires, such as fingerprints or DNA on an arson device found at the point of ignition.

DEC, FESA and WA Police maintain a group of bushfire cause investigators who have a significant understanding of bushfire behaviour and investigation techniques to track down arsonists. The annual refresher course helps keep the investigators sharp.

DEC Fire Operations Officer Murray Mitchell said the two-day course enabled investigators to discuss new techniques and processes as well as look over previous cases to share insights and tips – before being put to the test.

In teams, the investigators carry out real life training scenarios and determine the location and ignition devices of several previous lit fires.

"It can be incredibly hard with long life matches, for example, burning up to look very similar to a burnt out twig, but the sources of these training fires is always determined," Murray said.

"It is a great opportunity to share techniques and tricks and build good relationships between the agencies."

Bushfire cause investigators use all available means of investigation

including surveillance, aerial tracking and photography. Investigators Tom Keneally from DEC and John Haddon from FESA have recently returned from a trip to Canberra where they attended an advanced investigators course focusing on pattern analysis.

The multi-agency composition of the officers draws on the investigative skills and bush expertise of the different organisations and enables the team to respond in a coordinated manner around the State.

"DEC currently has 13 fully trained bushfire cause investigators, who are highly regarded among FESA and WA Police for their bush knowledge," Murray said.

Of the 1,468 deliberately lit fires last fire season, 14 people have been arrested for 35 of those fires. This sets WA's investigators well above the national average success rate.

Murray said the difficulties in finding arsonists meant witness accounts of fire ignition were very important.

"Police rely very heavily on witness accounts of how and when people first see fire or smoke and the people nearby when this happens. Due to lack of forensic assistance, persons of interest are usually only identified by witnesses," he said.

Rewards of up to \$50,000 are offered for the reporting of information that leads to the identification and conviction of arsonists.

Members of the community with information on suspicious persons or firefighters are encouraged to report this information to the police by ringing Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.



Tyre education program on a roll

AN education campaign targeting Kalgoorlie businesses and industries that are the biggest disposers of old tyres has resulted in a significant improvement in the tracking of tyre waste in the Goldfields.

DEC Regional Industry Regulation Leader Wayne Astill said that during an investigation in July 2009, DEC had become aware that few tyre retailers were complying with controlled waste regulations.

"When disposing of more than 200 kilograms of used tyres, companies or businesses have to use a licensed controlled waste carrier and keep the paperwork for three years to verify tyre disposal methods," Wayne said.

"Illegal dumping of old tyres can be a problem, and around the time of this investigation we had had an increase in reports of tyre dumping in unmanned landfills, the bush and on road reserves.

"The controlled waste system

prevents large-scale illegal dumping of tyres because this tyre waste is being tracked."

Wayne said as well as contacting tyre retailers, general freight companies and other big tyre users, DEC wrote to landfill operators to remind them they could only accept large volume tyre waste from licensed controlled waste carriers with a tracking form.

"Early last month, as part of a broader campaign, DEC inspected and reviewed the operations of a disposal site, five controlled waste transporters that transport tyres and 10 tyre retailers," he said

"There was huge improvement, all the retailers that had disposed of tyres had receipts.

"It was encouraging to see such a positive response and improvement in the way tyre waste was being handled – it's a good outcome for the community and the environment."



A dramatic lightning storm causes fire ignition in Cape Arid National Park in early November. The resulting wildfire burnt through nearly 300 hectares of the park and was brought under control within two days. The fire threatened an important habitat area for the critically endangered western ground parrot, which has the majority of its remaining population within the park.

Lightning storms such as this are common in the South Coast Region in November and December and frequently cause wildfires, often in remote areas. The photo was taken in the early evening by Threatened Species Conservation Officer Cam Tiller, a member of the South Coast Region's western ground parrot project team, while conducting in-field research.

New Penguin Island boardwalk

A NEW boardwalk is being constructed on Penguin Island, opening the area up to visitors.

DEC Project Manager Sara Padgett said the boardwalk on the southern end of the island would complement the extensive northern boardwalk, creating full access around Penguin Island.

"The boardwalk will help keep visitors off vegetation and safely away from the nesting birds on the island, including little penguins, pelicans, bridles and crested terns," she said.

Budgeted at \$300,000, the design and construction of the southern boardwalk is one of Swan Coastal District's largest capital works projects for the 2009–10 financial year.

DEC enlisted the help of Helicopters Australia to transport materials for the construction of the boardwalk.

"After several months of logistical planning, the helicopter

was found to be the most efficient and cost-effective way to deliver the 30 tonnes of construction materials required, while ensuring minimum disruption to the wildlife present," Sara said.

"The materials were dropped on the eastern side of the island away from the nesting birds, who watched the day's activities with interest."

Sara said operations staff located at both the 'lift' and 'drop' zones noted that there appeared to be minimal disturbance to wildlife throughout the helicopter transportation activities.

It is anticipated the construction of the boardwalk will be completed by March 2010, providing an enhanced visitor experience to Penguin Island.

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Forrestdale muster saves black swan cygnets

TEN black swan cygnets were saved during a rescue mission at a drying suburban lake in December.

DEC staff and volunteers gathered at Forrestdale Lake near Armadale to capture the abandoned cygnets and relocate them.

About 35 volunteers from bird handling organisations along with DEC staff guided the cygnets into a holding pen at one end of the lake.

The cygnets are being relocated to Yanchep Lake in Yanchep National Park.

DEC Swan Coastal District Conservation Officer Sean Walsh said adult swans often abandoned their cygnets when the lake dried up in summer.

"The young cygnets which have not developed and can't fly become targets for predators, particularly foxes," he said.

"Their only chance for survival is to be relocated to other lakes suitable for swan habitation at this time of year."

Fox trapping was undertaken in the lead-up to the muster, resulting in the capture of seven foxes.

In January 2009, 16 cygnets were rescued from the lake and 14 were successfully relocated to Yanchep National Park and a private property at Chittering.

"The January operation was the first time we had undertaken such a mission, and to know we saved these birds from an almost certain death has prompted us to make this an annual event," Sean said.

"The black swan is the official bird emblem of Western Australia and it is vital we protect these magnificent and iconic creatures."

Native ARC, Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, the Darling Range Wildlife Shelter, Malubillai Wildlife Carers Network, Friends of Forrestdale Lake, Friends of Yellagonga, Yanchep National Park volunteers, WA Seabird Rescue and the Waterbird Conservation Group were involved in the operation.



Shark Bay's newest addition, Khamun, swims with its mother Kiya.

New additions for Monkey Mia

WESTERN Australia's Monkey Mia dolphins have welcomed two calves born two weeks apart in the World Heritage-listed Shark Bay area.

DEC Shark Bay District Manager Brett Fitzgerald said a 60-centimetre-long calf was born to Puck and another was born to Kiya, both adult female dolphins in the group fed as part of a supervised program.

"The dolphins that visit the Monkey Mia beach are a matriarchal group consisting of three unrelated adult females and a selection of their calves, some of whom are now also adult females," he said.

Brett said one of the new additions had been named Samu in honour of research scientist Dr Amy Samuels whose findings provided valuable insight into dolphin behaviour.

"Dr Samuels was a longstanding researcher at Monkey Mia. She visited

on a regular basis from her home town in the USA where she lost her battle with cancer in December last year at the age of 57," he said.

"She had a long career of wildlife research on a range of species including dolphins and her research and advice has played an important role in how DEC manages the welfare of the dolphins in Shark Bay, particularly at Monkey Mia."

The other calf, Khamun, was born to Kiya and named with help from students from Shark Bay Primary School.

"Names of new calves have been decided by a variety of methods over the years including State-wide competitions and local input as a valuable way of engaging people with the environment and the dolphins," he said.

Brett said it was vital that people visiting Monkey Mia were aware of the newborns and stayed well away from

the mothers and calves when they came into shore.

"DEC has implemented a program to minimise any human or vessel interaction with the calves to ensure they have the greatest chance of survival," he said.

"As such, DEC has urged visitors to the beach to remain at the water's edge when the mothers and calves are inshore to prevent the calf from beaching itself.

"In the first few weeks of life, calves are tuned into their mother's movements and will follow any rapid movement in the water. If people are in the water near the calves and they move, they could follow and inadvertently beach themselves."

Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*) calves will usually suckle for up to four years. The sex of a calf cannot be determined until it is six months old.

