



Barrow Island animals make the move

GOLDEN bandicoots, boodies and other threatened mammals have been airlifted from Barrow Island as part of a major conservation project to establish new populations on the mainland and on other islands.

The translocation project is one of the biggest ever undertaken in Australia and is occurring as one of the environmental offset programs for the Gorgon gas project on Barrow Island. The offset programs, which also include flatback turtle conservation, and a dredging audit and surveillance program, are being managed by DEC and funded by Chevron.

Project Manager DEC Senior Principal Research Scientist Keith Morris said that during the past month 325 golden bandicoots, 65 boodies, 111 spectacled hare-wallabies and 104 brushtail possums had been airlifted from Barrow Island, Western Australia's second biggest island, 60 kilometres off the Pilbara coast.

"The animals were taken to one of three locations – hare-wallabies and golden bandicoots to Hermite Island in the Montebello group, 30 kilometres north of Barrow Island, possums to the Cape Range National Park near Exmouth, and boodies and golden bandicoots to Lorna Glen, a former pastoral station about 800 kilometres away in central WA," Keith said.

Environment Minister Donna Faragher and DEC Director General Keiran McNamara visited Barrow Island in late February to see the

capture of some mammals and their release on Hermite Island.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to translocate animals from Barrow Island where there are currently healthy populations of 40,000 to 60,000 golden bandicoots, 2,500 to 3,000 boodies, up to 10,000 spectacled hare-wallabies and 1,500 to 2,000 possums," the Minister said.

The mammals going to Hermite Island are part of DEC's Montebello Renewal project, under the *Western Shield* program.

Feral cats and black rats used to be abundant on Hermite Island but efforts by DEC and volunteers in the past 10 years have led to their eradication, meaning the island can now become a threatened species refuge.

Keith said boodies and golden bandicoots once lived on Lorna Glen and across the arid region, but had disappeared since European settlement.

"The re-introductions will occur as part of Operation Rangelands Restoration, which is aimed at restoring ecosystem health and wildlife diversity to almost 600,000 hectares of rangelands in the north-eastern Goldfields by 2020," Keith said.

"Since 2001, DEC and the Wiluna Aboriginal community have removed livestock and other introduced animals from Lorna Glen, managed bushfires and constructed a boundary fence with neighbouring landholders.

"A 1,100-hectare predator-proof compound

has been built for re-introduced animals to acclimatise before being released into the wild and to seek shelter from the few remaining feral cats.

"Previous mammal re-introductions into unfenced areas in Australia's arid interior have not been successful, mainly due to feral cats.

"But recent advances in feral cat control techniques mean we can now go forward in the conservation of Australia's most threatened native animals and the restoration of the arid zone."

During the next 10 years, DEC plans to re-establish 11 native animal species at Lorna Glen, making it one of the world's largest wildlife reconstruction programs.

Lorna Glen Project Officer Judy Dunlop said a sample of animals were tagged with radio collars so they could be monitored following release.

Similarly, the reintroduction of possums at Cape Range will be the start of another fauna reconstruction project in the arid zone, where most mammal declines have occurred.

Keith thanked DEC staff from the Science Division (Woodvale and Manjimup research centres) and regional staff from Karratha, Exmouth, Denham and Kalgoorlie as well as students, caretakers and volunteers who made the translocations possible. He also thanked the Shire of Roebourne which provided air-conditioned facilities at Karratha airport for holding animals in transit, staff from Bristow



Lorna Glen Project Officer Judy Dunlop with a golden bandicoot from Barrow Island.

and Jayrow helicopter companies who ensured the quick transfer of animals and pilot Peter McGinty for his role in flying the animals.





DEC staff at the WA Tourism Awards in 2009 where the Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre won gold for 'New Tourism Development'. (Front row, from left) Peter Fishwick, Rick France, George Watson, (back row) Jeremy Flynn, Rod Quartermain, Tracy Churchill, Derren Foster and Keith Hockey.

Pinnacles finalist in national Tourism Awards

THE Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre was a finalist in the national Tourism Awards in late February.

The recognition follows its win in the Western Australian Tourism Awards in 2009 for best 'New Tourism Development'.

Moora District Parks and Visitor Services Coordinator George Watson attended the awards ceremony in Tasmania and said that while the Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre didn't take out the top prize in their category, just getting to the national level was a great achievement.

"While we didn't win, it was an honour to represent the State and to raise the profile of the work DEC is doing to enhance WA's nature-based tourism industry," George said.

"It was also great to meet with Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife and Forestry Tasmania staff and to see first hand how they address the many visitor servicing and tourism issues that are shared by DEC."

The Pinnacles Desert Discovery centre opened in November 2008 to enhance the experience for visitors to Nambung National Park.

"The centre takes visitors on a sensory journey through the park, with the use of soundscapes, video footage, back-lit panels, objects and static displays," George said.

The centre also features improved parking and toilet facilities, a retail gallery and new ticket booth and shelter. It was designed in line with sustainable development principles, a significant achievement given the remote setting of the national park.

"Consultation and research showed the new centre should not impinge on the natural values of the Pinnacles Desert, but blend in with the environment, and this is what we feel has been achieved," George said.

"It offers interpretation and improved amenity, that complements visitors' experience within the Pinnacles Desert, rather than detracting from the remote and natural values of the site."

New resources from *Waste Wise Schools*

A NEW accreditation scheme and teacher resources from the *Waste Wise Schools* program were launched by the Minister for Environment and Youth Donna Faragher at the Wirrabirra Primary School assembly in February.

The Wirrabirra Student Environmental Monitors ran the assembly and the special guests were treated to the whole school's rendition of the 3R song 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle'.

The new resources, which include an operating practices manual, four curriculum-linked activity guides and fact sheets, have been developed to provide further support for current and future *Waste Wise Schools*.

Fact sheets for students and teachers are available on the *Waste Wise* website and include topics such as climate change, littering and how to make a worm farm out of a fridge,

as well as other waste minimisation issues.

The new accreditation system has been developed to recognise the excellent work done by *Waste Wise Schools*.

Waste Wise Schools Program Coordinator Wendy Aspden said Wirrabirra Primary School received their new accredited school sign and also celebrated their new Environmental Education teacher position and program which began this year.

"They have been an active and enthusiastic *Waste Wise School* since 2003, with a whole-school approach to waste minimisation and environmental activities," Wendy said.

"A highlight of the afternoon was the student guided tour of the school's *Waste Wise* projects which include composting, worm farming, *Waste Wise* gardening, and their extensive recycling program."



(Back row, second from left to right) Minister for Environment and Youth Donna Faragher, DEC Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs Director Ron Kawallak, Wirrabirra Environmental and Waste Wise teacher Nichola Butler and Wirrabirra Principal Steve Richards with Wirrabirra Primary School students at the launch of the new Waste Wise School resources.



Keeping an eye on corals at Ningaloo Marine Park

A TEAM of DEC scientists and rangers spent much of January re-assessing the health of coral communities at Ningaloo Reef uncovering some pleasing results.

Under the supervision of the acting Marine Park Coordinator Matt Smith, the team surveyed coral monitoring sites that had previously been surveyed in 1998–99 in the northern and central parts of the marine park. They also established and surveyed several new sites in the southern part of the marine park.

Indicative results show coral communities in Ningaloo Marine Park are in good condition, with low rates of disease and low levels of predation by the coral-eating marine snail *Drupella* and no evidence of the crown-of-thorns starfish.

Principal Research Scientist Kim Friedman said the monitoring was part of the state-wide Western Australian Marine Monitoring Program (WAMMP) which aimed to measure the effectiveness of DEC's marine conservation and management programs.

"The goals of the conservation and management programs are to maintain and improve the health of the ecological values such as coral, fish and turtles," he said.

"They also work to maintain and improve the social values of the marine park, which include recreation, tourism, seascapes and fishing.

"This survey complements other long-standing 'one-off' coral health monitoring programs in Ningaloo Marine Park."

Kim said live coral cover and composition, coral diversity and colony size were key indicators of coral community health.

"These indicators were measured to determine the rates of change in these attributes caused by natural, human or

climate change since the previous surveys.

"The team also surveyed coral disease at selected sites for the first time in the marine park and the presence or absence of coral predators *Drupella* and the crown-of-thorns starfish were also noted at each site."

The precise location of monitoring sites are determined by GPS and marked with submerged plastic-capped star pickets and smaller pieces or reinforcing rods.

Exact relocation of survey locations and high resolution photographic records ensure the accuracy of repeat measures and

help produce reliable estimates of change.

Kim said the community was getting behind the surveys with the Cape Conservation Group and Exmouth District High School coming up with a more defined strategy for community monitoring to inform snorkellers of the best ways to preserve coral at high-use coral sites.

"With support from DEC, this volunteer program will help alert snorkellers to the danger to fragile coral colonies of accessing these sensitive sites at low tide presents," he said.



DEC scientist surveying coral near Dugong Reef.

Ogilvie Nature Reserve officially named

DEC has worked successfully to have a nature reserve named by the State Geographic Names Committee.

Nature Reserve 12657, which sits at the intersection of West and East Ogilvie roads and North West Coastal Highway, is now officially called 'Ogilvie Nature Reserve'.

DEC Nomenclature Committee Chair and Manager Planning and Estate Branch Paul McCluskey said the area was now recognised as Ogilvie by Landgate and Geoscience Australia, as well as by the Travellers Atlas map book.

Geraldton District Operations Officer Catherine Page prepared the submission and helped source its supporting documents.

"These included a petition from the local community and neighbouring landholders and letters of support from a registered native title group, a local Indigenous group and the Shire," Catherine said.

DEC's Nomenclature Committee then submitted the documents to the State Geographic Names Committee for endorsement, which lead to approval being granted.

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Environmental monitoring bolstered by graduate investigators

DEPUTY Director General Robert Atkins and Principal of the WA Police Academy Superintendent Kellie Properjohn, were on hand to congratulate DEC officers as they graduated from the Authorised Officer's Training Course (AOTC) held at WA Police Academy in February.

This was the first AOTC conducted following the amalgamation of the former Law Enforcement and Regulatory Officer Training courses. Regulatory Training Coordinator Julie Dean said she was thrilled with the way the course had evolved.

"This has been an excellent forum. We've now struck the right balance between legislative theory and the practical side of environment and parks and conservation matters, which will hold our new investigators in good stead," she said.

DEC Regional Monitoring and Investigations Leader Darren Winterbine believes the course will enable him to mentor his colleagues in the Midwest.

"The course will increase investigative and enforcement skills in the region and enable me to pass on the practicalities that I've learned when it comes to basic investigations," he said.

DEC Regional Investigator John Hall, who previously spent 20 years with WA Police, found the course both challenging and rewarding.

"Taking in a large amount of new legislation was probably the main challenge, but to gain the accreditation and the opportunity to network with a great bunch of people were definitely the highlights," John said.

Environment Minister Donna Faragher recently reiterated that \$4 million had been provided for the next four years to fund regional investigator positions in the Midwest, South West, South Coast, Pilbara and Swan regions.

Mrs Faragher said the new investigators were a fundamental element of the Government's election promise to improve environmental monitoring and compliance programs.

Graduating alongside the DEC officers were five staff from Perth Region NRM, an officer from Department of Minerals and Petroleum and an Environmental Forensics student from Edith Cowan University.

Perth Region NRM's Mick Pattison is currently conducting



Authorised Officer Training Course graduates.

business audits on behalf of the Swan River Trust.

"I undertook the investigative training to ensure that both NRM and Swan River Trust were on the same page as far as legislative issues," he said.

"The real-life scenarios that we've encountered throughout the course will be beneficial in the handling of audits in the future and I would definitely recommend this training to anyone pursuing a similar line of work."

Environmental Forensics student Tatyana Eather admits that the years of experience of her class mates was a little intimidating at first, but she soon found herself on the same level as those around her.

"I'm in my third year at ECU and a lot of the people in this class have had over 10 years' experience in the field. I think the most pleasing aspect of the course was that it catered to everyone's level of experience and I now have my foot in the door for post-university life," Tatyana said.

The AOTC ran for 11 days and incorporated training in the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and the *Litter Act 1979* with the respective legislative authorisations being issued upon successful completion.

To enquire about the AOTC contact Julie Dean via email at Julie.Dean@dec.wa.gov.au.

