



Community conservation projects bolstered by grants

COMMUNITY groups and individuals carrying out conservation projects with environmental benefits have received a boost thanks to the State Government's \$6 million, four-year Environmental Community Grants program.

A total of \$1.53 million was available this year in the second round of funding, and 139 projects received grants, ranging from \$30,000 to \$250.

The funding total includes \$30,000 per annum for one of the categories as part of the environmental management and conservation initiatives associated with the Fiona Stanley Hospital project.

"The grants recognise the enormous contribution made by community-based organisations in protecting the state's environment and conserving the nature of WA," Environment Minister Donna Faragher said.

"Almost 250 applications were received this year and, of those, 139 projects have been funded. This brings the number of projects funded under the program to 269.

"This year, I was very pleased that many new groups and individuals who did not apply for a grant in 2009 were successful in obtaining funding.

"This demonstrates how valuable the grants program is for the state's community and not-for-profit organisations, private landowners and local governments."

Mrs Faragher met a number of grant

recipients last week in Merredin, Perth and Kalgoorlie and handed over a series of presentation cheques.

One of these visits was to Herdsman Lake Regional Park where the Minister presented a cheque for \$6000 to the Friends of Herdsman Lake for revegetation work around Popeye Lake, and another cheque for \$5000 to the Herdsman Lake Bird Banding Group for their ongoing bird study at the lake.

Other grants awarded this year include:

- \$30,000 for the Australian Wildlife Conservancy to secure the future for woylies at Karakamia through feral predator exclusion fencing
- \$28,200 for research into snubfin dolphins in Roebuck Bay
- \$28,300 to the Friends of Paganoni Swamp to improve the status of the population of brush-tailed phascogales in the reserve and control weed infestations
- \$20,000 to the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Urban Landcare Group for an environmental and conservation public education project
- \$19,550 for Greening Australia to evaluate direct seeding results in GondwanaLink sites to assist in future direct seeding projects.

The full list of grants can be found at www.dec.wa.gov.au/ecg or by phoning 9442 0300.

The Environmental Community Grants program is administered by DEC.



DEC Project Manager Regional Parks Branch Jayson Puls, Jacqui McCauley from the Friends of Herdsman Lake, Environment Minister Donna Faragher and Euro Gerbaz from the Herdsman Lake Bird Banding Group.

Online tool to help provide habitat for Carnaby's black cockatoo

FINDING suitable plants for Carnaby's black cockatoos is just a mouse-click away thanks to a new online tool.

Plants for Carnaby's Search Tool is one measure being taken to assist the recovery of the endangered bird. The program enables users to describe their site, purpose for planting or desired plant characteristics. It then compares this information to the features of plants used by Carnaby's black

cockatoo for feeding, night roosting or nesting and recommends a list of matching species from more than 130 records.

DEC Director of Nature Conservation Gordon Wyre said home gardeners, land managers and developers now had easy access to information on which species to plant that will provide feeding, night roosting and nesting habitat for Carnaby's.

"The search tool can also be used

to help land owners or managers identify preferred plant species that are important to the cockatoos that might occur on their land that should be protected," he said.

"In this way the tool will also assist people involved in the assessment of development projects that might affect Carnaby's black cockatoos and allow for more informed conditions to be written for development approvals."

Gordon said the innovative use of existing software had resulted in a significant cost saving to the project which was funded through State Natural Resource Management funds.

The search tool's creator, DEC Project Officer (Carnaby's Cockatoo Recovery) Christine Groom, said it was constructed using LucID version 3.5.

"The project involved input from a number of people, including DEC staff and people from the WA Museum, Murdoch University and the University of Queensland's Centre of Biological Information Technology," she said.

A print function, which will enable people to print their list of plants, is being developed for the search tool in cooperation with the University of Queensland and is expected to be available in the near future.

To access the Plants for Carnaby's Search Tool go to www.dec.wa.gov.au/plantsforcarnabys.



DEC Project Officer (Carnaby's Cockatoo Recovery) Christine Groom with a Carnaby's black cockatoo chick. Photo – Rick Dawson

New champions kickstart the *DECcrease* project

THE department's *DECcrease* program has received a major kickstart following the appointment of 39 workplace 'champions' across the state to help with the agency-wide rollout of the program.

The call for nominations from staff went out following the release of the *DECcrease* Policy which states that each DEC workplace will require a *DECcrease* Champion, with more than one champion appointed in larger workplaces.

The *DECcrease* project is the department's internal sustainability program, designed to ensure that DEC leads by example by incorporating sustainability principles into its diverse range of activities, operations and decision-making processes across Western Australia. The project's key intent is to encourage the consideration of sustainability principles when decisions are made and actions are taken across the organisation.

DECcrease Senior Project Coordinator James Milne said that this is an exciting time for the program with nominations received from a broad representation of levels and positions across DEC.

"We've had regional and district managers put their hand up to be champions in some workplaces which has really added weight to the importance of this role," he said..

"The *DECcrease* program has been ticking along and slowly building momentum for the past couple of years. With the new team of champions on board, now is the time to really start to achieve the aim and key intent of *DECcrease*."

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Vale Peter Hewett

THE recent passing of long-serving leader and mentor Peter Hewett gave friends and colleagues occasion to pause and reflect on a life well-lived and a career that took the lead in a transformation of a society's understanding of the value of forests.

When Peter first joined the WA Forests Department in the 1950s, the forests of the south-west were an economic asset, managed and conserved to provide a continual supply of timber to a state on the move—a living store of raw materials feeding a hunger for construction and manufacturing both locally and overseas. Over the following three decades this perception was to change dramatically as people came to understand that forests had an intrinsic value in their own right, as natural heritage and a place to enjoy the outdoors. From his appointment as Divisional Forest Officer in Mundaring in 1957, Peter was at the front of this trend, and would establish himself as a pioneering strategist in opening forests up for nature-based recreation.

It was a philosophical position he would take into the newly created position of Chief of Division of Extension Services and Recreation in the 1970s, and the depth of his commitment and professionalism in this new generation of public interface was an inspiration to others. Close colleague and friend Wayne Schmidt, speaking at Peter's funeral, paid tribute to him as "a consummate professional and one of Western Australia's and indeed Australia's truly outstanding foresters...who took to

his new role with relish and began building what in time would become one of the most effective forestry extension programs in Australia."

He was both figuratively and literally a 'trail-blazer'. The early commitment to canvassing the opinions of forest visitors in planning and developing recreation facilities was to lead to one of Peter's greatest achievements: successfully negotiating the planning and construction of the Bibbulmun Track. The official opening of the track in 1979 as part of WA's 150th anniversary celebrations was the culmination of seven years of Peter's skilful management of relationships as well as considerable logistical challenges, with a high degree of community involvement.

'FATHER of Forest Recreation' saw the forest for more than the trees.

By the time the onset of Parkinson's disease forced Peter to take early retirement in 1990, walking the Bibbulmun Track had become a world-renowned experience, attracting thousands of local, interstate and international trekkers a year. Most importantly, true to Peter's vision, the track to this day sustains a profound sense of community ownership, run by a well-organised not-for-profit foundation governed by volunteers.

Along the way, Peter left a lasting impression on many young foresters moving through the ranks. Tammie Reid remembers being inspired and a little overawed by him when she came to work in the Extension Branch in the early 1980s. In her first job after graduating from ANU's forestry program, Tammie found her natural passion for interpretation and community outreach had the full if somewhat daunting support



Peter Hewett with his wife Beverly. Photo courtesy Peter Hewett Jr.

of a powerful man and a lateral thinker.

"To a young, inexperienced forester just starting out he was a little scary," she recalled. "He was tall, imposing, calculating, different in his thinking. But inspiring. You felt in the presence of a man who enabled big things to happen."

He stood tall both in physique and influence. Paul Jones worked closely with Peter as his scientific advisor when he was appointed Director of Forests in the newly formed Department of Conservation and Land Management in 1985, and remembers him first and foremost for his leadership qualities.

"The thing I learned most from observing Peter was that it is not so much how hard you work yourself, but how effectively you can get other people working for your goals," Paul said.

"Peter was a great observer of human nature and able to understand what

made people tick, and as a consequence how to deal with them. He was a great relationship-builder and had contacts throughout Australia as a consequence of his departmental and volunteer work with the various bodies he was involved in."

Paul says the other attribute that most stood out about Peter was his generous interest in life in general—but within that, a particularly unabating dedication to the pursuit of knowledge about forestry.

"As the progression of Parkinson's disease made movement and speech laboured he did not shrink back and give up, but was still actively pursuing interests and would ring me periodically to get publications for him or to check some fact," Paul said.

"Despite struggling to make himself understood he persisted against all odds until he got what he needed. Peter was above all a decent and caring human being."

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It's an observation echoed by Wayne Schmidt, who recalled his visits with Peter in the advanced stages of his disease. "Remarkably, Peter never lost his keen interest in our native flora and like nothing more than to collect leaf, bark and fruit samples during our outings along the river foreshore in Rossmoyne," he said.

"In the end, I think he began to despair at my inability to identify all but a small handful of tree species and garden specimens. For on my last visit, he provided a sketch pad and showed me a series of pencil drawings that he had made of assorted eucalypt leaves and seed capsules we had previously collected. Each was correctly labelled...quite an achievement on his part, not to mention a rather blunt reminder that in spite of my years of training as a forester and landscape architect, I was still the pupil."

But while the Bibbulmun Track may remain his most celebrated achievement, Peter never stopped being a forester, and daughter Penni, who followed in his footsteps, said she would always be proud of the way he maintained an unwavering commitment to a sustainable forest industry.

"Dad showed great leadership in the development of an extension program encompassing recreation and visitor services, farm forestry advisory service and landscape planning, as well as actively driving for the use of our forests for timber production alongside conservation, water production, and recreation," Penni said.

"When he believed in something, he didn't back away from trying to achieve it – through thoughtful negotiation, intelligence and dry humour.

"Even as Parkinson's disease robbed him of his ability to communicate easily, he stayed very involved in the Institute of Foresters, in recent years helping to organise a field visit to Araluen Botanic Park where the Institute members identified many of the trees for the Araluen Foundation."

As a loving father and grandfather who took immense pride in his family, Peter is sadly missed by wife Beverley, children Mandy, Carolyn, Penni and Peter and their partners, and nine grandchildren. But they can take some comfort from knowing he will be remembered with admiration for generations to come, for having given Western Australians enduring ways to experience and love their natural heritage.

Symposium inspires *EcoEducation* Kimberley resource

CHIEF Scientist Professor Lyn Beasley AO recently joined Perth and Derby school teachers and educators in attending *EcoEducation's* Kununurra Symposium.

EcoEducation Senior Project Officer Elaine Horne said Professor Beasley's knowledge and experience provided a fantastic insight to the symposium.

"As chief scientist, Lyn contributed a refreshing perspective to the one-day seminar on the critical issues of fire and cane toads," Elaine said.

"Professor Beasley enthusiastically participated in an evening of cane toad hunting and observed many spiders and insect life.

"Highlights of the symposium included an animal spotting expedition with the teaching group to Lake Argyle, exploration of the great fossil Devonian reef, viewing and discussions on the importance of biodiverse-rich springs nearby, and an exploration of Parry Lagoon and Wyndham's geology and geography.

"Delegates also had the chance to discuss agricultural practice with a pastoralist and a prominent seed producer.

"A critical outcome of the *EcoEducation* Symposium was the increased awareness and capacity of teachers who attended to understand the very different environments and issues in the East Kimberley. Teachers can now take these back into their classrooms and embed them in the

curriculum and their lessons.

"During the Symposium, the teachers suggested ideas and activities for inclusion in a key resource being written on fire and cane toads. These topics and materials will form the heart of a new *EcoEducation* Kimberley resource.

"I thoroughly enjoyed leading the Symposium with the support of Kununurra DEC officer Corrin Everitt who organised the Kununurra agenda. I would also like to thank Melissa Patterson, Daryl Moncreiff, Nathan Connor, Tracey Robins, Rhiannon Hill and Fire Management Services."



DEC officer Jeff Mengler wearing latex gloves for protection while collecting cane toads. Photo – DEC

