



Congratulations to our environment champions

THOSE leading the way in environmental initiatives in Western Australia were celebrated at the 2010 WA Environment Awards on Saturday 6 November.

An awards presentation dinner was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, where the Overall Environment Award was taken out by Green Skills – Regional Program 1989 to 2010.

This not-for-profit organisation operates a diverse range of environmental sustainability programs, employment programs and environmental skills training in metropolitan and regional areas, from its Murdoch, Albany and Denmark offices.

Green Skills has four social enterprises—Ecojobs, Green Skills Projects, Green Skills Training and Centre for Sustainable Living—and is a leader in innovative environmental projects, promoting community awareness on environmental issues, encouraging community involvement in on-ground activities, and generating environmental career opportunities.

The Overall Highly Commended prize went to Woolworths – Zero Food Waste by 2015. This project grew from the company's objective of diverting all food waste from landfill for beneficial uses by 2015. To realise this ambitious target, Woolworths works

with its suppliers, employees, customers, the national charity Foodbank, local charities, farmers, zoos and local and national governments.

The category winners of the 2010 WA Environment Awards were:

Small Business Leading by Example Category

Australian Native Nursery

Government Leading by Example Category

Department of Health – Fiona Stanley Hospital Project

Biodiversity Conservation Category

Care for Hedland Environmental Association – Hedland Community Flatback Turtle Monitoring Program

Bush, Land and Waterways Category

Helena River Catchment Group – Helena River Rehabilitation Project

Resource and Waste Management Category

South East Regional Energy Group – Switched on Business and Industry

Community Energy Efficiency Category

Western Australian Council of Social Services – Climate Change Readiness for Community Services

continued on page 2...



Green Skills – Regional Program 1989 to 2010 took out the top prize at the WA Environment Awards, held on Saturday 6 November. Pictured here are Louise Duxbury (left) and Dorothy Redreau (centre) with Environment Minister Donna Faragher who presented the award.

...continued from page 1

Rivers, Estuaries and Wetlands

Category

South Coast NRM – Saving Lake Warden and Lake Gore

Environmental Education and Communication

Category

WA Chapter of the Australian Association for Environmental Education – Engaging the community in every sense

Corporate Business Leading by Example Category

Woolworths Limited – Zero Food Waste by 2015

Community Achievement – Regional Category

Green Skills – Green Skills Regional Program 1989 to 2010

Community Achievement – Metropolitan Category

Canning River Regional Park Volunteers Inc – 20 Years of work in CRRP

The 2010 WA Environment Awards were sponsored by the Waste Authority, Office of Energy, Western Power, Swan River Trust, Publishers National Environment Bureau, Packaging Stewardship Forum, Royalties for Regions, Rheem and Whiteman Park.



Receiving the Highly Commended prize for the Woolworths – Zero Food Waste by 2015 project was Woolworths State Manager Brad Bolin.

Desert survey uncovers rare and venomous snakes

TWO of the world's rarest and potentially most venomous land snakes were recently discovered during a biological survey at Ilkurlka in Western Australia's Great Victoria Desert.

The two western desert taipans (*Oxyuranus temporalis*), measuring more than one metre, are being housed at the Adelaide Zoo to allow the venom of the snakes to be assessed, and determine whether a species-specific antivenom is needed.

Worldwide, just five individuals of this type of snake have ever been found. Prior to a biological survey in May 2010 at Ilkurlka, only a single individual of the western desert taipan was known to science.

The inland taipan has the most toxic venom worldwide, and the coastal taipan is the third most toxic. The venom toxicity of the western desert taipan is, as yet, unknown but likely to be extremely dangerous.

DEC regional ecologist Dr Karl Brennan, who led the biological survey expedition, said the remote desert regions of Western Australia held an extremely rich diversity of animals and plants but there were critical gaps in knowledge.

"Surveys such as that in the Ilkurlka region are helping to fill these gaps," Karl said.

"The fact it was unknown until a short time ago that a large and potentially deadly snake was roaming the Great Victoria Desert demonstrates our need for more information about WA's desert fauna and flora."

The survey—led by DEC and the Spinifex People, in partnership with the WA Museum, the Adelaide Zoo, and Museum Victoria—also recorded 10 species of native mammal, 51 species of reptile, 68 species of bird, one frog and more than 200 species of plant.

Adelaide Zoo herpetologist Terry Morley, who participated in the survey and will be caring for the snakes, said both animals had settled in to their new environment well.

"To ensure the snakes don't bring any diseases into

the zoo, they will be in quarantine for 12 months and then will be put on public display," he said.

"Having these snakes housed at Adelaide Zoo is a critical step in enabling medical researchers to develop a better understanding of how patients should be treated when bitten."



Terry Morley from Adelaide Zoo with one of the western desert taipans.



Conserving the Great Western Woodlands

AN integrated conservation strategy for the Great Western Woodlands—an internationally significant region of great biological richness in the state's south-east—was released by Environment Minister Donna Faragher in Kalgoorlie on Wednesday 3 November.

"The release of this document culminates a year of community engagement through a reference group that included community-based groups along with industry organisations and state and local government authorities," Mrs Faragher said.

The Minister said the document—*A Biodiversity and Cultural Conservation Strategy for the Great Western Woodlands*—focused on improving coordination and management of the Great Western Woodlands for the next 10 years.

"It marks the beginning of a new era for conserving the region as well as ensuring sustainable development of resources, tourism and other industries, including pastoralism," she said.

DEC's project coordinator for the Great Western Woodlands, Ian Herford, said the strategy had been developed to ensure the long-term conservation of the area's unique natural and cultural values.

"The Great Western Woodlands extends across 16 million hectares and is a globally unique example of extensive, healthy temperate-climate woodland ecosystems," Ian said.

The region contains some 3,000 species of flowering plants—about one-fifth of the nation's known flora—as well as a diverse range of mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds.

The Great Western Woodlands has great cultural significance to Aboriginal people

as well as a rich European history, with pastoralism having been carried out since the 1860s and mining since the gold rush days of the 1890s.

Ian said that due to the scale and relative intactness of the woodlands, the long-term conservation of the region was more achievable than is often the case.

"Recognising this opportunity, the WA government made a commitment to better protect and manage the area," he said.

"The Great Western Woodlands is a multi-purpose area, so the strategy takes into account the full range of economic, social and cultural activities and values."

The strategy's key priorities include creating greater public awareness of the area, creating voluntary partnerships to coordinate on-ground activities across the many tenures of the region and implementing an integrated fire management program. The Minister is

establishing a Great Western Woodlands Reference Group to provide advice on management of the area and implementation of the strategy.

Other key priorities include joint management of conservation reserves and creating training and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people, better control of weeds and pest animals, and research to increase the knowledge base to guide management and use of the woodlands and their resources.

DEC has been allocated \$3.8 million across the next three years for the development and initial implementation of the strategy, with \$3 million for on-ground operations through the department's nature conservation program and \$800,000 on capital works.

For more information about the strategy, visit DEC's website (www.dec.wa.gov.au).

DEC program a breath of fresh air for WA schools

THE Clean Air Society of Australia and New Zealand (CASANZ) has recognised the ongoing effort and achievement of DEC's AirWatch program by awarding it the Clean Air Achievement Award at the WA branch's recent annual general meeting.

As a school-based education program, AirWatch has raised the profile of air pollution and climate change issues among young people with the aim to reduce the negative impact of school communities on air quality.

AirWatch Program Manager Fiona

Marr and Education Coordinator Hamish Jacobsen were delighted to have their efforts in sustainability education recognised by air quality experts.

"It is wonderful that our work is valued by air quality practitioners who are respected by the wider scientific community," Fiona said.

"We'd also like to acknowledge the vision of the CASANZ WA committee including outgoing president Dr Farah Adeeb of DEC's Air Quality Management Branch, in creating a community and education stream within the 2009 conference and providing a platform

for AirWatch and other education and community engagement initiatives to share their contributions in the field."

CASANZ Branch President Giacomo Collica said the award recognised the program's innovative contribution at the 19th International Clean Air and Environment Conference, where the AirWatch team coordinated a workshop involving local school participation in the Energy Smart for Air Project. The session struck a chord with delegates and AirWatch has been invited to become a regular feature of all future CASANZ conferences.

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DEC achievements reported to the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority

MORE than 20 DEC staff attended the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority's (MPRA) one-day workshop on 14 October, to provide an overview of achievements made in relation to marine park and reserve management plans.

Marine Coordinator for the Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park Darren Stevens showcased interpretive boat ramp signage as well as recent research outcomes of a survey conducted with Dr John Huisman on the benthic algae and



Swan Coastal District Marine Ranger Vaughn Chapple and West Kimberley District Marine Reserves Officer Teresa Coutts.

seagrass in the marine park, which has increased the known number of species from 14 to 98.

Community participation was on the agenda for Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, Swan Estuary Marine Park and Marmion Marine Park Marine Conservation Officer Pam Sutton who previewed the development of a Marine Community Monitoring Program which will enable greater community participation in research and monitoring in the marine parks.

Jurien Bay Marine Park Marine Coordinator Mat Dasey highlighted the importance of DEC's ongoing support for the University of Tasmania to conduct long-term monitoring in the marine park.

Marine Coordinator for Shark Bay Marine Park and Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve Dave Holley reported on vessel improvements made to *Sirenia III* to increase the patrol capability of the Shark Bay District Office.

Ningaloo Marine Park and Muiron Islands Marine Park Coordinator Heather Taylor focused on education as she presented activities coordinated by the Exmouth District Office, including holiday programs and a series of public seminars on marine values.

Marine Policy and Planning Branch Senior Marine Conservation Officer Barb Green spoke on behalf of Dr Cath Samson, former Regional Marine Coordinator for the Montebello Islands Marine Park, Barrow Island Marine Park and Barrow Island Marine Management Area. A major achievement for the region and marine reserves has been the delivery



Jurien Bay staff (from left) Suzie Glac, Keith Hockey and Matt Dasey with Marine Policy and Planning Branch Acting Manager John Lloyd during the Annual Marine Program meeting.

of the patrol vessel *Sousa* and its tender *Barry*. The vessels will enable a significant increase in DEC presence in the marine reserves.

Marine Conservation Officer for the Rowley Shoals Marine Park Teresa Coutts highlighted the excellent working relationship that the West Kimberley District office has with marine tourism operators visiting the marine park. Marine tourism operators work closely with DEC in monitoring use of the marine park. The data collected by operators

helps to ensure DEC has an ongoing understanding of potential impacts on marine park values.

The MPRA is the vesting body for the state's marine parks and reserve system. Seven members are appointed by the Minister for Environment to carry out the functions of the MPRA in accordance with the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*. One of the MPRA's key functions is to assess the implementation of marine park and reserve management plans.