



DEC on display at 2011 Caravan and Camping Show

REDISCOVERING parks and connecting with nature were the key themes of the department's presence at the 2011 Caravan and Camping Show held at Claremont Showgrounds recently.

DEC displays showcasing WA's national parks, the Tree Top Walk (TTW) and Keep Australia Beautiful Council WA (KABC) provided staff the opportunity to interact with many of the 35,000 visitors to the five-day show.

Tourism and Recreation Education Officer Kevin Smith said the show gave him the chance to talk to people about their trips and provide them with information that could improve their holiday experiences across the state.

"Visitors to the show were introduced to the new DEC Campgrounds website which highlights more than 110 camp sites, of which 12 are now bookable online," Kevin said.

"With the system now up and running, the public were given the opportunity to interact with the new website.

"In addition, the display provided information about parks, trails, volunteer programs and park passes."

Business Manager Julie Ross said the TTW also played a key role within the display and created much interest among the visitors.

"The event provided a valuable opportunity to promote the TTW and increase awareness of the broader Walpole Wilderness area," she said.

"Research has shown that more recreational vehicles are being purchased and the number of tourists on open roads is increasing, so it was appropriate for us to have a presence at the show to talk to one of our key target audiences.

"The positive feedback from the public about the TTW was overwhelming with many having visited numerous times with friends



DEC Parks and Visitor Services Project Officer Glenn Willmott talking 'Rediscover Parks' with Ken and Heather Shuffle-Botham of Woodvale.



DEC Interpretation Officer Bron Anderson discussing all things Tree Top Walk with Gayle Boag of Victoria Park.

and relatives; so much so, they said it was a very memorable part of their lives.

"TTW held a competition to win a hamper valued at \$200 which allowed us to engage with the visitors walking past. It also provided us with positive feedback on our marketing endeavours."

Visit the new DEC Campgrounds website at www.dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds. For more information on the Tree Top Walk go to www.dec.wa.gov.au.



Driving down emissions at CleanRun Community Day

DEC's Air Quality Management Branch recently offered free health checks for vehicles at Kings Park as part of the CleanRun Community Day.

A CleanRun remote sensing device allowed staff to measure the carbon monoxide, nitric oxide, total hydrocarbons and smoke emitted by passing vehicles in real time.

The remote sensor sends an infrared and ultraviolet light beam across a single road lane. Fuel-specific concentrations of the pollutants are measured based on the absorption of infrared and ultraviolet in the light beam.

The results are virtually instant and a smart sign with a variable message indicated to the vehicle driver how the vehicle is performing. The ratings can be good, fair or poor.

Community Involvement Environmental Officer Kristie Stevens said the general public were overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of the opportunity to test their vehicles' emissions.

"Overall, we conducted between 70 and 80 unique vehicle tests and the majority received fair-to-good results," she said.

"Many drivers had come to Kings Park specifically for the test, with many also taking the opportunity to discuss with RAC technicians at the event how they could finetune their vehicles to produce fewer emissions and save money in the long run.

"Surveys conducted during the day revealed most participants strongly agreed testing emissions was worthwhile and that they had better understanding of the impact of vehicle emissions as a result.

"Surprisingly, the day was also a hit with the kids who enjoyed face painting and hopefully learned a little more about the environment during the experience."

Driving a personal vehicle is one of the most polluting activities many of us engage in on a daily basis. One way of reducing the impact of these pollutants is to ensure your vehicle is operating as efficiently as possible.

CleanRun is a DEC initiative that aims to improve air quality by reducing pollution by vehicle emissions. For more information about the remote sensing device and vehicle emissions, contact the Air Quality Management Branch on (08) 9333 7436 or airquality@dec.wa.gov.au.



DEC and RAC staff at the CleanRun Community Day.



Environment Minister Bill Marmion at the 2011 E-waste launch.

E-waste program gets \$1.5 million boost

DURING a visit to one of WA's busiest recycling facilities, Environment Minister Bill Marmion recently announced that the state government will inject \$1.5 million into the recycling and disposal of electronic and electrical 'e-waste'.

The funds will go to the Western Australian Transitional E-waste Program, set up by the state's Waste Authority to subsidise e-waste recycling and disposal costs.

"Australians are among the fastest adopters of new technology in the world," he said.

"With increasing production and demand for electronic products such as televisions and computers, e-waste is growing three times faster than any other waste stream.

"With the implementation of a national e-waste strategy up to three years away, the government is providing \$1.5 million now to subsidise up to 50 per cent of e-waste disposal costs for metropolitan depots and up to 50 per cent of disposal and transport costs for non-metropolitan depots."

Electrical retailers can also apply for funding to hold one-off collection days.

"E-waste contains a wide range of potentially hazardous chemicals that can pose a threat to wildlife and human health," the Minister said.

"Anything we can do to remove such items from the waste stream is important and this will make a real difference in how we dispose of e-waste in the metropolitan area."



Time up for exotic island rodents?

INTRODUCED rodents on several offshore islands are the target of a major eradication program recently started by DEC's Science Division and funded by the Australian Government's *Caring for our Country* program.

A team from Science Division's Woodvale office has undertaken the first eradication with the house mouse being targeted on Three Bays Island in Shark Bay.

DEC Principal Technical Officer Brent Johnson said the initial baiting in August last year appeared to have been successful.

"This is despite the fact that the species has proven difficult to remove in other attempts elsewhere in the world," he said.

"Ongoing monitoring will continue for some time before any confirmed declaration of success."

Direction Island in the Cocos-Keeling group was recently visited by the eradication team to trial methods unique to such a tropical location.

"Coral atolls, such as those in this group, have many hermit and land crabs which are capable of entering

conventional bait stations and can also quickly consume any ground baits," Brent said.

"Fortunately the toxin, brodifacoum, is not harmful to crustaceans but this does reduce the availability of the baits for the rats.

"Considerable information was obtained from these trials and the team will return later in 2011 to complete the eradication, more confident in the likelihood of success."

Pacific rats on Adele Island off the Kimberley coast will also be targeted in 2011.

"Armed with information from a previous unsuccessful attempt in 2004, the team will combine forces with staff from the West Kimberley District in May to establish about 5,000 bait stations across this major seabird rookery," Brent said.

"Other islands will follow over the next three years. One of these, Sunday Island off One Arm Point, is subject to a native title claim and DEC is working with the Bardi Jawi community to ensure the rat eradication is undertaken in the most appropriate way."

In all cases, toxin delivery methods are developed to prevent access to the anticoagulant bait by non-target species. The eradication programs will be supported by short and longer-term monitoring programs and an education program, and quarantine protocols will be developed to ensure the islands remain free from introduced rodents. The engagement of local Indigenous communities where possible in the program is also an important aspect.

In 2009, a threat abatement plan to reduce the impacts of exotic rodents on biodiversity on Australian offshore islands of less than 100,000 hectares was approved by the Australian Government. Introduced rodents are a major threat to the biodiversity of islands around the world and are known to persist on at least 69 islands off the WA coast. Since the 1980s, successful eradication programs have been implemented on half of these, and this project is continuing this important conservation initiative.

For more information about the eradication programs contact Brent Johnson on (08) 9405 5106.



DEC Science Division staff (left to right) Keith Morris, Brent Johnson and Neil Thomas using remote cameras to observe rat activity on Direction Island in the Cocos-Keeling islands.



Brent with the first casualty on Three Bays Island in Shark Bay.

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Managing Editor: Madeleine Clews

Editor: Sarah Deverell

Contributing Editors: Joanna Moore and Kahla Emonson

Design and Production: Peter Nicholas

Telephone: (08) 9389 8644

Email: ecn@dec.wa.gov.au



Farewell from Wandoo Recovery Group

THE Wandoo Recovery Group (WRG) is closing its office, ending eight years of effort, commitment and achievement.

Wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo* Blakely) is a widespread and ecologically significant tree species endemic to south-western Australia. The WRG was formed in February 2003 in response to increasing community concern about wandoo's failing health.

The group's role was to investigate the causes of crown decline, and develop appropriate strategies and actions and involved the coordination of research, securing funds and planning government and community-based action.

Executive Officer Liz Manning said that through the group, volunteers, government and non-government agencies had collaborated to build knowledge and expertise in the wandoo species and assisted with research and mapping projects.

"The group has strived to understand the factors responsible for wandoo's decline and raise public awareness and appreciation for this marvellous tree.

"Together we have traversed wandoo's vast range, puzzled by the complex interplay of environmental and human-induced changes linked to its decline," she said.

"I wish to personally thank the many wonderful people I have met during my time as the WRG Executive Officer. I greatly treasure the hospitality, friendship, knowledge, advice and encouragement they have offered."

While executive and administrative support for the WRG will cease, research into the decline of wandoo (and other native tree species) is continuing through the Centre of Excellence for Climate Change Woodland and Forest Health at



Murdoch University. Information on the various research projects and reports is available from www.treehealth.murdoch.edu.au.

For more information on conserving wandoo please contact Manager Swan

Region Paul Brown on (08) 9423 2917 or email paul.brown@dec.wa.gov.au, or go to www.dec.wa.gov.au and follow the links Management and protection > Forests > Conserving our wandoo.

Moulting penguins not sick

PENGUINS found on south-west beaches appearing scruffy and lethargic have had members of the public worried.

Many concerned beachgoers have contacted DEC's Busselton office to report finding penguins that appeared



sick and uncharacteristically allowing people to get up close and touch them.

Ranger Gilbert Stockman explained that these penguins are not sick, they're moulting.

"All adult penguins moult at the end of the breeding season, which is usually late summer. All of their feathers are shed and replaced over a period of two to three weeks," he said.

"During this time, they are particularly vulnerable to land predators and interference.

"When the penguins are moulting, their feathers are not waterproof and so they need to stay on land.

"They also cannot feed while moulting and so they feed intensively prior to the event and store body fat in order to survive the loss of up to half their body weight.

"When the penguins finish moulting they will go back into the water with their new coat and build up their weight again."

Two of the most common species that the department

receives queries about are the rock hopper penguin and the little penguin, also known as fairy penguin, blue penguin or little blue penguin.

"I was recently called to see a rock hopper penguin that was handed to me on a 30 degree day, wrapped in a blanket, as the people thought it was sick. They were actually doing it more harm than good," Gilbert said.

"I took the penguin to a more private area on the beach and observed it from the dunes as it settled down between some rocks above the high tide mark.

"After a week the penguin had finished moulting and returned to the ocean."

If you find a penguin on a beach or nestled among rocks, please observe it from a distance, keep quiet and enjoy the unique moment without causing stress to the penguin.

If you find a penguin in an area frequented by dogs or lots of people, please contact your local DEC office and someone will be sent out assess the penguin and, if necessary, move it to a safer area to finish its moulting in private.

