



DEC future leaders show the way

DEC's annual Graduation and Awards Ceremony was held earlier this month at the WA Conservation Science Centre, with Environment Minister Bill Marmion and Director General Keiran McNamara on hand to congratulate the deserving recipients.

The ceremony marked the achievements of participants in the department's Graduate Recruit Program, Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES), School-based Traineeship program, Regulatory Training Program, Pathways Program, Scholarships Program and, for the first time, Fire Management Services.

Bill Marmion said the future management of the state's natural environment has been strengthened following the graduation of 12 people from DEC's Graduate Recruit Program.

"It was extremely encouraging to see so many young Western Australians expressing an interest in the management of our precious environment," he said.

"The Graduate Recruit Program is a wonderful initiative that seeks to develop the skills of people working in the areas of environmental management and conservation as well as developing future leaders within DEC.

"This year also marked the graduation of the first participants in DEC's specialist firefighting training for employees who

were engaged in prescribed burning and fire suppression activities.

"This qualification recognises the skills and knowledge of firefighting personnel working predominantly as crew members across the state."

Graduate Recruit Program

The majority of graduating recruits have been appointed into DEC professional entry-level positions throughout the state. All graduate recruits were invited to attend 10 weeks of training including 11 core courses during the program.

This is the final group of graduates completing the current recruit program. A new Graduate Development Program will get under way in 2012.

This year's graduates were Tina Bowers, Robert Campbell, Wendy Chow, Kasey Darts, Nicholas Detchon, Jessica Donaldson, Christine Fleay, Tegan Gourlay, Bree Phillips, Michael Raykos, Samara Rogers and Lauren Strumpher.

Two awards are presented to Graduate Recruit Program graduates—the Keynes Memorial Award, which went to State Salinity Strategy Project Officer Wendy Chow, and the Director General's Merit Award, which was awarded to Flora Conservation Officer Bree Phillips.



Director General Keiran McNamara (left) and Environment Minister Bill Marmion (centre) pictured with MATES trainees and representatives from the Mirriuwung Gajerrong Park Council and the Reserve Committee.

MATES

MATES is an important part of DEC's commitment to increasing the number of Indigenous employees in the department through a number of strategies including a traineeship program.

Eleven employees graduated from

certificates II, III and IV in Conservation and Land Management in 2011 and were recognised at the ceremony. They were Douglas Gerrard, Jeremiah Hester, Vincent Kennedy, Leslie Moore, Gordon Reid, Chris Retsas, Simon Harrington, Dorothy Wallam, Ryan Bellotti, Michael O'Dene and Louise O'Reilly.



Louise O'Reilly received the Aboriginal Trainee of the Year Award. Fremantle Football Club's Community Programs Manager Wade Spilcker presented the award, which recognised Louise's outstanding work as a trainee in the Goldfields Region.

The Aboriginal Trainee Supervisor of the Year is awarded to the supervisor within the MATES program who has demonstrated the highest level of support and commitment to the development of trainees under their supervision. The recipient of the Aboriginal Trainee Supervisor of the Year was Parks and Visitor Services



Winner of the Keynes Memorial Award State Salinity Project Officer Wendy Chow

Operations Officer Nick Evans, who supervises Simon Harrington and Dorothy Wallam.

'Kwabalitch' is a Nyoongar word that means 'excellent' or 'good'. The Kwabalitch Award has been established to recognise a MATES trainee who shows dedication, perseverance and a commitment to personal and professional development. Leslie Moore was chosen as this year's recipient of the Kwabalitch Award for his love for country and the dedication he shows DEC, his co-workers and his fellow MATES.

School-based Traineeships

School-based Traineeships is an initiative to promote the department to a younger demographic and provide an employment pathway for school students. The traineeship is undertaken during years 11 and 12 with the trainee working two days per week.

The 2011 graduates, who have completed Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management, are Mitchell Bennett and Cohen Smith.

Regulatory Training Program

The Regulatory Training Program provides a competency-based training framework for environmental enforcement and investigation officers. These qualifications are the best-practice standard for environmental regulators and other staff involved in regulatory activities.

Graduates for 2011 were Maxine Birkin, Cliff Bliss, Cameron Craigie, John Hall, Kevin Hughes, Jason Nelson, Richard Petty, Andrew Richardson, Darren Winterbine, Luke Bentley, Alex Bite, Alex Bowlay, Steve Campbell, Allan Madgwick, Kate McConigley, Cameron Oxford and Mathew Swan.

Fire Management Services

DEC provides specialist firefighting training to employees who are engaged in prescribed burning and fire suppression activities. This work is critical to DEC's land management objectives and requires special skills and knowledge for firefighting personnel working predominantly as crew members across the state.

Graduates for 2011 were Wayne Aggiss, Kevin Barnsby, Lloyd Bentink, Ross Bernardin, Matthew Corlett, Paul Dunstan, Trevor Dye, Jason Fletcher, Julian Harrison, David Hulcup, Alan Johnson, George Laws, Ernest Love, Shaun McHenry, Thomas Powell, Michael Raykos, Alan Rhodes, Wayne Rhodes, Terrance Roberts, David Rule, Steve Rule,

Michael Sawyer, Stephen Tate, Shane Tyler and Timothy Wellstead.

Pathways Program

DEC has a proud and strong culture of encouraging its staff on a path of continuous learning. The program aims to recognise the skills and knowledge of conservation employees and expand their professional experience and expertise.

Pathways Program graduates for 2011 were Zsi Cockman and Michael Rose.

Scholarships

Each year, the department awards a number of scholarships to encourage DEC staff to expand their skills and qualifications through higher education. This year the Science Scholarship in memory of Dr George Malajczuk was awarded to Melissa Cundy and Sean Walsh.

The Leadership Scholarship in memory of Seamus Mulholland was received by Winston Kay, David Rawet and Tammie Reid, while the Women's Scholarship in honour of June Craig was awarded to Teagan Johnston and Joanne O'Connor.

The Director General's Career Development and Study Assistance Scholarship provides support for undergraduate and postgraduate study and was received by Ben Ansell, Belinda Catcheside, Amanda Fairs, Lauren Fox, Craig Jaques, Cherie Kemp, Jelena May, Mark Neilson, Lucinda Peters and Gail Ritchie.

Published by the Department of Environment and Conservation's Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs Division, Cygnet Hall, (cnr) Mounts Bay Road and Hackett Drive, CRAWLEY, WA 6009.

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



DEC and holidaymakers rescue dolphin

STAFF from the DEC's Moora District Office came to the rescue for a panicky young dolphin trapped in shallows near Leeman in late April. Without the intervention, the dolphin almost certainly would have died within hours.

The 1.7-metre-long juvenile bottlenose dolphin was reported washed up on the beach in a remote area and despite the efforts of concerned members of the public, the animal could not be encouraged to swim into deeper water.



The teenage boy farewells the dolphin he's rescued before it is moved.

Each time the animal was guided into deeper water it immediately swam into the shallows and stranded itself on the beach. A teenager and his father holidaying near the beach stayed with the animal and then raised the alarm when it was clear the dolphin was in trouble.

In consultation with DEC's Nature Protection Branch and under the supervision of a local veterinarian, DEC staff carefully collected the dolphin from the beach, assessed its condition and then released the animal near a sanctuary zone

in Jurien Bay Marine Park.

DEC Marine Park Coordinator Matthew Dasey conducted the operation with the assistance of marine park rangers based in Jurien Bay.

"I am confident that swift action by members of the public and DEC has saved the life of this dolphin and the whole team was extremely pleased at the result," he said.

"Bottlenose dolphins are plentiful in the area and a feature of the marine park. They are intelligent and aware creatures that can become disoriented. So I am grateful that we were able to be on the spot within the hour of its report to intervene in this case.

"Although the reason for the dolphin's distress is unknown, there are theories that may explain the odd behaviour.

"Despite their serene appearance, dolphins can become stressed and can behave in ways that make no sense to us. It is possible that this dolphin was chased by predators such as sharks into the shallows, but we have no way to know for sure what happened.

"What is clear though, is that without assistance this stressed-out animal would have died on the beach."

Matthew said the real heroes of this story were the father and son team who kept the dolphin calm and off the sand for hours, which prevented the animal becoming injured, overheated or sunburnt.

"Their concern for the dolphin's welfare was critical to ensure that the animal was healthy when we arrived to transport it to a safe area for release," he said.

"We were impressed at their dedication and it was obvious that the young boy



DEC staff and a local veterinarian prepare to release the dolphin from the marine park patrol boat.

had formed a bond with the animal over the hours of their intervention. It also seemed that the dolphin was calmer when its rescuers were nearby. We are thankful for their help."

The dolphin was taken to deep water in the marine park patrol boat and released close to a sanctuary zone of Jurien Bay Marine Park.

"It was dark by the time we were in position but the dolphin was healthy and swam away strongly when released under the supervision of the veterinarian," Matthew said.

People who see stranded marine wildlife should report it to DEC's Wildlife Hotline on (08) 9474 9055.



Easter bilby the real treasure of school holiday activities

CHILDREN came from across the Walpole Wilderness to take part in the popular Easter school holiday activities held at the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk.

The aim of the holiday program was to incorporate environmental messages into the Easter celebrations.

DEC Interpretation Officer Claudia Simpson said the holiday participants had the chance to learn about this unique part of the world and importance of protecting our natural environment.

"Children participated in an action-packed morning learning about our fragile animal species in our Easter bilby treasure hunt," she said.

"This activity has become increasingly popular over the past few years, as it provides a wide range of experiences including art and craft, games and of course an Easter egg treasure hunt.

"Coalmine Beach picnic area proved the

perfect location for the egg hunt and participants took part in record numbers.

"Other highlights of our program included Forest by Night, where participants walked along a moon-lit Tree Top Walk, and Kids Twilight Antics, where children visited the tingle forest at dusk to play games and learn about the unique nocturnal animals.

"Sensational Snakes gave visitors the opportunity to learn about these magnificent creatures, while providing some great holiday photo opportunities.

"We've received positive feedback following the individual activities, which makes the program very rewarding for organisers and a fantastic platform for DEC to convey a lasting conservation message."

For more information about holiday programs at the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk contact Claudia on 9840 0400.



Children taking part in the Easter bilby treasure hunt, making Easter chicks cards and bilby ears.



DEC Programs Officer Berdina Ballast helping children in the Swamp dwellers activity.

Imagination the key during holiday fun

THE team at Nearer to Nature had some special guests on hand during their autumn school holiday program that captured the imaginations of children in order to promote real-life environmental issues.

Nearer to Nature Program Coordinator Jill Francis said the program began with an insight into the aerial acrobatics of the dragonfly and a watery exploration into the homes of the area's swamp dwellers.

"Complete with waders and net, our expert guide delved into the murky depths to find some interesting critters to show the children," she said.

"'James Pond' and 'Possum Galore' took the children on a N2N spy kids adventure where they tracked down environmental clues to decode an environmental message.

"The kids were treated to a surprise encounter from 'Dewy Droplet' who shared with them the amazing journey of water's role in the environment.

"As we are currently experiencing one of the worst droughts in history, it is important to teach children

how precious fresh water is. So by taking on the role of a droplet and moving through the water cycle, encountering hazards such as pollution, the children quickly learned that it is not so simple for a droplet of water to reach a tap!"

The Birds, bikes and brunch activity at Jarrahdale was popular for both children and adults. The message of healthy body and environment was reinforced by cycling through the natural environment and seeing some amazing raptors.

Once again, Ramble with a ranger sold out within days. DEC's new John Forrest ranger, Nick, was truly thrown in the deep end with 12 very enthusiastic junior rangers and an impromptu search and rescue for an injured cyclist being the highlight of the day.

"Overall the program was a success and the perfect way to promote 2011 International Year of Forests", said Jill.

For more information on DEC's Nearer to Nature program contact Jill Francis on 9295 2244.

