



Horses return to work at Lorna Glen

DEC has looked to the past to trial a new technique for monitoring the bilby population at Lorna Glen in the northern Goldfields, home to one of the world's most extensive arid zone wildlife reconstruction projects. Observers rode stock horses to monitor bilby activity as part of *Operation Rangelands Restoration*, a project that aims to restore 600,000 hectares of former pastoral lease land to its natural state by 2020.

DEC Senior Research Scientist Dr Neil Burrows said bilbies were elusive, solitary and nomadic creatures and that monitoring the animals using machines such as quad bikes or on foot limited access to the bush and could be damaging to the environment.

"Horses are much quieter and gentler on the environment than quad bikes, and they can also go where vehicles can't, navigating through thick scrub, recently burnt spinifex, through water and across steep sand dunes. They can travel much longer distances than people on foot and they provide an excellent observation platform," he said.

"Bilbies are very difficult to trap for surveys, so we rely largely on signs of their presence to determine how well they have been doing since we introduced captive-bred bilbies into the Lorna Glen landscape between 2007 and 2009.

"Stock horses are once again playing an important role in the rangelands, and this project is enabling DEC to pay respect to the rich pastoral heritage of the area."

The two stock horses were transported to Lorna Glen and kept in existing cattle yards for five

days while they were not working. They were fed muesli and clean chaff to reduce the risk of weed infestation.

Neil joined DEC scientist Judy Dunlop and volunteer Shane Burrows in the trial, travelling 27 kilometres within a 2,850-hectare survey area over a three-day period.

"The trial was a resounding success, as we were easily able to observe digs, tracks and burrows of bilbies, recording 10 fresh burrows along the sample transects, which leads us to believe there were more than 45 bilbies active in the area we observed," he said.

"The results confirm that bilbies are doing well in their new environment. Now we have demonstrated the success of using observers on horseback, further surveys will determine how far the bilbies have spread and how many bilbies there are."

Over the past three years, DEC, along with the Wiluna Aboriginal community, has worked on restoring the land by reintroducing native mammals that once occurred across the arid zone but disappeared since European settlement. There has also been sustained fox, cat and wild dog baiting, feral animal control, fire management and infrastructure work done.

DEC aims to re-introduce 11 native mammals, and has already successfully released boodies and golden bandicoots into a 1,100-hectare predator-proof acclimatisation compound, while bilbies and brush-tail possums have successfully been released into the wider landscape.



Volunteer Shane Burrows with the stock horses.



First graduates from DEC's firefighting course

THE department's newest firefighting training program has delivered its first batch of graduates.

Twenty-five DEC employees from around the state have been recognised for their skills and knowledge in bush firefighting with the attainment of a Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations).

DEC Senior Fire Training Officer Alex Moylett said that while many of the graduates have been engaging in work above and beyond the Certificate II level for years, this was the first time that their training, together with recognition of their specific work skills and experience, has resulted in the attainment of the national qualification.

"The department has been providing firefighting training on many levels for a number of years, from entry-level firefighting to providing knowledge to make planning and management decisions," he said.

"This is the first time, however, that we have been able to issue national qualifications from the Public Safety Training Package.

"As well as providing recognition of employees' hard work, it allows us to standardise the ways that we ensure our people are doing their job safely and properly."

DEC District Works Coordinator and recent graduate of the Certificate II Steve Tate is pleased to have been recognised.

"It's nice to be acknowledged for my role in upholding public safety in fire operations, and the fact that it is a nationally accredited qualification is great," he said.

"I have been working for the department for 24 years. In that time I have been constantly learning about fire and will continue to do so, but this qualification will certainly help me in my future work."

Participants in the course were assessed under various units of competence, including 'Prevent Injury', 'Prepare, Maintain and Test Response Equipment' and 'Operate Communications Systems and Equipment'.

Various other staff members are also working towards attaining other qualifications in fire management.

The work is critical to DEC's land management objectives as well as to the agency's requirement to provide essential firefighting resources to combat bushfires threatening the WA community and environment.

World Environment Day reaches the tree tops

FROM Bollywood to the Valley of the Giants, ambassadors and tourists alike celebrated World Environment Day on Sunday 5 June as part of a worldwide campaign to stimulate awareness of our natural surrounds.

Over the past 38 years, the United Nations Environment program has provided an opportunity for people to commemorate the day and support the environment through sustainable development. The event aims to support a greater awareness and ownership of the natural environment.

This year India was the host country for World Environment Day. Bollywood actors and other celebrities across the globe took up the challenge to do something positive for the environment, whether this was planting trees or learning more about how to better care for our natural resources.

In WA, the Tree Top Walk celebrated by hosting free guided walks led by Helen Nash. The walks were received by a number of different visitors from Germany, Italy and Spain, as well as travellers from within Australia.



The International Year of Forests message tree.

DEC's Regional Parks and Visitors Services Leader Tim Foley believed it was important for one of DEC's premier tourist sites to be involved with an event that purported a global message and linked in with the efforts of countries overseas.

"As if almost on cue, we had a large proportion of visitors from India, some of whom are now residing in Perth and were thrilled to learn that India was the host country for the day," Tim said.

Acting District Interpretive Officer Claudia Simpson encouraged visitors to interact with the centre by creating a message tree, an idea Tim said had been an overwhelming success.

Tim explained that visitors were encouraged to write down what the forest meant to them and place their thoughts on the message tree.

"The visitors' writing celebrated themes of peace, nature and protecting greenery throughout the world," he said.

"The tree was created especially for the day but will be maintained as a continuous display acknowledging 2011 as the International Year of Forests."

All visitors received a free fridge magnet promoting World Environment Day as a gift from the Tree Top Walk.



Visitors at the Tree Top Walk on World Environment Day.



Illegal sandalwood harvesting on the rise



Some of the sandalwood seized by DEC

A RISE in seizures of illegally harvested sandalwood in the Goldfields has prompted calls for public information on the issue.

DEC's Goldfields Region, with assistance from WA Police, has made four sandalwood seizures this year in the Kalgoorlie area, totalling about 13 tonnes, plus harvesting equipment.

DEC is also investigating several other reports of illegal sandalwood operations in the Goldfields.

Sandalwood is a small tree occurring in the Wheatbelt and rangelands of WA and into SA, valued for its oil and aromatic qualities. It is used for incense, wood carvings and the manufacture of small articles. Most illegally harvested sandalwood exported out of Australia ends up in Asia. The black market of the product is thought to be worth millions of dollars.

DEC Goldfields Regional Manager Ian Kealley said no charges had been laid yet but investigations were continuing in relation to breaches of the Conservation and Land Management Act,

Wildlife Conservation Act and Sandalwood Act.

"Sandalwood can fetch more than \$10,000 per tonne, making the four seizures worth around \$130,000," he said.

"Our investigations are focusing on the alleged harvesting, processing, transportation and sale of sandalwood.

"There has been a big rise in the frequency and scale of illegal sandalwood operations and the public can assist greatly by reporting any suspicious activities, particularly vehicle movements and registration numbers."

Sandalwood harvesting on unallocated Crown land, pastoral leases and private land is regulated by DEC and the Forest Products Commission, with harvesting licences issued on an annual basis.

DEC is continuing to liaise with mining and pastoral industries to gather more information about illegal sandalwood operations.

To report suspicious activities, please contact the DEC Goldfields office on 9080 5555 or local police.

University students enjoy environmental education excursion

STUDENTS enrolled in the University of Notre Dame's Foundations for Environmental Education unit spent a day at Beelu National Park earlier this month, taking part in environmental education activities with DEC's EcoEducation branch.

DEC EcoEducation Officer Leonard Thorn said the morning session immersed students in traditional Nyoongar culture.

"We demonstrated how to make a fishing fence and took the students on a mock fishing expedition, with many of them catching a fish," he said.

"We then went on a forest walk where we explored the traditional use of plants and animals."

The afternoon session involved a sensory blindfold rope walk trail led by DEC Education Coordinator Lisa Ingram, which allowed students to practise their teamwork skills and navigation strategies with good old-fashioned humour!

University of Notre Dame Lecturer Paul Pulé

commented on the fantastic support with the logistics and delivery of the program.

"The excursion was an integral aspect of the SE3/550 Foundations for Environmental Education curriculum," he said.

"It gave students a chance to see how professional environmental educators present their lessons and learn what they might incorporate into their own lesson plans and pedagogical approaches.

"It was also a chance to get away from the classroom and be in the forest, not simply talking about environmental education, but actually doing it.

"I will be recommending EcoEducation and the centre to my colleagues."

Visiting lecturer Liz Lewis also took part in the activities.

For more information on DEC's EcoEducation programs contact Lisa Ingram on 9295 6149 or visit the website www.dec.wa.gov.au/ecoeducation.



University of Notre Dame students learning how to 'catch fish' using a traditional fishing fence with DEC EcoEducation Officer Leonard Thorn.

Retiree leaves his mark

THE retirement of Perth Observatory manager and former Director of Sustainable Forest Management Paul Jones was recently celebrated, following 40 years of service with DEC and its Forests Department and CALM predecessors.

Paul made considerable achievements and showed great leadership across all three departments, showing the utmost professionalism which made him highly regarded by his staff and peers.

On graduating from the Australian National University in 1971, Paul commenced work with the Forests Department at Dwellingup that same year to undertake fire research work in the south-west forests. He

later served as district manager at Kelmscott and as a regional leader in Manjimup.

Following the establishment of CALM, he was seconded as scientific advisor to the director of forests where he assisted in the development of three forest regional management plans and the Timber Production Strategy—*A strategy to take WA's south-west forests into the 21st century*. After an exchange to the then Department of Primary Industries and Energy in Canberra in 1990, Paul was involved in the development of the *Forest Management Plan 1994–2003* in 1991 and 1992.

In 1998, while fulfilling the role as the department's dieback coordinator, he also established the Management

Audit Branch, before writing and assisting with the development of the Forest Management Plan 2004–2013.

In 2004 Paul was seconded as acting director of forests and subsequently appointed to that position in May 2006 where he took on the challenge of implementing the forest management plan.

During this time Paul addressed the scope and role of the division and established the communication mechanisms and structures so that the sustainable forest management service could be effectively implemented. Paul built positive relationships with non-government organisations and always maintained a strong focus on the support welfare of his staff.

After relinquishing his position as director of Sustainable Forest Management to plan for a transition into retirement in 2008, Paul agreed to take on two more new challenges that assisted the department, one at the Office of Information Management and the other at the Perth Observatory.

Director General Keiran McNamara expressed his appreciation of Paul's service to the department at a farewell function held earlier this month.

"Paul's contribution has been widely appreciated by his colleagues in the former CALM and in DEC, and particularly by me," he said.

"I know that Paul's leadership and professionalism is highly regarded throughout the department, especially by his staff and peers.

"I would like to personally thank Paul for his loyalty, dedication, diligence and professional commitment to the highest standards of public service and wish him all the good health and happiness in the next stage of life."



Paul Jones receives a retirement gift from Director General Keiran McNamara.



Paul Jones mingles during his retirement function held at DEC's Crawley office.

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