



New strategy launched for the Kimberley

THE Kimberley—one of the world's last great wilderness areas—will be protected under the state government's new science and conservation strategy.

Premier Colin Barnett released the government's bold vision for the region's long-term conservation on 17 June with Environment Minister Bill Marmion.

"I am pleased to announce the completed strategy, along with an investment of \$63 million over five years to deliver conservation outcomes," he said.

The strategy provides a framework for the conservation of the region's unique natural values. The Kimberley region—which covers a land area of 424,500 square kilometres—is renowned for its natural beauty and enormous cultural significance.

The Premier said the strategy was one of the most significant conservation initiatives in Western Australian history, befitting of a region of such international significance.

"The Kimberley holds a special place for many people locally, in WA, Australia and across the world," he said.

The strategy focuses on providing opportunities for Aboriginal involvement and employment in land management, and increasing knowledge about the area, as well as promoting nature and culture-based tourism.

"The strategy will be delivered through partnerships with traditional owners, landholders, industry, government and non-government organisations. I welcome interested groups and individuals to play a part in protecting this magnificent region," he said.

The Premier said the centrepiece of the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy was the Kimberley wilderness parks, the state's largest interconnected system of marine and terrestrial parks covering more than 3.5 million hectares. This will include four new marine parks at Camden Sound, North Kimberley, Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach which will almost treble the area of marine parks and reserves in WA.

There will also be new terrestrial reserves for the Kimberley islands with the highest conservation significance. Prince Regent National Park, formerly a nature reserve, has been upgraded to class A, making it WA's 99th national park. A conservation reserve corridor linking Prince Regent and Drysdale River national parks will also form part of the wilderness parks.

Environment Minister Bill Marmion said the state government had met the challenge of conserving the Kimberley for generations to come.

"This strategy sets a long-term vision but is action-oriented, with many initiatives ready to commence immediately and be funded into the longer term," he said.

"The Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy has a 'connectivity conservation' approach. This means managing threats, such as fire, feral animals and weeds, cooperatively across property boundaries to increase the resilience of ecosystems across the whole landscape.

This landscape-scale approach reflects connectivity conservation initiatives from around the world, such as Yellowstone to Yukon and the Canadian Boreal Forest Framework.

The Minister added that substantial progress had also been made in implementing some key initiatives.

The full Kimberley and Conservation Science Strategy is available at www.dec.wa.gov.au/kimberleystrategy.



Environment Minister Bill Marmion speaks at the official launch of the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy.

Key strategy initiatives and funding include:

- \$21.5 million over five years for a landscape-scale program of fire, feral animal and weed control, to be implemented in partnership with traditional owners, pastoralists and other stakeholders
- funding of \$15.2 million over four years for the proposed Camden Sound and Eighty Mile Beach marine parks
- \$14.2 million for a major marine science program
- \$9.6 million over four years for tourism initiatives and upgrades to visitor facilities in the Kimberley's parks.



Herbarium specimens begin their big move

THE mammoth task of moving the Western Australian Herbarium's entire collection of specimens is underway. Within the next few months, 726,000 plant specimens will be moved from the former WA Herbarium building to the new facility at the purpose-built Western Australian Conservation Science Centre.

DEC Herbarium Collections Manager Karina Knight said it was exciting to see the first boxes containing the carefully packaged specimens being transported into the new WA Herbarium.

"The process is proceeding very smoothly. It has been made easier by a great deal of prior planning," she said.

The WA Herbarium houses the state's entire collection of plant specimens, preserved indefinitely.

"The collection provides the core resource for knowledge of the state's

flora and fungi which contributes to, supports, and services the research, conservation and decision-making activities of DEC," Karina said.

"The transportation of the specimens from the old herbarium to the new one comes after years of planning, which involved the planning of the new facility as well as the design of new storage boxes.

"At the old herbarium, specimens were housed in open pigeonhole shelving, but the decision was made early on in the planning process that they should be housed in boxes.

"The main benefit of a box is that it affords better protection for the specimens from general handling and pest incursion, and allows more efficient use of the vertical space available.

"It is the first herbarium box design in the world that has a front entrance, as well as being shower and insect proof."

The transportation of the specimens is

a massive undertaking and is expected to take about four months. Herbarium staff will pack the collection into 40,000 boxes, ensuring they remain in the correct order. Once packed and transported to the new centre, the specimens are loaded into large freezers and kept at minus 18 degrees Celsius for a week to ensure harmful insects that can destroy specimens are not brought into the new facility.

The move represents a significant step in the long process to bring the vision of the new WA Herbarium to life.

"So far, we've moved some 180,000 specimens, and filled about 9,000 boxes," Karina said.

"The collection is to be maintained in perpetuity as a comprehensive, adequate and representative research and archive collection of specimens of all taxa in plant and fungi groups which occur in WA."



Herbarium staff pack the collection into storage boxes at the old WA Herbarium building.



Environment Minister Bill Marmion and DEC Project Eden Ecologist Linda Reinhold monitor chuditch populations using radio-trackers.

Project Eden flourishing in Shark Bay

DEC's Project Eden is seeing positive results, with the chuditch becoming re-established in its former range in François Péron National Park, along with several other species once locally extinct.

The Project Eden program, launched in 1994, aims to control introduced predators to allow for the reintroduction of threatened animals. Part of this was the construction of a 3.4-kilometre feral proof fence at the Taillefer Isthmus, the narrowest section of the Peron Peninsula, which prevents reinvasion by feral animals.

As well as the chuditch, other native species doing well include the malleefowl, southern brown bandicoot and the bilby. Echidnas and the threatened woma python have also increased in numbers since feral animal control began.

Environment Minister Bill Marmion recently visited the World Heritage-listed Shark Bay region to inspect progress with the wildlife recovery program.

"Since 1994, DEC and its predecessor have undertaken extensive feral animal control measures. Foxes have effectively been eradicated,

the sheep population is zero and wild goats have been culled to just a number of small, isolated mobs," he said.

"The major 'feral focus' is now on cats. The current baiting regime is keeping the cat population stable and at a relatively low level."

The Minister joined DEC Shark Bay District staff in monitoring chuditch that were released onto the peninsula in May. Radio collars fitted to the nine animals enable monitoring to assess their survival and distribution.

"It was encouraging that we were able to locate some of the animals and, with continued feral cat control, it is expected that the reintroduced animals will begin breeding and the population will grow," he said.

"An important component of Project Eden is a captive breeding program in the national park. Native animals bred at the centre supply stock that can be reintroduced into areas in which they thrived in pre-European times.

"The breeding program will play a key role in reconstructing the native fauna of Dirk Hartog Island National Park within Shark Bay."





DEC staff launch the EcoDrive package: Karl Carrabotta, Keiran McNamara, Stuart Cowie, Tina Stockport, Drew Farrar, Kristie Stevens, Peter Musk, Lucinda Peters, Jen Scott and Tina Runnion.

Smart driving cuts carbon footprint

STAFF with DEC's *CleanRun* program have launched a new initiative aimed at cutting toxic vehicle emissions by focusing on smarter, safer driving techniques.

The EcoDrive resource kit, which is thought to be the first of its kind in the southern hemisphere, provides fleet operators with tips to help maximise fuel economy, thereby reducing vehicles' carbon footprints.

DEC *CleanRun* EcoDrive Manager Kristie Stevens said fleet operators who took heed of the tips could expect three-fold benefits: environmental, cost savings and improved health and safety.

She said the difference between the best and the worst driver could mean up to 35 per cent difference in fuel economy.

"Since fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions are directly linked, a driver who reduces fuel use by 35 per cent can expect a 35 per cent reduction in CO₂," she said.

The resource kit contains a handbook, a training package including a training video, workbooks, assessment tools and an in-cab

training CD, workshop materials, agendas, surveys and sample strategies, educational components and evaluation tools for calculating baseline data and program results

It was launched by the Environment Minister in May and developed in collaboration with extensive input from the transport industry including a two-year trial with professional drivers.

"We've found that that the key to a successful EcoDrive program is to work together with drivers in designing a strategy that's by drivers for drivers," Kristie said.

"So, as part of the *CleanRun* EcoDrive program, a group of volunteer drivers will identify the ecodriving techniques that are applicable to their workplace.

"So far we've had local government take a big interest in the program but it can also be used by bus drivers, haulage drivers and more."

For a free copy of the *CleanRun* EcoDrive resource kit contact *CleanRun* at cleanrun@dec.wa.gov.au.

Albany beach named the cleanest in WA

THE Keep Australia Beautiful Council (KABC) initiative has declared Albany's scenic Emu Point to be Western Australia's cleanest beach.

Emu Point took out the title at this year's Clean Beaches Awards, as well as receiving the Community Action award.

The awards aim to encourage care, protection and management of WA's coastal regions.

KABC Project Officer Rohan Swan called the win at Emu Point a wonderful example of people power.

"It was great to see a community group that puts so much of their own time and effort into a place that they love come away with the award," he said.

Improvements made at the beach include safer vehicle access, interpretive signs, jetties and boat ramps for people with disabilities. Coastal EcoEducation activities held at the beach during school holidays kept young people engaged with their local environment.

Entrants to the awards this year were particularly diverse, with KABC receiving a large number of submissions for a broad range of categories. This year also saw the first nomination by a river and an estuary.

"It was exciting because they are the first non-coastal beaches to enter. Hopefully we will have more similar beaches next year," Rohan said.

"It was also very satisfying to see the range of nominating organisations from local councils to 'Friends of' groups, Coast Care groups, visitor centres and local environment groups.

"Every year we see so many brilliant things and so much commitment to the coastal environment. The applications were of a very high standard, so to receive an award you really must have done something extraordinary."

Other award winners included: **Community Action Award**

Won by Emu Point. Jurien Bay and the Marmion Marine Park shoreline were highly commended in this category.

Friendly Beach Award

Coogee Beach—for visitor facilities and forging links with its Indigenous history. City Beach was highly commended in this category.

Resource Management Award

Koombana Bay (Bunbury)—for initiating waste and water minimisation strategies and its partnerships with organisations and schools which conduct resource management initiatives and awareness campaigns.

Environmental Protection Award

Shelley Beach—for developing the Phyto Fighter 1000, a device to prevent the spread of dieback in threatened coastal areas on the south coast. Coogee Beach, Cemetery Beach and Pretty Pool (Port Hedland) were highly commended.

Litter Prevention Award

Point Walter—Blackwall Reach for its litter prevention, collection, survey and education initiatives including the Bush Buddies campaign designed to educate children about litter.



WA Chief Scientist visits the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk

WEST Australian Chief Scientist Lyn Beazley and Dr Richard Tarala were among a group of prominent scientists, teachers and DEC EcoEducation officers who recently visited the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk.

The trip was part of a professional learning weekend which aimed to promote the newly established curriculum-linked EcoEducation program at the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk and to showcase the magnificent forests and unique environments of Perup and the Walpole Wilderness. During the visit participants stayed at Perup – Nature’s Guesthouse.

DEC Senior EcoEducation Officer Elaine Horne said the weekend was well timed, with the first night coinciding with Arbor Day, June 10, and occurring during the International Year of Forests.

‘Each day was unique, exciting and filled with quality educational outcomes,’ Elaine said.

The group was first welcomed at Perup by DEC Donnelly District Officer Glen Batty where they experienced a night walk through the spectacular jarrah forest.

Early next morning, the group headed to explore the Walpole Wilderness, where they were guided by Frankland District Interpretation Officer Claudia Simpson. First stop here was Swarbrick forest and art trail, which celebrates the changing perceptions of forest and wilderness over time. The group then visited the famous Tree Top Walk,

where they discovered the uniqueness of the tingle forest ecosystem.

To complete their visit to the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk, the group was invited to an informative talk by DEC Frankland District Officers Carol Ebbett and Roslyn Burnside on the feral pig management program and the threats to biodiversity. Other sites visited were Coalmine Beach, the Giant Tingle Tree and Circular Pool, which were enjoyed by all.

The weekend concluded in Perup, where the

group viewed the newly established woylie enclosure accompanied by Donnelly District Officer Beverly Gardiner and took part in fauna trapping. Participants were fortunate enough to have a personal encounter with possums and a brush-tailed phascogale.

All those who took part, including West Australian Chief Scientist Lyn Beazley, expressed their enjoyment of the weekend, making the experience even more worthwhile and rewarding for the organisers.



Participants and EcoEducation staff at the Valley of the Giants: (front row) Fiona Harris, (second row, from left) Claudia Simpson, Trish Candeias (Guildford Grammar), Natalie Shaw (Guildford Grammar), Gail Manton (Department of Education), Professor Lyn Beazley, Elaine Horne, Dr Robyn Groves, Derek Ingram, (third row) Dr Richard Tarala, Professor Shaun Collin, Tom Collin, Jack Collin, Geordie Collin, Lisa Ingram.

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: Samille Mitchell, Karla Forrest and Kate Nye-Butler

Design and Production: Peter Nicholas

Telephone: (08) 9389 8644

Email: ecn@dec.wa.gov.au