



# Smuggled reptiles released back into the wild

**ELEVEN bobtail lizards got a second chance last month when Environment Minister Bill Marmion met with volunteers from Native Animal Rescue at Yanchep National Park and released them back into the wild.**

The animals had been illegally taken from their habitats to feed a smuggling operation which had been uncovered by DEC wildlife officers in conjunction with Australian Customs.

During a 12-week investigation period, 12 bobtail lizards, six south-west crevice skinks and one broad banded sand swimmer were found concealed within stuffed teddy bears, which a St James couple allegedly attempted to post to an address in Hong Kong.

The joint investigation culminated in a search warrant where a further 12 bobtails were discovered. It will be alleged these

bobtails were also destined for Hong Kong.

DEC Wildlife Officer Matt Swan said the way the bobtails were concealed in the teddy bears was cruel, with little concern shown for the welfare of the animals.

"Their legs had been taped to their bodies with masking tape and there was tape over their mouths and eyes. They could not move and had difficulty breathing," Matt said.

"These animals are protected by state legislation, but despite heavy penalties that can be imposed upon traffickers who are caught, there are always some who are prepared to take the risk because of the money involved. Pythons, skinks and geckos unique to WA seem to have been heavily targeted over the past few years."

Matt believes the recovered bobtails were intended for sale in Asia, where they may fetch as much as AUD \$7,500 each.

"While common in WA, these lizards are highly sought after in Asia because they are easy to care for, attractive and exotic."

Of the 12 bobtails seized from the couple, one was euthanised because it had a broken pelvis. The remaining 11 were treated for the potentially fatal 'bobtail flu'. Wildlife rehabilitation group Native Animal Rescue provided round-the-clock care for more than four weeks to get the bobtails back to a condition where they could be released.

Wildlife officers rely heavily on members

of the public to alert them to any illegal or suspicious activity they may observe involving wildlife. If you have any information please contact DEC's Nature Protection Branch on (08) 9334 0292.



*DEC Wildlife Officer Matt Swan with one of the rescued reptiles.*



*The bobtails were found concealed inside teddy bears.*



*Environment Minister Bill Marmion assists with the release of the bobtails.*

# Kalgoorlie-Boulder group boosted by grant



*Volunteers from the community plant trees as part of Kalgoorlie-Boulder Urban Landcare Group's tree planting program.*

**THE Kalgoorlie-Boulder Urban Landcare Group (KBULG) was among 164 recipients of this year's round of Environmental Community Grants.**

The not-for-profit group was granted \$23,500 as part of the state government's program to recognise and support the vital contributions made to environmental and conservation programs by community and not-for-profit organisations, conservation-minded private landholders and local governments.

KBULG Coordinator David Gleeson said the group was very appreciative of the funding and were looking forward to putting it to good use.

"We hope to build on our past efforts by using the money to expand the Karkurla community nursery," David said.

"It will give children and adults alike a chance to learn about and grow Goldfields woodland plant species for distribution within the Goldfields community."

Last year the group received a \$20,000 grant as part of the same program. The funds were used to fund a public education program.

"KBULG's ongoing community education program aims to raise awareness, while educating, engaging and encouraging the community to take action towards being more environmentally sustainable within our community through fun, innovative and interactive activities," David said.

"These projects are designed to inspire the community to become more environmentally aware,

whether it is about littering, flora and fauna, woodland biodiversity, waste reduction, or sending out strong messages such as 'reduce, reuse and recycle'. KBULG is currently the only community organisation providing these environmental programs within in this region.

"We believe public education and community awareness are vital tools in the overall conservation of our local environment, and we look forward to continuing this work into the future.

"It is with support from the state government and programs such as the Environmental Community Grants that we are able to continue to achieve great results within our community, as one of WA's leading community environmental organisations."

## DEC and community volunteers reclaim the dunes at Moses South

**DEC staff and the Cape to Cape Catchments group have worked together to restore dunes along the Moses South coastline.**

The two-part project saw sand fencing erected, a pedestrian boardwalk and barrier fence built and 600 local plants planted in the dunes.

The fence has reduced sand blowout and allowed new vegetation to establish and stabilise the dunes, while the boardwalk and barrier fence have established a formal path to the beach.

DEC Ranger Gilbert Stokman said it was necessary to continue maintaining the site because of the large amount of weather erosion, sand movement and increased numbers of visitors adding pressure to the coast.

"There have been many sand blowouts in this area lately," Gilbert said.

"This is mainly due to people taking different paths to the beach, or the occasional driver taking their vehicle too close without realising

the damage this could be having on the dunes," he said.

Gilbert said while the new plants and fencing would be monitored for their effectiveness, people needed to be mindful of the environment when visiting the beach.

"This restoration project appears to be working well and, if people do the right thing, it can stay that way," he said.

"While people may not think that one set of footprints is affecting the vegetation, others will follow that same set of footprints with their own. This eventually creates a tunnel for onshore winds to carry loose sand to cover existing vegetation.

"We encourage visitors to come down and enjoy this magnificent piece of the south-west, but please also respect the hard work of others who are trying to keep it that way for future generations to enjoy."



*DEC and Cape to Cape Catchments staff and volunteers at the project site.*

# Tree Top Walk the focus of fungi conference



*Conference conveners cut the special fungi cake for visiting delegates.*

**NINETY delegates from across Australia and as far away as the United States recently visited the Tree Top Walk as part of the sixth biennial Fungimap VI conference.**

The conference provided mycologists and fungi enthusiasts a chance to get together and share knowledge, while its location provided a great opportunity to learn more about the Tree Top Walk as a tourism attraction. Delegates also learnt about the area's natural environment, as well as the educational programs delivered at the site and across the region.

DEC Regional Leader Parks and Visitor Services Tim Foley said the highlight of the visit for the delegates was seeing an amazing array of fungi growing within the tingle forest.

"The conference provided delegates with briefings on cup and disc fungi, conducting fungi surveys and photographing fungi," Tim said.

"In addition, Senior Technical Officer Ray Cranfield from DEC's Manjimup office gave a 'beginners' guide to lichens' presentation.

"The conference delegates spent a good part of the day at the Tree Top Walk putting their photography training into good use. They were very keen to find specimens they hadn't seen before."

Tree Top Walk guide Helen Nash also led the group around the site, outlining its role as a valuable land management tool as well as giving an overview of the tingle forest and its ecosystem.

"The group was very impressed with the beauty of the rare tingle forest and the experience of the walk itself," Helen said.

"One of the highlights of the day for the group was a specially designed cake which had been created by local lady Vicky Neale for the occasion," Tim said.

"The delegates were totally surprised at the fun cake and really appreciated the fact that we had created something a little different to remember their visit by."

Tree Top Walk Business Manager Julie Ross said she thought the delegates had taken more pictures of the cake than the fungi on the site.

"We like to do things a bit differently here," Julie said.

Tim said that by hosting visiting delegations, the Tree Top Walk was creating a greater awareness and appreciation of the region's many natural wonders.

"This will pay dividends into the future from a tourism perspective," he said.



# Yearbook now available

THE inaugural *Department of Environment and Conservation 2009–10 Yearbook* has now been released. The yearbook is an accompaniment to the DEC statutory annual report, which has traditionally documented the agency's workings in considerable detail. However, a new approach to the annual report prompted the creation of the yearbook.

The new, leaner annual report format focuses on financial reporting and the broader requirements of meeting public sector standards, while the yearbook allows for the considerable scope of DEC's operations to be recorded and made available to an enquiring public who have an interest in their environment and how it is managed.

It contains information on enforcement, prosecution, flora and fauna translocations, licensing and other data.

The DEC Yearbook is available online at [www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/6139/2035/](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/6139/2035/).

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**Managing Editor:** Madeleine Clews

**Editor:** Sarah Deverell

**Contributing Editors:** Joanna Moore, Kahla Emonson, Karla Forrest and Kate Nye-Butler

**Design and Production:** Peter Nicholas

**Telephone:** (08) 9389 8644

**Email:** [ecn@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:ecn@dec.wa.gov.au)

# Grant helps Green Skills in quest to eradicate weed

**ONE of the recipients of this year's Environmental Community Grants program is well-placed to achieve its aim of eradicating the invasive weed *Senecio glastifolius* in the Albany region.**

The not-for-profit organisation Green Skills was boosted recently by a \$30,000 grant from the state government. Green Skills Albany Office Manager Diane Evers said the project to remove the weed has had great success since it began in 2006, but this latest funding grant will help the project achieve even better results.

"With funding through the Minister's Environmental Community Grants program and the state's Natural Resource Management program, we can plan a two-year schedule toward eventual eradication of *Senecio glastifolius* from the Albany area," she said.

*Senecio glastifolius*, commonly known as senecio, is a highly invasive weed with the potential to spread around the south coast from Albany possibly as far as Mandurah, and up to 100 kilometres inland wherever there are disturbed sandy soils.

"It is a tenacious plant, creating many seeds which can spread up to 1.5 kilometres on the wind," she said.

"Where senecio is left unchecked, the area will be seen as a sea of mauve daisies in August through October. Some people may think this looks good, but the existence of the species crowds out many native species and severely restricts the opportunity for biodiversity."

In the years since the project began,

Green Skills has had great success working to remove the weed.

"Last year we addressed the highest priority areas to stop the spread of senecio along the coast, as well as addressing other priority areas to limit the germination of new plants this year," Diane said.

"This year, with a very early start, Green Skills has been able to cover the priority areas well before the plant has set buds."

Diane said the current funding will also be used to generate greater public awareness and community involvement.

"We intend to hold a number of public workshops on site at known locations of senecio. At these workshops we will engage

local residents to be aware of the invasiveness of the plant and of the correct procedure to remove and destroy it.

"We also hope to find a number of regular walkers with community spirit who will keep an eye out for the plant."

The group expects to completely eradicate senecio in the Albany region within five years.

"Following that we will continue to monitor the area for a further five years to confirm that any remaining plants are sighted and destroyed, leaving the bush able to regenerate," Diane said.

The grant awarded to Green Skills to assist in this project forms part of \$1.58 million distributed to environmental groups and individuals across the state.



*A Green Skills work crew removes senecio from bushland near Albany.*

