



# American HAZMAT experts visit WA

**PEOPLE involved in responding to serious pollution incidents recently had the opportunity to trade knowledge and skills with officers from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).**

Four senior field officers from the US EPA spent two weeks in Perth for a series of intensive training workshops run in conjunction with DEC and the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA).

Environment Minister Bill Marmion said the US EPA officers were highly qualified with direct experience in major incidents such as Hurricane Katrina, gas explosions, clandestine drugs laboratories and the space shuttle recovery.



Video footage of the training exercises can be viewed on DEC's [YouTube channel](#).

"Western Australia has had a working relationship with the US EPA for eight years," he said.

"Because of the close collaboration between DEC and the US EPA, the course ensured that Western Australians involved in responding to serious pollution incidents—especially where those incidents involve hazardous materials—have been trained to world-class levels."

The training was run for employees of DEC, FESA, the Department of Health (DoH) and local government, as well as private contractors who clean incident sites.

US EPA officer Bruce Potoka was impressed with the standard of WA officers and regulations.

"It's been wonderful working with DEC and all the agencies involved. Western Australians have a great approach to safety and to proactive management of incidents. They are interested in our methods and keen to learn," he said.

"I see our visit to Perth as a technical exchange—not only are we sharing our skills and knowledge with Western Australians, we're learning a great deal from them as well."

The training involved a range of components including hazardous materials response procedures, decontamination, occupational safety, radiation monitoring, incident assessment, command and control, waste transport, and containment and clean up techniques.

DEC Pollution Response Officer Paul Fanetti said it was great working with the US trainers as well as people from local government, FESA, DoH and contractors.

"It gave us an opportunity to increase our knowledge and network with others. When responding to an incident it is beneficial to have a good working relationship with the other officers involved," he said.

Paul said he was pleased to have taken a more active role in

facilitating training exercises this year, working in conjunction with the US officers and FESA.

"During the first week we conducted a mock accident between a tanker and a ute. We simulated smoke and the spillage of chemicals to make it as real as possible. It was important to teach those present how to effectively manage such a situation in a lifelike manner."

This is the fourth time since 2003 that DEC's Pollution Response Unit has organised for the US EPA to conduct training in Western Australia.



Participants from DEC, the Department of Health, FESA and local government join forces for one of the practical training exercises.



# Promoting parks in the Pilbara

**VISITORS to the Pilbara enjoyed free entry to Karijini and Millstream Chichester national parks for one special weekend in August, as part of the state government's Rediscover Parks initiative.**

DEC Pilbara Parks and Visitor Services regional leader Alex Bowlay said the free entry days encouraged people to rediscover the wonders of two of WA's most popular national parks.

"Karijini is renowned for its spectacular natural beauty, ancient geological formations and recreational opportunities," he said.

"Millstream Chichester National Park attracts visitors because of its rolling spinifex hills, escarpments and winding tree-lined watercourses as well as the lush oasis of the Millstream wetlands."

Usually there are daily entry fees for Millstream Chichester and Karijini, which help DEC maintain roads and campsite infrastructure to reduce impacts on the surrounding environment, but the free entry days provided an excellent opportunity for everyone to enjoy what the parks have to offer.

"Visiting your local national park is a great way to get out

into nature, whether for relaxation, education or adventure, while supporting local businesses and communities," Alex said.

In the lead-up to the free entry weekend, staff from DEC's Pilbara Region exhibited at the Shire of Roebourne Lions Club FeNaCING Festival. DEC Education and Interpretation Officer Judymae Napier said the FeNaCING Festival—whose name is inspired by the region's three main production and export commodities iron (Fe), salt (NaCl) and natural gas (NG)—was a good opportunity for DEC to promote their local parks, giving out flyers and other merchandise.

"We had a great response from the community. We hope to have spread the message to encourage people to get out into the parks and enjoy the spectacular scenery of the Pilbara," she said.

"DEC also had a stall at the annual Nameless Festival in Tom Price, which ran the same time as the parks' free entry weekend. We gave out newly-published marine park bookmarks, stickers and stubby holders, as well as a marine animal identification guide, which will help people engage with the natural coastal environment.

"We also promoted awareness of threatened species in the region by giving out stickers featuring the bilby, mulgara and northern quoll. They feature the DEC web address on them, so adults and children alike can go to the site and get more information about each animal.

"We also had a sticker developed for boat owners,



*DEC Education and Interpretation Officer Judymae Napier providing a young visitor with marine stickers and messages.*

advising them about safe distances for whale watching, and gave those away also."

DEC also provides annual local park passes, available to residents and ratepayers of the shires of Ashburton, Roebourne, East Pilbara and the Town of Port Hedland. The pass provides 12 months unlimited entry to Karijini and Millstream Chichester national parks for \$20 per vehicle.



*A reef illustration wall proved popular with many children at DEC's stall at the FeNaCING festival.*

## ScienceNetwork WA opens gateway to the Kimberley

**DEC has thrown its support behind a plan from Scitech, Western Australia's leading science education institution, to promote the Kimberley region and the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy (KSCS) through a dedicated online portal within the ScienceNetwork WA.**

The portal, managed by Scitech and funded by the Department of Commerce, will help achieve a key outcome in the KSCS strategy—to provide an online knowledge gateway providing access to scientific and cultural information on the Kimberley.

In fulfilling this outcome, Scitech hopes to enhance its well established ScienceNetwork WA website with a new section covering WA regions including news and information on the Kimberley.

ScienceNetwork WA has independently recognised the efforts of scientists over the past seven years as the state's most comprehensive online science news source.

The website publishes science related news articles each week and has a database of 5,500 subscribers to its weekly newsletter.

For more information go to [www.sciencewa.net.au](http://www.sciencewa.net.au).



# Farewell to the Wells—a photographic institution



**WITH the passing of Babs Wells in July, the curtain fell on an era of wildlife photography in Western Australia.**

The extraordinary life and business partnership of Babs and Bert Wells produced a collection of some 17,000 transparencies documenting a vast array of Western Australian fauna in their habitat. The Wells collection was acquired by the then Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) in 1994, on condition that the images be used only for community education purposes. Wells photographs have since featured in many hundreds of departmental publications, and are still used today.

Remarkably, the couple did not embark on photography as a career or even as a hobby until Bert was approaching retirement in the 1970s. They decided to specialise in Western Australian wildlife and proceeded to cover virtually every centimetre of the state in a quest to capture what was interesting, what was different, and what hadn't been done before. Key to their partnership was a clear division of labour, with Bert behind the camera and Babs scouting for subjects.

Babs and Bert maintained a long-standing professional relationship with CALM, joining in many biological survey expeditions and camping out with wildlife scientists and technical staff to work with them recording the animals of significance to the area being studied. They also carried out studio photography under commission by the department. One notable such occasion was when a rare marsupial believed to be extinct, the long-tailed dunnart (*Sminthopsis longicaudata*), was discovered in the Gibson Desert. Using desert sand and rocks sent to Perth with the animal, and specimens of spinifex from Kings Park, Babs and Bert set up a makeshift habitat for the dunnart and monitored it night after night to catch it while active. Each time it ran behind the rocks, Babs chased it back into the field of the camera again, until Bert was finally able to capture a striking and memorable image of the dunnart, mid-frame, with its distinctive long tail—more than twice the length of its body—sticking straight up behind it.

Babs was predeceased by Bert in 2003, but their unusual combination of skills and personal qualities, combined with their deep love of their work, has enabled them to make a unique contribution to conservation in Western Australia that will not be forgotten.



*Babs' role was primarily to research and scout for the species being sought to be photographed by her husband Bert.*



*The Wells captured the world's first photograph of a long-tailed dunnart—a species believed to be extinct until a specimen was found in the Gibson Desert in 1981.*





## Have your say on Barrow islands

**ENVIRONMENT Minister Bill Marmion has released the *Barrow group nature reserves draft management plan for a two-month public comment period.***

The draft plan for Barrow Island nature reserve covers about 24,070 hectares of land down to the low water mark on Barrow Island and three nearby smaller islands—Boodie, Middle and Double islands—off the coast of Dampier.

The draft plan provides an opportunity for people to express their opinions, suggest alternatives and have their say on how the area will be managed during the next 10 years.

"Barrow Island is especially valued for its 22 threatened fauna species, extensive cave ecosystems and nesting beaches for marine turtles and migratory shorebirds," Mr Marmion said.

"The diversity of Barrow Island's fauna can be attributed to the range of habitats available, the island's relative isolation, and the petroleum industry's stringent quarantine system.

"This has led to Barrow Island being the largest land mass in Australia that does not contain any introduced vertebrates.

"Looking after the island's natural values is very much a collaborative process, which is why I'm pleased that throughout the planning process DEC has consulted extensively with key stakeholders.

"These include Chevron Australia (on behalf of the Gorgon Joint Venture, Barrow Island Joint Venture and the Barrow Island Coordination Council), the Department of Mines and Petroleum and the Department of State Development."

The Minister said the draft management plan would be implemented alongside existing environmental management documents produced by industry that provide guidance for the operator of each joint venture.

Copies of the draft management plan are available at DEC's Kensington or Karratha offices, or online at [www.dec.wa.gov.au/haveyoursay](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/haveyoursay).

# Joy over cockatoo chick

**CELEBRATIONS were in order recently as a threatened cockatoo chick was found to have been bred in an artificial nest in the Perth metropolitan area for the first time.**

The male forest red-tailed black cockatoo chick was discovered inside an artificial nesting box on the grounds of Murdoch University within Beeliar Regional Park. It is believed to have hatched in mid-May and was removed from the nest in July to be banded and DNA-sampled.

The artificial nesting boxes were installed on the Murdoch campus as part of a project by Murdoch Environmental Restoration Group (MERG) to encourage breeding of native bird species in the area. The project was funded by last year's round of the state government's Environmental Community Grants program.

DEC Regional Compliance Coordinator Officer Rick Dawson said the cockatoo chick was in good health.

"It took flight and left the nest at about 72 days old, which is within normal expectations," he said.

"It will be interesting to monitor its progress and see how it goes. Because its DNA has been recorded, in the future we will be able to tell if other newbor ns are offspring from this particular male. We expect it will stay with the flock of around 70 other red-tails that have set up residence in the Murdoch area.

"Recently we have begun to see more red-tails in the metropolitan area and on the Swan Coastal Plain, attracted to the food sources of both native and introduced species, such as Cape Lilac. The exciting thing is that they're now breeding in the area.

"The flock in Murdoch appears to be drawn to the large roosting trees and availability of food sources in the area."

MERG have again been successful in the 2011 Environmental

Community Grants, which will see them continue on-ground rehabilitation works to enhance the roosting and feeding site for the endangered black cockatoo.

Forest red-tailed cockatoos are listed on the state's threatened fauna list.



*The threatened cockatoo chick was found in an artificial nesting box.*

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