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## World Wetlands Day conference celebrates wetlands and tourism

**WORLD Wetlands Day on Thursday 2 February marked the 31st anniversary of the signing of the intergovernmental treaty known as the Ramsar Convention on wetlands of international importance. To commemorate the day, DEC staff attended the eighth annual WA Wetlands Management Conference.**

Wetlands Section Environmental Officer and conference steering committee member Christina Denton said the international theme for World Wetlands Day 2012 and this year's conference is Wetlands and Tourism.

"Sustainable tourism in and

around wetlands can bring many benefits to countries from national to local community levels. If poorly managed, tourism practices can also have negative impacts on wetlands and the people they support," she said.

"The purpose of the conference was to raise awareness about the importance of our wetlands and the vast amount of work that is going on in WA to conserve, manage and restore them.

"The conference was aimed at everyone from community members, volunteers and students to local and state government environmental officers and industry representative and was wonderful opportunity for wetland practitioners to share information, exchange ideas and network.

Community attitudes towards conserving wetlands are very important, particularly as many nationally and regionally important wetlands in WA occur on private property, pastoral lease or lands designated for other purposes.

"DEC community programs such as Healthy Wetland Habitats work to support and assist private landholders to conserve the wetlands on their property," Christina said.

"DEC is also preparing *A guide to managing and restoring wetlands in Western Australia* to support stakeholders seeking to manage and restore wetlands."

WA currently has 12 wetlands recognised as internationally important under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for their ecological, botanical, zoological, limnological and hydrological significance.

Another eight wetlands are currently being assessed for nomination to be listed. Wetland management plans and ecological character descriptions of the Ramsar wetlands are coming soon to the DEC website.

For more information on DEC's role in wetland management and protection visit [www.dec.wa.gov.au/wetlands](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/wetlands).



Healthy Wetland Habitats Coordinator Amanda Fairs with DEC programs posters and information on display at the conference.

### Apply now for environmental grants

Applications for the 2012 round of Environmental Community Grants are now being sought.

Environment Minister Bill Marmion said there were eight categories of grants, including biodiversity conservation; sustainable catchment management; interpretation; and sustainable recreation in natural areas.

"Funding will be available for voluntary wildlife rehabilitators, and projects which rehabilitate, conserve, enhance or restore natural areas or values, as well as for activities that raise public awareness for nature conservation at a local level," he said.

"Other types of projects the government will fund include those aimed at protecting threatened species and their habitats; revegetating or rehabilitating natural vegetation and waterways; weed and pest control in remnant bushland; establishing recreational facilities to reduce pressures on natural areas; and environmental information and education activities."

This is the fourth round of the state government's Environmental Community Grants program. The Minister said many innovative conservation projects have been implemented as a result of the program, and these were providing ongoing conservation benefits to the community.

Applications close on 2 April 2012. For more information or to apply visit the DEC website.

# Wedge-tailed eagles return to the wild



**TWO wedge-tailed eagles have been successfully released after a long road to recovery in the care of dedicated DEC-registered rehabilitator Rose Best.**

Rose began caring for the first eagle, a juvenile female, at the end of June last year after it had been found totally emaciated at a horse stable in Broome.

Rose said one of the main dilemmas of wildlife rehabilitation was figuring out how to teach young birds of prey how to hunt, given that they often have not had the chance to learn from their parents.

"Luckily, though, I had some help. A few months later, I was asked to care for an adult male that had only minor injuries from being hit by a car. This turned out to be perfect timing, as the male was able to show the female how to hunt," Rose said.

Over the next few months, the two birds grew stronger in the large aviary at Rose's home and became fit for release. They were released in early February, following the wet season in the Kimberley.

"The heavy rain meant there would be lots of food for them," Rose said.

"Hopefully being released with the male will improve the female's chance of survival in the wild as they have spent time together."

Wedge-tailed eagles are commonly seen in ones and twos, and will congregate in larger numbers around carrion.

Rose said the birds flew away strongly when released, and was confident they would do well as they were both fit and strong.

Rose has been a DEC-registered wildlife

rehabilitator for more than 15 years, and has contributed 19,000 hours' service in that time. She said there was no greater joy than releasing a native animal back into the wild.

"The release is what you work for during those long months of rehabilitation, and it is just fantastic to see the animal healthy and ready to return to its habitat."



*Both eagles made a strong recovery in Rose's aviary.*

## Restructure in DEC division

Commencing on 30 January 2012, DEC's Environmental Regulation Division was restructured to strengthen and improve the delivery of the department's industry regulation service.

The decision to restructure certain branches was reinforced by feedback received from a number of stakeholders, including DEC staff, peak industry bodies and industry operators.

The main feature of the restructure is the creation of two new branches; the Industry Regulation Licensing Branch and the Industry Regulation Support Branch. In addition, the Controlled Waste and Permitting Section and the Inspection and Compliance Branch have been combined to form the Industry Regulation Compliance Branch.

The new structure will give the Environmental Regulation Division a modern, efficient industry regulation service and will facilitate the development of industrial regulation expertise, and the formulation of policy and guidelines, and allow for much needed regulatory reform.



## Miriuwung-Gajerrong rangers install signage for new conservation parks

### DEC has commenced the installation of boundary signage for six new conservation parks established in the Kimberley Region.

The new parks were established under the Ord Final Agreement and are jointly managed by DEC, the Miriuwung-Gajerrong Aboriginal Corporation and the Yoorrooyang Dawang Regional Park Council.

The new parks will be managed to preserve flora and fauna as well as to preserve Aboriginal culture and heritage. All of the parks contain sites that hold significance for the Miriuwung and Gajerrong people.

Senior Operations Officer Bill Dempsey said the first of the new parks to have boundary signage installed was Ngamoowalem Conservation Park.

"This area was formerly known as Livistona, however the name was recently changed to the recognised Miriuwung name for the area, Ngamoowalem, which means 'cycad place,'" Bill said.

"The 70,310-hectare conservation park encompasses the range along the Valentine/Parry Road including the popular Molly and Middle springs, Valentine Creek and Black Rock Falls. These sites will undergo improvements over the next few years to include the provision of toilets and picnic facilities."

Bill said the Miriuwung-Gajerrong rangers would continue to roll out the new boundary signage throughout the first half of 2012.

"Visitors to these areas will start to notice the new signage over the next few weeks," he said.

"It has been specially designed to include

artwork from a local Miriuwung artist."

Existing conservation areas, including Mirima National Park and Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve, will also undergo a facelift in 2012 with new signage installed to bring them in line with the new joint-managed conservation parks.



*The team behind the installation of the new signage.*



# Bush Ranger cadet program finds perfect match

DEC's Bush Rangers WA program recently welcomed the Spinifex Bush Ranger cadet unit to its ranks, thanks to some detective work by DEC staff.

MATES Trainee Coordinator Louise O'Reilly said she found out about the school in Tjuntjuntjara—a small community in the Great Victoria Desert—through word of mouth.

"I first got involved with the Tjuntjuntjara school after a former City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder sustainability officer forwarded on an article from ABC Gardening Australia," she said.

"The article was a letter of the month from Tjuntjuntjara Nurse Sue Leverton. It explained that the health service and the school wanted to establish an organic garden program for the kids, and asked for donations to get the program up and running.

"I discussed the opportunity with Community Education Coordinator Jennifer Weston and we agreed I should contact Principal Lesley Chennell to

discuss the school's options for DEC Waste Wise and Bush Ranger cadet program support for what they were essentially already doing.

"To my delight earlier this year the Bush Rangers WA state coordinator informed me that the partnership had been established, which was a fantastic outcome."

Louise said DEC Kalgoorlie worked closely with the Spinifex people living in Tjuntjuntjara on many different projects as part of its joint management initiative, but this was the first to be done with the youth of the community.

Bush Rangers Unit Leader Adam Pennington said he hoped the Bush Ranger program would provide a career pathway for students into the field of conservation and land management, either on country, with DEC's Aboriginal Heritage Unit or as national park rangers.

Adam said the Bush Ranger unit's location in Tjuntjuntjara had many benefits.

"Tjuntjuntjara is located within a nature reserve.

There is also a vast suite of biodiversity and cultural values beyond the nature reserve, within the Spinifex native title determination area held by the Spinifex people. The students will learn about these values throughout the program," Adam said.

"However, the remoteness also presents many challenges. The limited transport options can make it difficult to attend Bush Ranger camps and other activities off country.

"The program is not only beneficial for the children's learning and skill development, it could also be a stepping stone to increased joint-management projects and initiatives towards enhancing relationships between the remote community and DEC."

If you would like to help or get involved with the Spinifex Bush Ranger unit contact Adam Pennington on (08) 9037 1133 or [landmgr@spinifex.org.au](mailto:landmgr@spinifex.org.au).

More information on Bush Rangers WA can be found on the DEC website.

## News in brief

### Australian Tidy Towns judge hits town

The small town of West Arthur recently played host to national Tidy Towns judge Dick Olesinski as he made his way around the country to determine which town will take out the crown of Australian's Tidiest Town.

West Arthur won the state title in mid-November last year.

During his two-day visit, Dick evaluated West Arthur's many initiatives against the national awards criteria which encompass environmental innovation and protection, water and energy conservation, community partnerships, litter prevention, resource recovery and the preservation of local heritage and culture.

The overall winner will be announced at a Vice Regal function in Canberra on 8 May.

## Historic site to be restored



**HISTORIC buildings at Perry's Paddock within Yellagonga Regional Park are due to be restored in the first half of this year, following a visit from Environment Minister Bill Marmion last month.**

The limestone buildings at Perry's Paddock include a single-room cottage attached to the ruins of an old stable. Perry's Paddock is listed on the Western Australian State Register of Heritage Places, and is one of three places in Yellagonga Regional Park on the register, along with Cockman House and Luisini Winery.

The Minister visited the site to meet with DEC Project Manager Jayson Puls,

Wanneroo MLA Paul Miles and architect Alan Kelsall.

Jayson said the works at Perry's Paddock would focus on stabilising the structural integrity of the building's walls and protecting the structure from further weathering, without disturbing the archaeological evidence of the site.

"DEC is very grateful to the Wanneroo Historical Society, who has provided early photographs and documentation of the buildings which will be used in the development of interpretive signage at the site," Jayson said.

Perry's Paddock—which was named after

Jack Perry, a grazier who bred racehorses on the property at the turn of the 20th century—has strong historical and cultural significance to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

"It is important to conserve the high scenic quality of Perry's Paddock as it is representative of a rural landscape which is now rare in the urban context of Wanneroo," Jayson said.

"DEC will seek the services of a suitably qualified and experienced stonemason to undertake the works outlined by the heritage architect. The work is expected to be completed by June 2012."

