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**Managing editor:** Madeleine Clews

**Editor:** Sarah Deverell

**Contributing editor:** Karla Forrest

**Design and production:** Peter Nicholas

**Telephone:** (08) 9389 4000

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

## Experts meet to discuss Perth air quality

**MORE than 125 participants attended the first annual Air Quality Forum that was presented by the Air Quality Coordinating Committee (AQCC) at the WA Conservation and Science Centre on Thursday 15 March.**

The forum was launched by Environment Minister Bill Marmion, who identified vehicle emissions and transport planning as key areas for air quality improvements. The Minister was joined by Shadow Environment Minister Sally Talbot (MLC) and Lynn MacLaren (MLC).

Nobel prize laureate Professor Barry Marshall shared some of his personal experiences and urged the state government to continue to act on air pollution to avoid issues experienced in other cities around the world. Edith Cowan University Professor Andrea Hinwood highlighted Perth's dynamic growth and development as areas that might pose issues for air quality into the future.

Twelve presentations, covering a variety of air quality issues, were delivered throughout the day to communicate the achievements of

the Perth air quality management plan and to inform participants of the current actions and directions of air quality management.

AQCC Chairperson Stuart Cowie said participants were also provided a rare opportunity to view and discuss specialised air quality monitoring equipment used by DEC.

"This included the FTIR (fourier transform infrared spectrometer), which records levels of pollutants by measuring the amount of light an air sample absorbs at a particular wavelength," Stuart said.

"People also had a chance to check out our mobile monitoring caravan, which is fitted with a range of analysers and can be used in situations where a quick field deployment is needed for short-term air quality monitoring."

Stuart said participants also posed many questions and provided new ideas for air quality management that will be considered by the AQCC.

"I was thrilled by the community response and I look forward to ongoing improvements in air

quality management as a result of the Air Quality Forum," he said.

Copies of the presentations from the forum are available from the Perth AQMP website.

For more information on general air quality matters visit [www.dec.wa.gov.au](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au) or contact AQCC Executive Officer Caron Macneall by calling 9333 7435 or emailing [AQCCAdmin@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:AQCCAdmin@dec.wa.gov.au).



(Top) The Minister's opening speech.  
(Above) Environment Minister Bill Marmion and Professor Barry Marshall with FTIR monitoring equipment.



### Northcliffe fire brings community together

DEC has thanked the communities of Northcliffe, Pemberton and Manjimup and other agencies for their assistance and support during the bushfire that threatened the area recently.

DEC Donnelly District Manager John Gillard said the fire suppression effort involved resources from DEC, FESA, volunteer bushfire brigades, the Shire of Manjimup, Fire and Rescue Service volunteers, local contractors, tree plantation companies and the Forest Products Commission.

"In addition, invaluable support was provided by WA Police, Water Corporation, Main Roads WA, the Department for Child Protection, St John Ambulance, the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Power and many others," he said.

The full media statement is available on the DEC website.

### Visitors to South Coast urged to take care

Visitors to the South Coast are being urged to put their safety first when spending time near the ocean during Easter and school holiday periods.

DEC Albany District Manager Mike Shephard said the Southern Ocean could be unpredictable and dangerous.

"We urge everyone to take extra precautions when fishing off rocks and to stay away from the black rocks."

Read the full media statement on the DEC website.

# International recognition for Araluen

**THE Araluen Botanic Park has joined an elite group of camellia gardens worldwide after being recognised by the International Camellia Society (ICS) under its Gardens of Excellence program.**

Araluen Botanic Park Foundation General Manager Rod Ross said the park joins a group of just 17 gardens worldwide that were previously recognised.

"The ICS launched the Gardens of Excellence program in 2001 to recognise camellia gardens of excellence," he said.

"To qualify, gardens must meet a strict set of criteria developed by the ICS to encourage excellence in the growing of camellias to ensure visitors can see them at their best."

Garden Development Manager Grant Nixon said the accolade was a testament to all of the people that have worked to build Araluen into a botanic garden, starting with JJ 'Boss' Simons, of the Young Australia League, back in 1929.

"It was Simons who planted the first camellia in the gardens adjacent to the Chalet Healy in 1939. This camellia is still there and is now about five metres tall," he said.



*Stunning camellias such as this winter gem were behind the decision to recognise Araluen as a Garden of Excellence.*

DEC Senior Project Officer Renee Evans said the recognition reflected the hard work of the Araluen Botanic Park Foundation garden staff and volunteers.

"The camellias in the park provide

visitors with great enjoyment and are a feature of the gardens."

For more information about Araluen Botanic Park phone 9496 1171 or visit the new Araluen Botanic Park website.





## Botany conference to be held in Perth



### **DEC's herbarium will play host to the 2012 Australasian Systematic Botany Society conference in September this year.**

The conference will attract more than a hundred botanists, researchers and students to Perth during spring and will showcase a broad range of systematic botanical research currently being conducted across Australia and New Zealand.

WA Herbarium Curator and conference host Kevin Thiele said the conference will provide an opportunity for local botanists to find out about interesting and exciting research being done both in their back yard and across the continent to New Zealand.

"We hope to put together sessions on local endemism, pollination, as well as biodiversity threats such as climate change and plant pathogens," he said.

"This year's theme is 'Local knowledge, global delivery,' which was inspired by the landmark decision at the 2011 International Botanical Congress to allow electronic publication of new species of plants.

"This represents a new era in communicating local research almost instantly to a worldwide audience."

Senior Research Scientist Kelly Shepherd said the opportunity to co-host the conference was fantastic for DEC and the WA Herbarium.

"Sometimes we feel quite isolated here in Perth so it is a wonderful opportunity to discuss ideas with like-minded scientists face to face, some of whom we may have been communicating with via email for years. Getting together to hear what research is being

done in different regions can also promote new ideas, approaches and collaborations," Kelly said.

"It is also a fantastic opportunity to show case our new herbarium and the south-west in spring."

Capping off the conference will be a two-day field trip to Lesueur National Park, one of the state's flora hotspots.

"The park has exceptional flora conservation values, with more than 900 types of vascular plants, including nine threatened species and more than 100 locally or regionally endemic species," Kelly said.

"We are very excited to be able to offer this experience to conference-goers, but places are limited."

Please visit the conference website for details on registration and submission of abstracts.





# Yanchep caves offer cool change during heatwave



AS PART of the annual Capricorn Community Festival earlier this month, Yanchep National Park opened four of its caves to the public and encouraged visitors to check out the unique and distinctive cave formations within.

Yanchep Marketing Coordinator Jennifer Green said all caves had a great attendance despite the 39-degree heat on the day.

“The open day provided visitors to the park a unique opportunity to see all four caves in their full glory, and the caves’ constant cool temperatures were a refreshing respite from the heat for most people,” she said.

Tours were hosted throughout the day in the magnificent Crystal Cave, attracting almost 80 people. Cabaret Cave, which is a popular venue for weddings and functions, was open for viewing in the morning and the rarely seen Yonderup Cave was open for three tours throughout the day.

“We also offered an exciting adventure caving experience, which saw participants donning helmets and exploring the caves by torchlight,” Jennifer said.

This initiative was part of DEC’s ‘Rediscover Parks’ campaign, which is aimed at encouraging Western Australians to visit national parks.

## Birdwatching in the hills

**ON Sunday 4 March, enthusiastic bird watchers arrived at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre for the inaugural evening session of the newly fledged ‘Hills Bird Walks’.**

*Nearer to Nature* Programs Coordinator Jill Francis said the group was led by biologist and award-winning wildlife filmmaker Simon Cherriman.

“Simon took us on a two-hour loop walk in Beelu National Park, encountering 13 species including a tawny frogmouth, which was perched just a few metres from us as we sat and

relaxed on a beautiful granite outcrop,” she said.

“This gorgeous nocturnal bird perched low in a wandoo tree for at least five minutes, offering the group excellent views of its gorgeous feather pattern and yellow eyes.”

Simon said the group also spotted a playful grey fantail and some elusive inland thornbills, among other species.

“An uphill climb along a gully and through jarrah/marri forest and mixed pine plantation had us back at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre, where we enjoyed hot drinks and cakes—the

perfect end to a relaxing Sunday night: 13 humans, 13 bird species, one quiet night and a large expanse of beautiful Perth Hills bush!”

Jill said the guided walks were a regular event organised by *Nearer to Nature* and run from the Perth Hills Discovery Centre.

Jill said the next bird walk will be held early morning on Sunday 1 April and anyone interested is welcome to attend. For more information about the Hills Bird Walks, including species lists and booking information, contact the Perth Hills Discovery Centre on 9295 2244.

