



Carnaby's tracking provides new insights

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SATELLITE tracking devices attached to 11 Carnaby's cockatoos are beginning to reveal some of the species' mysterious behaviour and movements, following their release in and near Perth in May.

The rehabilitated cockatoos were released from Perry Lakes and Yanchep National Park with satellite tags attached as part of a project to monitor their movements for research. They quickly joined wild flocks of Carnaby's in the area.

Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Research Officer and University of Western Australia PhD student Christine Groom said the satellite tracking had already produced some fascinating results.

"This has never been done before with black cockatoos, so the data from the past month have provided us with an insight into the daily lives of Carnaby's cockatoos that hasn't previously been possible," she said.

"Two of the cockatoos released at Perry Lakes headed east into the Perth hills and have remained there, while one has headed south and was last recorded at Lake Preston, more than 100 kilometres from the release site.

"Of the cockatoos released at Yanchep National Park, two continue to drift between the park and the Pinjar pine plantation, while another has settled in an area along Lancelin Road between Seabird and Ledge Point.

"The data are showing us previously unknown night roost sites, daily movement patterns and significant travel distances, with one cockatoo travelling more than 60 kilometres in one day.

"The more we learn about the behaviour and movements of these iconic birds, the better we can protect them with targeted recovery efforts."

In addition to the tracking devices, the cockatoos had their tail feathers marked with non-toxic blue or pink ink so people can recognise the birds and report sightings to DEC.

"Sightings by the public are helping fill in the gaps between satellite fixes and provide valuable observations of flock size and behaviour," Christine said.

To report a sighting of a tail-marked black cockatoo phone DEC on 0409 087 631 or email christine.groom@dec.wa.gov.au with the location details.

Since the release, Christine reported on her project blog *Researching Carnaby's Cockatoo* that one of the study birds had flown 170 kilometres in five days.

For more updates on the cockatoos, visit Christine's blog: www.carnabyscockatoo.blogspot.com.au.

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DEC Research Officer Christine Groom (right) releasing the rehabilitated cockatoos with Murdoch University PhD supervisor Kris Warren.

DEC supports recreation by resource workforce in Pilbara parks

FORTESCUE Metals Group has become the first resources company to purchase DEC national park passes for its Pilbara workforce.

DEC Pilbara Parks and Visitor Services Regional Leader Alex Bowlay said the collaboration with Fortescue was in response to increased visitation to Karijini and Millstream Chichester national parks by the company's Solomon Hub Project workforce.

"Fortescue employees and contractors are visiting waterholes and popular day-use areas in the national parks, and it became clear we needed

a system to encourage them to visit and engage positively with DEC rangers," Alex said.

"This is the first time DEC has negotiated with a resources company regarding workforce recreation opportunities in the Pilbara, and the department wants Fortescue's example to lead the way for other organisations to purchase national park passes."

Scott Hansen from Fortescue's Tom Price Community Office said the initiative was a great way to ensure environmental and community benefits for all parties.

"Karijini and Millstream Chichester national parks are spectacular parts of the world, and Fortescue recognises the importance of managing visitation by people attached to our activities," he said.

"Fortescue is very pleased that DEC collaborated to produce the unique park passes and looks forward to ongoing interaction with its personnel on managing recreation opportunities."

Alex said resources sector workers were now discovering additional benefits to working in the Pilbara, which is home to some of Australia's most awe-inspiring natural areas.

"If we can get people into our national parks it will give them a better sense of the Pilbara's diversity," he said.

The national park passes cover entry to Pilbara national parks, including Karijini, for 12 months. They have been designed to be hung from a vehicle's rear vision mirror, making them highly visible to DEC rangers.

Park passes are also being sought by other Pilbara resource companies to encourage safe and appropriate workforce recreation.

Pilbara Parks and Visitor Services Regional Leader Alex Bowlay (centre) with Fortescue employees Enda Lawless and Bethanie Paidra with the new park passes.



News in brief

Dolphin calf disentangled in Swan River

THE dolphin calf that had been swimming in the Swan Canning Riverpark, with a severe fishing line entanglement around its dorsal fin, was freed in June following a successful rescue operation.

The three-year-old calf, Gizmo, was first reported on 27 April as entangled, and dragging seaweed that was caught in the lines.

The rescue team from DEC, Perth Zoo, Murdoch University and WA Police, supported by the Swan River Trust, placed Gizmo in a sling and while checking the dolphin, removed additional line that was found embedded in its tail.

More information can be found in the full media statement.

Councils judged on sustainability

THE cities of Cockburn, Mandurah, and Rockingham are in the running to become Western Australia's most sustainable city for 2012 in the Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards.

In the lead-up to the award ceremony on 3 July, the three finalists were visited in June by state judge and chief advisor of the Sustainable Energy Association, Professor Ray Wills.

The entrants for this year's awards submitted 141 projects across eight categories. More than 3,500 volunteers took part in the projects.

More information can be found in the full media statement.



New fences protect Nullarbor caves



DEC staff Parks and Visitor Services Coordinator Ian Hughes (left) and Operations Officer Mick Rose place a visitor risk sign at the approach of a newly fenced cave.

ONE of Australia's most biologically important cave systems has received extra protection, following a project to fence off the catchment areas of several caves on Mundrabilla Station on the southern Nullarbor.

In partnership with the station owner, DEC fenced off Webbs Cave (including nearby Snake Pit Cave), Thampana Cave and Witches Cave, with 7.5 kilometres of fencing.

DEC Esperance District Manager Klaus Tiedemann said the fences were constructed to mark future proposed reserve boundaries and exclude livestock from the caves.

"The fences will prevent livestock manure and weeds from

being transferred into the cave environments, reduce soil erosion and disturbance, and reduce the risk of livestock becoming trapped in the caves," he said.

"As part of the world's largest karst region covering about 200,000 square kilometres, these three caves play a critical role in the system and have exceptionally high conservation values.

"From a biological perspective the Nullarbor caves contain rare endemic fauna, some of which are very small, fragile and vulnerable to disturbance.

"Spiders, crustaceans, centipedes and many more troglobites and troglaphiles share the caves with larger creatures like masked owls and chocolate bats."

Klaus said signs had been installed to raise awareness about safety risks and inform visitors of the importance of the caves and their environments.

"The fencing project will not only raise visitor awareness of the need to tread carefully near these karst features but also allow the surrounding catchment area to regenerate without being impacted by grazing livestock," he said.

The project started in October 2011 in accordance with the *Interim Management Guidelines for Nullarbor Caves and other Selected Karst Features*, a report prepared in 2009 for DEC and the Rangelands Natural Resource Management group.

Contaminated Sites Act under review

DEC has announced a review of the *Contaminated Sites Act 2003* to determine if the legislation is meeting community expectations in identifying, recording, managing and remediating contaminated sites.

The Act requires owners, occupiers and polluters to report known or suspected contaminated sites to DEC.

It also establishes a hierarchy of responsibility for clean-ups, with the polluter or person who caused the contamination first in line.

Since the Act came into force on 1 December 2006, DEC has classified more than 2,000 sites and responded to more than 10,000 requests for information.

A site may be contaminated if it has a substance above background concentrations that may present a risk to human health or the

environment. DEC, in consultation with the Department of Health, classifies sites under one of seven categories: report not substantiated; possibly contaminated – investigation required; not contaminated – unrestricted use; contaminated – restricted use, contaminated – remediation required; remediated for restricted use; and decontaminated.

The feedback will be assessed by DEC and used to prepare a further document discussing suggested changes to the Act.

The 12-week public comment period on the consultation paper, 'Review of the *Contaminated Sites Act 2003*' commenced 29 June. The consultation paper and online survey are available at www.dec.wa.gov.au/contaminatedsites. Hard copies of the consultation paper are available by calling DEC on 1300 762 982.

