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Murujuga – WA's 100th National Park

THE state government announced the creation of Western Australia's 100th national park on 17 January 2013 – Murujuga National Park.

The park will ensure the conservation of 44 per cent of the Burrup Peninsula and cover an area of almost 5,000 hectares of the northern and most eastern part of peninsula. This includes 86 per cent of the Dampier Archipelago National Heritage Place gazetted on the peninsula.

The creation of the park was announced by Environment Minister Bill Marmion at a signing ceremony with Ngarda-ngarli land owners and the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation at Burrup Peninsula's Hearson Cove.

Mr Marmion said Murujuga National Park was the result of a long but fruitful process that has seen the transfer of ownership of non-industrial lands on the Burrup Peninsula to the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) as freehold land.



Murujuga signing ceremony: (L to R) Woodside Indigenous Affairs Advisor John Litchfield; Pluto Vice President Richard Van Lent; trainee ranger Morgan Lockyer; Environment Minister Bill Marmion; Aboriginal elder Tootsie Daniels; Aboriginal elder Colin Churnside; trainee rangers James Wally, Ian Wally, Geoff Togo, Dallas Fredrick and Rex Munda; and Supervisor Ranger trainees Brad Rowe.

This transfer of ownership is part of a historic native title agreement reached in January 2003. The land will remain freehold Aboriginal land that will be leased back to the state and managed as a national park with formal protection under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.

Mr Marmion said the arrangement, which was a first for the state, had been achieved through extensive consultation and resulted in an innovative joint management agreement between MAC and DEC.

"The Burrup Peninsula is internationally renowned for its ancient Aboriginal rock art and has the biggest 'gallery' with the highest concentration of engravings of any known site in the world," he said.

"The area is also known for its significant vegetation and diverse terrestrial fauna, and has outstanding scenic landscapes that offer nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities.

"The new Murujuga National Park will provide for the protection of the area's nationally important conservation and cultural values and is an excellent example of a partnership that balances the protection of ancient and living heritage with sustainable use of the region's natural resources."



Tootsie Daniels singing a song about Murujuga.

The final management plan was prepared by the Murujuga National Park Council, which includes representation from MAC, DEC and the Department of Indigenous Affairs. It will guide management operations for the park for the next 10 years.

The plan includes a range of conservation strategies including weed control, rehabilitation of disturbed areas, and fox baiting, as well as managing recreational activities in conjunction with cultural values.

Sanctuary successful as woylie numbers grow



EFFORTS to recover the critically endangered woylie are proving successful, with the latest figures from a south-west sanctuary showing a population growth of almost 400 per cent.

The population has flourished since DEC released 41 woylies into the 420-hectare predator-free Perup Sanctuary, near Manjimup, in December 2010.

Trapping last November saw 161 individuals caught, with all traps full

every night and unavailable to catch other animals—indicating that there were a lot more animals competing for the traps.

In addition, a woylie that had twin pouch young in April 2012 had another set of twin pouch young in the November trapping—there are only three records of twin pouch young in the Upper Warren since the 1970s from more than 9,000 records of female woylies.

DEC is on track to meet its goal of the sanctuary supporting at least

400 woylies within the next five to 10 years, which will compensate for any rapid and continuing woylie declines in the wild.

Environment Minister Bill Marmion said a lot of hard work was being done to determine the reason for a 90 per cent decline in the wild population during the last decade.

“DEC is working to control feral cat and fox populations across key areas of the state through its *Western Shield* fauna conservation program. Researchers are also looking at the role disease may be playing in the decline of woylies,” he said.

“The Perup Sanctuary population will ultimately provide a valuable source of animals for re-establishment of woylies in areas outside the sanctuary.”

Collaborators in the research program include DEC, Murdoch University, Perth Zoo, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, South Australian Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Warren Catchments Council, the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country program and The University of Western Australia.



Above: DEC employee Brian Whittred, releases a woylie into the reserve.

Left: Michaela Pleitner, a German uni student, helps out in the Perup Sanctuary. **Below:** Woylie

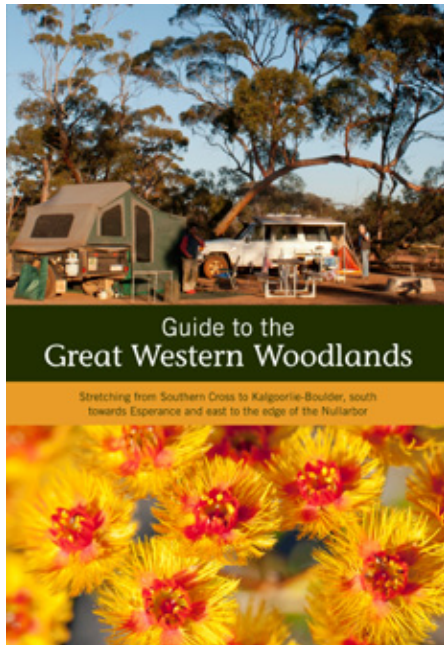


New guide to the Great Western Woodlands

A NEW guide to the Great Western Woodlands has been released detailing the history, culture and natural values of the unique region, which covers an area about the same size as England and is regarded as the biggest remaining area of intact Mediterranean-climate woodland on Earth.

Released by the Environment Minister in Kalgoorlie-Boulder last week, the guide covers an area of nearly 16 million hectares, stretching from the edge of the Wheatbelt around Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie-Boulder, south towards Esperance and east to the edge of the Nullarbor.

The region is rich with indigenous cultural significance, with Aboriginal occupation of the area dating back to at least 22,000 years ago.



The area also supports significant exploration and mining activity, featuring more than 300 operating mines as well as pastoral leases and timber harvesting.

The full-colour 160-page guide, published by DEC, is part of the state government's \$3.8million commitment to develop and implement A *Biodiversity and Cultural Conservation Strategy for the Great Western Woodlands* to protect the area's natural and cultural values.

Mr Marmion also announced the winners of a competition among teachers to develop new educational resources in partnership with DEC, the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Urban Landcare Group and Millennium Kids.

The winners of the teachers' competition were:

- Kristina Wesley of Swan Christian College, Middle Swan, for her entry on invertebrates and vegetation identification, biodiversity, human impact and land uses
- Rekha Amarasuriya of The University of Western Australia for her entry on biomes and animals in ecosystems
- Julia Freeman of Schools of Distance and Isolated Education, Leederville, for her entry on geography, threats and the Gondwana Link project
- Anna Killigrew of Koora Retreat Centre, Coolgardie, for her entry on the history and colonising of the area, surviving the journey and impacts on Aboriginal people
- Susanna Webber of Kalgoorlie-Boulder Community High School for her entry on species and ecosystem protection.

Chaplain joins DEC

THE Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has employed a chaplain to support staff and their families.

DEC risk manager John Ireland said staff often faced difficult, dangerous and challenging jobs where both the public and staff were at risk, such as fighting fires, rescuing people, attending pollution incidents and rescuing wildlife.

"The role of the new chaplain is to assist staff in dealing with the impact on themselves, their families and their workmates resulting from the often traumatic circumstances they face as well as the everyday issues that affect people in the workplace," he said.

Steve Bradfield joined DEC on 14 January 2013, bringing a wealth of previous experience to the role, which is particularly important during the bushfire season.

"In my five years with the Army Reserve I had a great opportunity to train as a chaplain because it exposed me to people working in difficult jobs and I was able to offer support and connect people to other helpful services," Mr Bradfield said.

"I've been on international operational deployments on peace-keeping missions and that's allowed me to work with people while they're in tough situations.

"Chaplains can help people in very difficult times to re-establish family ties and get back to work and to some sort of normalcy in life again, including people who are critically hurt and others with general life issues who just want someone to listen.

"I think one of the best things for DEC is that staff will have someone from within our organisation who is onsite so it means we can care for our own in a nurturing environment.

"Like many DEC staff, I enjoy the outdoors and I like what the department does so I'm really looking forward to working with people who have committed their lives to WA's environment, and if I can make someone feel better at work then it's worth it for me."

DEC's chaplaincy program was developed following extensive consultation with Western Australia Police, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Salvation Army.



New parks for Horizontal Falls

MARINE and national parks will be created around Horizontal Falls at Talbot Bay in the Kimberley.

Announced by Premier Colin Barnett earlier this week, the parks are part of the state government's \$63 million Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy.

Horizontal Falls is an internationally-renowned tourist attraction that contains

immense natural and cultural values including distinctive geological features, stunning scenery, world-class coral reefs, dolphins and mangrove ecosystems.

Both parks will be class 'A', giving the area's natural and cultural values the highest possible protection.

The proposed national park will cover 160 square kilometres, while the proposed

marine park will cover almost 3000 square kilometres of state waters to the south of Camden Sound Marine Park and include Talbot, Collier and Doubtful bays and Walcott Inlet.

The government will liaise closely with the Dambimangari traditional owners and indigenous land use and joint management agreements will be negotiated. Draft management plans for both areas will be released for public comment.



Horizontal Waterfalls, The Kimberleys. Photo – Tourism WA

Nature Conservation Service Conference 2012

DEC's 12th annual Nature Conservation Service Conference was held on 13 and 14 December 2012 attended by around 60 staff from across the department.

The two-day conference featured a number of presentations from internal and external speakers, as well as workshops discussing topical issues.

Acting Assistant Director Nature Conservation Keith Claymore said a range of topics formed the basis of the conference including program design, management and cost effectiveness, myrtle rust, fire management, environmental flows and fauna translocation.

"It was a timely conference for staff, and provided a good number of papers aimed at performance improvement and better decision-making for the department's Nature Conservation Service," Keith said.

"I would like to thank my support staff at Crawley who organised this event, conference speakers and chairs."

Director Nature Conservation Gordon Wyre announced the winners of the Director's Excellence in Nature Conservation Awards at the conference.

"The Director's awards are aimed at recognising some of the outstanding contributions made by staff during the year," Gordon said.

Senior Principal Research Scientist Norm McKenzie was presented with the award for excellence in Knowledge Discovery, Transfer and Communication.

Nature Conservation Program Leader Kim Williams was the recipient of the award for excellence in Leadership and Conservation Delivery.

The awards reflect Kim and Norm's dedication to nature conservation over the past few decades and their outstanding commitment promoting Western Australia's biodiversity values and conservation.

