

NatureMap

Mapping Western Australia's biodiversity



Department of
Environment and Conservation



<http://naturemap.dec.wa.gov.au>

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NATUREMAP – TWO YEARS ON

Welcome to the inaugural NatureMap newsletter. We plan to release these periodically to keep you up to date with current news and what's around the corner.

NatureMap is a collaborative project between the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Western Australian Museum. Together with industry partner Fugro Spatial Solutions Inc., we quietly launched the NatureMap portal at the end of 2007, and from modest beginnings NatureMap has gone from strength to strength, winning the environmental category in the **2009 WA Spatial Excellence Awards**, and coming in as a finalist in the national awards. We now have over 400 registered users regularly downloading data, and that's a small proportion of users who access NatureMap anonymously every day.



We've been periodically adding new data sources throughout the last year, including the DEC fauna survey returns and threatened fauna databases, island mammals, a cane toad observational database and BugBase – an important invertebrate database.

NatureMap is a work in progress. There are so many things we could do and would like to do, but you have to start somewhere. For example, when NatureMap was first designed back in 2006, we were limited to supporting only one browser: Internet Explorer. The world has moved on since then, with Mozilla Firefox and Safari now taking a substantial slice of the market. And alas for Macs, there is no Internet Explorer. However, there is good news...

A NEW VERSION

On Friday, 18th December, 2009, we released NatureMap V1.1. This version extends browser support to **Firefox** and **Safari** on both Macs and PCs. NatureMap also seems to work well with Google Chrome (pop-ups may need to be enabled). In addition, we've moved to greater compliance with State Government accessibility standards. We've also rolled NatureMap out onto fast, new servers. You should notice the improvement. We welcome your feedback on the new version, particularly browser support and accessibility issues. For more information you can click on the *Accessibility* link in the top right-hand corner of the page. And finally, we've implemented some under-the-hood functionality to improve future integration with our flagship sister-site, **FloraBase** (<http://florabase.dec.wa.gov.au>).

IT'S ABOUT NATURE

NatureMap is about nature. It's about liberating the wealth of knowledge we've accumulated on the biodiversity of our State, so we can better manage this precious resource under threat from climate change, land clearing, salinity, weeds and ferals. One way we can liberate that knowledge is by using information technology (IT) wisely and cleverly. Though NatureMap is made up of computers and networks, its focus isn't on IT for its own sake – it's about enabling planners, researchers, industry, consultants and the general community to gain access to biodiversity information so they can better understand our flora and fauna and contribute to real conservation outcomes. NatureMap provides information to anyone, at no charge to the user, because it's more important to make the information available and accessible.



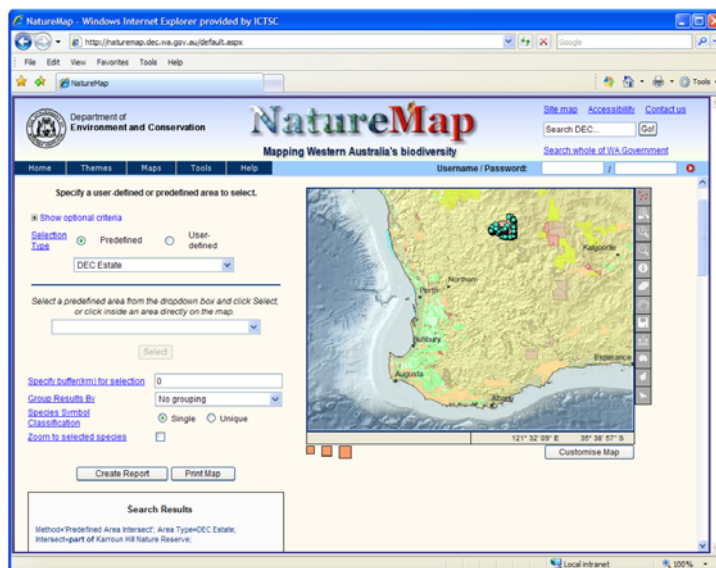
Having said that, implementing and maintaining a project like NatureMap is a major undertaking for any organisation. That makes it important for us to establish good relationships with potential funding partners who can see the value of bringing biodiversity information to the public. In particular, the need for a data management project officer is crucial to process the many datasets needing to be incorporated into NatureMap. If you see yourself or your organisation as a partner we'd love to hear from you.

So WHAT'S COMING UP?

We had to put a number of proposed enhancements on hold while we completed V1.1, but we're now full steam ahead to implement a number of much-desired features over the next six months, such as symbolising species by your *Group By* setting (e.g. conservation status), querying and grouping by date of observation, displaying species images, browsing species by name, and much more.

We'll be adding a host of spatial reference layers, some of which you'll be able to query species in, including mining tenements, fire history, soils/landforms, watersheds and catchments, acid sulphate soils, threatened ecological communities and RAMSAR wetlands.

And finally we'll be adding a number of high priority species datasets, including Bird Atlas Records for WA, FaunaFile records from Western Shield, Banded Ironstone Formation species, invertebrate data from ForestCheck and *Phytophthora* isolate distribution to name a few. We'll let you know more about those closer to the time.



Later on in the year we'll again be paying attention under the hood. NatureMap is built using the ESRI suite of spatial software. ESRI's software has advanced substantially since NatureMap was first architected way back in 2006, so we'll be upgrading to the latest versions of software, including moving from ArcIMS to ArcGIS Server. You really wanted to know that, didn't you? But paying attention to such things is important for system stability and so we can improve your experience of NatureMap.

FEEDBACK

Your feedback is very important to making NatureMap work better for you. If you experience any difficulties or have suggestions for improvements, send us an email.

XMAS GREETINGS

From a personal perspective this has been challenging but rewarding project, and I've appreciated the support and encouragement of colleagues and users. I hope to meet some of you over the coming months to improve NatureMap and make it work better for you. Until then may you have a safe and blessed Christmas, and have a great holiday!



Regards,

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