

Coral coast parks update

July 2011

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Information for the community

Welcome to the first edition of the *Coral coast parks update*. This newsletter will be distributed regularly to keep you up to date with the latest news and happenings throughout your local coral coast parks.

Ningaloo Coast World Heritage listed

On 24 June 2011, the World Heritage Committee decided to inscribe the Ningaloo Coast on the World Heritage List, acknowledging it as one of the outstanding natural places in the world. More information will soon be available.

Tropical Cyclone Carlos hits Cape Range

Phil Arthur, Cape Range National Park Ranger

Cyclone Carlos was a Category 2 system which hit Cape Range National Park on 23 February 2011. The system had strong winds up to 150 kilometres per hour and was accompanied by heavy rain. The Milyering rain gauge recorded 280 millimetres of rain over a 24-hour period during the red alert. Ranger staff observed one storm that dropped 60 millimetres within 30 minutes.

After the cyclone DEC staff assessed the damage to the park. Numerous roads and campgrounds were closed due to flooding and water damage. DEC staff and local contractors have worked to reopen these areas quickly and performed campground and facility maintenance and undertaken road repairs.

All DEC sites within Cape Range National Park are open to the public; however, road works will continue. These ongoing road works should have minimal impact on park visitors. We apologise to anyone who has been adversely affected during this time.



Green turtle hatchling, Ningaloo Marine Park

Ningaloo Turtle Program 2011

Chantelle Coote, Ranger and Program Coordinator

The Ningaloo Turtle Program (NTP) is a collaborative project between Cape Conservation Group Inc (CCG) and DEC. It is designed to promote and ensure the long-term survival of turtle populations within the Ningaloo region.

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Colourful corals recovering from times of stress

Heather Taylor, Marine Park Coordinator

DEC has been monitoring the 'coral bleaching' along Ningaloo reef over the past four months. Coral bleaching is when the coral have expelled the algae in their tissues (due to stress), leaving the bright white coral skeleton in place.

This year, the reef experienced an extended period of elevated sea temperatures which led to coral stress and bleaching. Sea surface temperatures can be tracked using a combination of in-water sensors and satellite technology.

Staff will be assessing the full extent of mortality of the event in July and August, by collecting images at the park's long-term monitoring sites.

Corals will quite often recover from these stress events, so a post-event survey will be important to examine the significance of this 2011 event, and quantify if, where and how many coral colonies we have lost across the park.



Example of bleached coral within Ningaloo Marine Park, Coral Bay

Monitoring of long-term trend data on turtle population size is achieved through the collection of turtle nesting information including nest abundance and nest disturbance data.

The 2010–11 NTP season (November–March) proved to be very successful despite the severe weather events bringing major tidal activity to the beaches over which NTP operates.

Overall, 3,295 new turtle nests were recorded, approximately three times more than recorded during the 2009–10 season!

DEC extends a huge thank you to the local Exmouth community and external volunteers who spent time over the summer monitoring our beautiful beaches for turtle tracks.

If you would like to become involved, check out our website www.ningalooturtles.org.au or contact the DEC office.

Campground booking online— Cape Range National Park

Jamie Campbell, Education Officer

Due to high demand, DEC is trialling an online booking system for a select number of campgrounds statewide including Tulki, Pilgramuna, Kurrajong and Yardie Creek within Cape Range National Park.

The remaining camp sites are still available without bookings but they are very popular and fill up quickly during the months between April and October.

By visiting the new DEC Campgrounds website you can get details about more than 110 DEC camp sites, view photographs, search and compare sites by region and even get up-to-date weather forecasts.

You can book your camp site up to 10 months in advance. Just go to www.dec.wa.gov.au/campgrounds and follow the links.

Pilgramuna offers a boat launching beach with good snorkelling to the south. Tulki and Kurrajong offer great bush camping experiences with the beautiful backdrop of Cape Range. Yardie Creek campground is adjacent to the unique Yardie Creek with plentiful birdlife and a nature walk that takes in both views of the gorge and the breathtaking Ningaloo Reef.

For more information contact the Milyering Visitor Centre on **9949 2808**.

Out and about on marine patrols

Heather Taylor, Marine Park Coordinator

Staff have been out and about on marine patrols over past months, including a joint operation with the Department of Fisheries over the Easter long weekend.

Fishing in sanctuary zones is the major offence detected throughout the park, and sanctuary zone awareness is our number one priority educational message. While most visitors have a good understanding of why we have sanctuary zones and where they are, it is important to get the word out to those who don't. DEC has brochures available for anglers seeking further information and sanctuary zone locations.

Sanctuary zones offer opportunities for tourism, recreation and research, and provide great opportunities for snorkellers and divers to view pristine areas of our Ningaloo reef with its world-renowned marine biodiversity.

So spread the messages to visitors to remind them of our 'no take' areas, or sanctuary zones, in Ningaloo Marine Park.

For more information check out our website at www.dec.wa.gov.au or contact the DEC office.



DEC marine parks vessel *Cetea*

Feral goat control program 2011

Brooke Halkyard, Conservation Officer (Terrestrial)

The goat (*Capra hircus*) is considered one of the most significant feral animals in Cape Range National Park. Feral goats affect native animals by competing for resources such as food, water and shelter, and by contributing to changes in ecosystems.

Feral goats are recognised as a significant threat to many endangered species such as the threatened black-flanked rock wallaby, once widespread in WA but now restricted to isolated populations throughout the state, including Cape Range National Park. Feral goats threaten the survival of native plants through their feeding habits.



Feral goats at Yardie Creek, Cape Range National Park

The impact of hooves and overgrazing destabilises soil and increases erosion.

Earlier this year, DEC undertook an aerial goat cull as part of its ongoing efforts to reduce the number of feral goats in Cape Range National Park. Over three days, 246 feral goats were removed from the park. Aerial surveys before and after revealed a 50 per cent reduction in the number of feral goats following the cull.

In collaboration with stakeholders, DEC will continue working towards a reduction in the environmental damage caused by feral goats using various control measures (for example, enlisting organised groups to assist, implementing periodic knock-down of population numbers through aerial shooting programs and allowing for the commercial mustering of goats).

You can also assist DEC in combating the feral animal problem by reporting any sightings of feral goats, foxes, or cats within the national park to the Exmouth District Office.

If you would like to receive a copy of this newsletter electronically please email exmouth@dec.wa.gov.au with your contact details.

Department of Environment and Conservation
Exmouth District

22 Nimitz Street, Exmouth, WA, 6707

Phone: (08) 9947 8000

Email: exmouth@dec.wa.gov.au