



Attractions and facilities

ECO-TOURISM CONFERENCE IN MAY

The annual Tourism Information Exchange has been named WA's major event in the International Year of Ecotourism.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management's Acting Executive Director, Keiran McNamara said the Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-Tourism (FACET) chose the trade expo as the year's major event, based on its success in promoting the importance of sustainable nature-based ecotourism.

"To help celebrate the International Year of Ecotourism, the Tourism Information Exchange event will be complemented by a one-day FACET conference," Mr McNamara said.

"This will give the State's tourism industry the opportunity to discuss and plan ways that Western Australia can lead the world in innovative and sustainable ecotourism."

Mr McNamara said the conference and trade expo aimed to facilitate a greater exchange of information between tourism operators,

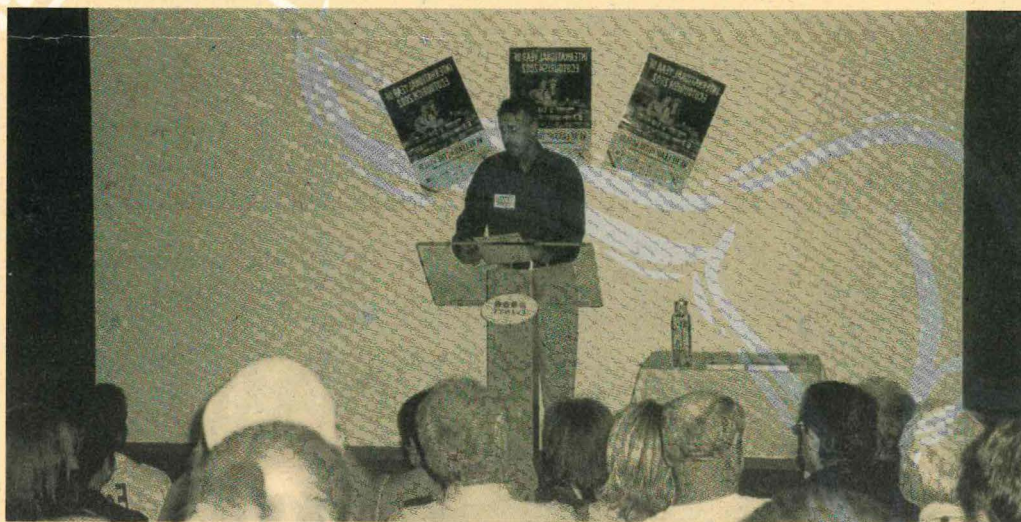
government agencies and local government authorities.

"It aims to review successful international ecotourism experiences, identify relevant issues and trends and showcase WA's nature-based tourism opportunities."

Mr McNamara said the conference and trade expo, 'WA Tourism: In Touch with a Sustainable Future,' would begin on Tuesday 21 May 2002 at the Aquarium of Western Australia (AQWA), Hillarys.

"The event is a huge cooperative effort between government and industry, including FACET, Ecotourism Association of Australia, Western Australian Tourism Commission, the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Edith Cowan University, the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators' Committee and regional tourism authorities."

For further information or to express your interest, contact Kerrie Coombe on 08 9380 9388 or kerrie@raybird.com.au



Dr Ross Dowling (Deputy Chairperson, FACET) launching IYE2002 at AQWA in February 2002.

Around the Regions

GET NEARER TO NATURE IN 2002

Experience being *Nearer to Nature* with the Department of Conservation and Land Management's exciting new range of bush activity programs.

Nearer to Nature offers ecology walks, night spotlighting, wetland wanders and Aboriginal culture walks.

Activities include bushy arts and crafts, the chance to meet native animals in special encounter sessions and much more.

For further information, contact Iris Flenady at the Hills Forest Discovery Centre on (08) 9295 2244 or email irisf@calm.wa.gov.au

SWAN REGION

NEW SIGN SYSTEM FOR REGIONAL PARKS:

The Department has launched a new sign system Perth's regional parks.

Each park has its own brand image designed to represent its character. For example, Beeliar Regional Park has a tortoise as its brand image.

A new Sign System Manual for Perth's regional parks contains 15 types of signs for regional parks, and full specifications on how to choose, design, manufacture, install and maintain the signs.

It is anticipated that many of the local governments involved with regional parks will adopt the new sign system, providing a common means of presenting park information and management directions to visitors.

Carnac Island Members of the public can be involved in planning the future management of Carnac Island.

The public has until May 24, 2002 to comment on the draft management plan released by the Department of Conservation and Land Management in December 2001.

The draft management plan for the popular nature-based tourism destination was prepared for the Conservation Commission of Western Australia for public comment.

Copies are available from the Department's website – www.naturebase.net or from the Department's offices in Kensington or Fremantle.

For further information, contact Terese Dimascia on (08) 9334 0566 or email teresed@calm.wa.gov.au

Yanchep National Park: The fee for the Crystal Cave tour in Yanchep National Park will increase in October 2002 to \$6.50 per adult, \$3.50 per child and \$15.50 per family or mini group.

The increase will enable the Department of Conservation and Land Management to recover the costs of running interpretive programs in Crystal Cave.

Commercial tour operators have been given 12 month's notice of visitor fee increases.

For further information contact Phil Smeeton at Yanchep National Park on (08) 9561 2444, or email philsm@calm.wa.gov.au

GOLDFIELDS

The Rowles Lagoon freshwater lake system is finally accessible after high water levels restricted access to the area.

Water levels are now low enough for recreational water activities.

The Rowles Lagoon Conservation Park is 65 kilometres north-west of Coorgardie and is a popular destination for nature-based tourism and recreational visitors.

The wetlands are important habitats for over 41 species of waterbirds, including eight protected by international treaties.

Facilities are being upgraded using \$50,000 of capital funds.

For further information contact Barry Hooper on (08)9021 2677 or email barryh@calm.wa.gov.au

PILBARA

Karijini National Park: Earlier this year, bush fires burnt more than 55,000 hectares in the northern section of Karijini National Park.

Successful efforts were made to keep the fire away from the new visitor centre that is designed and constructed to withstand the fire-prone environment.

Fire is an intrinsic part of the ecology of spinifex grasslands and is necessary for the regeneration process. The dry leaves and volatile resin of the spinifex plant makes it highly flammable and easily ignited by lightning strikes which are common during summer.

Fires ignited by lightning are usually stopped when they reach areas with low fuel, or are brought under control by firefighters.

Much of the Karijini National Park is inaccessible, so many fires are left to burn themselves out naturally.

While fires can interfere with our planned enjoyment of the park (particularly when it is closed for safety reasons), it is an essential and natural process.

For more information contact Judymae Napier on 08 9143 1488 or email judymaen@calm.wa.gov.au

MID WEST

Kalbarri National Park: Two spectacular new lookouts overlooking the Murchison River gorge at Hawkes Head and the Loop were recently completed.

Now accessible to all visitors, the new facilities protect the landscape, improve safety for visitors, and serve as great platforms for spectacular viewing.

To provide better access for coaches, a car park will be constructed at Hawkes Head early this year, along with wheelchair accessible toilets.

Nambung National Park: Further work to improve the roads into the park continues with resheeting planned for the gravel section of the Pinnacles Road. Drivers should take care and drive slowly as construction equipment may be operating in the area.

For more information contact Sue Hancock on (08) 9921 5955 or email susanh@calm.wa.gov.au

Southern Forests: The Department of Conservation and Land Management would like to thank officers from the Forest Products Commission and local volunteer bush fire brigades for their support in attending 46 fires in one week of January.

This is the biggest number of lightning-caused bush fires in the forest areas in more than a decade.

Work is continuing on infrastructure development on the Karri Forest Explorer Drive set to be launched in autumn. The developments include new signs, interpretation centres and FM radio transmitters around the entire drive. Further development includes new steps and gas barbeques at Big Brook Dam; new day use and camping facilities in Giblett forest; and new steps, information shelter, toilets, jetties, decks and walk trails in Warren National Park.

West Cape Howe National Park: A severe wildfire in November caused the closure of parts of the park to the public.

Most walking and four-wheel drive tracks were reopened in December and the affected section of the Bibbulmun Track is now operational and appropriately marked by track wauvals.

Vehicle access to Shelly Beach and the campsite area has been reopened. The only remaining closure is the Dunsky/Cape 4WD track (off the Bibbulmun Track) and is appropriately marked. There is much to be rehabilitated and repaired before opening the 4WD track.

All visitors should remain extremely cautious and remember that fires are only permitted in designated areas. The region's very dry winter has already caused a number of serious wildfires. Uncontrolled fires may result in the loss of rare and endangered flora and fauna.

For further information, contact the Department's Albany Office on (08) 9842 4500.

Windy Harbour to Point D'Entrecasteaux walk trail: The walk trail is expected to be launched in winter this year.

This community based will extend from Windy Harbour to Salmon beach, linking Point D'Entrecasteaux and Toolakup recreation sites.

Lake Muir Nature Reserve: Developments on a new site are expected to be completed by July 2002.

The new 100 metre boardwalk with a lookout platform will provide visitors with opportunity to learn about biodiversity in the area while enjoying the new facilities.

For further information please contact David Meehan (08)9776 1207 or email davidme@calm.wa.gov.au

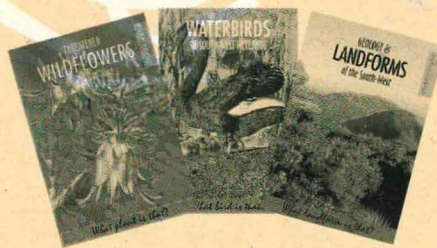
Hot off the Press

The Department of Conservation and Land Management has a range of quality publications available. Bush Books are a series of practical field guides to help you learn about and discover WA's unique plants, animals and special features, region by region. The Department has recently released three new Bush Books.

Threatened Wildflowers of the Mid-West, Waterbirds of South-West Wetlands, and Geology and Landforms of the South-West

Licensed Commercial Tour Operators are eligible to receive a 20% discount. Bush Books retail at \$6.50 and are available to licensed CTO's for \$5.20.

Bush Books are available from leading newsagents, bookstores, tourist centres, Department offices or through the Department's website www.naturebase.net. For a list of available publications contact (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437.



NEW DISTRICTS, NEW NAMES

The Department of Conservation and Land Management's restructured Districts in the south-west have new names so their locations can be identified more easily. The new names are:

- Swan Region: Swan Coastal and Perth Hills districts
- South West Region: Wellington and Blackwood districts
- Warren Region: Donnelly and Frankland districts

NEW LICENSING FOR NATURE-BASED TOURISM OPERATORS

The Department of Conservation and Land Management recently announced the introduction of new licensing procedures that would give benefits to tour operators who receive industry-based accreditation.

National Parks Director Jim Sharp said the Department would now offer licences for up to five years to operators who achieve accreditation from the Tourism Council of WA and the Ecotourism Association of Australia.

Mr Sharp said unrestricted licences previously had to be renewed each year, costing tour operators and the Department time and money.

"It is important to reward operators who had pursued and achieved accreditation," Mr Sharp said.

"In order to ensure that private and commercial activities are not detrimental, the Department attempts to ensure everyone is aware of the relevant restrictions and monitors compliance with these requirements and the effects of interaction activities."

Mr Sharp said monitoring included:

- regular patrol activities;
- a structured enforcement program to monitor compliance with the Wildlife Conservation Act, Conservation and Land Management Act and licence conditions, including covert operations;
- ensuring all commercial operators and other licence holders are aware of relevant legislation and licence conditions;
- provision of up-to-date information on conservation areas and values;

- determining positive and negative impacts of activities in conservation areas and with wildlife;
- implementation of an efficient and effective emergency response plan for events such as wildlife strandings;
- assessment of the effectiveness of wildlife management;
- pre-season seminars for operators; and
- management committees.

"The goal of the Department is to achieve a balance between nature-based tourism and recreation and maintaining the conservation values of parks and reserves, that is optimising access while minimising impact," he said.

"Our aim to achieve these goals has been supported by the tourism industry through its cooperation and compliance and we look forward to this partnership continuing."

For further information, please contact Kerry Troeger on (08) 9334 0119 or email kerryt@calm.wa.gov.au

MUNDA BIDDI BIKE TRAIL FROM PERTH TO ALBANY OPENS

The Munda Biddi Mountain Bike Trail opened at Jarrahdale in early December.

The trail - destined to be one of the world's greatest mountain bike trails - is the latest in a long line of successful nature-based tourism projects developed and managed by the Department.

The Munda Biddi - meaning "path through the forest" in Nyoongar - when completed will stretch 850km from Mundaring to Albany.

It will pass through towns and rural communities, taking in the most beautiful sites in the South West and traversing national parks and conservation reserves.

It will be built in three stages during the next three years - from Mundaring to Collie (stage one), Collie to Pemberton (stage two) and Pemberton to Albany (stage three).

Families can enjoy peaceful cycling along relatively flat terrain of old railway alignments while experienced and competitive cyclists will enjoy the more challenging sections.

A total 'bush' touring experience will be available to touring cyclists with the wide forest tracks.

YOU WERE WONDERING?

Touring Western Australia is a newsletter produced by the Department of Conservation and Land Management to keep the tourism industry informed about developments that affect the industry. If you have a query regarding any of the Department's tourism policies, activities or developments, we would be pleased to answer these in future editions of the newsletter. Enquiries can be sent to *Touring Western Australia*. Fax: (08) 9334 0253 or email (kieronw@calm.wa.gov.au).