

Welcome to the first volunteer newsletter of 2017. February and March is known as Bunuru in the Nyoongar calendar, which traditionally is a great time to be near the coast, rivers and estuaries. Luckily, Parks and Wildlife has a number of projects that can help you to do this – for further information visit the volunteering opportunities section of the [website](#).

Looking a little ahead, the annual Great Cockey Count is being held this year on Sunday 9 April, at sunset. [Birdlife Australia](#) hopes to make this year the most comprehensive survey to date. The Great Cockey Count is a long-term citizen science survey and the biggest single survey for black cockatoos in Western Australia, with volunteers monitoring known roost sites to count black cockatoos as they come in to their evening roosts. Records submitted provide a snapshot of black cockatoo populations, and over time this has helped to quantify the changes in black cockatoo numbers.

For more information on how to get involved in the count visit the [Birdlife Australia website](#).

Read on for news of the Volunteer of the Year awards, the campground host workshop and all things volunteer-related. We wish all of our volunteers a happy, safe and productive 2017!

Parks and Wildlife volunteers celebrated



In December, the department hosted more than 100 guests at an afternoon high tea to recognise and celebrate the work of volunteers at the annual Volunteer of the Year awards.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob and Director General Jim Sharp presented the 2016 Volunteer of the Year award to Darryl Scott for his work as a campground host in Stokes National Park and his assistance with numerous projects in for the department's Esperance District.

Darryl has contributed almost 8000 hours of his time and has become an invaluable part of the Parks and Wildlife team on the South Coast.

Volunteer of the Year award winner Darryl Scott and Environment Minister Albert Jacob.

February 2017

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Department of Parks and Wildlife





1. Crooked Brook Forest Volunteer Group receiving their Long Service awards 2. Outstanding Service award winner Ken Suckling with family and Senior Ranger Paul Udinga. 3. Director General Jim Sharp, Volunteer of the Year award winner Darryl Scott and Environment Minister Albert Jacob
Photos – Rolf Perey Guildford Photographics and Parks and Wildlife

Darryl said volunteering with the department had significantly improved his health over the past three to five years.

"It'll be the best thing you can ever do if you want to leave your stress behind. Once you start volunteering, you won't stop because the enjoyment is always there. You will not regret it," he said.

"I started off as a campground host, then I got drawn into a few other things around the park, assisting the rangers. If anything was going on, I was the first to put my hand up for it," he said.

Nine Outstanding Service and 10 Highly Commended awards were also presented during the ceremony to volunteers for their work, dedication and commitment, and 25 volunteers received certificates for long service. Awardees included volunteers from various projects including the WA Herbarium, a number of national parks and the Perth Observatory.

Volunteer program coordinator Lee Hollingsworth said the awards were an opportunity for the department to thank its volunteers for the important role they play in the community and the tireless and selfless work they contribute to our natural environment.

"Last year, more than 5000 Parks and Wildlife volunteers contributed more than 630,000 hours to volunteer projects around the State – a record effort - congratulations go to these exceptional volunteers for standing out" he said.

For more info and a short video visit the [website](#).



**DOLPHIN
WATCH**

Dolphin Watch award winners



Top: Albert Jacob and Dolphin Watcher and Volunteer of the Year Joan Munro.

Above: Jim Sharp and Citizen Scientist and Photographer of the Year Paige Myles.

At the end of 2016, the River Guardians team held a special event to recognise and thank *Dolphin Watch* volunteers for their contributions to the project.

The event was held at the Royal Perth Yacht Club. Scientists from Murdoch and Curtin universities provided updates on the dolphin population and launched the sixth edition of FinBook – the identification catalogue of all the dolphins that have been observed in the Swan Canning Riverpark.

Volunteer, Joan Munro, was awarded Dolphin Watcher of the Year for the third year in a row, while volunteer Paige Myles took out two awards for Citizen Scientist of the Year and Photographer of the Year.

If you would like to be part of this citizen science project, more information can be found on the [River Guardians website](#), or come along to the next *Dolphin Watch* training and information night — [see website for more information](#).

A very special thanks to all the volunteers who put their heart and soul into making this citizen science project such a success.

Turtle monitoring taskforce descends on Pilbara island



Above: A volunteer measuring a flatback turtle. Photo - Liz Grant

Left: Volunteers watching a satellite tagged turtle. Photo - Sabrina Fossette-Halot

In November, Parks and Wildlife pilot flatback turtle monitoring program was carried out on Thevenard Island, 22km off the coast of Onslow, to investigate its suitability as a long-term monitoring site.

Over four weeks, a team led by Parks and Wildlife marine scientists, and assisted by volunteers, collected data, counted turtle tracks and tagged female turtles.

Thevenard Island project leader Sabrina Fossette-Halot said the team's objective was to assess the size of the flatback turtle population nesting on Thevenard Island and to deploy satellite tags to track female turtles' movements during and after the nesting season.

"We have about 20 volunteers from Onslow, Exmouth, Perth and even Queensland who are assisting Parks and Wildlife staff in collecting data," Dr Fossette-Halot said.

"This information contributes to a broader understanding of the ecology and demography of the Pilbara flatback turtle stock."

Thevenard, a nature reserve of about 550ha, is the largest of the Mackerel Islands, a group of 10 islands about 1400km north of Perth. It is an important nesting site in the Pilbara for flatback, green and hawksbill turtles.

The pilot project at Thevenard is part of the *North West Shelf Flatback Turtle Conservation Program*, which has been established to help understand the ecology and demography of the North West Shelf flatback stock, which includes populations found off the Pilbara and southwest Kimberley coasts.

The *North West Shelf Flatback Conservation Program* is a \$32.5million, 30-year program funded by the Chevron-operated Gorgon Gas Project and is administered by Parks and Wildlife.

Flatbacks are listed as vulnerable under the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*. Internationally they are considered data deficient, meaning that more research is required to determine their abundance and distribution.

Field Guide to Western Australian Fauna app

Smartphone app



The new 'Field Guide to WA Fauna' app has been developed by the Western Australian Museum in collaboration with other museums around the country to describe and celebrate Western Australia's unique biodiversity.

Detailed descriptions of animals, distribution maps and endangered species status, combined with live images from their native habitat, provide a valuable mobile reference to be used in the bush, outback and metro regions of Western Australia.

The app holds descriptions of more than 250 species including birds, fish, frogs, lizards, snakes, mammals, spiders and insects, as well as freshwater, terrestrial and marine invertebrates.

For more information and to download the app, [visit WA Museum's website here.](#)

Park Explorers are getting around!

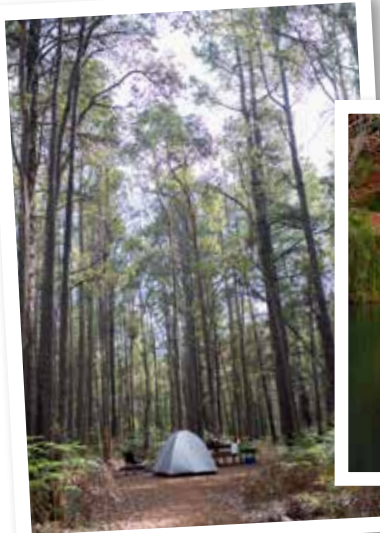
The first round of Park Explorers have been out and about exploring our beautiful national parks, taking pictures of their trips and sharing them with us on social media.

To see some of the amazing images from their adventures, [search for the hashtag #parkexplorers on Instagram and Facebook.](#)

Be warned though, there are some amazing pics which are bound to make you want to grab your boots and tent and start exploring!

If you would like to be featured as a Park Explorer too, just use the hashtag [#parkexplorers](#) when sharing your images on social media.

Happy exploring!



Far Left: Lane Pool Reserve. Photo – Chanel Bowen
Left: Fern Pool. Photo – Mark Jakobsons
Above: Green Pool, Denmark. Photo – Perry Mitchell
Top: Dales Gorge. Photo – Mark Jakobsons



Parks Foundation to support WA parks

The WA Parks Foundation has been established to raise funds to benefit parks and connect people to parks.

Parks and Wildlife has been working closely with Her Excellency, the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AC, the Governor of Western Australia to establish the WA Parks Foundation with help from the community, corporate sector and peak organisations, including many respected members of the environmental community.

The WA Parks Foundation's vision is for WA parks to be increasingly loved and visited, and for the plants, animals, landscapes and cultural values they embody to be protected and a source of pride for all Western Australians.

To learn more about the WA Parks Foundation and become a member visit www.ourwaparks.com.au. Show your support for WA parks.



Above: John Forrest National Park. Photo – Gooitzen van der Meer/Parks and Wildlife

Niggling nurdles conquered by volunteers

When the *River Guardians* team began receiving reports about nurdles washing up on the beaches in east and north Fremantle, they quickly organised 69 volunteers to hand sift through the sand, collecting as many nurdles as they could.

Nurdles are tiny pieces of raw plastic material used in the manufacturing of plastic products.

Community program coordinator, Marnie Giroud said the volunteers did an amazing job.

"In two hours, almost 240,000 nurdles were collected over approximately 477m² of river foreshore," she said.

"It wasn't an easy task. The nurdles are so small that volunteers had to use sieves to sift through the sand."

Riverpark officers were also on site collecting nurdles and have since used a contractor with a sand sifting machine to help remove them.

"With the help of sand sifting machines and volunteers, hopefully most of the nurdles have been collected. But we do encourage anyone in the area to keep an eye out for nurdles, as they are so small they are easy to miss among the sand and seaweed," Marnie said.



At this stage, it is not known where the nurdles came from, but the departments of Parks and Wildlife, and Environment Regulation are investigating.

Above: The tiny nurdles proved tricky to remove. Photo – @plasticfreejuly

Maratus mystery

To celebrate International Volunteer Day on 5 December 2016, Parks and Wildlife volunteers were treated to the Western Australian premiere of 'Maratus' — an Australian documentary about a man who stumbles across a new species of spider which changes his life.

Forty volunteers attended the screening, which was officially opened by Parks and Wildlife's Science and Conservation Director Dr Margaret Byrne. Volunteers enjoyed a spider-themed morning tea followed by the screening and a Q&A session with the documentary's star, Stuart Harris.

'Maratus' tells the story of Canberra man Stuart who, while walking in Namadgi National Park, takes a photo of a beautiful spider and posts it online. His photo is seen by Sydney-based scientist, Jurgen Otto, who calls him with the news that it might be an undiscovered species. Stuart then begins an epic quest to locate the spider again – a journey of extraordinary scientific and self-discovery.

Three years later, in 2011, he succeeded. After a research and peer review process, the species was named after him – *Maratus harrisi*. Since then,

60 new species of *Maratus* have been discovered, including eight by Stuart, thanks to a renewed interest in the species. Stuart said he hoped the documentary would encourage more people to take part in citizen science.

Right top: Stuart Harris. Photo – Stuart Harris

Right: Stuart Harris and Dr Margaret Byrne. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Below: *Maratus harrisi*. Photo – Jurgen Otto (Flickr)



Campground Host Workshop 2016



The annual Campground Host Workshop was held in November at the Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre, in Kensington. The workshop was opened by Parks and Visitor Services Director Peter Sharp, who acknowledged how the program contributed towards the recreation objectives of the department. Campground hosts spent more than 300,000 hours improving visitor experiences at more than 60 campsites across WA in 2016.

More than 150 new and experienced volunteer hosts attended the two-day workshop to hear from 17 rangers showcasing parks from all nine WA regions. Rangers reported that they had a good pick up rate and have filled a number of vacancies for the year ahead.

There were presentations from Keep Australia Beautiful's Maureen Maher, who highlighted some of WA's litter and illegal dumping issues in her presentation. Hosts are often in an ideal situation to report these incidents and many signed up as official litter reporters.

Jan from Global Gypsies, a 4WD travel and tour company, also gave a talk based on their organisation's experiences of running bush tours, and offered useful advice on how to deal with sticky situations that campground hosts may come across.

Director General Jim Sharp closed the workshop, personally thanking the volunteers for their contribution.

In the days following the event, further training was provided for hosts who attended a basic wildfire awareness

course to give them further skills required for being the department's eyes and ears on the ground.

If you would like more information on the program visit the [website](#).

*Main: Campground Host Workshop participants
Inset top: Rangers make their pitch to the hosts
Inset above: 2016 rangers*



Campground host vacancies 2017

The following sites currently have vacancies for campground hosts in 2017. Please be aware that only volunteers currently registered as campground hosts are able to be assigned to these roles. For more information on becoming a volunteer campground host, [visit the website](#).

Swan Region

Yalgorup National Park November and December
Ranger Ben Byrne (08) 9303 7738
email: ben.byrne@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Warren Region

Warren National Park February and April
Ranger Tracey Robins (08) 9776 1207
email: tracey.robins@dpaw.wa.gov.au

South Coast

Stokes National Park June and July
Senior ranger Dave Thornburg (08) 9076 8541
email: dave.thornburg@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Lucky Bay in Cape Le Grand National Park

April and May
Senior ranger Cameron Hennessy 0427 766 067
email: cameron.hennessy@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Midwest Region

Shark Bay February and March
Senior ranger Chris McMonagle (08) 9948 2226
email: chris.mcmonagle@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Kimberley Region

Windjana Gorge May
A/District manager Dave Woods (08) 9195 5500
email: david.woods@dpaw.wa.gov.au

Main: Lucky Bay Campground. Inset: Gnaala Mia. Photo – Bill and Elizabeth Stevens

The Volunteers and Community Unit provides community members within WA with opportunities to support, be involved in, and contribute to, the work of the Department of Parks and Wildlife.

The unit supports volunteers as an integral component of the Western Australian community. Volunteering enriches the community through the delivery of environmental, social, economic and health benefits to individuals, local groups and communities, the State and the nation.

If you have an event or story you would like to feature in future editions of the newsletter, or have any comments or suggestions, please contact us. All photos credited to Parks and Wildlife unless otherwise stated.

Volunteers and Community Unit

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