



Ministers highlight importance of whale migration

Environment Minister Stephen Dawson and Tourism Minister Paul Papalia recently took the opportunity to highlight the importance of WA's annual humpback whale migration, which is one of the longest whale watching seasons in the world, attracting thousands of visitors to the coast each year.

Minister Dawson said whale migration was one of the world's greatest conservation recovery stories, with humpbacks going from the brink of extinction in the 1960s due to hunting by commercial whalers, to an estimated 35,000 that travel the Western Australian coastline today.

"Seeing whales interacting in their natural environment is, for many, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I encourage Western Australians

to view this tremendous marine spectacle that is taking place at our doorstep," he said.

Minister Papalia said tourism was a key pillar of the State Government's plan to diversify the economy, create jobs and develop business opportunities, especially in the regions.

"Extraordinary natural experiences such as whale watching were great for tourism as they help draw visitors to regional areas and support local jobs through the money visitors spend during their stay."

WA's annual whale migration sees thousands of these mammals make the 13,000km round-trip from Antarctica to warmer waters in WA's north between May and late November. During this time, the number of whale entanglements and stranding incidents may increase, and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) has specialised teams throughout the State that can be deployed to safely attempt disentanglements.



Above: Humpback whales.
Photo – Matt Swan/DBCA

Right: Environment Minister Stephen Dawson and Tourism Minister Paul Papalia at Hillarys highlighting the importance of whale migration season.
Photo – DBCA



New Geikie Gorge boat a tribute to Bunuba leader

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The spectacular and ancient Geikie Gorge in the west Kimberley has a new tour ferry, the Ms Casey Ross.

Left: Artwork for the Ms Casey Ross embodies the spirit of the Bunuba people by including totemic animals like freshwater crocodiles, sawfish and brologas. Photo – Gwendolen Monteiro/DBCA

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WA mammal research on show at international conference

More than 750 researchers from around the world came together last month at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre for the 12th International Mammalogical Congress.

Hosted in Perth for the first time, the congress was an excellent opportunity for department staff to discuss work being done to protect Western Australia's mammal species with international experts.

Executive Director of Science and Conservation Dr Margaret Byrne said staff presented a wide range of research to their national and international counterparts at the conference.

"Our researchers presented on genetic studies, monitoring methods, translocation successes, as well as invasive species management under our *Western Shield* wildlife recovery program."

"WA is home to nearly 200 mammal species, and our agency plays an important role in managing a significant area of the State's lands and waters for conservation and research," she said.

"It was also a good opportunity to hear from scientists and policy managers from other government agencies, universities and the private sector, including plenary speakers Chris Dickman, Marilyn Renfree and David Macdonald."



Above: DBCA senior principal research scientist Keith Morris with John Woinarski and Sarah Legge, co-chairs of the 'Save havens for threatened mammals' session. Photo – DBCA

Senior principal research scientist Keith Morris presented on the department's translocations of mammals to WA islands.

"WA islands have been very important for mammal conservation in Australia, as they provide a refuge for threatened species and are largely protected from disturbances to the mainland, such as pest species and broadscale fire," he said.

"Our research has shown positive impacts of introducing multiple mammal species to an island at a time, to act as 'ecosystem engineers', each working together in a sense to benefit the ecological functioning of the island."

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Visitors can now experience the gorge's stunning geology, wildlife and cultural significance from the new 88-seat twin-engine ferry, which has all-ability access.

It will replace the *Miss Geikie 2*, which is the department's longest serving vessel, having operated in the gorge since the early 1990s. The *Ms Casey Ross* is named after the late matriarchal leader of the Danggu muway, or clan, when Geikie Gorge National Park was first created.

For the traditional Bunuba custodians, the Danggu Dawangarri people, the connection to the land goes back to the Dreamtime.

Left: DBCA Director General Mark Webb chats to Bunuba woman Mary Aitkin at the unveiling of the new boat named in her mother Casey Ross's honour. Photo – DBCA

Kimberley regional manager Daryl Moncrieff said the boat was unveiled to commemorate an Indigenous Land Use Agreement between DBCA's Parks and Wildlife Service and the park's traditional owners.

"The Indigenous Land Use Agreement finally gives Bunuba people the responsibility for country, in a legal sense, that they've known they have always had," he said.

Geikie Gorge National Park will soon be renamed Danggu National Park.

View a video about the new boat at [youtube.com/waparkswildlife](https://www.youtube.com/waparkswildlife).

WA firefighters assist with Canadian fires

Four Parks and Wildlife Service staff from DBCA have travelled to Canada's British Columbia to help battle widespread forest fires.

The officers – Brad Barton and Dr Adrian Wayne from Warren Region, Tony Mennen from South West Region and Paul Musarra from Swan Region – are highly experienced in a variety of incident management roles including planning, logistics and operations.

Tony, Adrian and Paul are working in operations and logistics in the Brooksbank Incident Management Team in the Cariboo region, in the centre of British Columbia. This team is managing a complex of fires ranging from a few hectares up to a massive 55,000-hectare fire. Brad has been deployed to the Cariboo Fire Centre in Williams Lake as Planning Section Chief overseeing all six Incident Management Teams in the region.

The deployment was facilitated through an agreement between Australia's National Aerial Firefighting Centre and the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre for the purposes of assisting each nation with critical bushfire emergencies.

This latest deployment continues a tradition of international assistance in times of crisis, with WA firefighters having served in Canada in 2009, 2014 and 2015.



Above: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets Brad Barton, who has been deployed to the Cariboo Fire Centre in Williams Lake.
Photo – facebook.com/JustinPJTrudeau

Loggerhead turtle activity doubles at Ningaloo



Above: A tagged loggerhead turtle makes its way to the sea. Photo – DBCA

Thousands of hours of hard work have paid off for volunteers and staff involved in the Ningaloo Turtle Program, with a record amount of loggerhead turtle activity recorded in 2016-17.

The program, which started in 2002, is a successful collaboration between DBCA's Parks and Wildlife Service and the Cape Conservation Group.

Ningaloo Marine Park coordinator Dr Peter Barnes said 49 volunteers had come together to monitor the nesting beaches during the 2016–17 season.

"The standardised survey figures show the level of loggerhead activity recorded this season was about twice that recorded in any other season," Peter said.

"A record 696 loggerhead nests and almost 1,400 false crawls were recorded in the monitored area over a one-month period of the nesting season.

"An additional 1,857 green turtle nests with 4,248 false crawls and 67 hawksbill nests with 91 false crawls were also recorded."

A false crawl is a track that shows where a turtle came ashore, but left without making a nest.

Peter said a number of tagged turtles were recorded by volunteers and these sightings would provide valuable information on turtle nesting and migration behaviour.



Mountain bike master plan released for Perth and Peel

The transformation of Western Australia into an international mountain biking destination has received a boost with the release of a master plan to guide the development of trails in Perth and Peel.

Environment Minister Stephen Dawson and Sport and Recreation Minister Mick Murray launched the *Perth and Peel Mountain Bike Master Plan* in July. It proposes expanding the current network of trails from 125km across nine sites to 575km across 24 sites.

Minister Dawson said the plan identified priority sites in the Perth Hills, Wungong, Dwellingup, the Swan Valley, Jarrahdale and Yanchep.

"The Perth and Peel regions include some of the most unique and picturesque landscapes in the world, so today we are really focused on making the environment the motivation for people seeking adventure-based tourism," he said.

"The aim is to provide exceptional experiences for mountain bikers while also protecting the natural environment by creating a diverse mix of trail types and mountain biking centres."

The plan was developed by WestCycle, with support from the State Government, Lotterywest and the West Australian Mountain Bike Association. The plan can be viewed at westcycle.org.au.

Above: Mountain biking in the forest. Photo – Rod Annear/DCBA

Farewell Jim Sharp



After a remarkable career spanning 45 years in WA's public service, former Department of Parks and Wildlife Director General Jim Sharp has retired.

Having started with the department and its predecessor agencies 32 years ago, Jim helped create a solid foundation on which WA's world-class conservation systems could continue to strengthen and grow.

Jim's appreciation of nature and the great outdoors was instilled early in his career as an outdoor education teacher in 1974. It was during this time his belief that our natural environment offered limitless opportunities for community wellbeing was established.

He went on to become the scientific advisor to the Director of National Parks, and worked in policy planning and implementation, before spending the following 12 years as Director of National Parks. These roles all led him to become more involved in the way our conservation reserves and natural values were managed, protected and sustainably used. He was strongly driven by getting people to engage in experiencing and valuing all that the natural environment offers.

Above: Jim Sharp celebrates the signing of a joint management agreement for Lalang-garram / Camden Sound Marine Park with members of the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation in November 2013. Photo – DBCA

Jim became Director General of the newly created Department of Parks and Wildlife in 2013. Under his leadership, some of the department's achievements have included overhauling archaic legislation with the new Biodiversity Conservation Act, doubling the State's marine parks and reserves system, creating 520 new camp sites, the application of world-class science to achieving the outstanding conservation outcomes through the *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*, expanding the department's volunteer base to some 15,000 registered volunteers, and delivering the best prescribed burning outcome in 29 years.

Significant steps were also taken in building and strengthening working relationships with Aboriginal traditional owners. As well as significant legislative changes, eight Indigenous Land Use Agreements were signed, paving the way for a new exciting era for conservation and cultural tourism.

We wish Jim all the very best for the future and thank him for his commitment and dedication to delivering conservation outcomes over the decades.



Languages the focus for NAIDOC Week 2017

In early July the department celebrated NAIDOC Week and this year the focus was on the importance, resilience and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

The 2017 theme – *Our Languages Matter* – highlighted the unique and essential role that Indigenous languages play in cultural identity.

At the department's Kensington headquarters, Whadjuk Noongar elder Professor Len Collard spoke to a packed room about the history and meaning of Noongar place names.

Broome-based Yawuru rangers and staff participated in a NAIDOC march, which brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, local schools and organisations to show their support for reconciliation.

In Bunbury some staff attended a family fun day, while up in Kununurra, East Kimberley District staff took students for a walk on country at Mirima National Park.

Yanchep National Park hosted a NAIDOC day event which had plenty of great activities for the whole family to enjoy.

It was an excellent turn-out at these events with staff across the State getting involved.



Above: Sand art created at Yanchep National Park. Each band is one of the Noongar languages. The outer black dots represent languages lost and yellow dots languages that remain.

Photo – DBCA

Left: Yawuru rangers Jason Richardson and Luke Puertollano at the NAIDOC march.

Photo – Sarah Mullineux/DBCA

Congratulations to all graduates, trainees and award winners



In June staff were recognised for their outstanding contribution and dedication to their work at the 2017 Graduation and Awards Ceremony.

Environment Minister Stephen Dawson congratulated 52 staff members from DBCA and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation for their achievements.

“Today is very important because we recognise people whose work in fire management, native animal conservation, land management and environment regulation has been noteworthy over the past year,” Mr Dawson said at the ceremony. “I want to acknowledge and celebrate this distinguished group of people who have dedicated their careers to Western Australia’s natural heritage.”

Fire Management Reward and Recognition Program 2017

Outstanding Leadership Award

Kelly Gillen
John Gillard

Outstanding Achievement Award

Brian Moss

Outstanding Crew Leader Award

Matt Corlett

Outstanding Crew Member Award

Bradley Walter

Excellence Awards

Neil Burrows
Mitchell Davies
Tom Kenneally
Richard Lorkiewicz

Outstanding Contribution Awards

Bel Catchside
Anne Lillie
Alan Rhodes

Western Shield Award

Mike Paxman

Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES)

Aboriginal Trainee of the Year

Jason Richardson

Aboriginal Trainee Supervisor of the Year

Mark Varley

Kwabalitch Award

Jonnie Saegenschnitter

Scholarship recipients

Women’s Scholarship in Honour of June Craig

Emma de Burgh
Jacqueline Shervington

Science Scholarship in Memory of Dr George Malajczuk

Robert Hughes

Leadership Scholarship in Memory of Seamus Mulholland

Lincoln Marissen

Director Generals Scholarship for Career Development and Study Assistance

Leticia Lorkiewicz
Carola Lovegrove
Lynette Marshall

Graduates

Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management

Jason Fong
Jason Richardson
Jonnie Saegenschnitter

Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations)

Callum Raper
Vicky Reynen

Aspiring Leaders Program

Peter Barnes
David Chemello
Michelle Corbellini
Bill Dempsey
Pericles Dos Santo
Corrin Everitt

Megan Flowers
Matthew Fossey
Tim Gregson
Matthew King
Leticia Lorkiewicz
Katie MacWilliams
Johannes Pieterse
Meghan Porter
Nitin Solanki
Danielle Stone
Sean Walsh
Campbell Youngson

1 Aboriginal Trainee Supervisor of the Year award winner Mark Varley and Environment Minister Stephen Dawson. 2 MATES graduates and award winners. 3 Media and communications coordinator Emma de Burgh receiving the Women’s Scholarship with Jim Sharp. 4 Aspiring Leaders Program graduates. Photos – Sophie Lisle-Williams/DBCA



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