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Minister and Director General visit Kimberley

DPaW Acting Director General Jim Sharp joined Environment Minister Albert Jacob recently on a trip to the Kimberley to meet with traditional owners about the creation and expansion of national and marine parks in the region.

The discussions followed a recent budget announcement committing \$18.5 million over the next four years to support the expansion of the Great Kimberley Marine Park; the creation of a national park at the internationally recognised Horizontal Falls and the establishment of what will be Australia's biggest national park.

Jim said the new national parks were likely to be jointly managed by DPaW and the traditional owners, including Dambimangari, Wunambal Gaambera, Balanggarra and Miriuwung Gajerrong people.

"On the first day of the trip we met with representatives of the Dambimangari people, whose traditional lands extend over much of Prince Regent National Park as well as the waters of Camden Sound and to the north. We then met Wunambal Gaambera traditional owners for further discussions," he said.

Jim said the negotiations, which were led by officers of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in conjunction with DPaW, were particularly important to provide training and employment opportunities for traditional owners.



While in Broome, Environment Minister Albert Jacob (centre) also met with Yawuru rangers (left to right) operations officer Anthony Richardson, ranger Jason Fong, ranger Preston Manado and ranger supervisor Luke Puertollano. The Yawuru rangers are part of the joint management team caring for Yawuru Conservation Estate with Nyamba Buru Yawuru, DPaW and Broome Shire Council.

"I extend my thanks, particularly to Kimberley Region staff, who, working alongside their DPC colleagues, have played a key role in the day-to-day and on-the-ground work to have these parks created, and to staff in a range of fields including marine planning, science and parks and visitor services. Their work is a further example of DPaW staff working with the community to ensure the best outcomes for the community and conservation alike," he said.

The Great Kimberley Marine Park will comprise Lalang-garram / Camden Sound Marine Park, the proposed Horizontal Falls Marine Park, the proposed North Kimberley

Marine Park and the proposed extension of the North Kimberley Marine Park to the Northern Territory border.

It will be Western Australia's largest marine park, covering more than 30,000 square kilometres, and will triple the area of the State's marine park network.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said that together, the new national parks and Great Kimberley Marine Park would form one of the largest interconnected protected areas in the world and significantly enhance the region's international profile as a premier tourism destination.

Published by the Department of Parks and Wildlife's (DPaW's) Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs Division

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Department of Parks and Wildlife



Crucial prescribed burns completed across WA

DPaW's autumn–winter prescribed burning program in the State's south-west has drawn to a close with some crucial burns completed in Yellagonga Regional Park and Yanchep, Gnangara and Pinjar pine plantations near Perth to manage bushfire risk.

Wetter-than-usual conditions delayed some burns, which will be carried over to the spring burning program—the main season for favourable prescribed burning conditions.

DPaW Perth Hills district fire coordinator Michael Pasotti said 20 individual burns had been started or completed in the hills area this year including a few very difficult but strategic burns to protect homes and infrastructure on the urban fringes.

"We were able to finish a couple of really tough burns around Gooseberry Hill in areas that hadn't been burnt for a long time, in extremely steep, often inaccessible terrain next to highly vulnerable properties," he said.

"There were very high fuel loads and only small windows of opportunity to complete burning, due to the slope and aspect of the land and the particular drying cycles of the fuels involved.

"We also completed about 55 kilometres of 'edging' on some larger prescribed burns that are scheduled for ignition in early spring in Avon Valley National Park and east of Pickering Brook. Edging creates a fuel-free buffer around the perimeter of the burn area before core ignition, which helps contain the burn within its boundaries.

"In some instances our staff were assisted by local volunteer bushfire brigades and we would like to thank those who joined us to help complete these burns."

DPaW Kimberley regional fire coordinator Ed Hatherley said planning and implementing the early dry season prescribed burning program in the Kimberley involved traditional owners and other partners.

"The burning, which finished in June, included some important successes," he said.

"Prescribed burning was carried out across an area of about five million hectares in the North Kimberley, with about one million hectares of land burnt under mild conditions. And the hard work is already paying off.

"DPaW has also been involved in combating recent bushfires at Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve and Mitchell Plateau, which were prevented from spreading when they ran into areas prescribed burnt earlier this year. DPaW, in consultation with Wunambal Gaambera traditional owners, assisted in the containment of the Mitchell Plateau fire."

To find out more about DPaW's fire management and prescribed burning activities visit dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/fire or like us on [Facebook](#).



Staff get active for fire fitness test

DPaW staff are gearing up for the coming bushfire season this month by strapping on heavy backpacks and hitting the streets to test their fitness.

DPaW regional fire operations officer Bradley Reynolds said fire-related duties were often physically demanding and it was vital that staff involved in fire were in top shape.

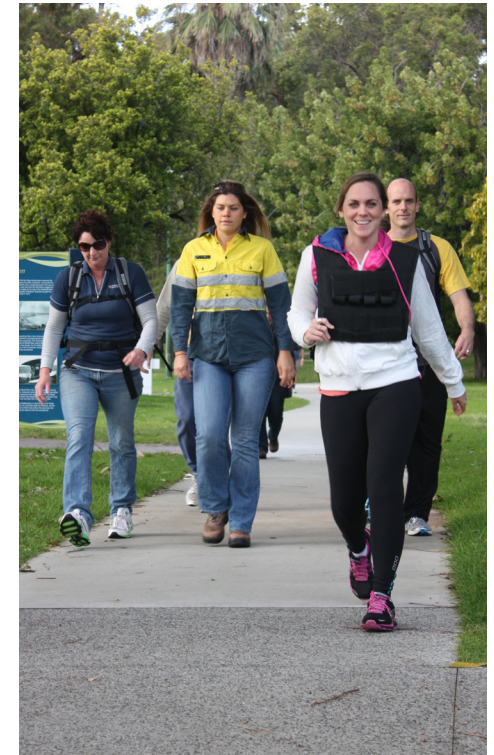
"People near Perth's DPaW offices in Crawley and Kensington may have noticed groups of walkers marching quickly around the area wearing strange, black vests," he said.

"They would have been taking part in the annual fire fitness assessment by doing what we call the 'pack test', which involves walking with a weighted vest carrying 11.3 kilograms over a distance of 3.22 kilometres within 30 minutes.

"Those involved in more arduous tasks during fire season must pass a 'walk and functional assessment', consisting of a 4.8-kilometre walk within 45 minutes plus a functional assessment, which examines aspects of strength, coordination and flexibility.

"The 'pack test' and 'walk and functional assessment' are designed for staff who need to work directly on the fire ground. However, we also test those involved in support roles during a bushfire, who don't need to get as close to the action, with a 1.6-kilometre walk to be completed within 16 minutes."

DPaW fire management services branch manager Murray Carter said the fitness training was an important component of pre-bushfire season groundwork.



DPaW and Department of Environment Regulation staff completing the fire fitness pack test at Matilda Bay in Crawley.

"Fire fitness assessments and the training run by the department in the months leading up to fire season are essential for supporting our fire management capabilities and for giving our staff the confidence to do their important work for the people of WA," he said.

"The required medical appraisals that are carried out alongside fitness tests also allow us to identify any health issues that may affect an employee's ability to properly complete fire-related duties and lower their risk of harm."

Restoration project at Kalbarri National Park wins award

A decade-long project to restore and enhance the picturesque coastal cliffs at Kalbarri National Park has won a coveted Western Australian Coastal Award for Excellence 2013.

DPaW received the Coastal Development/ Design Award for the Kalbarri National Park Coastal Cliffs Restoration Project in August at the WA State Coastal Conference in Esperance.

Major improvements to visitor facilities at Kalbarri National Park's coastal cliffs included the construction of 600 metres of recycled plastic boardwalk and more than 1,500 metres of asphalt paths, the design and installation of visitor signs, and the construction of picnic facilities at Natural Bridge.

DPaW senior ranger and project manager Mike Paxman said the restoration project team was delighted to receive the award.

"It is a great acknowledgment of everyone who went the extra mile over the past 10 years to breathe new life into the wonderful Kalbarri coastal cliffs," he said.

"We are thrilled that our work means park visitors are now enjoying an enriched experience, while the cliff tops' unique plant communities will be preserved for many years to come."

In addition, DPaW officer Kim Onton took home the Individual Contribution award for her voluntary work on BirdLife Australia's Shorebirds 2020 program, which is gathering important information needed to conserve visiting migratory shorebirds.

DPaW Acting Director General Jim Sharp congratulated staff and volunteers at Kalbarri National Park for their dedication and commitment to the restoration project.

"The DPaW staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly on this innovative project have ensured these magnificent cliffs are protected for present and future generations," he said.

"With its scenic gorges, soaring sea cliffs and exciting water-based activities, Kalbarri National Park remains one of the State's most popular parks with more than 305,000 visits in 2011 and 2012.

"I was also delighted to see Kim recognised for the fantastic work she has done as a voluntary coordinator on the Shorebirds 2020 program."



Above: New visitor panels at Kalbarri National Park. Top right: Restoration work in progress.

News in brief

Holiday fun for kids

Help the kids have fun these school holidays by checking out the exciting nature-based activities on offer around Perth.

DPaW's Nearer to Nature holiday program starts 1 October 2013 and features a variety of engaging and interactive education sessions aimed at children from four to 14 years of age.

DPaW program coordinator Jill Francis said the *Downy ducklings* activity, held at both Canning River Eco Education Centre and the Perth Hills Discovery Centre, would combine storytelling and craft with a water's edge walk to learn about ducklings.

"There is also a range of other activities with varied themes, including *Adventure caving* at Yanchep National Park and *Aliens in the bush* at Star Swamp," she said.

For more information and to book visit the Nearer to Nature [webpage](#) or call 9295 2244.

Broome on croc watch

Last month Broome residents and visitors were asked to be on alert due to saltwater crocodile sightings.

DPaW wildlife officer Peter Carstairs said since the beginning of September, crocodile sightings had occurred in a number of popular locations including Cable Beach, Reddell Beach, Entrance Point and Dampier Creek.

"Temporary warning signs have been installed and DPaW and the Shire of Broome are monitoring the situation," he said.

"People are strongly advised to exercise caution in and around the waters, beaches and mangroves of Broome."

For more information see the [full media statement](#).

Western ground parrot recovery boosted by donation



A valued conservation group has donated \$10,000 to DPaW's South Coast Region to support important work being done to save the critically endangered western ground parrot.

The Friends of the Western Ground Parrot donated the funds to assist DPaW's South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team (SCTBRT) in its work maintaining parrots currently in captivity.

SCTBRT chair Sarah Comer said in the future captive breeding could play a vital role in the recovery of the western ground parrot.



Top: The endangered western ground parrot. Above: DPaW South Coast Region staff Deon Utber, Bruce Bone and Sarah Comer (left) accept a cheque from Friends of the Western Ground Parrot members Anne Bondin and Dave Taylor (right).

"We currently have seven captive western ground parrots, which has allowed us to develop husbandry techniques for a potential captive breeding program that can be used to re-establish wild populations," Sarah said.

"The generous donation from the Friends of Western Ground Parrot community group will help DPaW maintain the captive birds while captive breeding options are further investigated.

"We hope to be able to roll out a captive breeding program next year that will support large-scale recovery actions for the western ground parrot that are already being implemented for the two remaining wild populations in Cape Arid and Fitzgerald River national parks.

"This includes integrated feral predator management, fire management, survey and population monitoring."

Sarah said National Threatened Species Day on Saturday 7 September highlighted the endeavours of groups such as the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot.

"We are very appreciative of the time, effort and funds they contribute for an important conservation project," she said.

The State Government allocated \$250,000 in 2012–13 for DPaW's western ground parrot recovery actions.

The western ground parrot was once thought to be a subspecies of the eastern ground parrot. However, genetic work has now shown that this secretive parrot is quite distinct from its eastern cousins, and is therefore treated as a separate species.



A diver working in DPaW's Pilbara tropical marine parks.

DPaW divers test skills

Last month eight DPaW dive program leaders headed to Perth for a three-day course to sharpen their skills.

Coordinated and delivered by departmental dive officer Pam Sutton, the course saw participants spend two days in the water refining their in-water expertise and practicing emergency response to scenarios of injured, unconscious divers operating off department marine park vessels.

They also visited the Fremantle Hyperbaric Medicine Centre and toured the hyperbaric chambers used to assist in diving medical emergencies.

Another course highlight was a visit to the WA Police Divers headquarters in North Fremantle where the divers watched operations of one of the State's most disciplined and highly trained commercial dive teams.

Participants gained valuable skills that will help their work coordinating dives in their districts and as part of the marine science program, in accordance with the 2013 DPaW Diving Code of Practice.

The department has about 40 underwater scuba divers who work in marine and national parks across WA.