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Christmas message



Published by the Department of Parks and Wildlife's (DPaW's) Public Information and Corporate Affairs Branch

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Parks and Wildlife



20130343

As 2013 comes to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution in what has been a challenging year. It has been a year of significant change with the creation of the new department and the subsequent relocation of a number of staff.

With the demerger, we said goodbye to colleagues who remained with environment regulation and we will again be farewelling a number of staff through voluntary redundancies.

Many of these officers have worked with the department and its predecessors for many years. In fact, one of the staff is the longest serving employee, departing after 55 years of service.

With their departure comes a loss of corporate knowledge and expertise, however we have a culture of training and mentorship that should hold us in good stead for the future.

We also have the incredible support of a network of volunteers and I recently had the opportunity, along with the Minister for Environment to recognise their efforts at the Volunteer of the Year Awards (see page 2).

As many of us take leave at this time of the year to celebrate with our families, I would particularly like to recognise our staff involved in fire suppression.

This time of year is usually very busy for our preformed teams and I would like to acknowledge their commitment and professionalism. There have been many changes in the management of fire at a whole-of-government level, and the department plays a key role in this.

The new year will present many challenges which we will continue to meet with great success.

I wish you and your families a happy and refreshing Christmas.

**Acting Director General
Jim Sharp**

Bushfire campaign launched



The State Government launched its 'Are You Ready?' bushfire campaign on 1 December. It features Victoria Cross recipient Ben Roberts-Smith delivering the message that bushfire preparedness is a responsibility shared by Government, emergency services, communities, neighbours and the public.

DPaW seasonal conservation employees Helga Mowat and Craig Devenny represented the department in the television commercials alongside Ben and staff from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Volunteer Bushfire Brigades and Western Power.

Helga said she enjoyed being part of the action.

"It was a learning curve in regards to how a short TV ad is made and how much goes on behind the scenes. It was also a good networking opportunity between agencies who are working to achieve the same result," she said.

"The campaign is a great way to get messages across before the bushfire season gears up, including the preparation work the department has done through mandatory pre-season fire training and prescribed burning.

"It was very humbling to meet Ben Roberts-Smith. He thought we were the heroes and described for us the brotherhood of the armed forces, which is similar to what we do during fires."



DPaW seasonal conservation employees Helga Mowat and Craig Devenny on the set of the campaign commercial.



Volunteers recognised

A husband and wife team who work tirelessly helping to restore former pastoral leases in the Goldfields have been named DPaW's Volunteers of the Year.

Keith and Rhonda Skelley, who devoted more than 4,750 hours to protecting threatened species and caretaking remote former pastoral leases, were recognised on Monday 25 November at the department's annual Volunteer of the Year Awards ceremony.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob paid tribute to the couple for their contribution to conserving Western Australia's environment.

"Keith and Rhonda are a fine example of the invaluable work of department volunteers who selflessly contribute their valuable skills, knowledge and time to important environmental projects in WA," the Minister said.

"Since 2011, Keith and Rhonda have managed four remote former pastoral leases in the Goldfields, including the native fauna soft-release compound at Lorna Glen, which is part of the landmark Operation Rangelands Restoration program."

The awards celebrate the work of people who volunteer on environmental projects and programs with the department.

Fifteen Outstanding Service Awards were also presented to volunteers for their valuable work across WA, and their service, dedication and commitment.

"The spirit of volunteers who assist the department is exemplified by their efforts to take ownership of the wider community's responsibility to protect the environment," the Minister said.

"Highlights for volunteers this year include the ongoing efforts to save the critically endangered western ground parrot; continuing high quality maintenance of the Bibbulmun Track; and supporting department staff in the management of world-class national parks."

The Minister added that each department volunteer is making a valuable contribution to promoting and implementing park management and nature conservation programs throughout WA.

Congratulations to all the award winners

Volunteer of the Year

Keith and Rhonda Skelley

Outstanding Service

Cathie O'Neill

Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group (SERAG)

Geoff and Ruth Byrne

Western Australian Herbarium

Peter Wilmot

Lake Mealup Recovery Program

Bill Brookes

Yanchep National Park

Eddie Seaman

Stirling Range National Park

Friends of the Western Ground Parrot

Albany

Isabel Busch

Bibbulmun Track

Guy Spouge

Bibbulmun Track

Laurent Gaillard

Esperance District programs

Lynda Smith

Friends of the Spectacles

Peter Sweetman

Bibbulmun Track

Ray Turner

Yanchep National Park

Dave Mulholland

Yanchep National Park

Stephen Todd

Penguin Island

Mary Hoggart

Esperance Herbarium

Children's book wins national award

A children's book about the real-life story of whale rescue work done by DPaW's whale expert Doug Coughran has won a prestigious national award.

Deepsea Whale Rescue, published by DPaW last year, received a Certificate of Commendation at the 2013 Whitley Awards ceremony in Sydney.

The Whitley Awards recognise outstanding publications that promote and encourage the conservation of Australasian fauna, and are the most coveted in Australian zoological publishing.

A leading expert in large whale disentanglements, Doug Coughran has spent the last 34 years working at the department specialising in whale rescues.

"I was delighted to share both my own and colleagues' experiences of responding to whales in trouble with young readers and help them learn about the difficulties whales encounter," he said.

Written by Jan Ramage and illustrated by Mark Wilson, the book tells the story of problems faced by whales during their 13,000-kilometre annual migration, which includes a stretch of the Western Australian coast.

Rescuers including Doug come to the aid of one whale that becomes entangled in fishing ropes shortly after defending her calf against attack by a pod of killer whales.

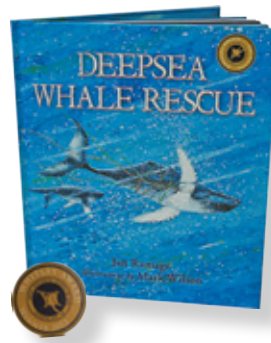
Acting Director General Jim Sharp said the book was an excellent resource for young people to discover more about WA's natural environment and its majestic inhabitants.

"*Deepsea Whale Rescue* gives children across Australia and the rest of the world the opportunity to learn about the vital and often dangerous work done by DPaW officers," he said.

"This accolade is also a wonderful recognition of the enormous contribution of Doug Coughran, who has dedicated his life to the safe rescue of whales at sea."

Doug was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2010 for his services to conservation and the environment, particularly the disentanglement of whales.

Deepsea Whale Rescue is available from bookstores and the DPaW shop at shop.dpaw.wa.gov.au.



Doug Coughran with his Member of the Order of Australia.



Winners: Yanchep National Park Senior Ranger Mark Varley, Park Manager Alison Pritchard, Regional Leader Ewen MacGregor, Marketing Coordinator Jennifer Green, Volunteer Coordinator Ciara McIllduff, Visitor Services Manager Julia Coggins and Tourism WA CEO Stephanie Buckland.

DPaW attractions pick up tourism awards

Two of DPaW's nature-based tourism attractions were named winners at last month's Western Australian Tourism Awards held at Crown Perth.

Yanchep National Park came away with gold in the Tourism Attraction category, while the recently completed Walpole Wilderness Discovery Centre won gold in the New Tourism Development category.

The awards recognise outstanding customer service, innovation and ongoing business excellence in the WA tourism industry.

Yanchep National Park Manager Alison Pritchard said it had been an honour to accept the Tourism Attraction award on behalf of staff and volunteers.

"We have an incredible team of passionate and committed people here at Yanchep and this gold medal acknowledges our achievements," she said.

"Of course, this award would not be possible without the support of businesses that operate within the park, along with DPaW's district, regional and Parks and Visitor Services staff."

Yanchep National Park has been on a winning streak of late—in addition to the WA Tourism Award, several Yanchep volunteers were recently honoured at DPaW's Volunteer of the Year awards (see page 2), while Chocolate Drops, a specialty chocolate shop and tearoom that operates in the park, picked up awards in two categories

of the City of Wanneroo's Business Awards.

DPaW's other big winner at the WA Tourism Awards, the Walpole Wilderness Discovery Centre, is a state-of-the-art interpretative centre located at the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk.

DPaW Acting Director General Jim Sharp said both award-winning projects showcased how people could interact with the natural and cultural values in WA's parks.

"These awards demonstrate recognition by the tourism industry that we provide unique and innovative world-class amenities for visitors," he said.

Gold medallists will go on to represent WA at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.

Charley takes the long way round

International adventurer and motorcycle enthusiast Charley Boorman visited the DPaW-managed Pinjar Motorcycle Area last month to help celebrate the opening of the upgraded Family Trail.

Swan Region Parks and Visitor Services Leader Ewen MacGregor (not the celebrity, DPaW's own!) said the upgrade included the resurfacing of a six-kilometre section to provide a safer, one-way trail system to accommodate a range of rider skill levels.

"In addition to the resurfacing, other upgrades designed to make Pinjar more attractive were completed. This included improved parking facilities for vehicles and trailers to cater for an increasing number of people using trails in the area," he said.

Charley Boorman visited Pinjar on Friday 8 November, naming a section of the Family Trail 'Long Way Round', the title of the popular TV series in which he appears with Hollywood actor, Ewan McGregor.

The coincidence that the other Ewen MacGregor is the DPaW employee who managed the trail redevelopment, also a passionate adventure motorcyclist, wasn't lost on Charley. Laughing, he said: "Ewen and Charley meet again on the Long Way Round ... down under!"

Ewen said Charley's visit, like the upgrade itself, had been arranged jointly between DPaW and the Recreational Trailbike Riders Association (RTRA).

"DPaW works very closely with the RTRA, as well as the wider motorcycle community, in a partnership approach for the development and management of motorcycling, and we value our relationship very highly," he said.

"The RTRA also assists DPaW by supporting and managing the volunteer Friends of Pinjar group."

In addition to more than \$555,000 of DPaW funding, Lotterywest provided \$86,000 for the upgrade through its Trails Grant program, managed by the Department of Sport and Recreation.

Ewen said DPaW intended to redevelop the Pinjar site and to further invest in creating a true 'trail bike park', with plans to include a more advanced motocross style area, more advanced trails and the provision of a toilet block.

The development of off-road motorcycle areas like Pinjar, which is one of three such areas within the Swan Region, is an action in the State Trail Bike Strategy.

"Our thinking is that the activity is going to occur anyway and, to reduce the impact on environmentally sensitive areas, we need to make the existing off-road-vehicle areas more attractive to riders," Ewen said.

"Pinjar is receiving rave reviews by users and the area has received a 400 per cent increase in visits since we opened the area, so we appear to be on the right track."

Cooperation: (left to right) The Department of Sport and Recreation's Aaron Minchin, DPaW's Ewen MacGregor, Charley Boorman, Lotterywest's Faye Baxter and RTRA President Steve Pretzel.



International adventure motorcyclist and TV personality Charley Boorman with DPaW's own Ewen MacGregor, Swan Region Parks and Visitor Services Leader.



Kimberley marine park plan announced

Humpback whale calving grounds will be protected and Aboriginal employment opportunities increased as part of the Lalang-garram / Camden Sound Marine Park Joint Management Agreement, signed last month with traditional owners in Derby.

The agreement, between DPaW and the Dambimangari Aboriginal

Corporation, is the first such agreement for any marine park in Western Australia.

In Derby, Environment Minister Albert Jacob also released the Lalang-garram / Camden Sound Marine Park management plan, the first to be created for a marine park under the State Government's Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy.

The Minister said the plan outlined a range of strategies to conserve the values of the area, including the southern hemisphere's biggest humpback whale calving ground.

"As well as protecting the principal calving area of humpback whales, it is also important for conserving flatback and green turtles, snubfin and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, dugong, saltwater crocodiles, several species of sawfish and a wide range of marine habitats," he said.

"The creation of this park, along with other parks under the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy, will not only protect the ocean environment, it will pave the way for training and employment opportunities for traditional owners.

"The government is negotiating an Indigenous land use agreement

with the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation that will provide for a range of further opportunities for the traditional owners to be integrally involved in looking after their country.

"These opportunities include support for ranger programs and other employment and training initiatives that will help protect the cultural and environmental values of country."

The park ultimately will cover more than 7,000 square kilometres (700,000 hectares) once the park boundary is extended to the high water mark.

The government has provided \$10 million over four years to DPaW and the Department of Fisheries for park management. It also is providing \$2.2 million a year for ongoing management in the years from 2015-16.



Humpback whale. Photo – Tourism WA



Environment Minister Albert Jacob and Chair of the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation Warren Barunga commemorate the signing of the joint management agreement.

New 10-year plan for south-west forests

Environment Minister Albert Jacob recently released a new framework to manage the state's south-west forests for the next decade.

Mr Jacob said the *Forest Management Plan 2014-23*, which covers 2.5 million hectares of land vested with the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, struck the right balance between conservation and other activities.

"This new plan incorporates a number of management activities to ensure biodiversity

and water catchments are protected, while at the same time allowing for recreation and a sustainable native forest products industry," he said.

"The plan is based on scientific knowledge, and the potential impact of climate change has been taken into account.

"It builds on the previous 10-year plan to provide clear policy direction for the south-west forests and their diverse values and uses."

For more information or to view the plan visit the DPaW website www.dpaw.wa.gov.au.



Photo – Tourism WA