



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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Fire trucks upgraded and firefighters recognised

Additional safety features are being fitted to 105 Parks and Wildlife fire trucks ahead of the 2014–15 fire season.

Fire Management Services manager Keith Low said the features included a water spray protection system and increased heat shielding.

"The \$10,000 per truck spray protection system uses water from the truck's tank to protect the whole vehicle, including the cab, for up to five minutes in the event of an entrapment or burnover situation," he said.

"The heat shield curtain, which costs about \$3300 per truck, further protects occupants of the cab from the radiant heat of fires. Additional shielding and lagging to protect critical electrical and mechanical components have also been added to help maintain truck mobility in the event of entrapment."

The fire truck modifications were among new procedures and training programs introduced in response to a number of improvement notices issued by WorkSafe following the tragic

2012 Black Cat Creek bushfire near Albany that claimed the life of employee Wendy Bearfoot.

Unveiling one of the first upgraded trucks in Albany last month, Environment Minister Albert Jacob said staff working in frontline firefighting roles often work under difficult conditions that carry risks.

"With the addition of water spray protection systems and heat shield curtains, these appliances are designed to further protect Parks and Wildlife firefighters," Mr Jacob said.

While in Albany, the Minister also presented National Fire Medals and Clasps to Parks and Wildlife staff from the South Coast and

Wheatbelt regions and the Forest Products Commission.

"These medals and clasps recognise the long and diligent service of staff who commit themselves to protecting their communities in times of emergency or natural disaster," he said.

Full list of recipients on page six.



National Fire Medal and Clasp recipients: Andrew Robinson (FPC), Mark True, Peter Masters, Gary Treeby, Environment Minister Albert Jacob, Neil Worrell, Luke Coney, Tim Mitchell (FPC) and Vince Hilder.

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Department of Parks and Wildlife



Aspiring leaders prepare for future



Director General Jim Sharp presents landscape architect Vicki Winfield with her certificate.

Nineteen dedicated employees are celebrating following the completion of a 12-month training program designed to enhance their leadership skills and help them build successful and sustained careers.

Learning and Development's senior training and development officer Peter Hill said the Aspiring Leaders program involved five workshops throughout the year with additional mentoring components with an experienced staff member.

"The course used progressive learning to embed new leadership behaviours, which we found to be more valuable than doing an intensive week-long course," he said.

Senior operations officer Jamie Conway-Physick said progressive learning was an important aspect of the program.

"It provided an opportunity to apply the skills at our individual workplaces before coming back to the sessions, evaluating their

effectiveness and building on them," he said.

Landscape architect Vicki Winfield said one of the program's key focuses was on personality profiling.

"It was very useful in understanding not only ourselves but the people we work with. It highlighted the diversity of our colleagues and emphasised how everyone can contribute in different ways," Vicki said.

"From that, we developed and practised skills to communicate with, energise and support the people around us."

The final session of the program involved a leadership forum with Director General Jim Sharp, Science and Conservation Director Margaret Byrne, Parks and Visitor Services Director Peter Sharp and Regional and Fire Management Services Acting Director Kelly Gillen.

The aspiring leaders were given the opportunity to ask questions of the panel, gain insights into their leadership style and seek advice about effective communication in the workplace.

The Aspiring Leaders program was made available through the Learning and Development Section of People Services Branch and forms part of the department's Management Leadership Framework.



Aspiring Leaders program participants with senior training and development officer Peter Hill (far left) and Institute of Management senior trainer Dominic Siow (front, second from left).



Western ground parrot. Photo – Jennene Riggs

Breeding hopes for WA's rarest birds

Parks and Wildlife recently transferred seven critically endangered western ground parrots from a secluded south coast enclosure to Perth Zoo, where it is hoped they will successfully breed.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said with fewer than 140 western ground parrots estimated to be left in the wild, breeding birds in captivity may be one of the keys to the species' survival.

"The western ground parrot is Western Australia's rarest bird, with the entire population restricted to a couple of locations on the south coast," Mr Jacob said.

"These shy, secretive, ground-dwelling birds are vulnerable to predation by feral cats and to bushfires. To safeguard the species, Parks and Wildlife established a secure facility on the south coast five years ago for a small number of the western ground parrots.

"Now these birds have been transferred to a newly refurbished aviary at Perth Zoo, a breeding program will

be developed to underpin ongoing recovery efforts for the wild population."

Parks and Wildlife is continuing to implement the western ground parrot recovery plan in Cape Arid and Fitzgerald River national parks, including fire management and feral cat control using new *Eradicat*® baits.

"Once threats have been addressed – and if the birds are able to be successfully bred at the zoo – we hope they can be released back into national parks," he said.

State Government funding to initiate the captive breeding program has been supplemented by a \$15,000 grant from the volunteer-run group, Friends of the Western Ground Parrot.

"The Friends of the Western Ground Parrot are to be commended for their commitment to this species. It is pleasing to see such cooperative arrangements between government and the community to achieve positive conservation outcomes," Mr Jacob said.

Unique tracking system a benefit to department

The latest version of the department's unique spatial support system has been released, solidifying the technology as a fundamental tool in Parks and Wildlife's management of bushfires and resources.

The system, custom-made by the Office for Information Management, tracks the location of the department's extensive fleet of road, air and marine vehicles in real time.

Radio Communications Section manager Glen Bradbury said the spatial support system provided essential information for staff safety and the coordination of operational resources.

"Using an interactive web application, staff with an internet connection across the State can check the location of all

vehicles, machines, aircraft and marine vessels thanks to the installation of specially designed iridium and GPS satellite devices," he said.

"Various layers can be added to the application map, showing up-to-date information about fire perimeter, road and infrastructure locations, vegetation type, topography and more. Users can also view live weather information from the Bureau of Meteorology overlaid across the map."

Glen said the system was developed using open-source technology.

"We developed on freely available technology platforms to suit the department's needs, resulting in a highly specialised tracking and mapping system at a low cost," he said.

The spatial support system has led the way in the field of resource tracking across the State, with other State Government agencies adopting the technology and using the system to support their work.

The system was the result of strong cooperation between Fire Management Services Branch and the Office for Information Management, with Radio Communications Section staff designing and commissioning the satellite devices, and IT Operations Section staff developing and managing the web application.

Communications technical officer Allen Robinson with one of the custom-built GPS devices.



The recently sighted chuditch. Photo – Mark True/Parks and Wildlife

First chuditch sighting in 15 years

A rare marsupial not seen in the Albany region for more than 15 years has been sighted by a Parks and Wildlife ranger at Two Peoples Bay.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the chuditch was spotted and later photographed by ranger Mark True.

"Mark saw the chuditch, or western quoll, crossing the road in front of his vehicle at Two Peoples Bay Nature Reserve last month. He was later able to photograph the animal in a tree on the edge of the reserve," Mr Jacob said.

"This is an exciting discovery because the animal has not been seen in the Albany area for 15 years, with the last local sighting in the Redmond area north of Albany in 1999.

"The chuditch, which is about the size of a small cat, is WA's largest carnivorous marsupial. This species used to be found over most of Australia, but is now restricted to parts of the

south-west corner of WA and is classed as vulnerable.

"The good news is that chuditch numbers have increased in recent times, particularly in south-west forests, in response to the State Government's successful *Western Shield* baiting program.

"An experimental cat control program in Fitzgerald River National Park on the south coast is also having a positive effect on introduced predators, with good numbers of chuditch observed during recent surveys."

Members of the public are urged to contact Parks and Wildlife's Albany office on 9842 4500 with reports or images of chuditch seen in the region.

The chuditch is easily recognisable with its white-spotted fur. It is usually nocturnal and climbs trees to hunt and to escape from predators.



Illustrator and senior graphic designer Gooitzen van der Meer at work on an illustration.

Showcasing WA's natural beauty

WA Naturally launched a new product line recently—a collection of stunning nature photographs and illustrations by two Parks and Wildlife employees, Peter Nicholas and Gooitzen van der Meer.

Sales and distribution manager Cathy Birch said 33 works were on display at the department's Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre in Kensington for three weeks as a test phase. The phase enabled feedback to be gathered to further develop and refine the display before it is delivered to a broader audience throughout WA.

"These works would normally only be seen in *WA Naturally* publications, including *LANDSCOPE* magazine, now in its 29th year," she said.

"By reintroducing the photos and illustrations in a new and innovative way we hope to inspire a greater community connection with the amazing natural places and native species managed by the department.

"The 'dress-rehearsal' display was well received by staff and casual visitors to the centre and we are looking forward to positioning the display in an external setting and gathering more feedback from community members."

If anyone is interested in hosting the display at their venue please contact Cathy on (08) 9219 9913 for more information.

Prints (unframed) can be purchased online at shop.dpaw.wa.gov.au/prints.

Milestone for western swamp tortoise

Australia's rarest reptile species received a boost recently with the release of the 500th juvenile captive-bred western swamp tortoise into the wild.

Sixty-eight tortoises were set free in two separate releases at Twin Swamps Nature Reserve and Moore River Nature Reserve in July, bringing the total number of juvenile tortoises released since 1994 up to 567.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the 500th release was a conservation landmark that added to the improved recovery outlook for the critically endangered native species.

"These juveniles will bolster numbers of tortoises in the wild and hopefully many will mature into breeding adults," he said.



Western swamp tortoise. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

"As one of the world's rarest tortoises, the western 'swampies' have been on a rollercoaster ride, with numbers so low they were thought to be extinct until 1953 when a boy found one crossing the road in Upper Swan and took it to the WA Naturalists' Club wildlife show."

The Minister said that while numbers have risen and fallen over the past 60 years, a joint effort by Parks and Wildlife, Perth Zoo and other State Government agencies, the community, in particular the Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise, and corporate sponsors, has seen the wild population stabilise and increase in recent times.

The ongoing conservation program of the species includes radio-tracking and monitoring of western swamp tortoises, including one tortoise which has been tracked for 51 years.

Activities such as monitoring, captive breeding, translocations and awareness-raising are continuing.



Parks and Wildlife conservation employees Chris Tom and Steve Busby at the tortoise release in Twin Swamps Nature Reserve. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Wetland guide available

The online publication *A guide to managing and restoring wetlands in Western Australia* is now available for download from the Parks and Wildlife website.

Prepared by the department's Wetlands Section, the guide provides practical information on the nature and management of wetlands of conservation value.

Acting Director Science and Conservation Ken Atkins said with a wide variety of wetland management activities being carried out by individuals, groups and organisations throughout the State, there was a growing demand for information that meets the needs of many different audiences.

"This ranges from Parks and Wildlife staff to community groups and individual landholders who have a role in managing wetlands," he said.

"The guide will provide an informative and helpful resource for the community in managing wetlands and includes the first review of WA's wetland vegetation and flora. It details region-specific information covering more than 500 wetland plants and includes photographs of more than 200 wetland plants."

The guide can be downloaded at www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/wetlandsguide. Feedback received via online forms will be used by the Wetlands Section to inform future reviews of the guide.



Representatives of the Ngarla people joined Parks and Wildlife officers and pastoralists to celebrate the signing of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement for Eighty Mile Beach.

New partnership reached for Kimberley's Eighty Mile Beach

A second Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) for Eighty Mile Beach has been signed with the Ngarla people, marking significant progress in building and formalising partnerships with traditional owners in the Kimberley.

The ILUA, signed recently by Environment Minister Albert Jacob and Attorney General Michael Mischin, will enable the joint management of Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park and adjacent terrestrial reserves with the Ngarla people.

"This agreement highlights the successful partnerships being developed in the Kimberley between the State Government and native title

groups. A key priority for the Liberal National Government is working with Aboriginal groups in the creation of conservation areas to ensure their cultural values are protected and to generate social and economic benefits for communities," Mr Jacob said.

Mr Mischin said the agreement was the second to be reached under the State Government's \$81.5 million *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy* and one of four ILUAs being developed at Eighty Mile Beach.

"These ILUAs will provide for the creation and joint management of Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park and Jarrkurnpang Nature Reserve in Ngarla native title determined lands," he said.

"The agreement also allows for the employment of two members of the Ngarla native title group in full-time equivalent positions in the day-to-day management of the Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park and associated reserves."

Parks and Wildlife has been working with joint management partners to develop interpretive signage for visitors to the marine park about the area's unique ecological values, as well as the cultural significance of the area to Ngarla people.

The Ramsar-listed Eighty Mile Beach extends for 220km and is comprised of rocky shores, seagrass meadows, tidal creeks and mangrove-lined muddy bays and is one of the world's most important feeding sites for migratory birds.

Firefighters recognised

List of recipients of National Fire Medals and Clasps

1st Clasp recipients

Mark True, 26 years' service – South Coast Region, Parks and Wildlife

Neil Worrell, 31 years' service – South Coast Region, Parks and Wildlife

2nd Clasp recipients

Greg Durell, 37 years' service – Wheatbelt Region, Parks and Wildlife

Peter Fishwick, 48 years' service – South Coast Region, Parks and Wildlife

Peter Masters, 36 years' service – South Coast Region, Parks and Wildlife

George Doust, 37 years' service – Warren Region, Parks and Wildlife

Medal recipients

Paul Blechynden, 25 years' service – Wheatbelt Region, Parks and Wildlife

Luke Coney, 24 years' service – South Coast Region, Parks and Wildlife

Mitchell Davies, 22 years' service – Wheatbelt Region, Parks and Wildlife

Gregory Ferguson, 22 years' service – Wheatbelt Region, Parks and Wildlife

David Guille, 21 years' service – Forest Products Commission

Vince Hilder, 17 years' service – South Coast Region, Parks and Wildlife

Tim Mitchell, 24 years' service – Forest Products Commission

Andrew Robertson, 16 years' service – Forest Products Commission

Mark Moore, 25 years' service – Wheatbelt Region, Parks and Wildlife

Gary Treeby, 16 years' service – Forest Products Commission

Stephen Rule, 19 years' service – Warren Region, Parks and Wildlife

Michael Sawyer, 18 years' service – Warren Region, Parks and Wildlife

International whale conservation

Parks and Wildlife senior marine wildlife officer **Doug Coughran** represented Australia at the **International Whaling Commission (IWC) Euthanasia Workshop in London.**

Doug was among international experts from 11 countries who gathered to compare euthanasia methods for live strandings of large whales, which have become more frequent in recent years, and share lessons learned.

Dr Paul Jepson, Zoological Society of London, said a paper co-authored by Doug in 2012, entitled *Euthanasia*

of beached humpback whales using explosives, was integral to the workshop and the subsequent report.

This recently published report contains a series of recommendations that aim to inform and develop new guidelines in places where none currently exist.

"It was a great honour for me to represent Australia in London where I had the opportunity to speak about the difficult and challenging work the department has done on previous whale strandings," Doug said.

This work included the use of a special whale rescue blade that Doug helped design, which was successfully used recently by a disentanglement team to release two humpback whales from caplin traps in Newfoundland.

"I was delighted to hear the wonderful feedback from the team who said the knife had helped them in eight disentanglements this year, and continues to be used by teams worldwide," Doug said.

The knife was designed here in WA and manufactured in Colorado in collaboration with Spyderco.

Renewed optimism for critically endangered plants

The discovery of new seedlings from three critically endangered plants has given scientists renewed hope in saving important native plant populations.

New populations of cactus banksia (*Banksia anatona*), Foote's grevillea (*Grevillea calliantha*) and the round-leaf honeysuckle (*Lambertia orbifolia* subsp. *orbifolia*) were established by Parks and Wildlife staff at various sites throughout the State's south-west between 1998 and 2009.

The species are threatened by severe habitat fragmentation, *Phytophthora* disease, weeds and grazing.

Research scientist Leonie Monks said finding new seedlings in the populations shows they are reproducing and establishing naturally.

"We are finally starting to see successful reproduction from the plantings that were done several years ago, which is very exciting," she said.

"Seeds were collected from existing populations and a small number were germinated by the department's Threatened Flora Seed Centre to determine their viability. Viable seed lots were then grown at the Kings Park and Botanic Gardens nursery to produce seedlings.

"The seedlings were planted at a secure site close to existing populations. Successful reproduction and establishment of new seedlings will contribute to conservation of the species into the future."

Leonie said the translocation of the cactus banksia started as an experiment.

"That was the first time we had introduced a plant species outside of its natural range in the Stirling Ranges," she said.

"We are very pleased that it is flourishing, enabling us to collect seeds and establish further populations."



Round-leaf honeysuckle.

Photo – Sarah Barrett/Parks and Wildlife