



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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Crocodiles caught and released in major survey

With snapping jaws and wriggling bodies, 50 freshwater crocodiles at Windjana Gorge National Park were recently part of a major survey conducted by Parks and Wildlife West Kimberley District.

The first of its type to be conducted in Western Australia, the survey contributed to ongoing research into freshwater crocodiles designed to establish the health of the local crocodile population before the arrival of cane toads.

The highly detailed survey examined each animal's size, weight, sex, age, body measurements and location.

The survey was carried out by Parks and Wildlife staff, researchers, local Bunuba rangers and volunteers. The survey team camped out for four nights trapping,

examining and releasing the crocodiles back into waterways.

Team member and West Kimberley nature conservation coordinator Tracy Sonneman said the survey provided essential baseline information on the health and population of crocodiles in the Windjana Gorge.

"It was very rewarding to be part of this collaborative effort to gain a greater understanding of the crocodile population in the national park and to learn from the Bunuba rangers and researchers," she said.



Left: Bunuba rangers and Parks and Wildlife staff (left to right): Henry Williams, Rory Williams, Clive Aiken, Nigel Hale and Philip DeBruyn.

Above: West Kimberley nature conservation coordinator Tracy Sonneman and interpretation officer Sara McAllister.

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Above: Miriuwung-Gajerrong and Reserve 31165 rangers with rock art conservator Dave Lambert (front left). **Left:** A Miriuwung-Gajerrong ranger wet brushing to remove graffiti. Photos – Jo Erskine/Parks and Wildlife

Course helps Traditional Owners protect rock art

A hands-on rock art conservation course coordinated by Parks and Wildlife has provided Kimberley Aboriginal groups with valuable skills in art site protection and conservation.

Projects and policy officer Jo Erskine said five traditional owner groups participated in the recent course, which focused on techniques for protecting art from damaging impacts including water wash from rain, and leaching of salts and minerals from the rock.

“Rock art sites are of immense cultural importance to Aboriginal people and are an important part of maintaining their relationship to their land,” Jo said.

“While many of the previous rock art projects in the Kimberley looked at scientific research relating to art dating, the aim of this project was to build specific skills in art site conservation.

“This included managing sites for external impacts such as vegetation, fire, animals, insects, graffiti and visitors.”

Jo said the course was developed by New South Wales-based rock art conservator Dave Lambert specifically for Aboriginal rangers and communities.

“We were fortunate to have Traditional Owner groups from throughout the east Kimberley participate, including Parks and Wildlife Miriuwung-Gajerrong rangers, Purnululu

rangers, Reserve 31165 rangers, along with Armbangardi rangers from Carson River Station, Balangarra rangers and the Ngarinyin traditional owners who speak for Jilariba (Walcott Inlet),” she said.

“One of the great outcomes of the course was that it gave rangers the confidence and skills to carry out practical rock art conservation themselves, including managing immediate conservation concerns and predicting future issues.

“Each group was also given a rock art kit to enable them to undertake their own rock art conservation and maintenance.

“The Kimberley region has the greatest diversity and some of the most spectacular rock art in Australia, so it is in everyone’s interests to protect it.”

Miriuwung-Gajerrong ranger Raymond Bradshaw was enthusiastic about the course.

“It was good spending time with old people, learning about sacred sites and the importance of protecting them from animals, fire or anything destroying it.”

Prescribed burn program off to a great start

Parks and Wildlife’s prescribed burn program is well underway, with favourable weather conditions enabling the start of 35 burns across the State, covering an area of 28,534ha.

Fire Management Services manager Mike Meinema said regional staff around the State were working hard to ensure the community was protected from bushfire.

“We conducted a full urban interface burn in Neerabup National Park in mid September, which was particularly successful, despite the many challenges associated with being so close to built-up areas,” Mike said.

“In addition, we carried out a 13,000ha burn on the eastern side of the Perth Hills, one of the largest burns the department has completed in recent years.”

Mike said spring burning in the northern suburbs of Perth had

been aided by a series of successful fuel reduction burns completed throughout winter in Gnangara, Pinjar and Yanchep pine plantations.

“The department conducts a mixture of burn types to achieve different results including community protection, nature conservation and forest management,” he said.

Mike said staff training ahead of the upcoming bushfire season in the State’s south-west was continuing.

“Parks and Wildlife has also been involved in combating recent bushfires in Millstream Chichester National Park and near Karijini National Park.”



Prescribed burning in pine plantations north of Perth. Photo – Leigh Sage/Parks and Wildlife

Boost for nature-based education

Parks and Wildlife have joined with the Department of Education and Rio Tinto to help deliver a major environmental education program for school students.

Education Minister Peter Collier and Environment Minister Albert Jacob welcomed the \$3 million boost for the *Earth Assist* program, which has already involved more than 6500 students in 80 secondary schools since 2009.

Mr Collier said Rio Tinto's \$3 million sponsorship of the program until 2018 would provide opportunities for more students.

"I am delighted the *Earth Assist* program will now be available to primary students in addition to secondary students, and has been extended to country schools," he said.

"Seed collection, plant propagation, plant and animal surveys, and litter assessment and removal are among the practical activities that students have participated in."

The program will be delivered at many national and marine parks and reserves with technical support from Parks and Wildlife.

Mr Jacob said the Government was committed to providing opportunities for young Western Australians to visit, explore and experience the State's many parks.

"We are encouraging young people to explore nature with their families and friends via activities such as camping, walking the Bibbulmun Track, cycling the Munda Biddi and climbing the gorges of the Kimberley," he said.

"We have committed more than \$21 million to upgrade and develop visitor facilities and add at least 450 new camp and caravan sites throughout WA."

Yanchep to host Great Aussie Camp Out



Environment Minister Albert Jacob, Outdoors WA Executive Officer Jamie Bennett, Sport and Recreation Minister Terry Waldron join Mount Hawthorn Primary School students for the launch of *Outdoors October*.

Western Australian families will come together at Yanchep National Park on 11–12 October for a night under the stars as part of the *Great Aussie Camp Out*.

The event is the first in the '*Go on, get camping*' program, developed in collaboration between Parks and Wildlife, the Department of Sport and Recreation, Nature Play WA, Outdoors WA and the Caravan Industry Association.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the State Government was committed to encouraging people to explore WA's extraordinary natural areas under the *Parks for People* initiative.

"We have so many inspiring natural places. I encourage people not only to get outdoors, but to try camping as a great way of spending time in nature as well as reconnecting with family and friends away from the normal routines of life," Mr Jacob said.

The Yanchep National Park campout has proved popular, with more than 100 people on a waiting list to attend after registrations exceeded capacity within 12 hours of opening.

"The event will introduce families to the joys of camping in an encouraging and supportive environment and help them increase their confidence to make camping part of their lifestyle," Mr Jacob said.

The event is part of a wider initiative known as *Outdoors October* launched by the Environment Minister and Sport and Recreation Minister Terry Waldron.

This year's theme encourages those with little experience of getting outdoors to have some fun and take the first steps," Mr Waldron said.

"To help, Nature Play WA has launched a series of [short 'how to' films](#) for first-time campers. They include how to find great places to camp, where to pitch a tent when you get there and how to light a camp fire."

Mr Waldron said more than 120 events across the State had been listed in the *Outdoors October* program, including canoeing lessons, fishing clinics and caving adventures.

To find out more about activities in your area, visit www.outdoorsoctober.com.au and post your *Outdoors October* adventures on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) using #outdoorsoctober, #perthoutdoors and #getoutside.



Joint effort to fight invasive weeds

Trevor Brown and Wayne Lloyd cut down calotropis plants and apply chemicals to the stumps. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife staff recently carried out work to eradicate a fast spreading weed threatening native animals and plants in King Leopold Ranges Conservation Park, 240km north-east of Derby.

Conservation officer Allan Bennett, along with four conservation employees who travelled from the south-west of WA, spent two weeks treating more than 3500 calotropis (*Calotropis procera*) plants in the Millie Windie valley, an area of significant conservation value. The plant is a medium-sized shrub or small tree which can grow to 4m tall.

“The team was also joined by the Bunuba rangers, traditional owners of the area, who have been working with the department to remove calotropis over several years,” Allan said.

“The weed outcompetes native plants for sunlight, water and nutrients, which means infestations have resulted in less viable habitat for native animals.

“We applied chemicals to smaller plants by foliar spray while larger plants were cut down

to ground level and immediately sprayed at the stump, with many of the plants showing signs of decline within a week of treatment.

“Large calotropis infestations were also recorded and mapped, which will greatly assist us with planning for future weed control works in the area.”

The team also removed 10km of abandoned cattle fencing.

“We were able to remove more than three times the amount of fencing that was originally anticipated, which will greatly reduce the possibility of further deaths of native animals such as birds and wallabies caused by barbed wire,” Allan said.

The \$28,000 project was funded through Parks and Wildlife’s *Remote Regions Nature Conservation Program*, which assists remote regions to carry out priority conservation, park infrastructure and good neighbour projects. It also offers opportunities for conservation employees from the south-west to work in different parts of the State.

First Parks and Wildlife annual report released

Parks and Wildlife’s 2013-14 annual report, the first for the department, is available on the Parks and Wildlife [website](#).

The report features an attractive modern design that presents information in a clear and appealing format, highlighting the department’s successful work over the past 12 months.

Call for submissions for wetland conference

The Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre and the State Wetlands Coordinating Committee are joining forces to host the 11th annual Wetland Management Conference on 2 February 2015 in Cockburn.

Submissions are now open for all interested people to contribute poster presentations and/or workshop presentations.

The conference theme is ‘Wetlands for our Future’, with a focus on the management of urban and peri-urban wetlands, and managing pressures from urbanisation and climate change. Speakers with case studies of wetland restoration and reports on monitoring and native animal studies are also sought.

If you are interested in contributing a poster or workshop presentation please submit an abstract by 17 October 2014, by contacting Denise Crosbie on 9417 8460 or email denise@cockburnwetlands.org.au.

Registrations to attend the conference open in November 2014. More information is available at www.cockburnwetlands.org.au.



Western swamp tortoises are just one species that has benefited from wetland conservation in recent years. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Have your say about Hamelin Bay jetty ruins

Community members are invited to have their say about the future of the historic Hamelin Bay jetty ruins.

Parks and Visitor Services coordinator Ben Tannock said a structural engineering assessment of the timber jetty remains indicated there were serious issues in the remaining piles and crossbeams.

“The ruins of the 130-year-old jetty, a highly photographed and popular site, are synonymous with Hamelin Bay and its historic shipping past associated with the timber industry,” he said.

The options being considered include dismantling the jetty and using the timber to create an interpretative seat and table for the Hamelin Bay precinct, or making structural repairs.

Ben said visitors to the area would be surveyed about the jetty ruins over coming weeks.

“We would like to know whether there is a strong desire for the retention of the structure,” he said.

To give feedback email blackwood@dpaw.wa.gov.au.

Public forums to be held on local prescribed burn plans

Parks and Wildlife will be holding forums next week in Manjimup, Pemberton and Northcliffe to engage with local residents on prescribed burning plans for their communities.

Forums will be held in:

- Manjimup, 14 October 2014, Community Library Centre from 3–5.30pm
- Pemberton, 16 October 2014, Ambulance Centre from 3–5.30pm
- Northcliffe, 17 October 2014, Northcliffe Town Hall from 3–5.30pm

Information and advice will also be provided on public firewood gathering, fenceline clearing, firebreak maintenance and conservation issues in State forest and national parks at the forums.