



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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New plan will help protect WA biodiversity hotspot

The new year marked the start of a new chapter for the south-west's national parks and reserves with the release of a 10-year management plan for the Leeuwin-Naturaliste capes area including some of Western Australia's most scenic beaches, forests and heritage sites.

At the launch on 9 January, Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the south-west was internationally recognised as one of 35 international biodiversity hotspots so it was important to ensure a balance of conservation, recreation, tourism and cultural values.

"The plan guides the overall management of six national parks and eight nature reserves as well as parts of State forest and other small reserves, covering 37,400ha," he said.

It sets out how Parks and Wildlife will work with the community on nature-based recreation and tourism, conservation, fire management, and management of introduced species.

It also details important cultural and heritage values of the region and the State Government's commitment to engage and collaborate with Noongar people in managing the planning area.

The region is one of the oldest occupation sites in Australia with evidence of occupation by Noongar people 55,000 years ago.

The Minister said the national parks covered in the plan were some of the most popular in the State, with the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, WA's most visited park, receiving more than 2.7 million visits a year.

"Stretching across the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge and Scott Coastal Plain, the plan covers significant natural assets including important wetlands and significant conservation species and communities," he said.

A priority for this area is the creation and upgrade of camp sites and caravanning options for families under the *Parks for People* initiative, with work already underway in Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.

"The development of infrastructure such as this is vital as the region continues to grow as a tourism hub. This plan will guide how we work with the community into the future to manage these important natural assets to ensure we achieve the right balance," Mr Jacob said.

The plan is available from the Parks and Wildlife website www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management-plans/approved-management-plans.



Member for Vasse Libby Mettam, Environment Minister Albert Jacob, City of Busselton Mayor Ian Stubbs, and Director General Jim Sharp at the launch of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste area management plan. Photo – Rod Annear/Parks and Wildlife

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Department of Parks and Wildlife



Aerial firefighting fleet back in action



Western Australia's southern bushfire season is well underway and ground crew are once again being assisted by the aerial fleet that was last month officially activated for the 2014–15 bushfire season.

The fleet includes the Erickson Aircrane, six Bell 214B Helitacs, eight fixed-wing water bombers, six air attack supervisor platforms, and one aerial intelligence helicopter.

The Erickson Aircrane has a 7000-litre water capacity and can fill up in just 18 seconds.

Acting Emergency Services Minister Liza Harvey and Environment Minister Albert Jacob reviewed the fleet at Woodman Point in late December.

Ms Harvey said the joint Parks and Wildlife and Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) aerial fleet would again play a critical role in protecting the community.

"The water bombing aircraft, including the huge Erickson Aircrane, have the vital task of attacking bushfires early, allowing firefighters on the ground to get closer to do their work," she said.

"The air intelligence helicopter also plays a crucial role, providing fire mapping information, so that resources can be placed where they are most needed.

"However, people can't rely on having an aircraft hovering over every house during a bushfire – I urge everyone to play their part, prepare their property and have a bushfire survival plan."

Mr Jacob said Parks and Wildlife worked closely with DFES to ensure the aircraft were based where they were most needed.

"The aircraft are strategically located in Perth, Bunbury, Busselton, Manjimup and Albany, and have already been in action this season," he said.

"They will continue to be a vital component of how the Government responds to bushfires this summer."

Above: The Erickson Aircrane drops water in a demonstration exercise at Woodman Point.

Left: Commonwealth Minister for Justice Michael Keenan, Environment Minister Albert Jacob, Acting Emergency Services Minister Liza Harvey, Regional and Fire Management Services Director Peter Dans and Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson. Photos – Heather Quinlan/Parks and Wildlife

Rewards program now open for 2015

The fire management rewards program 2015 is now open and staff are encouraged to think about their peers and put forward nominations for those people they believe demonstrate excellence in their fire roles.

The program recognises people who demonstrate exemplary behaviour in fire management. The program was launched in 2014 in recognition of the fact that staff who participate in fire management activities were highly competent, experienced and committed in what they do and many consistently go above and beyond the call of duty.

Nominations for the rewards program close on Friday 17 April 2015. Staff can find more information, nomination forms, and view a video (<http://intranet/regionalservices/Pages/Fire-awards.aspx>) on the department's intranet.





*Left top and bottom: Some of the facilities at the new Nanga Brook campground.
Right: A new camp site at Logue Brook Dam overlooking the water.*

New campgrounds open in time for summer school holidays

Two major Parks and Wildlife projects were completed just in time to offer holiday-makers 103 new caravan and tent sites in the south-west.

The two campground developments, at Lane Poole Reserve and at Logue Brook Dam south of Perth, were officially opened on Boxing Day 2014.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the new campgrounds were part of the State Government's \$21.05 million *Parks for People* initiative, funded by the *Royalties for Regions* program under Western

Australia's *Caravan and Camping Action Plan 2013–18*.

"I am delighted that these campgrounds are open because they are close to Perth and provide affordable family holidays with opportunities for camping, picnicking, mountain biking, bush walking, swimming, fishing and canoeing," Mr Jacob said.

"Logue Brook Dam near Harvey has seen the completion of stage one of an overall \$2.5 million upgrade.

"This includes the creation of 62 camp sites, new toilets, state-of-the-art camp kitchens with

gas barbecues and water tanks, fireplaces and tables for each camp site, 875m of walk trails, and an upgraded boat ramp with new and improved roads."

The new facilities will be managed by the Lake Brockman Tourist Park under a community partnership agreement with Parks and Wildlife – the first of its type in the State providing benefits for the department and local communities.

The first stage of the new \$2.2 million Nanga Brook campground in Lane Poole Reserve has 29 camp sites for caravans and 12 tent camp sites.

Abseiling and tree climbing prove popular at Tree Top Walk

Almost 300 people have abseiled off the jetty at the Tree Top Walk and more than 200 have climbed a 40m-high karri tree since Parks and Wildlife and Spacechameleon Adventure teamed up to offer 'soft adventure' at the popular tourist site.

Regional Parks and Visitor Services coordinator Tim Foley said the innovative partnership was a first for the Tree Top Walk.

"Until early February, visitors have the opportunity to get rigged out to abseil off the Tree Top Walk jetty with professional guidance and expertise from Sven Borg, owner of Spacechameleon Adventure," he said.

"Going over the edge is always an adrenalin hit and Sven is keen to ensure those looking for a bit of excitement will enjoy the rush.

"Participants climb up a ladder to get over the handrail with a harness, helmet and ropes fitted for a safe but thrilling experience.

"Tree climbing is a unique experience with visitors being able to hang alongside some of the most majestic karri trees in the forest. Visitors ascend on a rope between 25m and 40m using mechanical ascenders to enjoy the view among the famous tingle trees.

"Once they get as high as they want to, they can relax for a while before being lowered to the ground."

Tree climbing in the Valley of the Giants started on 13 December.

Tim said it was exciting for the department to be able to offer a new opportunity at the Tree Top Walk and the Valley of the Giants.

"As part of the *Parks for People* initiative, the State Government is keen to encourage more Western Australians to enjoy our national parks through the diversification of experiences and improved accessibility, and the new soft adventure program does just that," he said.

Valley of the Giants manager Julie Ross said there had been a very positive response from visitors with the new option creating a lot of excitement.



Stephanie Crawford of Denmark abseiling at the Tree Top Walk.

Restored railway bridges open to public



Top: Environment Minister Albert Jacob with Parks and Visitor Services project manager Jayson Puls and Director General Jim Sharp at the John Forrest bridge opening.
Above: Minister Albert Jacob and Jim Sharp try out the bridge. Photos – Emma O’Leary/Parks and Wildlife

A three-month \$480,000 restoration project has given six historic railway bridges in John Forrest National Park a new lease on life.

The bridges, which once represented the latest technology in rail bridge construction, were fabricated 90 years ago in the former Midland railway workshops and were part of the Eastern Railway that linked Perth to the Goldfields and the Wheatbelt.

Since the railway line’s closure in 1961, they have been a significant feature of the Railway Reserves Heritage Trail, a popular walking and cycle trail through the park. The park’s bridges were included on the Register of Heritage Places in 2003.

In reopening the bridges to the public in December last year, Environment and Heritage Minister Albert Jacob said the bridges were a popular visitor attraction in WA’s oldest national park

“I am delighted the bridges have been restored, allowing safe public access while conserving a significant part of WA’s industrial heritage,” Mr Jacob said.

The restoration project, undertaken in consultation with the State Heritage Office, required an innovative approach because the bridges’ wooden decks had rotted and new timber dimensions were no longer commercially available.

The wooden decks were replaced with special precast concrete decks containing an imprint of the original timber decking as an interpretive link to the bridges’ past.

Importantly, the bridges’ original steel-ripped structures are now protected from corrosion. They are a rare example of this kind of engineering, with only one other in WA.

The bridge restoration project is part of a \$1 million State Government commitment to improve visitor facilities in John Forrest National Park under the *Parks for People* initiative.

News in brief

WA threatened species lists updated

Nine fauna and flora species have been added to Western Australia’s threatened species lists, which were updated in December last year.

Changes to the list include the addition of Carter’s freshwater mussel, as well as eight flora species including *Androcalva bivillosa* and *Austrostipa bronwenae*. In addition, the status of the western ringtail possum was changed from vulnerable to endangered, and *Banksia verticillata* from vulnerable to critically endangered.

Stachystemon nematophorus, a dense shrub in the Kalbarri region, was removed from the list because larger populations are now known to exist.

A low spreading shrub, *Scholtzia sp. bickley*, was added to the presumed extinct list because it is only known from a single specimen collected in the Bickley area in 1920. It has not been found again, despite extensive searches.

The total number of threatened flora and fauna species on the list is 669. The lists are available from the Parks and Wildlife [website](#).

New search app for aspiring volunteers

Members of the community can now search for a conservation group in their local area or subject of interest with an interactive search application.

The ‘Find a conservation group’ app is available on the Parks and Wildlife website at www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/find-a-conservation-group and will work on a computer, tablet or smartphone.

People with an interest in volunteering can zoom, pan and click on the map to find a group, get in touch and get involved in local action for bushland and natural areas.

Parks and Wildlife Yearbook available

Parks and Wildlife’s first Yearbook, for 2013–14, is now available on the Parks and Wildlife [website](#).

The Yearbook ensures the department reports on its full range of operations and highlights major achievements that fall outside the defined scope of the Annual Report that focuses on meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Commission’s Annual Reporting Framework.

The publication is primarily an online resource, however a limited number of copies have been printed for distribution to the department’s regional and district offices, corporate executive members and key stakeholders.



Cane toad program coordinator Corrin Everitt setting the remote cameras. Photo – David Pearson/Parks and Wildlife

Quolls surviving cane toad invasion on Adolphus Island

Endangered northern quolls are surviving on a Kimberley river island that has been colonised by cane toads.

Parks and Wildlife, working with the Balangarra Traditional Owners, found evidence of quolls on Adolphus Island, which is located in the Ord River less than 2km from the riverbank, during four visits last year.

Cane toad program coordinator Corrin Everitt said it was exciting the carnivorous marsupials were persisting on the island.

“Despite the presence of cane toads, species susceptible to their poison such as northern quolls are surviving in low numbers, which is very good news,” Corrin said.

It is thought toads reached Adolphus, near the mouth of the Ord River, by ‘rafting’ there during floods about two years ago.

“It is significant that cane toads managed to cross salty water to get there,” Corrin said.

“Despite the lack of surface freshwater on the island during the dry season, toads have been able to survive by retreating to burrows and rock crevices”.

Corrin said staff surveyed quoll populations with cage traps, infra-red remote cameras and conducted searches by day and night on foot.

She said a number of cane toad control techniques would be trialled on Adolphus, which would help inform the future management of other islands in the path of the invasive species.

“Early in 2015, with the Balangarra rangers and the traditional owners, we plan to survey quoll numbers again and trial if they can be taught not to eat toads,” she said.

“Together with researchers at the University of Sydney, the Balangarra rangers and traditional owners, we also hope to test the use of particular toad pheromones added to water bodies that are thought to reduce breeding success.”

Turtle monitoring gathers valuable data

Dedicated volunteers in the west Kimberly have been busy recording the activities of nesting flatback turtles to help conserve and understand the species.

Parks and Wildlife visitor interpretation officer Sara McAllister said the Eighty Mile Beach Turtle Monitoring Program, jointly funded by the department and BHP Billiton Iron Ore, had expanded in 2014 to include satellite tagging of some mature flatbacks.

“In a collaborative effort between Parks and Wildlife regional staff and marine scientists, Karajarri rangers and Nyangumarta traditional owners, satellite trackers were attached to 10 flatback turtles,” Sara said.

“Each of the tagged turtles has been named and members of the public can track their movements on the www.seaturtle.org website.”

This year’s monitoring program began in mid-October and more than 100 volunteers, including guests staying at the Eighty Mile Beach Caravan Park, local residents and Broome-based volunteers, assisted with night monitoring.

“More than 1200 turtle activities, including nesting and false crawls, have been observed this season, which is consistent with data recorded in previous years,” Sara said.



A flatback turtle heads back to the water at Eighty Mile Beach.