



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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PM visits Northcliffe

Prime Minister Tony Abbott paid a visit to residents and firefighters in Northcliffe last week following February's large forest fire.

Joined by Federal Member for O'Connor Rick Wilson, Mr Abbott met with community members and Parks and Wildlife staff for a briefing about the fire and the recovery efforts underway.

Warren regional manager Peter Keppel said the Prime Minister acknowledged the significant time it would take the community to recover and recognised Northcliffe residents for their resilience.

"It was a great opportunity for the community, and particularly Parks and Wildlife firefighters, to have their efforts recognised at a Federal level," he said.

Mr Abbott stopped to buy a pie at a local cafe, inspected a fire truck, attended a briefing and chatted with locals over afternoon tea.



Prime Minister Tony Abbott with Donnelly district manager John Gillard (left), firefighters Peter Beebe and Stephen Luff, and Member for O'Connor Rick Wilson. Photo – Manjimup-Bridgetown Times

First community partnership for campgrounds



Lake Brockman Tourist Park operators Steve and Lee-Anne Brown and Denise and Peter Douglas at the newly opened Logue Brook campground.

Parks and Wildlife has entered into its first community partnership arrangement for the management of a campground.

An agreement with the leaseholders of the Lake Brockman Tourist Park for the day-to-day management of the recently opened Logue Brook campground is proving fruitful for both parties.

Tourism and Property branch manager Rod Quartermain said the new arrangement meant visitors to the 62-site campground near Harvey benefitted from a regular management presence and additional services.

"By partnering with on-site tourist park managers, Parks and Wildlife can offer visitors the best of both worlds—quality facilities at a low cost and the availability of services that would not usually be available at a government-run campground.

"The team at Lake Brockman Tourist Park benefit because they have an opportunity to provide extra services for travellers, such as tours, food, drinks, firewood and bait.

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Department of Parks and Wildlife



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They also provide all the day-to-day maintenance of the campground.

"Visitors pay the standard departmental camping fees and Parks and Wildlife remains responsible for the quality and major maintenance of the facilities.

"This means the department's rangers are able to concentrate on other issues."

Rod said the department was evaluating the possibility of other campgrounds being managed in the same way in the future.

Logue Brook campground, built under the State Government's \$21.05 million *Parks for People* initiative, offers 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 as well as new and improved roads.

More than 700 people have used the new campground since it opened in late December.

A further \$2.7 million will see more facilities developed at the site, including 130 new camp sites.

Recent visitor to Logue Brook and self-described 'grey nomad' Denise Campbell complimented the campground after a recent stay. In a letter to the department she wrote:

"I really appreciate areas that provide me with basic (but better) facilities at a reasonable cost. Your attention to the layout and accessibility at Logue Brook is outstanding ... Nowhere is too far to go to find a toilet, kept in pristine cleanliness ... Having no idea how long I was going to stay I found myself remaining a week and even then I was reluctant to move on.

The folk at the tourist park who act as your caretakers do an excellent job and are friendly and helpful ... You can be very proud of your achievements at Logue Brook."



Reeling in fishing waste

The bins have been placed at popular fishing spots to encourage people to dispose of fishing lines appropriately.

The Swan River Trust has successfully trialled its fishing line bin project on the Swan and Canning riverbanks.

During 2014, more than 25 dedicated fishing line bins were installed at popular jetties, fishing platforms, traffic bridges and boat ramps to help reduce the impact of discarded fishing line and tackle on dolphins, waterbirds and other animals.

Trust community engagement program manager Jason Menzies said the *Reel It In* fishing line bin project was a cost-effective solution to a serious problem and had delivered significant benefits to the dolphins, birdlife and the community.

"In total, more than 8788m of fishing line, 1743 hooks and sinkers, 1508 bait bags and 254 items such as lures and tackle packets were collected over nine months," Jason said.

"The results show that recreational fishers have made excellent use of the bins during this trial and we are reducing the risk of rubbish impacting on Riverpark wildlife," he said.

A further \$20,000 investment from the State Government will see an additional 20 fishing line bins installed and maintained over the next 12 months. The 45 bins are expected to remove up to 20km of fishing line per year.

The *Reel It In* initiative has involved seven riverfront local governments, plus the Fremantle Port Authority and City of Cockburn. Funding has also been allocated to inform the community about the dangers of discarded fishing tackle and to let the public know where the bins are located.

The fishing line bins are emptied and audited fortnightly by Native Animal Rescue volunteers including disadvantaged youth. The units are made from 100 per cent recycled plastic. The project is delivered in partnership with Recfishwest, Native Animal Rescue and Keep Australia Beautiful Clean Marine.

Conference brings together Kimberley *Bush Rangers*

Fishing workshops, bird identification seminars and a drill lesson with Broome's Australian Navy Cadets were all part of the program for participants in the fifth annual Kimberley *Bush Rangers* conference.

Eight Kimberley schools are involved in the conservation-based youth development program, which aims to develop the leadership and social skills of school students aged 12 to 17, as part of the State Government's Cadets WA program.

Kimberley Bush Rangers coordinator Sally Johnston said the gathering offered Kimberley teachers, education assistants

and volunteers involved in Bush Rangers an opportunity to plan the coming year's activities for cadets.

"We hold this event at the start of the school year to provide an induction to new staff and it's great to see them gain the confidence and enthusiasm to run Bush Ranger projects in their local communities," Sally said.

"Some of the projects carried out by Kimberley units in 2014 included running a crocodile education campaign in Broome, building and installing picnic benches for the Joon Joo Botanical Trail near Derby, and volunteering with Parks and Wildlife staff on animal monitoring surveys.

"With more than 200 cadets enrolled across the Kimberley, and more than 80 per cent of these identifying as Aboriginal, the program provides a great opportunity to engage with teenagers interested in a career as a ranger. In the Kununurra office alone, there are four staff members who joined Parks and Wildlife after being involved in the program.

"With an increasing number of Kimberley parks now jointly managed with traditional owners, it's great that we can identify potential rangers early on and equip them with the skills and experience to become the next generation of land managers."



Department of Fisheries education officer Dylan Pross shares sustainable fishing tips. Photo – Parks and Wildlife



The department's new concrete modular bridge is stronger and lasts longer than the existing timber bridges. Photo – Mark Graves/Parks and Wildlife

Innovative bridge design developed

The team at Parks and Wildlife Jarrahdale work centre and the Roads Unit have developed an innovative road bridge design that will ensure more reliable access for visitors and during bushfire operations well into the future.

Road coordinator Mark Graves said the team's aim was to design a bridge that could be adapted to site requirements, was strong, durable and cost-effective without being over-engineered.

"The new design has achieved all of this and five bridges have already been built at various locations throughout the regions," he said.

"The department has more than 300 bridges of which over half are on strategic roads for tourism, bushfire suppression and conservation management.

"Many of these are timber bridges that require a lot of maintenance to retain required load capacity and protect them from fire and termites.



"The new design will provide longevity, improve visitor access and keep maintenance costs down."

Mark said the design team at Jarrahdale was well-regarded for their innovation and capacity to design and build facilities in parks throughout WA.

"The team's idea for an adaptive pre-cast modular bridge had enormous potential, based on the same concept as the timber design, just in concrete," he said.

"Following Jarrahdale's key ethic of keeping it simple and in-house, the 'kit bridge' concept progressed rapidly from a design into the fabrication of a series of moulds for casting the bridge abutments and wing-wall concrete components.

"The bridge deck itself consists of beams sourced from UDUC Concrete in Harvey that were originally designed by the Public Works Department in the 1950s.

"Within 12 months, we had completed the first prototype bridge, which was erected in State forest as a crossing for the Serpentine River."

Capital works and roads coordinator Paul McCluskey said the modular bridge design was a great outcome of creative and lateral thinking.

"It will dramatically improve safety for visitors and staff, ensure access for bushfire suppression and reduce escalating maintenance costs," he said.

"We hope to continue the project to replace 10 bridges a year."

Rare pig nosed turtles seized

Two rare turtles native to the Northern Territory and New Guinea and highly prized on the exotic pet black market have been seized after being illegally kept at a Mount Helena residence.

Parks and Wildlife, with assistance from WA Police and Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, seized one live and one dead preserved pig nosed turtle, as well as two illegally kept south-west carpet pythons and an oblong turtle.

Pig nosed turtles are close to extinction in the wild, with poaching for the black market

rampant due to their unusual features, including a protruding pig-like nose. They are the only freshwater turtles with flippers.

The seized turtles are believed to have originated from the Northern Territory.

Wildlife officer Cameron Craigie said pig nosed turtles were an internationally protected species and were worth at least \$2000 on the black market.

“This extremely vulnerable species is being put at further risk by poachers and traffickers, who are driven by the prospect of monetary gain from supplying

people wanting to keep them as pets illegally,” Cameron said.

“The man who was keeping the reptiles illegally was intercepted while trying to sell the live turtle, and we expect to lay a range of charges under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.”

People with information about the illegal importation of reptiles or who notice any suspicious activity suggesting that reptiles are being kept illegally should call Parks and Wildlife’s Wildcare Helpline on 9474 9055, Customs Watch on 1800 061 800, WA Police on 131 444, or Wildlife Trade Compliance on (02) 6274 1900.



One of the rare pig nosed turtles that were seized. Photo – Rick Dawson/Parks and Wildlife

Scholarships awarded to staff

Seven Parks and Wildlife officers will commence or continue studies in a variety of disciplines after being awarded scholarships through the department’s 2015 Scholarship Program.

Workforce and diversity coordinator Kathryn Wilkinson said the program offered eligible staff the chance to develop their careers by providing financial assistance to undertake further studies.

“Over the past 10 years 121 staff have been awarded funding through the program,” she said.

“This year’s recipients will be formally recognised at the Graduation and Awards Ceremony to be held in June.”

Congratulations to the following staff members:

Women’s Scholarship in honour of June Craig

- Sarah Comer – PhD Research in Invasive Species Ecology

- Alison McGilvray – PhD Research in Environmental Science and Social Sciences

Leadership Scholarship in memory of Seamus Mulholland

- Stephen Bradfield – Masters of Business Administration (Leadership)

Science Scholarship in memory of George Malajczuk

- Hooman Tabarestani – Graduate Certificate in Environmental Assessment and Management

Director General Career Development and Study Assistance Scholarship

- Sonia Gillespie – Certificate IV in Programming
- Michelle Jess – Bachelor of Arts (Psychology)
- Jayden Miller – Indigenous Community Management and Development Degree.

Sad farewells for department employees

February brought sad news for Parks and Wildlife staff, with the passing of one current and one former colleague.

Senior zoologist Winston Kay passed away on 21 February and former Pilbara regional manager Chris Muller passed away on 15 February.

In a broadcast to staff, Director General Jim Sharp said Winston had very effectively managed the implementation of the department’s kangaroo management plan for many years and provided policy advice on crocodile management.

He also worked in Species and Communities Branch as executive officer of the Animal Ethics Committee. Winston was based at the Walpole office and lived in Denmark with his wife and two children.

Chris worked for the department and its predecessors for 24 years from 1981 to 2005, and continued to work with many staff after leaving the department through his consultancy business.

Chris was influential in the development of the Wildfire Threat Analysis process and, during his time as regional manager in the Pilbara, was involved in many negotiations to secure additions to the conservation estate, such as Cane River Conservation Park, Meentheena ex-pastoral lease and Murujuga National Park.

Former regional ecologist Peter Kendrick said Chris had worked hard toward the protection of the superb cultural values of the Burrup Peninsula, and showed strong engagement with and support for Aboriginal traditional owners across the Pilbara.



School groups benefit from 150 years of cultural knowledge

Students from Guildford Grammar School got a taste of Aboriginal culture last month as part of a cultural immersion day, one of the many Indigenous-themed activities run by the department's *Nearer to Nature* program.

More than 70 students took part in activities including traditional song and dance, hunting activities and fishing practices at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre.

Nearer to Nature manager Simon Leaning said the Guildford students were privileged to hear from not one but three Indigenous people based at the centre, who have 150 years' experience in Aboriginal culture between them.

"*Nearer to Nature* officers Trevor Walley, Leonard Thorne and Gudathada (Zac) Walker are the embodiment of Indigenous skills and knowledge and are more than happy to share their culture with others," he said.

"Trevor and Leonard are elders in the Noongar clan and hail from neighbouring groups in the south-west, while Zac is a Ngalia man from the northern Goldfields."

Trevor said it was important that young people learn about the culture that preceded European settlement.

"For many their first experience of an Aboriginal person may be through an educational program like *Nearer to Nature*. To share our skills and expertise with the younger generation is incredibly important," he said.

"We are able to reinforce learning about Aboriginal culture through hands-on activities and role play."



Top: Students from Guildford Grammar enjoy some traditional song and dance with *Nearer to Nature* officer Trevor Walley.

Above: *Nearer to Nature* staff Leonard Thorne, Zac Walker and Trevor Walley. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

Simon said *Nearer to Nature* had seen an increase in demand for cultural activities both in schools and the wider community over the past few years.

"The trend appears to be continuing with more than 2500 children booked to attend our Indigenous programs in 2015," he said.

"It is testament to the expertise of Trevor, Leonard and Zac that we are able to provide an authentic Indigenous experience that sees people coming back time and time again."

More information on the *Nearer to Nature* community program can be found at nearertonature.dpaw.wa.gov.au.

Plan for WA's second largest island released

A management plan for one of Western Australia's most important conservation areas, the Barrow group nature reserves off the Pilbara coast, has been released.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob last month released the plan, which covers WA's second largest island, Barrow Island Nature Reserve, and the nearby Boodie, Double and Middle Islands Nature Reserve.

"The islands are world-renowned for their environmental values and distinct biodiversity, with 23 threatened species on Barrow Island alone," Mr Jacob said.

"Together with extensive cave ecosystems and important nesting beaches for marine turtles and migratory shorebirds, the diversity of habitat and fauna is unparalleled.

"The island's relative isolation and the application of a rigorous quarantine system have resulted in Barrow Island being the largest land mass in Australia that does not contain any introduced vertebrates and we are keen to protect this in the future."

Planning officer Laurina Bullen said the release of the final management plan was the result of considerable consultation with key stakeholders, including Chevron Australia Pty Ltd, the Department of Mines and Petroleum, Department of State Development, traditional custodians, conservation groups and community groups.

"The plan will be implemented by Parks and Wildlife reserves officers on Barrow Island, who will continue their work alongside Chevron Australia and other government agencies to ensure the island's protection," she said.

Copies of the plan are available at www.dpaw.wa.gov.au.



Left: Barrow Island Nature Reserve. Photo – Fran Stanley/Parks and Wildlife



Right: Parks and Wildlife and Chevron staff discuss rehabilitation of a site on the island. Photo – Wesley Manson/Parks and Wildlife



Clockwise from top left: Wedge-tailed eagle, agile wallaby, pheasant coucal.

Cameras reveal expanded range of Kimberley wildlife

Remote cameras installed on Adolphus Island in the east Kimberley to monitor northern quolls have revealed a far greater range of wildlife than previously recorded.

State cane toad program leader Corrin Everitt said the cameras, which are part of a conservation program run by East Kimberley District and Science and Conservation Division staff, had captured images in October 2014 of the Eurasian hoopoe bird (*Upupa epops*) visiting the island.

"This is only the third sighting of the species in Australia, so were excited to find it on our cameras," Corrin said.

"It was first spotted in 2011 at Roebuck Plains Roadhouse and then in February

2014 at Galiwinku on Elcho Island in the Northern Territory.

"Australian sightings of the hoopoe, whose native range is Eurasia and north-west Africa, are thought to be a result of the birds flying off course during their migration."

The 35 cameras installed on Adolphus Island, which is located in the Ord River about 2km from the riverbank, also recorded large numbers of native bird species. These include Brahminy kites, collared sparrow hawk and wedge-tailed eagles," she said.

"Our bird list for the island has almost doubled from what was recorded during the 2008–09 large-scale biodiversity inventory survey conducted by the department.

"Other interesting images recorded include saltwater crocodiles and the ongoing presence of endangered northern quolls, spiny-tailed monitors and black-palmed rock monitors, species that are susceptible to being poisoned by cane toads.

"Also observed were 'colonies' of northern spiny-tailed geckos on the edges of salt flats."

Corrin said the department, in conjunction with the Balangarra Rangers and traditional owners, would continue monitoring northern quoll and cane toad populations on Adolphus Island in 2015 as part of the *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*.

Five cane toads found

Two separate cane toad discoveries were made recently, with one toad found at a Pilbara mine site accommodation village and four in a sandalwood consignment at a Perth freight depot.

On 6 March, Parks and Wildlife officers retrieved three live toads and one dead toad from a truck that had arrived in Perth from Kununurra.

Senior wildlife officer Rick Dawson praised the freight company, Toll Express, for immediately advising Parks and Wildlife of the discovery.

"Staff opened the vehicle and saw a toad so they did the right thing, closed it up again and called us straight away, allowing wildlife officers to thoroughly inspect the truck, he said.

"It is a serious concern that three live toads were discovered including, for the first time, a healthy male and two females, because of the risks of them escaping and breeding."

Just a few weeks earlier, a cane toad was found at the accommodation village of a Pilbara mine site.

Both incidents serve as reminders for members of the public and commercial freight companies to remain cane toad-aware when travelling from affected areas.

If a suspected toad is found by a member of the public, Parks and Wildlife recommends not killing it in case it is a harmless native frog. The animal should be isolated and the sighting immediately reported to the Parks and Wildlife cane toad hotline on 1800 44 WILD (9453).



Above: Three of the toads found in a freight truck in Perth. Photo – Peter Nicholas/Parks and Wildlife