



# PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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# New funding for feral cat control

Protection for the State's most threatened native animal species will receive a boost with new Parks and Wildlife feral cat control projects worth almost \$2 million getting underway this year.

The two initiatives, funded by the Australian Government under its new Threatened Species Strategy, were announced at the national Threatened Species Summit in Melbourne.

The summit was attended by Environment Minister Albert Jacob, who chaired a panel session, along with Parks and Wildlife Director General Jim Sharp, Science and Conservation Director Margaret Byrne and senior research scientists Keith Morris and David Algar.

Mr Jacob said \$1.7 million would be allocated to a project integrating feral cat control with existing broadscale fox control under the *Western Shield* conservation program.

"This will involve baiting approximately 850,000ha of conservation lands with the new *Eradicat*® feral cat bait, which was developed by Parks and Wildlife and recently approved for operational use," Mr Jacob said.

"It will help protect native animals such as the western ringtail possum and woylies at Perup sanctuary in the southern jarrah forest, numbats and woylies at Dryandra Woodland, the critically endangered western ground parrot and Gilbert's potoroo in south coast areas and the black-flanked rock wallaby in the semi-arid conditions of Kalbarri National Park."

Further funding of \$250,000 will allow Parks and Wildlife to conduct a field trial of a modified version of *Eradicat*®, known as *History*, in the Kimberley.



"The trial will determine how effective the bait is on feral cats and whether there is an impact on native species, such as the northern quoll," Mr Jacob said.

The project will also involve Bunuba Aboriginal rangers, who will receive training in feral cat management.

"Feral cats pose a significant threat to our native species and these projects, with Australian Government support, will assist Parks and Wildlife to continue its great work in feral cat control."

Above: Environment Minister Albert Jacob chairing a panel at the National Threatened Species Summit in Melbourne. Panel comprised Atticus Fleming from Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Mike Misso from Christmas Island National Park, Kathryn Moseby from University of Adelaide and Richard Trethewey from Kangaroo Island Natural Resources Management Board. Credit: Tamatha Smith Right: Feral cats are a major threat to native wildlife. Photo - Babs and Bert Wells/Parks and Wildlife



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Department of Parks and Wildlife



# Western swamp tortoise release a winner

**Parks and Wildlife staff, volunteers and excited children donned their gumboots recently to release 20 juvenile western swamp tortoises at Twin Swamps Nature Reserve, north of Perth.**

Senior research scientist Gerald Kuchling coordinated the release and said it would help strengthen numbers of the critically endangered tortoises living in the wild.

“From the 1960s to the early 1980s there were only two known and monitored wild western swamp tortoise populations, at Twin Swamps and Ellenbrook nature reserves, and by 1985 the population at Twin Swamps was nearly extinct,” Gerald said.

“Translocations at this reserve have been

taking place for 21 years and as a result the wild population has stabilised and increased, which is very encouraging.”

Western swamp tortoises are a long-lived native species but take around eight to 15 years to mature and have a slow breeding rate.

Tortoises for the most recent release were bred at Perth Zoo and were weighed, measured and marked to ensure their growth and progress could be monitored over coming years.

Gerald said they were released into the wild aged around three years old.

“They are less vulnerable to predators and to drought than hatchlings, but they still face many challenges to reach adulthood,” he said.

“Twin Swamps Nature Reserve is the best place for the translocation this year because it has a fox-proof fence around it and the clay-based swamps are supplemented with groundwater from a bore to ensure the wetlands are viable during drier winters and springs.”

*The Western Swamp Tortoise Recovery Program* is coordinated by Parks and Wildlife, in partnership with Perth Zoo, University of Western Australia and the Friends of the Western Swamp Tortoise community group.

**1** Dr Gerald Kuchling helps children release western swamp tortoises.

**2** Nicola Owens and Riley Peters.

Photos - Lauren Emmerson/Parks and Wildlife

**3** Western swamp tortoise.

Photo - Parks and Wildlife

# Community helps plant thousands of seedlings

**Thirty-two volunteers recently rolled up their sleeves and put their green thumbs to use by helping the department plant 23,000 seedlings near Geraldton – a mammoth effort.**

The conservation initiative was part of a week-long community planting venture held during July.

Flora conservation officer Janet Newell said 18 different flora species were planted in the Northern Agricultural Region, and within a local catchment which has less than two per cent of remaining vegetation.

“The project raises awareness of threatened flora conservation and is an important step in the recovery of threatened native species,” she said.

“It also helps to build relationships across organisations and provides opportunities for volunteers and students to be involved in conservation activities.

“We have had so much assistance and interest in the project. It has been inspiring and it was great to have so many people turn up so thank you to everyone.

“In half a day, 13 volunteers assisted with the planting of 4000 seedlings alone.

“Department staff were also assisted by property owners, prisoners from the Greenough Regional Prison, Northern Agricultural Catchments Council staff and a Green Army team, which shows how much can be achieved when we partner with community groups and other organisations.”

Volunteer Wendy Payne enjoyed participating in the planting day.

“It was definitely a feel-good experience. I loved working together with a great group of community members to provide habitat for my favourite local flower, *Grevillea bracteosa*,” she said.

The 18-month revegetation project will help improve the overall extent and connectivity of habitat for three threatened flora species on Yanget Station, near Geraldton. This includes connecting two small sub-populations of the critically endangered *Grevillea bracteosa* and improving an area of potential habitat for the endangered *Chorizema humile* and *Wurmbea tubulosa*.

The *Yanget Station – Protecting Threatened Flora* project is supported by the Australian Government’s *20 Million Trees Programme* (part of the *National Landcare Programme*) and Parks and Wildlife.

*Left: Parks and Wildlife flora conservation officer Alanna Chant with volunteer Wendy Payne planting native species near Geraldton. Photo - Parks and Wildlife*



# WA firefighters deployed to Canadian bushfires

**Twelve fire and emergency services personnel and forest firefighters were deployed earlier this month to help fight dozens of bushfires that are threatening communities across western Canada.**

Five Parks and Wildlife officers and seven Department of Fire and Emergency Services officers are part of a national contingent of 106 that have flown to Canada, primarily based in British Columbia and Alberta. Parks and Wildlife officers deployed are Frank Bailey (Perth Hills District), Ryan Butler (Goldfields Region), Tony Mennen (South West Region), Jeremy Friend (Blackwood District) and Lincoln Marissen (Donnelly District). They are scheduled to return to WA by mid-August.

The fires in Canada have caused tens of thousands of people to be evacuated and burnt more than 1.9 million hectares of forest.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said it was satisfying that expertise from the department would be able to help another jurisdiction to overcome bushfires.

"The Western Australian contingent includes experts in bushfire incident management, bushfire behaviour, aerial firefighting and forest fires," Mr Jacob said.

"I am sure our personnel will bring home valuable knowledge from their counterparts in Canada as much as they will share our expertise with the enormous international firefighting effort."

*Left: Ryan Butler, Jeremy Friend, Lincoln Marissen, Keith Low, Director General Jim Sharp, Frank Bailey, Tony Mennen. Photo - Jennifer Eliot/Parks and Wildlife*



*Above: Syaura Erickson Scott and Janalli Swain decorating a boomerang. Photo - Jonnie Saegenschnitter/Parks and Wildlife*

## Yanchep a hub for NAIDOC celebrations

**More than 700 people celebrated NAIDOC Week this year at Yanchep National Park.**

Park manager Julia Coggins said NAIDOC celebrations continued throughout the school holidays, with a special event attracting 300 visitors held on Saturday 11 July.

"Free activities and displays about Aboriginal culture were held throughout the two-week period in the park's wangi mia, where there was a vibrant atmosphere with lots of enthusiasm from guests and staff," she said.

"Aboriginal staff were on hand to answer questions and lead activities, which

included boomerang and clap stick painting, weaving activities, tool making, mia mia building, storytelling, sand art, spear and boomerang throwing, music and bush tucker tasting."

Visitor services officer Jonnie Saegenschnitter said he was pleased to be involved in the design and presentation of this year's NAIDOC program.

"Not only does it give me the privilege to share Aboriginal culture with visitors to the park, but also helps to strengthen my own culture through the feeling of pride I get from sharing that information and having it received so respectfully," he said.

"I guess you might say we can all benefit from these events."

Julia thanked the contribution of staff and volunteers who helped make the 2015 NAIDOC celebrations at Yanchep such a huge success.

"Each year this event and associated activities seems to be growing in momentum, both in the variety of things on offer for visitors to experience and also the number of visitors that are sharing in these celebrations. It was great to see such a large number of Aboriginal and Islander families choosing to celebrate at Yanchep this year."

# Historic Hamelin Bay jetty restored

Parks and Wildlife has completed repairs to the historic Hamelin Bay jetty ruins in Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.

Blackwood District Parks and Visitor Services coordinator Ben Tannock said the repairs were made following community consultation.

"We sought the community's views about what they would like to see for the future of the ruins, and we found that people were strongly in favour of repairing and retaining the structure," he said.

"Using recycled aged timbers from the original Busselton jetty, the beams were replaced and piles were strengthened with steel rods and jacketed with polycarbonate sleeves, while protective paint was also applied.

"Given the historical significance of both jetties, it is fitting that beams from the original Busselton jetty have been re-used at Hamelin Bay, and we thank the City of Busselton for their contribution to this repair."

The jetty was built more than 130 years ago to load ships exporting karri and other hardwoods. Its use began to diminish around 1913 as fewer ships serviced Hamelin Bay.

In 1921 a fire destroyed much of the jetty, and in 1961 a severe storm destroyed most of the remaining structure. All that remained at the shore line were eight piles and six crossbeams.

*Below: The restored jetty. Photo - Parks and Wildlife*



# IPA celebrated at Matuwa



**The creation of an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) agreement has been celebrated at Matuwa (Lorna Glen) and neighbouring Kurrara Kurrara (Earaheedy) east of Wiluna, home to the groundbreaking *Operation Rangelands Restoration* project.**

Goldfields Region manager Ian Kealley said the 600,000ha area had been jointly managed since 2005 under an MOU between Parks and Wildlife and the Wiluna Martu People and more recently through the Tarlka Matuwa Piarku Aboriginal Corporation, which holds native title for the area.

"Matuwa and Kurrara Kurrara are of immense cultural value, containing significant men's and women's sites, with western science and Indigenous knowledge being combined to protect the area's cultural and natural values," he said.

"On 3 July, the Tarlka Matuwa Piarku

Aboriginal Corporation signed an agreement with the Federal Government to dedicate Matuwa and Kurrara Kurrara as an IPA.

"More than 200 people, including many Parks and Wildlife staff, attended the IPA ceremony on 3 July, testament to the support from the Wiluna community and other partners and stakeholders for this important milestone."

*Operation Rangelands Restoration*, funded by the State Government through Parks and Wildlife and Gorgon Gas Project offset funds, aims to restore Matuwa and Kurrara Kurrara to their pre-European settlement state, including the reintroduction of 11 native mammals that once occurred across the arid zone.

The cornerstone of the project is an 1100ha predator-exclusion acclimatisation compound, where native mammals are introduced

without the threat of predation by cats, which are baited and controlled outside the compound and throughout Matuwa.

Parks and Wildlife has so far translocated golden bandicoots, boodies, bilbies, Shark Bay mice, brushtail possums and mala into the area.

"Employment and training for local Indigenous rangers has also been key to the success of the partnership," Ian said.

"These rangers have worked on cultural site management, boundary fence construction to exclude feral cattle and camels, prescribed burning and many other infrastructure and land management activities."

*Above: Frankie Wongawol, Lena Long and Roxanne Anderson with Parks and Wildlife Goldfields regional manager Ian Kealley. Photo - Jennifer Jackson/Parks and Wildlife*