



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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New skywalks announced for Kalbarri National Park

Construction of two new skywalks at Kalbarri National Park will begin next year, as part of a \$20 million State Government investment to develop an innovative tourism precinct in the park.

The cantilevered, transparent-floored skywalks will be built at the Inyaka Wookai Watju site, formally known as the West Loop, and will provide stunning vistas of the dramatic Murchison Gorge.

The Liberal National Government announced the *Royalties for Regions*-funded project on Sunday.

The investment will also complete sealing of the 22km of roads within the park and the redevelopment of the Inyaka Wookai Watju, Z Bend and Meanarra Hill sites.

The development at Inyaka Wookai Watju will include a kiosk, innovative displays to interpret Nanda Aboriginal heritage, a gathering storytelling area,

parking for coaches and RVs, shade shelters and toilets. An accessible loop walk trail will guide visitors to the skywalks which will project 20m and 12m beyond the gorge rim, more than 100m above the Murchison River.

Premier Colin Barnett said the project recognised the region's growing tourism industry and would further support the region's economy.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said improving access and infrastructure at Kalbarri National Park would help showcase WA's unique environment and encourage people to explore the State's natural heritage.

Find more details and view the artist's impression at www.dpaw.wa.gov.au.

Below left: Premier Colin Barnett and Environment Minister Albert Jacob visited Kalbarri National Park to make the announcement. Pictured with Acting Midwest Regional Manager Sue Hancock and Senior Ranger Mike Paxman. Below: The proposed skywalk.



Premier's Award for conservation project

A collaborative program aimed at getting young people directly involved in nature conservation has been recognised with a Premier's Award.

Parks and Wildlife, in partnership with the Department of Education, Rio Tinto and Conservation Volunteers Australia, won the Managing the Environment category at the 2015 Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management for the *Rio Tinto Earth Assist* program.

The collaborative cross-sector program connects school students to priority conservation projects and research.

Parks and Wildlife was also a finalist in the Improving Government award category with 'Making waves in marine management', submitted in partnership with the Department of Fisheries.

Students actively carry out conservation projects as part of the award-winning Rio Tinto Earth Assist program. Photo – Conservation Volunteers Australia



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Department of
Parks and Wildlife



Going in to bat for fire readiness

Cricketer Brad Hogg and his Perth Scorchers teammates Jason Behrendorff and Sam Whiteman are fronting this year's *Are You Ready?* bushfire campaign.

The State Government campaign, launched earlier this month, reminds the community that bushfire preparedness is a shared responsibility between government and the community.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said government agencies were working collectively to prepare for the upcoming bushfire season.

"The Department of Parks and Wildlife burned about 147,000ha in WA in 2014–15, which means 35 per cent of department-managed land in the south-west has a fuel age of less than six

years. A further 50,000ha in WA has already been burned this financial year," Mr Jacob said.

Parks and Wildlife was represented by firefighters Renee Leaver and Kris Coates in the television and print advertisements, and were joined by staff from Department of Fire and Emergency Services and Western Power.

Look out for Renee's speaking part when you see the ad online.

Visit www.areyouready.wa.gov.au

**ARE YOU
BUSHFIRE
READY?**

1 Perth Scorchers Brad Hogg, Jason Behrendorff and Sam Whiteman urge the community to get fire ready. **2** Parks and Wildlife firefighters Renee Leaver and Kris Coates represented the department in the campaign. **3** Filming of Renee's speaking part.



The WA public is being encouraged to have their say on the future of one of the world's most significant cultural and natural tourist attractions – Horizontal Falls and surrounding areas on WA's Kimberley coast.

A draft management plan was released this month by Parks and Wildlife and the Dambimangari Traditional Owners for the proposed Lalang-garram/Horizontal Falls and North Lalang-garram marine parks and the proposed Oomeday National Park.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the Liberal National Government was committed to ensuring this area, considered to be one of the most pristine coastal areas left in the world, was protected into the future.

"The area is rich with unique plants, animals and marine species found nowhere else and contains nationally significant natural, Aboriginal and historical values," Mr Jacob said.

Marine conservation officer Sarah Bignell said the draft plan represented a real partnership approach in working with traditional owners, building on work done for marine park proposals at Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach.

"The Dambimangari Traditional Owner partners have been caretakers of their land and sea country for thousands of years. The development process for these parks has been an amazing opportunity to learn from and work side by side with them," she said.

"It's particularly important that we have been able to work together for key steps of the process, for example, running workshops with key stakeholders such as commercial and recreational fishing industries as well as the conservation sector.

"Ultimately the draft plan and particularly the draft zoning arrangements represent a fantastic starting point for public consultation because of the way everyone worked together."

The Minister said the proposed parks were being delivered as a part of the *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*, which is creating one of the world's largest networks of connected marine and terrestrial reserves.

View the plan and make an online submission via a simple-to-use survey form at www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/horizontalfalls. The plan is open for public comment until 22 January 2016.

Above: Horizontal Falls. Photo – Todd Quartermaine/Parks and Wildlife

Community engagement the theme for inaugural conference

Parks and Wildlife's first annual staff conference was held this month, with employees from around the State coming together at Kensington to discuss the theme of 'community engagement'.

More than 25 speakers, from within the department and other organisations, gave presentations over three days, highlighting the range of work being done to engage with the community and ensure the natural world is valued and conserved. A range of workshops, field trips and networking events were also held.

Conference organiser Tracy Churchill said there was a focus on working with Aboriginal people, partnering with volunteers, citizen science projects and community education.



1 Her Excellency Kerry Sanderson, AO, Governor of Western Australia, pictured with Director General Jim Sharp, closed the conference with an address about the proposed parks foundation or friends association to help support WA's national parks and reserves. **2** Luisa Wing, State Manager of Conservation Volunteers Australia, gave a keynote speech about the benefits of working together for conservation. **3** The important role of volunteers in wildlife rehabilitation was highlighted during a field trip to Native ARC, Bibra Lake. **4** Staff went out on the Swan River to learn about Aboriginal people's cultural connection to the river with Noongar storyteller Marie Taylor. **5** Licensing officer Stella Horne makes friends with one of the patients at Native ARC. **6** Ranger Suzanne Trigwell set a Sheffield trap as part of a field trip to the Perth Hills Discovery Centre. **7** Aboriginal Heritage Unit programs coordinator Karim Khan, Parks and Visitor Services Director Peter Sharp and consultant Justin McAllister took questions from staff about the South West Native Title Settlement. Photos – Peter Nicholas, Linley Brown, Michael Phillips, Karla Graham/Parks and Wildlife

Julie and Margie recognised with prestigious awards

The Parks and Wildlife staff conference provided an opportunity to recognise individual employees in the department.

On Wednesday 14 October Environment Minister Albert Jacob attended a ceremony to present the Wayne Schmidt Award to Tree Top Walk business manager Julie Ross, and the Eugene Winmar Award to Karijini National Park visitor services officer Margie Hughes.

The Wayne Schmidt Award acknowledges staff members with a strong involvement in Parks and Visitor Services who excel in creating and enhancing nature-based visitor experiences.

Julie received the award for her enthusiastic management of the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk and her ability to motivate the communities of Denmark and Walpole to keep tourism moving forward.

Julie said she was humbled and excited to win on behalf of herself and the Tree Top Walk team.

"There have been some great people win the award to date and I'm proud to be included on the honour roll," she said.

"Our team has a willingness to go that extra mile, no matter what we get paid and no matter who for. If you have a passion, and we all do, and a determined belief in what you do, you will love doing it.

"And I do. It's been an amazing ride at the Tree Top Walk, we've achieved many things and created magical visitor experiences and while it's not about recognition for what you do, if it happens, it's a sweet thing."

The Eugene Winmar Award, which recognises outstanding achievement by an Aboriginal employee, was awarded to Margie Hughes due to her active involvement in the promotion of Karijini National Park to visitors and maintaining and sharing her cultural connection to the land.

Pilbara Region business manager Sharon Hann said Margie was a great support to other Aboriginal staff at the Karijini Visitor Centre, providing a mentoring role to younger staff.

"This mentoring is an important factor within the team, as it assists with the motivation and willingness of the staff to be working and living on their traditional lands."

The Eugene Winmar Award was created in honour of Parks and Wildlife's longest serving Aboriginal staff member, Eugene Winmar, who started work at the Forests Department in Jarrahdale in 1971.

1 Winner of the Eugene Winmar Award Margie Hughes with Pilbara Region manager Allisdair McDonald during the 10th anniversary of the Karijini Visitor Centre. Photo – Parks and Wildlife **2** Wayne Schmidt Award winner Julie Ross with colleagues Mick Murphy and Allison Donovan. **3** Aboriginal Heritage Unit manager Rhonda Murphy accepts the award from Environment Minister Albert Jacob and Eugene Winmar on behalf of Margie. Photos – Steve Csaba/Parks and Wildlife



Camping app helps people get outdoors

The new *CampingMate* app for iPhone and Android helps campers create and share camping checklists to make it easier to get outdoors and experience WA's natural wonders by helping with preparation and packing.

The app is part of a range of online and mobile resources being rolled out by Parks and Wildlife as part of the \$21.05 million, four-year *Parks for People* initiative.

Users begin by generating a detailed list of all the items that might be considered and then add or delete items to customise the list. When finished the list can be saved for later, taken on the camping trip and shared with friends. For the next trip, the saved checklist can be modified and updated.

The app was released during *Outdoors October*, a celebration of outdoor activities and recreation during spring led by *Outdoors WA*.



[Click here for iPhone](#)

[Click here for Android](#)





Aboriginal staff conference held

A cultural tour through Kings Park, the presentation of service awards and a keynote speech by Banjima Elder Maitland Parker were highlights of the department's biennial Aboriginal staff conference.

The conference, held on 12–14 October, brought 26 Aboriginal staff members together from across the State to share their achievements and discuss ways to improve the department's engagement with Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Heritage Unit manager Rhonda Murphy said Maitland's keynote speech was open to all staff in addition to conference delegates.

"Maitland, who worked as a ranger at Karijini National Park for 23 years, presented on his career, his experience as a park council member, involvement in native title, relationship with government, the importance of engagement with Aboriginal people and his aspirations for Karijini," Rhonda said.



During the conference two workshops were held to gather the employees' input on departmental policies: the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy* currently under review, and the *Engaging with Aboriginal People* training program under development as part of the existing Cultural Learning Program.

The conference also provided an opportunity to present Recognition of Service awards to 23 staff members who had worked five, 10, 15, 20, 30 and 35 years with the department and its predecessors.

Rhonda said recognising and promoting the achievements of Aboriginal staff was a key part of the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy*.

Yawuru clerical officer Melanie Edgar made the trip from Broome to attend the conference for the first time.

"I would like to thank the Aboriginal Heritage Unit team and the traditional owners, the Whadjuk people, for welcoming us all to Perth. Being a first-time attendee to the Aboriginal staff conference, I thought it was a great experience!" she said.

"I would like to give credit to all the rangers and guest speakers on their presentations. It was nice to have an insight of what others are achieving, and to network with my fellow Indigenous colleagues. Gala mabu (thank you)."

Above: Conference attendees take a cultural tour of Kings Park. Photo – Parks and Wildlife Left: Director General Jim Sharp with Banjima Elder Maitland Parker. Photo – Melanie Edgar/Parks and Wildlife



New plan for Swan and Canning rivers

Above: Managing recreation on the river is a focus in the strategy. Photo – Megan Lewis

A master plan to guide the conservation and recreation of Perth's much-loved Swan and Canning rivers was released this month.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the *Swan Canning River Protection Strategy* would guide investment, keep the rivers healthy and ensure they were accessible for the community to enjoy in the long term.

"For the first time, we have a whole-of-government strategy that sets out a shared vision on what needs to be done to make sure our rivers are better protected while meeting the demands of a growing city," Mr Jacob said.

The Minister said the State Government had already implemented some priority projects outlined in the strategy, including reducing excess nutrients, improving oxygen levels in the rivers and supporting riverbank restoration to enhance natural and cultural values.

The State Government has developed nutrient stripping wetlands at Ellen Brook and in Bayswater and has upgraded river oxygenation systems in the Canning River. More than \$16 million has been allocated to Parks and Wildlife in 2015–16 for the management of the Swan and Canning rivers.

The strategy is available at www.dpaw.wa.gov.au.



Dibblers get new home on remote island

Twenty-nine dibblers have been released on a remote island off the State's south coast as part of a project to establish a new population of the endangered carnivorous marsupial.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the 28 Perth Zoo-bred dibblers and one wild-born dibbler were flown to Esperance before being transported by boat to the 95ha Gunton Island in the Recherche Archipelago.

"This is a significant step forward in growing the number of dibblers in the wild," Mr Jacob said.

"Gunton Island is free of feral predators and has the right type of

habitat to support the species."

A dibbler is a small marsupial with coarse brown-grey fur, about 15cm long and weighing less than 100g. It has distinctive white eye-rings and a tapering hairy tail. They are very agile animals and, despite spending much of their time on the ground, often climb bushes to lick the nectar from flowers.

"There are five established populations of dibblers elsewhere in WA, including four with populations of fewer than 50 animals each. We are in the early stages of establishing two more populations. Creating another safe haven for this species is

vitaly important for its long-term survival," the Minister said.

Up to 150 captive-bred dibblers will be released on Gunton Island over the next two years as part of a collaborative project between Parks and Wildlife and Perth Zoo, with funding from South Coast Natural Resource Management.

Dibbler conservation is supported by baiting for foxes and feral cats under the wildlife recovery program *Western Shield*.

Right: Conservation officer Abby Thomas with a dibbler. Far right: Getting ready to release the dibblers. Photos – Parks and Wildlife



Above: Prescribed burning in the Perth hills. Photo – Jennifer Eliot/Parks and Wildlife

Milestone reached for prescribed burning

More than 86,000ha of prescribed burning has been achieved in the south-west forest regions since July 2015 as part of Parks and Wildlife's strategy to get ready for the summer fire season – a significant outcome and one of the best in recent years.

Director of Regional and Fire Management Services Peter Dans said the department was progressing with prescribed burning on land it manages, from Lancelin in the north down to Denmark on the south coast, to help protect communities from bushfires.

"Favourable weather conditions, motivated staff and the additional flexibility provided by *Royalties for Regions* funding have enabled the department to significantly progress its burn program with substantial results achieved so far," he said.

"Prescribed burning is an essential tool in reducing fuel loads and minimising the threat of bushfires throughout the State's forest regions.

"Autumn and spring are the ideal seasons to conduct prescribed burning in the south-west and last financial year the department was able to achieve its best prescribed burning outcome in five years within the south-west forest regions, with about 147,000ha completed.

"This now means that at the end of the previous financial year 35 per cent of department-managed land in the south-west forest regions had a fuel age of less than six years – our aim is to achieve 45 per cent, which research and experience tells us is fundamental to adequately reducing the impact of damaging bushfires. This is because older fuel loads support more intense, destructive and uncontrollable summer

bushfires."

Peter said the additional State Government allocation of \$20 million over four years under the *Royalties for Regions* program had provided Parks and Wildlife with greater capacity and flexibility to undertake prescribed burns on days with suitable weather conditions.

Peter encouraged all members of the community to visit the department's website to see if smoke from a prescribed burn may affect them.

Parks and Wildlife updates its website every morning with the prescribed burns planned for each day. The website www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/todaysburns provides details on where the burns will occur, the size and reasons for undertaking them. The webpage also provides health messages and links for people who may be affected by smoke.



Above: Staff relocate the croc. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Crocodile capture a big day for staff

West Kimberley District staff made headlines last month after capturing and removing two saltwater crocodiles in one day from the Broome townsite in order to keep residents safe.

A 3m crocodile displaying aggressive behaviour was removed from popular Cable Beach in the morning. Later that day, staff caught a 2m crocodile from the tidal overflow area at the Broome Airport.

The smaller crocodile was found in an emaciated condition and had a number of injuries suspected to have been caused by an attack from another crocodile.

Both were transported to the Malcolm Douglas Crocodile Park in Broome.



Praise for new walkway

The department's Pilbara Region received the following email from tour operator Phill Witt:

As a regular visitor, commercial operator in Karijini National Park commencing in 1997, I have witnessed many changes within. In most cases the changes enhance the Karijini experience. Up until recently, the most dramatic changes from my viewpoint had been the sensational ladder and handrail upgrades within Hancock and Weano gorges; I have a trade background so always appreciate the time and effort that goes into such projects and they really are quite something! Considering the inherent dangers when using the previous steel structures, the relatively recent upgrades are brilliant. Within the last few days, I ventured down to Fortescue Falls and Fern Pool as I have done countless times in years gone by and was left in absolute awe with what I encountered. The new walkway that extends down to the head of Fortescue Falls is nothing short of outstanding! When you consider the route chosen, the rock faces it's attached to, the extent of it and the staggering attention to detail, it is a mind-blowing structure!

In fact, as you casually stroll along this superb walkway admiring the spectacular view of Dales Gorge in total safety, you catch glimpses of the original walk trail which only reinforces the appreciation of this latest world-class structure that has been created within the park.

Upon reaching the snazzy timber deck at Fern Pool, I encountered a seasoned farmer from the south-east; here we were standing in front of one of the most picturesque views in Karijini and we were deep in conversation about the new steel walkway that allowed us access to what should have been the main focus of our attention, speaks volumes of the crew that designed and executed construction of this outstanding

walkway! I made a trip over to the rangers' HQ to find out who the contractor was that built it, only to be told that it was constructed by Parks and Wildlife personnel who are usually involved with other activities. Incredible; these guys have created a benchmark which is on a world-class level and when you consider how many international visitors you get to the park, will certainly leave a lasting impression of Karijini for both its breathtaking natural beauty and Aussie ingenuity and workmanship!

This outstanding walkway really is worthy of an information plate detailing when it was constructed and the team that created it.

Phill Witt

Remtrek Astronomy and Guided Adventure Hikes

Above: The new Fortescue Falls walkway. Below: The Parks and Wildlife crew that constructed the walkway. Photos – Parks and Wildlife





Barrow Island uncovered

A three-year archaeological project has unearthed secrets of Barrow Island's past.

Reserves officer Misty Shipway said the Barrow Island Archaeology Project (BIAP) was one of the largest and most comprehensive island archaeological surveys to have been carried out in Australia, and included surface artefact surveys and excavation of archaeological deposits.

"More than 30 occupation sites on the island have been recorded, revealing the transport and trade of stone artefacts from the Pilbara and Ashburton regions," she said.

"Artefacts included woodworking tools, processing implements and basal seed grinding stones, most of which are thought to be Pleistocene in age (more than 10,000 years old) representing some of the only intact examples of these previous lifeways known from Western Australia."

Lead investigator Professor Peter Veth of The University of Western Australia said the BIAP had scored many firsts.

"Three years of careful excavation has revealed occupation back to 44,000 years, exotic stone tools transported across the now drowned coastal plain

and many animal remains known from both the island and further afield," he said.

"The presence of nail-tailed wallaby and olive python spoke to different climate periods and landforms. Mudwhelks collected from the coastal zone and brought back to Boodie Cave were dated to more than 15,000 years ago. This means that coastal foragers of maritime deserts were highly mobile and incorporated both rich marine and arid terrestrial resources from the coastal plain and uplands in their diet," he said.

Barrow Island was abandoned by people when the sea level rose about 7000 years ago and there is no further evidence for use until the 1800s when whalers, pearlers and finally industry became established.

BIAP archaeologist and logistics manager Bob Sheppard said the archaeological records on Barrow were unique and worthy of many more years of study and investigation. His own interest in ship fittings and remains had yielded results with a 19th century wreck scatter being located on the southern end of the island.

Historic archaeologist Professor Alistair Paterson supervised the excavation of two historic sites which



2



3



4

have yielded dry stone-walled structures and a major pearling camp, containing scores of artefacts and spear points made from 19th century bottle glass. Some of these are Kimberley points and attest to the presence of Kimberley pearl divers.

While on Barrow Island, the BIAP team had a visit from Dr Harry Butler AO, noted Australian naturalist and environmental consultant. Harry has a long association with Barrow Island, having first visited more than 50 years ago.

Analysis of BIAP findings is continuing with more exciting results and conclusions to be confirmed.

BIAP is a collaborative project between The University of Western Australia, The University of Queensland,

Curtin University, James Cook University and Sacramento State University. The field teams on Barrow Island were led by Professor Peter Veth (UWA) and supported by Parks and Wildlife and Chevron Australia.

1 Excavations in Boodie Cave uncovered evidence of human occupation before the sea level rise cut Barrow Island off from the mainland nearly 7500 years ago. Photo – Kane Ditchfield *2* Anne Hayes, Roslyn Davison and Jane Hyland from the Buurabalayji Thalanyji Aboriginal Corporation joined Professor Peter Veth at Boodie Cave. *3* Bob Sheppard and Harry Butler discuss findings from the BIAP surveys. Photos – BIAP *4* BIAP team members Lucia Clayton-Martinez and Tiina Manne painstakingly excavate ancient occupation areas of Boodie Cave layer by layer. Photo – Jason Harmon