



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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2015 is drawing to a close and I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the achievements of Parks and Wildlife made with our community and industry partners this year.

More people than ever before are enjoying the State's natural areas. We saw an increase in the number of visits to national and marine parks and areas we manage, with more than 18.6 million during 2014–15. The *Parks for People* initiative, funded by Royalties for Regions, continues to deliver great incentives for people to go camping or caravanning in WA, with seven new or redeveloped campgrounds opened this year.

Our commitment to underpin the management of parks and ensure their values are conserved with best practice science was strengthened this year by a number of other initiatives. Findings from the seven-year Kimberley Islands Biodiversity Survey were published in a large volume that will inform management of the biologically rich islands.

A decade of research into a new bait targeting feral cats, *Eradicat*®, was integrated into our broadscale baiting program under *Western Shield*, after it was approved for operational use in December last year.

The *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy* continued to deliver positive outcomes. We worked closely with traditional owners in progressing the creation of new national and marine parks in the Kimberley, which will cover about five million hectares.

Early in the year we saw large bushfires near Northcliffe and Boddington that confirmed the strength of our capacity to respond to such incidents. Almost half of our staff were involved in the response to the fires, working closely with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Forest Products Commission, State Emergency Service, WA Police, Main Roads, Western Power, St John Ambulance, local bushfire brigades and interstate firefighters.



Thank you from Jim Sharp

In July 2015 we joined forces with the Swan River Trust and created a new Rivers and Estuaries Division within the department focused on the management and conservation of the Swan and Canning rivers and the Swan Canning Riverpark.

As we look back, it is important to recognise that we would not have made such progress without our dedicated volunteers, who in 2014–15 contributed more than 610,000 hours to conservation and management of the State's parks and reserves.

I would like to thank all staff for their enthusiasm, dedication and commitment which underpins all that we achieve.

I wish all employees, volunteers and industry and community partners a safe and happy Christmas, and forward to continued success in 2016.

Jim Sharp
Director General

Above: Camping at the new campground in Coalseam Conservation Park. Photo – Peter Nicholas/Parks and Wildlife

Green Growth Plan released

Parks and Wildlife recently hosted the launch of a new plan to manage land in the Perth and Peel regions as the population climbs toward 3.5 million by 2050.

Premier Colin Barnett, Environment Minister Albert Jacob and Planning Minister John Day together released the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million* for public comment.

Mr Barnett said the plan would secure Federal environmental approvals upfront to provide certainty to development and conservation in Perth and Peel for the next 30 years.

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Editors Mitzi Vance and Karla Graham

Contributors Heather Quinlan and Jennifer Eliot

Telephone (08) 9219 9000



Email pwn@dpaw.wa.gov.au



Department of
Parks and Wildlife





Green Growth Plan released

"What we are committing to is one of the largest expansions to a conservation reserve system surrounding a capital city ever undertaken anywhere in the world," Mr Barnett said.

"It is a once in a generation opportunity to meet the challenge of ensuring the sustainable growth of metropolitan area while protecting more areas of land with environmental significance."

The draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million* includes streamlined State environmental approvals for future developments, the addition of 170,000ha in conservation reserves, and the establishment of a Peel Regional Park and Peel Harvey Marine Management Area.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the plan streamlined development approvals while offering robust protection for WA's unique biodiversity.

"Actions include protecting threatened plants and animals such as the Carnaby's cockatoo and western swamp tortoise, and improving the water quality of the Swan Canning and Peel Harvey estuaries," he said.

"The harvesting of introduced pine trees will alter cockatoo food resources, however, their removal is essential for better management of Perth's main drinking water aquifer. Improved groundwater recharge will also help protect other groundwater dependent threatened species and ecological communities."

View the plan at www.dpc.wa.gov.au/greengrowthplan. Public submissions close at 5pm Friday 8 April 2016.

Above: Premier Colin Barnett launches the Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million. Photo – Jennifer Eliot/Parks and Wildlife

More recognition for traditional owners

Conservation reserves including national parks can now be jointly vested with traditional owners as a result of legislative amendments passed in State Parliament last month, due to come into effect in early 2016.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the changes to the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* meant that for the first time, the State Government and native title holders could create jointly vested conservation reserves, as well as re-vest existing reserves.

"These improvements build on the partnerships we already have with many traditional owner groups through joint management agreements, particularly in the Kimberley as part of the *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*," Mr Jacob said.

"The changes further recognise traditional owners as partners with Government in both the ownership and management of conservation reserves, including the joint preparation of management plans."

Mr Jacob said the amendments also created a single Conservation and Parks Commission to replace the two vesting authorities, the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority of WA and the Conservation Commission of WA.

"The new authority will be created early next year and will be the vesting body for conservation lands, forests and marine reserves and provide independent advice to Government on conservation matters," he said.

Below: Parks and Wildlife has been collaborating closely with the Yawuru people, traditional owners of the land in and around Broome. Photo – Jennifer Eliot/Parks and Wildlife



Campground unveiled at Credo

New camping facilities at the proposed Credo Conservation Park were unveiled last week, improving visitor experiences and boosting tourism at the former pastoral lease.

The new campground, about 70km north-west of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, has 16 multi-purpose camping sites that can accommodate caravans, camp trailers and tents.

The campground features two new toilet blocks, new signs and access roads, plus tables and barbecue rings for each site.

In addition to the new development, Parks and Wildlife has completed upgrades to the homestead, shearers' quarters and other facilities.

Goldfields regional manager Ian Kealley said Credo was becoming an increasingly popular destination.

"We hope these recent works will increase tourism in the region, and help display this dramatic part of WA," Ian said.

"These facilities will give visitors a better experience and encourage more people to get out and explore the area."

Caravanning and camping are vital components of regional tourism and make a huge contribution to the regional economy.

The \$250,000 project, funded by the State Government's Royalties for Regions program, is part of the \$21.05 million *Parks for People* initiative.

Above: Regional leader parks and visitor services David Pickles, Wendy Duncan MLA, Goldfields regional manager Ian Kealley and recreation and landscape unit coordinator Nathan Greenhill at the official opening of the new Credo campground. Photo – Vanessa Jackson/Parks and Wildlife



Aerial fleet ready for action

Western Australia's firefighting capability has been strengthened significantly with the launch of its full aerial firefighting fleet, including the return of the giant Erickson Aircrane 'Georgia Peach'.

The 22-strong fleet includes the aircrane, six Bell 214B helitacs, eight fixed-wing water bomber aircraft, six air attack supervisor aircraft, and one aerial intelligence helicopter.

They join Parks and Wildlife's fleet of 10 high-wing spotter aircraft for aerial fire detection.

Emergency Services Minister Joe Francis said the fleet was expecting another busy season after last summer dropping 25.7 million litres of water and foam – twice the volume dropped the previous season.

"This is testament to the hard work of hundreds of personnel," Mr Francis said.

Ten of the aircrafts were provided through the National Aerial Firefighting Centre, which coordinates the sharing of aerial firefighting resources between states

Clockwise from top: Environment Minister Albert Jacob, Emergency Services Minister Joe Francis and Commonwealth Assistant Minister for Health Ken Wyatt. Mr Jacob and Mr Francis check out a Bell 214B helitac. The Erickson Aircrane. Photos – Heather Quinlan/Parks and Wildlife

and territories during the fire season.

The Erickson Aircrane can carry 7500 litres of water or foam, hover fill in 38 seconds, and can cruise at 212km per hour.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said with another busy bushfire season expected, Parks and Wildlife had conducted prescribed burns over more than 130,000ha of land in south-west forests, national parks and reserves.

"This is an excellent achievement but I cannot stress enough how important it is that the whole community remains bushfire ready," he said.

For more information, visit www.areyouready.wa.gov.au.



Major awards for Perth wetland projects

A wetland project to treat stormwater and enhance habitat and amenity next to Perth's Canning River has topped the 2015 Western Australian Stormwater Industry Association (SIA) awards.

The *Wharf Street Wetland and Civic Parklands* project in Cannington, won SIA's award for Excellence in Research and Innovation.

Drainage and nutrient intervention program manager Peter Adkins said Wharf Street Wetland was a constructed wetland, which uses a controlled flow of water together with natural processes to treat stormwater thereby improving the quality of water feeding into the river.

"The project incorporates surface and subsurface flow wetlands and has been rigorously monitored and maintained since it began in 2009. The success we've had at the site is testament to the hard work of staff in the Rivers and Estuaries Division of Parks and Wildlife and our partners, City of Canning and SERCUL," Peter said.

Competition judges were impressed with the project's continued process of learning and adaptation, and the learning opportunities it provides to industry and research bodies.

A second program, the *New WAtEr Ways* program, was also recognised by the SIA, winning the top prize for Excellence in Policy or Education.

Land use planning program manager Jennifer Stritzke said *New WAtEr Ways* was a capacity building program that aims to raise the level of skills, knowledge and practice among government and industry to improve the delivery of urban water management.

"It provides training sessions, workshops, informative newsletters, demonstration site visits, networking evenings and a website filled with resources and links to relevant local and national urban water projects," she said.

The program is a partnership between Parks and Wildlife, Department of Planning, Department of Water,

Western Australian Local Government Association and the Urban Development Institute of Australia (WA).

As WA winners, both projects gain automatic entry into the National Stormwater Awards for Excellence 2015–16.



Top: Wharf Street Wetland. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Above centre: Drainage and nutrient intervention program manager Peter Adkins and land use planning program manager Jennifer Stritzke accept the award for the Wharf Street Wetland project from WA SIA Chairperson Helen Brookes.

Above: Jennifer Stritzke joins Shelley Shepherd, Mark Batty and Rebecca Epworth to accept the award for Excellence in Policy or Education for the New WAtEr Ways program. Photos – SIA



Goldfields pair love volunteer lifestyle

Down-to-earth and enthusiastic are just two phrases that can be used to describe Bruce and Kay Withnell, this year's Volunteer of the Year award winners.

Campground hosts Bruce and Kay were recognised by Environment Minister Albert Jacob at a Parks and Wildlife ceremony for their roles as full-time volunteer caretakers of the homestead at Matuwa (Lorna Glen) in the Goldfields and the 600,000ha Matuwa and Kurrara Kurrara (Earaheedy) Indigenous Protected Area.

The husband-and-wife team have helped respond to two bushfires, welcomed and managed visitors, liaised with neighbours, worked with the Wiluna Martu Traditional Owners and rangers, monitored and maintained the native animal enclosure and

fencing, and maintained the homestead and other infrastructure.

Bruce said their first stint at Matuwa was only meant to last 12 months, but a love for the role led them to stay on for three years.

"Kay and I love the solitude and the variety of jobs, and the country itself is magnificent," he said.

Kay said volunteering with Parks and Wildlife had been a fantastic experience.

"We're the same as any volunteer – not in it for awards or recognition. We just get so much out of doing things for others, and also for the animals and the environment," she said.

Another 31 dedicated volunteers were recognised at the ceremony with Outstanding Service Awards,

Long Service Awards and, for the first time, Highly Commended Awards (see below).

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said these awards recognise the people who generously volunteer their time and skills to contribute to important environmental programs around the State.

More than 4600 volunteers contributed over 610,000 hours to Parks and Wildlife projects in 2014–15, a record amount.

"This is an outstanding contribution to the conservation work being carried out in WA," the Minister said.

"They are all to be congratulated for their invaluable service to the community."



Top: Volunteer of the Year winners Kay and Bruce Withnell with Environment Minister Albert Jacob.

Above: Dr Kerry Traylor joins Kevin Reid and Will Smithwick with their Outstanding Service Awards for the Prawn Watch program. Photos – Guildford Photographics/Parks and Wildlife

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Volunteer of the Year Award

Bruce and Kay Withnell

Outstanding Service Awards

Joe and Jan King
Sheryl Wilson
Robert Broadway
Frank Morris
Kerry Davies
Jennie Hunt

Long Service Awards

Eunice Daubert
Faye Deery
Robyn Dennis
Shirley Fisher
Gilbert Marsh
Stuart Payne
Helen Riley
Dale Stein

David Taggart
Johanna Ter Wiel
Will Smithwick
Kevin Reid
Kelvin and Barbara Cooper
Patrick Tremlett
Yanchep Adopt a Spot team (Dave Grieg, Dave Little, Ceridwyn Morgan-Roberts and Walt Logue)

Highly Commended

Gayle Kealley
Cliff Burns
John Murphy
Alan Barker
Tom Sharman



Left: New and experienced campground hosts came together to learn about the program and consider their next volunteering adventure. Photo – Steve Csaba/Parks and Wildlife

Volunteer hosts ready to hit campgrounds

The Royalties for Regions-funded *Parks for People* initiative is improving campgrounds around the State and it's not just the guests who are benefitting.

Volunteer campground hosts, who help the department by staying at campgrounds to welcome visitors and carry out maintenance, have a range of excellent locations to choose from. These were presented at the annual campground host workshop, held at Parks and Wildlife's headquarters recently.

About 150 campground hosts attended the workshop, where they caught up on the department's latest programs, shared their experiences, built networks, and listened to special presentations on crocodile awareness and reptile smuggling.

30-year turtle program still going strong



A 30-year turtle tagging program in the Pilbara is providing vital information about the biology and behaviour of hawksbill turtles, including information such as foraging grounds, nesting grounds and deceased turtles.

Pilbara region marine conservation officer Joanne King said the tagging program at Rosemary Island has been going since 1986 and is among the longest running programs of its type in WA.

“Long-term projects such as this are important as turtles have a complex life cycle and trends in population numbers can be detected over decades,” Joanne said.

She said tagging was important to identify individual marine turtles.

“This year we recorded 444 turtles over 14 nights, including 134 turtles which had not been recorded before,” she said.

Parks and Wildlife staff, Murujuga Land and Sea Unit rangers and local volunteers camp around Hawksbill Hut research station and work through the night tagging turtles and recording details.

The tagging program is supported by Rio Tinto as part of a three-year agreement with the department.

Above: Volunteer Anna Vitenbergs and Patrick Distel from Rio Tinto waiting to measure and tag the nesting hawksbill in front of the Parks and Wildlife field station. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Change to fire alerts on social media

Parks and Wildlife’s Facebook and Twitter pages are important for communicating bushfire, smoke and prescribed burning information to the public and media.

To ensure effective and timely information, bushfire and smoke alerts will now only be posted to the Parks and Wildlife Twitter page with an updated pinned post to the top of the department’s corporate Facebook page to reflect the current status of any fires and smoke alerts. This Facebook pinned post contains the Twitter link and the dpaw.wa.gov.au/news/alerts live link.

Photos and community information messages regarding bushfires will still be posted on Facebook when needed.

The department’s Facebook page has 13,000 followers and Twitter more than 6500. Social media is a growing and successful communication tool to promote and inform the community about the department’s projects and operations in managing WA’s unique environment.



Natural Bridge lookout open for Christmas



Visitors to the south coast this festive season will get a sneak preview of the \$5.75 million redevelopment at The Gap and Natural Bridge at Torndirrup National Park near Albany.

When finished, the redevelopment will include new world-class lookout structures at both locations, with connecting paths, picnic areas, a visitor gathering area with interpretative facilities and a bigger car park.

Challenges in the fabrication progress have delayed the completion of The Gap lookout, but a stunning new lookout at Natural Bridge and a common picnic area is open for a short period before closing again on 18 January 2016 for further work.

The project is funded through Royalties for Regions and Parks and Wildlife’s capital works program.

Left: The new walkway at Natural Bridge. Photo – Mike Shephard/Parks and Wildlife