



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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Visitors flock to new lookouts at The Gap

More than 20,000 people have visited new facilities at The Gap and Natural Bridge in Torndirrup National Park since the \$6.1 million redevelopment opened in early April.

The centrepiece of the new facilities is two spectacular lookouts, providing incredible views of the Southern Ocean across to West Cape Howe. The project was funded by Royalties for Regions and Parks and Wildlife.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the redevelopment was universally accessible and included the two lookout structures, connecting paths, picnic area, interpretive signage and a car park for more than 30 vehicles.

“Visitors can experience the dramatic coastline and spectacular scenery out to West Cape Howe from a grated see-through platform that rises almost 40m above the ocean and extends 10m out from the cliff face, of which 4m is directly above the ocean,” he said.

Mr Jacob said the world-class facility was one of the best and safest ways to get immersed in the grandeur of the Southern Ocean.

Regional Development Minister Terry Redman said Royalties for Regions had contributed \$5.1 million to the project.

“Tourism is vital to regional WA’s economy. Visitors to the State spend \$8.9 billion a year – \$4 billion of that in the regions – and the industry employs about 94,000 people, many of those in regional areas,” he said.

“The Great Southern Development Commission also played a major role in securing funding for this project.”

“These facilities join the Granite Skywalk in Porongurup National Park, the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk in Walpole-Nornalup National Park and the Wilderness



Above: The new lookout at The Gap extends 10m from the cliff face and 40m above the ocean. Photo – Ryan Scott/Parks and Wildlife
Inset: Parks and Wildlife staff Mike Shephard, Peter Hartley, Greg Mair and Peter Dans. Photo – Sally Bostwick/Parks and Wildlife

Lookout in Mount Frankland National Park in offering unique eco-tourism experiences for visitors and, in turn, supporting local communities,” he said.

The Gap lookout is made of high-quality stainless steel and is supported by five cantilevered beams anchored securely to stable rock using anchors each up to 9m deep. The platform can support 27 tonnes – the weight of four African elephants or one humpback whale.

The environmental impact of the project was minimised by using existing path alignments for the new paths, limiting vehicle and machinery access during construction, and reusing vegetation and rock that were removed for the site.

View the video of the new facilities at www.dpaw.wa.gov.au.

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Department of Parks and Wildlife





Fish tracking to study river health

*A tagged black bream being released into the river by researchers (note the yellow plastic tag beneath its dorsal fin).
Photo – Stephen Beatty/Murdoch University*

Parks and Wildlife is working with Murdoch University on a black bream tagging project to study the benefits of providing artificial oxygenation to fish in the Swan Canning Riverpark.

River systems manager Mark Cugley said while monitoring has shown that providing oxygenation improved river water quality, the study would show if fish were taking advantage of these conditions during periods of oxygen stress.

“Artificial oxygenation has been successfully used in the Upper Swan estuary since trials began in 2006 to help process nutrients and improve aquatic habitat. This latest project will provide valuable data to inform management of the oxygenation plants and maximise the benefit to fish and other aquatic organisms,” Mark said.

The tagging project tracks the movement of 55 black bream implanted with acoustic tags.

“These fish will be tracked by the Swan Canning Acoustic Array, a collection of 25 acoustic receivers, or listening stations, installed by the department throughout the Riverpark between Fremantle and the Swan Valley,” Mark said.

“The receivers collect information on fish movements from the tags with a particular focus on

the area of the Upper Swan estuary influenced by the Swan Oxygenation Program.”

Staff and students from Murdoch University’s Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research will also investigate the metabolic response of black bream to a range of dissolved oxygen concentrations and temperatures in the laboratory, to help establish how these factors may influence the movements of black bream within the estuary.

“This data, together with field data from routine Parks and Wildlife water quality monitoring, will be compared with the information collected from the Swan Canning Acoustic Array over the course of the black bream tagging project to help inform the management of the Swan Oxygenation Program and ensure it provides conditions that are optimal for fish in the Upper Swan estuary.”

Mark said the study, which has received additional funding from Recfishwest, would also identify important habitats for black bream, the most important recreational fish species in the Swan and Canning rivers.

Recreational fishers who catch a tagged black bream are asked to return the fish to the water so data can continue to be collected, and to contact researchers with any information from the tag.

New treetop adventure for Lane Poole Reserve

There are nine courses, 87 challenges and 23 flying foxes for people to tackle at the new Trees Adventure Park in popular Lane Poole Reserve near Dwellingup.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob was on hand to open the tourism attraction earlier this month and, of course, have a go traversing the treetops on the trapezes and Tarzan jumps.

Mr Jacob said the high ropes obstacle course was developed from an unsolicited proposal and business plan submitted to Parks and Wildlife by Canopy Adventure Pty Ltd (trading as Trees Adventure).

“The company came forward with a unique proposal and the department worked directly with them through the assessment and approval process to deliver an exciting new park experience,” Mr Jacob said.

“Lane Poole Reserve already receives more than 180,000 visitors each year. With attractions such as Trees Adventure Park and the recently upgraded visitor facilities provided through the State Government’s *Parks for People* initiative, there are even more opportunities to attract visitors to the area.

“The Government is very supportive of initiatives that grow tourism in Western Australia and we encourage people to come to us with great business ideas.”

The department’s tourism and property branch manager Rod Quartermain said the Trees Adventure Park, located near Nanga Mill campground, featured a network of rope bridges, flying foxes, trapezes and Tarzan jumps through the tree canopy.

“The infrastructure has been built around tree trunks rather than drilling through them, minimising the impact on vegetation and allowing native wildlife to move freely underneath,” Rod said.

“Children as young as four can participate as the nine courses are graded by difficulty.”



*Right: Environment Minister Albert Jacob tests out a suspended skateboard. Photo – Ewen MacGregor/Parks and Wildlife
Below: Some of the obstacles on offer. Photo – Trees Adventure Park*



Autumn prescribed burning underway



The department's annual prescribed burning program is continuing in the State's south-west forests area. Since 1 July 2015, Parks and Wildlife has carried out prescribed burning on 151,400ha, with more to come as milder autumn weather provides greater opportunities for fuel reduction to manage bushfire risk.

This achievement is partly due to an additional \$20 million in funding over four years from the State Government's Royalties for Regions program, which has significantly boosted the department's capacity to safely undertake planned burns when weather conditions allow.

Parks and Wildlife is promoting the prescribed burning program within the community through a series of newspaper, radio and online advertisements in the Perth metropolitan area and its South West and Warren regions.



Parks and Wildlife staff carry out a large burn in the Perth Hills. Photos – Jennifer Eliot/Parks and Wildlife

Ranger cadet leaders conference



Unit leaders from the department's popular *Bush Rangers* and *River Rangers* programs gathered recently for a two-day conference that saw them test their skills at camp cooking, field botany and pitching a tent blindfolded.

More than 90 leaders – teachers who volunteer to lead *Bush Ranger* and *River Ranger* cadet units at schools throughout the State – attended the conference at Ern Halliday Recreation Camp in Perth's north.

Bush Rangers program coordinator Richard Olive said the annual conference gave unit leaders an opportunity to share ideas, learn from their colleagues and take part in hands-on workshops and presentations.

"Some of the highlights included a team-building activity that required participants to pitch a tent blindfolded, a chance to dissect fish with staff from the Department of Fisheries, and a workshop on Aboriginal acknowledgement by Parks and Wildlife's Aboriginal Heritage Unit officer Belinda Cox," he said.

"We were pleased with the response to the conference. One teacher reported back to say how

Above: Parks and Wildlife culture and heritage officer Belinda Cox runs a workshop on appropriate acknowledgement of Aboriginal people and lands.

Right: Unit leaders gaining some kayaking skills. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

valuable she had found the chance to network and hear about how other cadet groups overcame the challenges that face them. Another said he had gained a broad range of ideas to take back to his school and put into practice with students."

Bush Rangers and *River Rangers* offer students in years 5–12 the chance to experience and learn about nature through fun and educational activities such as camping, hiking, biking or canoeing. Students develop leadership and teamwork skills while contributing to conservation projects.

The program is supported by the Department of Local Government and Communities.





Workshop brings hope for western ground parrots

More than 30 conservation experts from across Australia and New Zealand recently attended a workshop to help secure the future for the critically endangered western ground parrot.

Hosted by Parks and Wildlife and the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team and facilitated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Species Survival Commission, the three-day workshop was sponsored by WWF, Birdlife WA, Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, South Coast NRM and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment.

Parks and Wildlife regional ecologist and South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team chair Sarah Comer said the workshop helped identify and prioritise emergency interventions for the critically endangered species.

"Although a small number of western ground parrots remain in the wild, careful management is required for the population to recover," she said.

"Workshop participants developed a vision for the species – that the community values western ground parrots and they are a symbol of a healthy ecosystem, so successful recovery will provide inspiration, hope and a blueprint for the community's efforts to conserve biodiversity and demonstrate that we can and should prevent extinction."

Sarah said severe bushfires in Cape Arid National Park at the end of 2015 had destroyed around 90 per cent of the bird's known habitat.

"The fires have created additional challenges, but we are encouraged by the results of three comprehensive

surveys and monitoring of unburnt pockets of habitat, with the assistance of volunteers and the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot," she said.

"Parrots have been detected in low numbers in two areas where we had previously not heard birds, and monitoring of the two historic sites has found birds persisting in these areas.

"Automated recording units have also been deployed in Cape Arid and Nuytsland Nature Reserve in the hope of detecting more birds, and these will be collected in May.

"Since October we have conducted targeted feral animal control around unburnt pockets of western ground parrot habitat and trapped 17 feral cats."

Above: Experts from across Australia and New Zealand gathered for the western ground parrot workshop. Photo – Giles Hardy

South Perth foreshore revitalised

Parks and Wildlife teamed up with the City of South Perth to transform the South Perth Promenade into a gateway befitting of one of Perth's top visitor and tourist destinations on the Swan River.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said Parks and Wildlife invested more than \$1 million through the Riverbank program to replace crumbling river walling at the popular riverside destination near Mends Street.

"This project was an important engineering project and its completion has made the South Perth Promenade safer, more attractive and easier for the community to access," he said.

"The promenade is a high traffic area and the gateway to South Perth on the Swan River and now boasts the facilities expected at an important tourist and visitor destination in Perth."

The development includes the replacement of 355m of collapsed river walling and the beautification of the promenade including seats, lighting and other facilities for visitors.

Parks and Wildlife has collaborated on 23 projects along the city's 18km foreshore since 2008 as part of the Riverbank program.

Below: Member for South Perth John McGrath, South Perth Mayor Sue Doherty and Environment Minister Albert Jacob officially open the South Perth Promenade. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

