



# PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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## Milestone in conservation legislation

**Conservation in Western Australia has entered a new era with State Parliament passing history-making new environmental laws on 13 September 2016.**

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the Liberal National Government had overhauled archaic wildlife legislation with modern and innovative laws that met expectations for environmental protection in the 21st century.

He said the passing of the Biodiversity Conservation Bill in Parliament delivered conservation powers never before seen in this State with every provision in the new legislation superior to the inadequate and outdated *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*.

“The State Government grasped the opportunity to replace outdated and deficient legislation with a more contemporary, robust Act that ensures accountable and effective governance of biodiversity conservation,” he said.

Under the old Act, people attempting to smuggle native fauna out of WA faced a maximum fine of \$4000 to \$10,000 for animals that can be worth more than \$100,000 each overseas. The new Act has increased the maximum penalties to up to \$500,000 to provide a real deterrent to those considering serious wildlife crimes.

The new Act has enhanced special protection for whales, dugong and dolphins. It also enables listing as critical habitat areas of land or water that are critical to the survival of a threatened species or community.



Above: Swan Coastal District manager Craig Olejnik and Environment Minister Albert Jacob release a native mammal. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

There is now increased public scrutiny of Ministerial decisions on listing native species and improved Ministerial accountability measures, particularly in relation to decisions that may result in extinction, which now must be approved by both Houses of Parliament. These decisions can currently be made without this scrutiny.

Fines have increased to \$1 million for illegally obtaining sandalwood, and for the first time,

WA has verifiable record keeping of trading and processing of sandalwood.

Parks and Wildlife Director General Jim Sharp thanked all staff who had been involved over many years in bringing this important new legislation to fruition, particularly Gordon Wyre, Director, Legislative and Policy Reform and his team for guiding and leading the process to a successful conclusion.

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Department of Parks and Wildlife



# Whale rescue training put into practice at Jurien Bay

*Above: Moora District staff Paul Jennings, Chris Phillips and Dave Henke approach the whale to cut the ropes entangling it. Photo – Parks and Wildlife*

**An intensive training program to build regional capacity to respond to whale entanglements has paid off, with the disentanglement of a 10m humpback whale off the coast of Jurien Bay earlier this month.**

Over the past few years a series of three-day courses was rolled out to staff across a number of Parks and Wildlife's coastal centres to help prepare officers for the possibility of a whale rescue.

Whales can become entangled in lines and ropes as they traverse WA's fishing grounds.

In early September, Parks and Wildlife's Moora District received a call about a whale entangled with ropes and floats five nautical miles north-west of Jurien boat harbour.

Jurien Bay Marine Park coordinator Paul Jennings led the district's Large Whale Disentanglement Response team in a delicate operation to free the whale.

"It seemed once the whale became initially entangled, it rolled in an attempt to free itself of the ropes, only to become more wrapped and restricted," he said.

"With the Jurien Sea Search and Rescue vessel following closely in support, three staff on board a zodiac vessel attempted to free the animal by cutting the ropes.

"They made several approaches, first cutting the ropes around the whale's head, then those around its pectoral fin and lower body. However two wraps around the tail remained tight and did not release.

"A careful last cut was made which released the remaining rope from the whale. We saw the whale rise high above the surface, curve its body and dive deep under the water. An inspection of the whale as it rose to the surface confirmed all ropes had been removed and it was free to swim away.

"We were absolutely elated!"

## Annual report released

The *Parks and Wildlife 2015–16 Annual Report* has been released, revealing some interesting statistics.

WA's national and marine parks and reserves are growing more and more popular, with an increase in the number of visits to Parks and Wildlife-managed lands to 19.75 million during 2015–16, up from 18.67 million in 2014–15.

Even better, visitors are reporting high satisfaction with their visits, with the highest satisfaction rating in more than 10 years being recorded at 91.4 per cent.

In addition, the department achieved its best prescribed burning outcome in six years, with 154,000ha burnt in the south-west forest regions in 2015–16.



For the first time, the report covers the department's management of the Swan Canning Riverpark following the amalgamation with the Swan River Trust in 2015.

The report is available on [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/about-us/annual-report-and-yearbook](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/about-us/annual-report-and-yearbook).

## Government adopts Ferguson recommendations

**The Liberal National Government has announced that it is supporting all 17 recommendations of the *Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire* by Euan Ferguson AFSM, including the implementation of a Rural Fire Service.**

The Premier said the State's volunteer firefighters did a magnificent job and their expertise in fighting bushfires needed to be better utilised. He said consultation would take place with relevant agencies such as Parks and Wildlife, DFES, local government, volunteer firefighters and the United Firefighters Unions of WA to investigate the best model.

Many of Mr Ferguson's recommendations were being implemented ahead of the upcoming bushfire season. This included establishing five pre-formed multi agency incident management teams for level 3 incidents, which include representation from both Government and volunteers.

For the first time, interagency pre-formed incident management teams have been established, with

Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services set to respond to a bushfire in teams made up of trained staff from both agencies as well as representatives of local governments and volunteer bushfire brigades.

Assistant Director Regional and Fire Management Services Kelly Gillen said the establishment of interagency teams would ensure a seamless approach to bushfire suppression.

"This change is in accordance with a recommendation made in the *Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire* and direction from Government to improve the State's capacity to respond to significant bushfires," Kelly said.

"The new arrangement will mean the expertise of both agencies will be drawn upon to make decision making quicker in a fast-developing situation."



Above: Judy Dunlop holding the quoll with Jeremy Lane, Ashwin Biljabu and Neil Lane. Photo – Gareth Catt/Kanyirninpa Jukurpa

## Good news for mammals on Threatened Species Day

**National Threatened Species Day was celebrated across the department on 7 September, with the announcement that a 1000ha sanctuary would be built by the end of the year to protect woylies and numbats at Dryandra Woodland in the Wheatbelt.**

The \$480,000 feral predator-proof enclosure will be built in conjunction with cat and fox baiting as part of Parks and Wildlife's *Western Shield* wildlife recovery program, and a coordinated neighbour and community involvement program.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said safeguarding threatened species at Dryandra was important.

"This woodland is one of the most important areas for fauna conservation in WA, supporting 10 threatened species and one of the few remaining wild populations of both numbats and woylies," he said.

Threatened Species Day also saw the announcement that the first northern quoll was trapped in WA's largest and most remote national park, Karlamilyi in the Pilbara, in Martu country.

Parks and Wildlife research scientist Judy Dunlop said the significant find was the result of a joint survey between the Kanyirninpa Jukurpa Punmu and Parnngurr ranger teams and Parks and Wildlife.

"Images of northern quolls were captured on remote camera in 2012 by Bamford Consulting Ecologists on behalf of Cameco, and there were sightings from traditional owners in the 1960s, but it was very exciting to capture and record the first live quoll in the area," she said.

## Volunteers outdo themselves

**Parks and Wildlife's dedicated volunteer base has contributed a record number of hours to help in the conservation and management of WA's natural places.**

In 2015–16, 5189 volunteers contributed 638,747 hours.

Volunteer program coordinator Lee Hollingsworth said the number of volunteers who were active, 5189 of the total 13,737 registered with the department, was also a record.

"This is a fantastic effort by all volunteers who had generously given their time so the department could achieve so much more," he said.

The highest contributing projects were 1993 wildlife rehabilitators giving 303,946 hours followed by 235 campground hosts who contributed a massive 158,837 hours across 50 campgrounds.

In 2015–16, 15 new projects were registered, and there are now more than 250 active volunteer projects registered. Volunteering opportunities include monitoring the Wildcare helpline, helping at Perth Observatory or WA Herbarium, monitoring wildlife including turtles or rare flora, and looking after trails such as the Munda Biddi Trail or Bibbulmun Track.



Above: Campground hosts Debbie and Andy Crook at Kennedy Range National Park. Photo – Gavan Mullan/Parks and Wildlife

In the Midwest Region, Kennedy Range National Park-based campground hosts Debbie and Andy Crook believe the personal reward they get from volunteering is far greater than their input.

"Originally both from country WA, we love the natural environment and love to share our enthusiasm for the environment with national park visitors. In this role, we have met a great diversity of people and made many friends," they said.

"We understand that helping visitors to quickly settle in and appreciate the national park attractions brings great satisfaction to visitors. The positive feedback we receive from visitors is especially rewarding.

"We also know that satisfied visitors usually stay longer and usually spread the word to their family, friends and colleagues. This in turn brings benefits to the local community."



Left to right: Bibbulmun Track volunteers. Herbarium volunteer Patricia Wenham mounting specimens. Campground host Ron Scott at Gnaala Mia campground. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

# Western Shield baiting targets feral cats in Midwest

Above: Black-flanked rock wallaby, Kalbarri National Park. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

**Parks and Wildlife has carried out aerial feral cat baiting over 1700km<sup>2</sup> of Kalbarri and Nambung national parks using *Eradicat*<sup>®</sup> to help protect important populations of native animals.**

The spring baiting, part of the *Western Shield* wildlife recovery program, is directly assisting the repopulation of black-flanked rock wallabies at Kalbarri, after last year's discovery of a small number of the mammals in the park.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said that following a translocation of 23 black-flanked rock wallabies from the Wheatbelt to Kalbarri in May, it was important to use the specially-developed *Eradicat*<sup>®</sup> bait to help reduce the predation risk by feral cats.

"The baiting will also help to safeguard populations of chuditch and malleefowl in the park," he said.

Baiting in Kalbarri National Park is part of \$1.7 million in Australian Government National Landcare Programme funding to integrate *Eradicat*<sup>®</sup> with existing broadscale fox control under the *Western Shield* program.

Meanwhile, *Eradicat*<sup>®</sup> is also assisting in protecting the vulnerable malleefowl and fairy tern in Nambung

National Park. Funding from sponsor Tronox is helping *Western Shield* to control foxes and feral cats and monitoring of native wildlife in the park.

*Western Shield* coordinator Gareth Watkins said Nambung National Park and surrounding nature reserves also supported a number of priority species including quenda, tammar wallaby and western brush wallaby.

"It is the first time *Eradicat*<sup>®</sup> has been used at Kalbarri and Nambung national parks and it is anticipated that this, and future baiting, will assist in managing the threat of feral cats in these areas," Gareth said.



Quenda. Photo – Alan Danks/Parks and Wildlife

## Community input on Ningaloo coast reserves

Parks and Wildlife's Parks and Visitor Services and Exmouth District staff recently spent time on the Ningaloo coast, speaking with visitors and undertaking preliminary field work ahead of proposed public reserves along this special area.

The department is keen to confirm results of extensive independent visitor research conducted along the Ningaloo coast over the years, which has provided a comprehensive view of why visitors value the Ningaloo coast and the types of experiences they seek when visiting this special area.

Social science coordinator Amanda Smith said 79 interviews were conducted with visitors to the area to record what experiences, aspirations and needs were required in planning for the public reserves.

"Visitors interviewed were from a wide range of backgrounds and included people visiting for a couple of days to those that were staying for a few months," she said.

"It provided valuable information and confirmed the extensive visitor research already conducted was still relevant. People who visit the coast do so for a remote, back-to-basics experience and to enjoy the many experiences the marine park offers.

"They want to enjoy an affordable holiday where they can take their dogs and enjoy a camp fire."

Exmouth district manager Arvid Hogstrom said the department's objective was to ensure these experiences remained now and in the future, and the creation of these public reserves would ensure this.

Visitor interaction and feedback is a key part of public consultation for the reserves and there will be ongoing opportunities for visitors and locals alike to have input into the planning process.

People will be able to participate in an online survey in the near future, which will provide valuable feedback on the types of facilities and services visitors want to see along the coast.

The survey results will help in the preparation of the draft management plan, which will be made available for public comment, pending the progress of negotiations with the Gnulli native title party.

More information on planning for the conservation and recreation reserves can be found at [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/ningaloo-coast](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/ningaloo-coast).

Below: Coastal camping at Warroora. Photo – Amanda Smith/Parks and Wildlife



# App helps explore marine parks

It's easier to appreciate the wonders of WA's 13 marine parks with the release of the Marine Parks WA mobile app for iPhones and iPads.

Parks and Wildlife senior projects officer Carolyn Thomson-Dans said the app, created by Parks and Wildlife with the support of Department of Fisheries and Exxon Mobil Australia, provided information on all activities in these areas, including fishing.

"This will make it easier for people to plan their visits to WA's magnificent marine parks, from the remote Lalang-Garram / Camden Sound in the Kimberley, to Walpole and Nornalup inlets in the south," Carolyn said.

"The app contains comprehensive information about each marine park, along with 72 common marine wildlife species and species of conservation significance such as whales, reptiles and fish.

"Importantly, all the data is downloaded to your phone, allowing people to access park information at any time.

"For example, the app has a 'where am I?' function so park users can see which marine park zone they are in and what activities they can enjoy in each particular area, even when offline or out of mobile phone range."

The app is available on iTunes.



Rowley Shoals Marine Park. Photo – Suzanne Long

# Spring has sprung for wildlife officers



Top: Dugite. Photo – Matt Swan/Parks and Wildlife Above centre: Duck family, Beelu National Park. Photo – Dom Lim Photography Above: Australian sea lion. Photo – Miecha Bradshaw/Parks and Wildlife

**Wildlife officers across the department had a busy start to spring, responding to hundreds of seasonal wildlife-related incidents across the State.**

Nature Protection Branch wildlife officer Karen Smith said September was traditionally a busy month, with snakes beginning to appear, ducks and swans emerging with their offspring, magpies swooping and marine mammals frequenting WA beaches.

"Wildlife officers across the State respond to many different incidents, and it is important that we continue to make the public aware of the wildlife they might encounter, both for the safety of people and the animals themselves," she said.

"We have been busy reminding the public to be aware of duck and swan families moving around and that motorists and cyclists should remain cautious on roads and paths near water bodies.

"With the onset of warmer weather, we have also been getting plenty of calls via the Wildcare Helpline and via our local offices about increased snake activity, as well as territorial magpies swooping."

Karen said seals and sea lions rested up on popular beaches at this time of year, with plenty of interest from members of the public.

"This year we have had a lot of calls about seals and sea lions, and have been busy assuring people that they are usually simply resting and should not be fed or approached," she said.

"In addition, Parks and Wildlife staff from across the State have responded to several whale strandings and disentanglements, as well as whale carcasses on beaches over the past few months."

People can report sick, injured or orphaned wildlife incidents to the department's Wildcare Helpline on (08) 9474 9055.