



# PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

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## William Bay to benefit from \$10.55m upgrade



Above: Elephant Rocks, William Bay National Park. Photo – Rory Turker

**A major redevelopment of the popular William Bay National Park was announced this month, with works set to include new trails, sealed roads, car parks, public art and lookouts.**

The Liberal National Government is planning an almost \$10.55 million upgrade to improve recreational facilities at the south coast park.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the two-year project would be a much-needed upgrade given that the park attracts more than 238,000 visits a year.

"Most infrastructure in the park is about 30 years old and there is now a compelling need for facilities that can withstand the coastal environment and deliver what visitors have come to expect," he said.

Works include purpose-built trails, sealed roads and car parks, installation of signs, public art and interpretation nodes and construction of visitor amenities such as

lookouts and picnic tables. Trails will also be upgraded with realignment of the Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail and a further upgrade of the Wilderness to Ocean Trail from Denmark to the park.

The funding includes \$9 million from the State Government's Royalties for Regions Growing Our South initiative, \$1.45 million from Parks and Wildlife and \$100,000 from the Shire of Denmark.

Regional Development Minister Terry Redman said the Royalties for Regions investment would significantly enhance facilities at the renowned Greens Pool and Elephant Rocks area, Mazzoletti and Waterfall beaches, and Madfish Bay.

"The new and improved facilities will create positive visitor experiences and contribute towards the sustainability of the tourism industry in Denmark, Walpole, Mount Barker and Albany," Mr Redman said.

## Numbats ready to join the wild

**Nineteen Perth Zoo-bred numbats were fitted with radio collars this month ahead of their release to the proposed Dryandra Woodland National Park and Mt Gibson Wildlife Sanctuary.**

Five of the numbats will boost the existing Dryandra population, while the remaining 14 will go to the Midwest sanctuary.

The release is part of the State Government's recovery program to arrest the decline in the numbers of the endangered species.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said it was the

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Department of Parks and Wildlife







# Kimberley marine parks created

The creation of the Lalang-garram / Horizontal Falls and North Lalang-garram marine parks and the release of the *Lalang-garram / Horizontal Falls and North Lalang-garram marine parks joint management plan 2016* was announced in Derby on 23 November 2016.

Both these marine parks will be jointly managed by Parks and Wildlife and the Dambimangari people, the traditional owners of lands and waters in the area.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the creation of the parks was a milestone in the Liberal National Government's *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*.

"We have been working with the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation since 2013 and have signed an Indigenous Land Use Agreement to jointly manage their sea country, while providing employment and economic opportunities for Dambimangari people," he said.

The creation of the marine parks will generate new tourism opportunities and ensure tourism is sustainable and high quality.

"The marine parks will also protect natural assets that people come to see in the Kimberley, such as coral reefs and a variety of marine species including dugongs and turtles," the Minister said.

The management plan can be viewed at: [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/parks/management-plans/approved-management-plans](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/parks/management-plans/approved-management-plans).

Above left: Lalang-garram / Horizontal Falls Marine Park. Photo – Jim Sharp/Parks and Wildlife

Left: Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation Director Leah Umbagai and Chair Francis Woolagoodja with Environment Minister Albert Jacob at the plan launch. Photo – Naomi Findlay/Parks and Wildlife



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Above: Principal research scientist Dr Tony Friend with one of the radio-collared numbats. Photo – Perth Zoo

first time zoo-born numbats would be released into Mt Gibson Wildlife Sanctuary.

"Just like State Government sanctuaries such as Perup near Manjimup, Mt Gibson has a predator-proof fence that protects a variety of threatened mammals," he said.

"Removal of threats, including feral cats and foxes, is the key to the survival of the numbat and sanctuaries are effective at providing protected areas for species to breed."

Parks and Wildlife principal research scientist Dr Tony Friend said the department's partnership

with Perth Zoo to breed and release numbats had so far seen more than 200 individuals released into the wild, re-establishing four former populations.

"This latest release will help boost the genetic diversity of the Dryandra and Mt Gibson populations."

Parks and Wildlife and Australian Wildlife Conservancy staff will monitor signals from the numbats' radio collars, collecting valuable data about their movements. The collars will also enable field staff to recapture female numbats after the mating season to determine if they have reproduced.

## Coronial held for Black Cat Creek

Early November marked the anniversary of the passing of departmental firefighter Wendy Bearfoot. The coronial inquest to examine the events of the Black Cat Creek fire, which claimed Wendy's life and injured a number of firefighting staff, was held over six days from 31 October to 7 November with five days of the hearings conducted in Albany.

Ten Parks and Wildlife officers gave evidence at the inquest. Director General Jim Sharp said these officers conducted themselves professionally and with integrity and were a credit to themselves and to the department.

It is expected to be some months before the Coroner's report is publically released.





# Premier's Award win

**Western Shield** was announced a joint winner of the 'Managing the environment' category at the Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management in early November.

Now in its 20th year, the wildlife recovery program protects some of WA's most vulnerable native wildlife from the threat of introduced predators, in particular foxes and feral cats.

The project's success to date has protected wild populations of more than 30 threatened species, established another 37 new populations and led to the removal of the quenda and tamar wallaby from State threatened species list. It involves baiting more than 3.8 million hectares of land across the State for introduced predators each year.

The program's success is due in part to the partnerships established with the community, with Tronox, Alcoa and Western Areas current sponsors and more than 11,000 students participating in the *Western Shield* schools program.

The award was shared with the City of Bayswater's Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary nutrient stripping wetland, a project which is delivered jointly with the department's Rivers and Estuaries Division.

Both projects were awarded for their innovation and commitment.

Director General Jim Sharp acknowledged the hard work of staff from all over the State to deliver both projects.



Top: Premier Colin Barnett (centre) with representatives of the department's Western Shield program. Left to right: Richard Olive, Michelle Drew, Ashley Millar, Margaret Byrne, Juanita Renwick, Gareth Watkins and Manda Page.

Above centre: Education coordinator Richard Olive and Western Shield senior operations officer Gareth Watkins celebrate the win. Photos – 3P Photography

Above: Visitors enjoy the award-winning Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary. Photo – City of Bayswater

## Bird calls signal recovery for western ground parrot

There are encouraging signs for the critically endangered western ground parrot, after a survey of Cape Arid National Park found a small number of young in the wild following bushfires in late 2015.

During a two-week-long survey, scientists were thrilled to have heard calls from young western ground parrots in two unburnt sections of the park.

It is believed there are as few as 150 western ground parrots in the wild, in reserves and national parks along the south coast of Western Australia.

Following the fires, Parks and Wildlife carried out emergency feral cat baiting in the park to protect the parrots from predation. This spring, another round of baiting provided extra protection during the breeding season, followed by targeted trapping and removal of feral cats.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said baiting across more than 145,000ha of the park had reduced feral cat predation, which was essential considering

the bushfires impacted about 90 per cent of the parrot's habitat.

Regional ecologist Sarah Comer said hearing young birds was a promising sign that efforts to protect the parrots following the 2015 fires had been successful.

"It's encouraging to see results from the hard work that recovery teams have put in, not only after the bushfires but the many years' of work prior to it," she said.

Automated recording units have been deployed to monitor sites where the birds were heard and at sites further east in Cape Arid National Park. Parks and Wildlife will continue to monitor the birds' habitat as part of the recovery plan for the species.

Feral cat baiting at Cape Arid National Park is delivered annually under the wildlife recovery program *Western Shield*. Post-fire baiting and research on *Eradicat*® has been funded by the *Federal Threatened Species Strategy*.

Below: Parks and Wildlife staff and volunteers. Left to right: Abby Thomas, Jim Creighton, Sarah Comer, Emma Massenbauer, Lucy Clausen, Steve Butler, Saul Cowen. Photo – Jennene Riggs/Riggs Australia





# Turtle monitoring taskforce descends on Pilbara island



Above: Volunteer Rebecca Bennett and Parks and Wildlife officer Hannah Hampson measuring a flatback. Photo – Liz Grant/Parks and Wildlife

**Parks and Wildlife pilot flatback turtle monitoring program is underway at Thevenard Island, 22km off the coast of Onslow, to investigate its suitability as a long-term monitoring site.**

Over the past few weeks a team led by Parks and Wildlife marine scientists and assisted by volunteers have been collecting data, counting turtle tracks and tagging female turtles.

Thevenard Island project leader Sabrina Fossette-Halot said the team's objective was to assess the size of the flatback turtle population nesting on Thevenard Island and to deploy satellite tags to track female turtles' movements during and after the nesting season.

"We have about 20 volunteers from Onslow, Exmouth, Perth and even Queensland who are assisting Parks and Wildlife staff in collecting data," Sabrina said.

"This information will contribute to a broader understanding of the ecology and demography of the Pilbara flatback turtle stock."

Thevenard, a nature reserve of about 550ha, is the largest of the Mackerel Islands, a group of 10 islands about 1400km north of Perth. It is an important nesting site in the Pilbara for flatback, green and hawksbill turtles.

The pilot project at Thevenard is part of the *North West Shelf Flatback Turtle Conservation Program's* monitoring program, which is being established to help understand the ecology and demography of the North West Shelf flatback stock, which includes populations found off the Pilbara and south-west Kimberley coasts.

Flatbacks are listed as vulnerable under the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*. Internationally they are considered data deficient, meaning that more research is required to determine their abundance and distribution.

The *North West Shelf Flatback Conservation Program* is a \$32.5 million, 30-year program funded by the Chevron-operated Gorgon Gas Project and is administered by Parks and Wildlife.

# Tree Top Walk celebrates 20 years

The Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk this month celebrated 20 years since the tourist attraction opened to the public.

Regional manager Luke Bentley said the 40m-high Tree Top Walk had delighted and educated more than 3.4 million visitors over the years.

"The 20th birthday is a key milestone in the lifetime of the walk. It was fitting to celebrate its incredible success and its place in the local economy," he said.

"The economic multiplier effect of the Tree Top Walk is considered to be approximately \$50 million, every dollar a valuable contribution to local businesses and employment."

Tree Top Walk business manager Julie Ross said the birthday celebration attracted about 1200 people, more than three times the usual number of daily visitors for November.

"It was a fantastic day with free entry and entertainment, a cake in the shape of a tingle tree, community market stalls, a high ropes course, speeches recognising the significance of this great attraction, as well as lots of fun activities for the kids," Julie said.



Top: The Tree Top Walk. Photo – Nic Duncan

Above: Warren regional manager Luke Bentley, assistant director policy and planning Tracy Shea and former executive director of the Department of Conservation and Land Management Dr Syd Shea cut the cake. Photo – Parks and Wildlife





# Wildlife taught to avoid cane toads

**Kununurra residents have been collecting cane toads for the production of taste aversion sausages, as part of a Parks and Wildlife trial to teach native animals not to eat the toxic toads.**

State cane toad program coordinator Corrin Everitt said research showed that feeding small cane toads to native predators such as floodplain goannas, or giving northern quolls toad mince sausages containing a nausea-inducing salt, made them feel sick.

“This experience leads to these predators avoiding toads when they subsequently encounter them,” she said.

Corrin said the department, in partnership with the University of Sydney and other groups including the Balangarra rangers, had been testing techniques to reduce the threat of invasive toads to native wildlife such as quolls and goannas.

“Rolling out taste aversion trials across large areas poses logistical problems such as getting enough toads to make taste aversion sausages, ensuring they are attractive to native wildlife, transporting them to

remote areas and then distributing them in challenging weather, especially in the summer wet season when toads are spreading rapidly,” Corrin said.

“Kununurra residents have been helping in this task by collecting cane toads so they can be turned into the taste aversion sausages.”

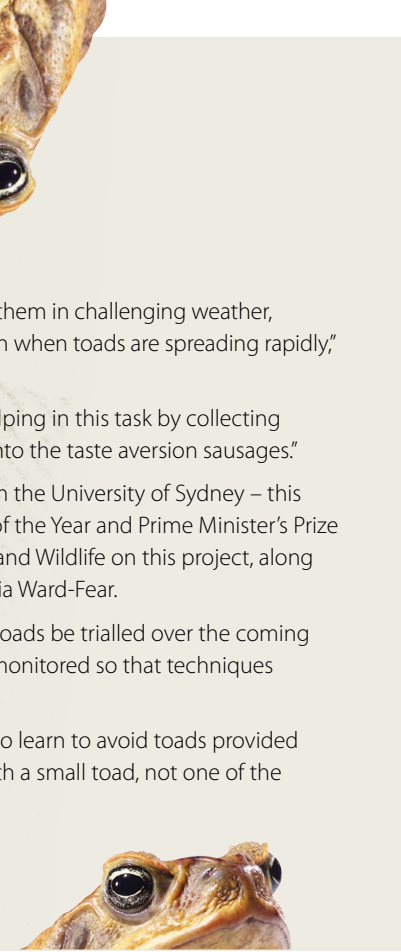
Corrin said Professor Rick Shine from the University of Sydney – this year’s winner of the NSW Scientist of the Year and Prime Minister’s Prize for Science – is working with Parks and Wildlife on this project, along with experienced researcher Georgia Ward-Fear.

“Various baits and the use of small toads be trialled over the coming wet season and the results will be monitored so that techniques can be improved,” she said.

“Native species do have the ability to learn to avoid toads provided an individual’s first experience is with a small toad, not one of the large highly toxic toads.”



*Above left: Sausages containing small amounts of cane toads are being used to teach native predators not to consume the toads. Left: Kununurra residents collect cane toads for use in the sausages. Photos – Corrin Everitt/Parks and Wildlife*



## New mountain bike trail open

**A new 9km section of mountain bike trail in Bramley National Park has attracted significant interest from locals and visitors in the weeks since its opening in early November.**

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the new \$270,000 trail formed part of the first purpose-built trail network under the Liberal National Government’s *South West Mountain Bike Master Plan*, made possible by the \$21.05 million Royalties for Regions *Parks for People* initiative.

“Mountain biking is growing in popularity, increasing the demand for access to our national parks,” Mr Jacob said.

“The Bramley forest network incorporates trails with varying levels of difficulty, appealing to a broad range of people, with smooth, flowing trails for beginners to more technically challenging trails for experienced riders.”

Parks and Wildlife is working with the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River and Margaret River Off Road Cycling Association to develop more trails within Bramley National Park and adjoining State forest and shire reserves.

*Right: A mountain bike rider tests out the new trail. Photo – Erik Sandstrom/Common Ground Trails*







## Long history for staff fauna training



Above left: A western pygmy possum captured in a pitfall trap. Above right: Course facilitator Sarah Comer with flora technical officer Steve Martin about to process a brushtail possum. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

**Parks and Wildlife's specialised fauna management course is in its 25th year providing department staff training in conservation and monitoring of native wildlife.**

First run in 1992 at Batalling Field Study Centre, the week-long course teaches staff from a wide range of disciplines about animal welfare, trapping and monitoring techniques and the legislative and policy requirements for animal handling.

Principal zoologist and course coordinator Juanita Renwick said over its 25-year history the course had benefited hundreds of staff and the State's wildlife.

"The course teaches staff to plan and design fauna monitoring programs that answer key conservation questions while ensuring animal welfare is a priority," she said.

"It is designed for a wide audience including wildlife officers, national park rangers, education officers, fire management staff, nature conservation staff and research scientists."

"Participants are able to take part in pitfall, funnel and Elliott trapping for reptiles and small mammals, radio-tracking numbats, camera surveys to monitor both native and introduced wildlife and cage trapping programs that monitor the department's *Western Shield* wildlife targets."

In 2016 the course was held for the first time at the proposed Dryandra Woodland National Park.

"This year's highlights included trapping bilbies, western barred bandicoots and boodies in the Barna Mia Nocturnal Animal Sanctuary, as well as seeing a numbat that had been translocated to Dryandra under the State Government's numbat recovery program," Juanita said.

"We are lucky to have a dedicated team of course facilitators to help organise and deliver the training, as well as two of our principal research scientists, Keith Morris and Dr Tony Friend, who have been involved with the training since its inception 25 years ago. They were able to offer valuable advice and inspiration to staff just starting their careers in fauna management."



Above: A boodie being released after monitoring. Photo – Parks and Wildlife



## Positive signs for fish in the Riverpark

Above: Black bream in the Swan Canning Riverpark. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

**A black bream tracking project in the Swan and Canning rivers has highlighted the benefits of artificial oxygenation in the upper reaches of the rivers.**

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the tracking of 55 tagged black bream had found the fish avoided areas of the rivers that had low oxygen levels, confirming river oxygenation was an important strategy for improving river water quality and survival of aquatic species.

"This research is showing that black bream, a popular recreational fishing species, favour areas of the river that are well oxygenated, which suggests that artificial oxygenation is beneficial during periods of low oxygen, particularly during summer and autumn months," Mr Jacob said.

"This is important because improving water quality with oxygenation relief not only helps aquatic animals and other wildlife, but it supports recreational fishing, and ensures the rivers are attractive for recreation and natural assets for the whole community."

A network of 30 acoustic receivers, or listening stations, along the rivers has been recording data

from the tagged black bream since April. About 740,000 detections were received during the first 116 days.

The data has revealed that black bream prefer habitat with large woody debris and brackish water. They tend to inhabit deeper parts of the estuary during the daytime, except in low oxygen conditions, and shallower waters in the evening.

Oxygenation plants at Guildford and Caversham provide relief for up to 10km of the Swan River. The State Government is upgrading the oxygenation plant at Bacon Street in Wilson to provide oxygen along 4.5km of the Canning River upstream of the Kent Street weir.

This project will continue to collect data from the black bream over the next year to further evaluate the effectiveness of the oxygenation plants in providing a refuge for fish and help guide the plants' efficient operation.

The Minister also released the *Fish Community Index*, an assessment of the Swan Canning Estuary during 2015-16. The report can be found on the [Monitoring, evaluation and reporting page](#) of the website.