



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

In this issue

Message from the new Minister

Bush and River Rangers leaders gather

Two predatory crocodiles caught

First anniversary for *Western Shield Camera Watch*

Second chance for threatened marine turtles

Sharing culture through tourism

Itineraries help guide the way

Marmion Marine Park celebrates 30 years

Bilby workshop brings together Indigenous rangers

Staff respond to wet and wild weather

Autumn 2017 *LANDSCOPE* magazine available now

Message from the new Minister



Above: Environment Minister Stephen Dawson (centre) with Bush Rangers unit leaders Grant Capes and Kurt Skeen from Fitzroy Valley District High School during the Bush and River Rangers conference. Photo – Peter Nicholas/Parks and Wildlife

Following the swearing in of the new Cabinet on March 17 by the Governor Her Excellency Hon Kerry Sanderson AC, Hon Stephen Dawson MLC commenced his role as WA's Minister for Environment, Disability Services and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council.

Minister Dawson has been a member of WA's Parliament since April 2013, when he was elected to the Legislative Council as Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region. Here are a few words from the new Minister:

"Western Australia's environment is home to a range of diverse cultures, unique natural beauty and rich resources that require effective and collaborative management. As the new Environment

Minister, I am looking forward to working with Parks and Wildlife to protect our unique environment for current and future generations, enhance biodiversity conservation and ensure positive and long lasting outcomes for regional economies.

"The importance and involvement of regional and remote communities – their strength and wisdom – is vital and this is something that Parks and Wildlife does extremely well and that I am keen to see continue. Community engagement and the creation of partnerships is the foundation for several initiatives that we will implement during this term of Government.

"The McGowan Labor Government is committed to growing Indigenous Ranger programs that will help in the protection of the environment while creating more social and economic benefits for communities in remote and regional WA.

"We will continue to implement a mosaic of national parks and a network of marine sanctuary zones to protect the outstanding natural and cultural values of the Kimberley region, including the creation of Fitzroy River National Park.

"As part of plans to expand our conservation network we are keen to begin work on the development of the Preston Beach to Ocean Regional Park, a 900-hectare bushland corridor protecting the significant conservation and landscape values on this special area.

"With unique areas like the Kimberley in the north, Ningaloo in the mid-west to the floristically rich Fitzgerald River in the south, it is important that we continue to protect cultural and natural values and to that end we aim to increase our world-renowned World Heritage-listed sites with a nomination for the spectacular Burrup Peninsula.

"Indeed, there is much to be achieved and I look forward to visiting our extensive conservation estate and meeting and working with Parks and Wildlife staff and volunteers who do wonderful work helping achieve these aims for the benefit of the Western Australian community and environment."

Published by the Department of Parks and Wildlife's Public Information and Corporate Affairs Branch

Editors Mitzi Vance and Karla Graham

Contributors Tania Durlik, Emma de Burgh, Lauren Emmerson, Sophie Lisle-Williams and Grace Milne

Design and production Lynne Whittle

Telephone (08) 9219 9000

Email pwn@dpaw.wa.gov.au



Department of Parks and Wildlife





Left: River Rangers sampling water in the Swan Canning Riverpark. Photo – Jennifer Eliot/Parks and Wildlife Right: Bush Rangers and River Rangers planting seedlings.

Bush and River Rangers leaders gather

Unit leaders came from all corners of Western Australia to share their experiences and learn from one another during the annual Bush Rangers and River Rangers conference this month.

Held over two days, the conference gave unit leaders from the nature-based youth education program the opportunity to network, take part in workshops and learn about Parks and Wildlife and how their ranger cadets can work with the department.

Director General Jim Sharp said the *Bush Rangers* and *River Rangers* programs were invaluable in a time when many young people find it hard to disconnect from their screens and get outdoors.

“*Bush Rangers* and *River Rangers* gives young people the opportunity to get out in the bush and feel comfortable in the natural environment, visit and experience our amazing national parks and reserves, and give

back to their communities and the environment by learning the art of volunteering,” he said.

“I’m proud to say that Parks and Wildlife’s two cadet programs account for almost 47 per cent of all cadets under the State Government’s *Cadets WA* program, and 41 per cent of all participating schools or units.

“It is also pleasing to note that there is a balance of males and females (47 per cent female and 53 per cent male) and 26 per cent Aboriginal students enrolled.”

The *River Rangers* program is the most recent addition to *Cadets WA* and is the only cadet program aimed at primary students, specifically Years 5 and 6.

Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Local Government and Communities, through *Cadets WA*, provides the resources and structures to schools to enable these programs.



Two predatory crocodiles caught

Parks and Wildlife captured and shot a rogue estuarine (saltwater) crocodile last week that was responsible for killing livestock near Kununurra.

East Kimberley district manager Bill Dempsey said during the last six months, the 3.5m crocodile ventured onto rural residential properties on the Lower Ord River and displayed aggressive behaviour toward landowners and their livestock.

“A vet has confirmed the crocodile recently killed a horse, and savaged a cow that later had to be put down. The same crocodile is also suspected of killing a domestic dog,” he said.

“While the Lower Ord is known to be crocodile habitat, and is outside the Lake Kununurra Crocodile Management Zone, this animal’s aggressive behaviour posed a serious threat to human safety which is why we destroyed it.”

In the west Kimberley the day prior, Parks and Wildlife staff shot another estuarine crocodile near Cable Beach as a last option, after several attempts to trap the threatening animal failed.

Crocodile sightings can be reported to the Parks and Wildlife Broome office on 9195 5500 or Kununurra office on 9168 4200.

First anniversary for Western Shield Camera Watch



Above: A screenshot from the Western Shield Camera Watch website.

This month marks one year since the department's citizen science project *Western Shield Camera Watch* went live, with 4100 volunteers already contributing nearly 600,000 classifications to the project database.

Western Shield Camera Watch, hosted on the Zooniverse website, asks users to identify native and introduced animals captured on remote cameras set in the northern jarrah forest. By following a simple step-by-step identification guide, volunteers have been helping in the huge task of identifying and recording these animal sightings collected from 90 cameras set up in conservation lands.

It is part of the department's wildlife recovery program *Western Shield*, which aims to recover native animal populations in the wild through broadscale management of foxes and feral cats.

Western Shield zoologist Dr Michelle Drew said the wonderful volunteers had already provided countless hours of work helping the department to piece together information on Western Australia's native animals and the introduced predators that hunt them.

"But we still need help from volunteers. By joining in and telling us what animals you see in the images online, you can help us understand how effective our fox management has been. We can use this information to help improve management in the future," she said.

The department's autumn baiting program under *Western Shield* is currently underway, targeting foxes and feral cats.



Top: Woylie
Above: Chuditch

Second chance for threatened marine turtles

It's home sweet home for two marine turtles that were rescued and successfully rehabilitated after being found in poor health.

The loggerhead and green turtles were released in waters near Exmouth last month.

Parks and Wildlife regional wildlife officer Cameron Craigie said the loggerhead was suffering from exposure to cold waters when it was rescued from Cheynes Beach in Albany in early March.

"We believe the strong current carried this individual all the way down from warmer waters in the north-west to cooler waters on the South Coast," he said.

"The green turtle was found in Exmouth last year suffering from buoyancy issues which means it could only swim on the water surface, and have difficulty submerging and diving for food."

Loggerheads are listed as endangered and green turtles are listed as vulnerable under the *Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*. They are two of the six species of marine turtles that can be found in WA waters.

Pilbara region marine conservation officer Joanne King said the loggerhead was fitted with a satellite tracker.

"Tagging is important to identify individual marine turtles and determine their success once released into the wild," she said.

The rehabilitation of the turtles and their release was a joint effort between Parks and Wildlife, the Exmouth Wildlife CARE group, the Bunbury Dolphin Discovery Centre, the Aquarium of WA and vets from Perth Zoo.

The loggerhead can be followed at www.seaturtle.org.

Anyone who finds a turtle washed up on a beach should call the Wildcare Helpline on 9474 9055.





Itineraries help guide the way

The release of a series of new travel itineraries and guides will give campers a head start when planning their next visit to one of Western Australia's magnificent national parks or iconic locations.

Four travel itineraries and four camping guides have been developed to give individuals and families some helpful tips and advice when planning their journeys.

Visitor communications manager Steve Crawford said the guides covered popular travel routes, designated camping spots and must-do activities.

"They also offer handy hints such as the best places and times to take snapshots and see local native animals," he said.

The new range of guides were launched at the recent Caravan and Camping Show to help people make the most of their experience when camping and enjoying nature.

An estimated 45,000 people attended the five-day event in Perth.

A Parks and Wildlife stall provided a great opportunity for people to learn more about the State's 100 national parks and 17 marine parks and showcased the amazing camping grounds on offer across Western Australia.

A competition was also held with the major prize a glamping experience for a family of four at Drafty's campground in Warren National Park.

Steve said the event was a great success.

"It's always great to engage with people who are keen to venture outdoors but who don't always know where to start," he said.

The camping guides are available online at parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/step-into-nature.



Left: Aboriginal Heritage Unit manager Rhonda Murphy speaks with forum attendees. Right: WAITOC CEO Robert Taylor talks to a prospective business operator. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

Sharing culture through tourism

Momentum for more cultural tourism in Western Australia's parks and reserves is building, with prospective business owners joining Parks and Wildlife staff at a Perth forum last month.

The Culture in the Parks forum, co-hosted by the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC), brought about 70 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together to discuss opportunities to establish businesses on Parks and Wildlife-managed land.

Aboriginal Heritage Unit manager Rhonda Murphy said the forum focused on opportunities in the Swan Region, which covers Perth and surrounds.

"The department's Swan Region has the highest number of visitors per year by far, but there is a comparatively low number of Aboriginal tourism experiences being offered here on Parks and Wildlife-managed land," she said.

"We'd love to see that increase to help build economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and as many visitors as possible have a chance to learn about Aboriginal culture."

WAITOC Chair Tahn Donovan said cultural awareness on country was vital for both local and international visitors to gain an opportunity to understand the complexity, diversity and depth of Aboriginal culture.

"By tour operators being on country sharing culture, it allows non-Aboriginal people to connect with our culture, but also with the country that they're on," she said.

In an address to those gathered, tour guide Troy Bennell from Ngalang Wongi Aboriginal Cultural Tours highlighted the importance of working together.

"Our mob didn't have opportunity back then. Now we do, but it's what we do with it. And the opportunity now is partnership. Best of both worlds; black and white," he said.

The department will be holding more forums around the State throughout 2017.

For more information on conducting Aboriginal cultural tourism on Parks and Wildlife-managed lands, visit parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/know/aboriginal-tourism-development.



Marmion Marine Park celebrates 30 years

It was the first of its kind for Western Australia and last month Marmion Marine Park celebrated its 30th anniversary.

The gazettal of the park in 1987 was the first step in creating what is now a Statewide system of marine parks and reserves that protect about 18 per cent of WA waters.

Situated offshore from Perth's northern suburbs between Trigg Island and Burns Beach, Marmion Marine Park provides the public with an amazing location for water recreation while protecting the incredible marine species and environmental values of the area.

Marmion Marine Park coordinator Melissa Evans said the marine park attracts as many as 1.75 million visits each year and has become Perth's primary recreational water activity spot.

"Bottlenose dolphins and Australian sea lions can be

spotted throughout the year in the park and humpback whales pass through the deeper waters during their annual migration between June and November," Melissa said.

"The park has a number of diving and snorkelling opportunities to view fish that live in the caves and ledges of the reef areas, as well as sea slugs, sponges, sea urchins, sea squirts and even green turtles."

Melissa said Mettams Pool is an extremely popular spot for snorkelling as well as the many reefs and small islands in the area.

Seabirds flock to the area throughout the year and are best viewed at Little Island, Burns Rocks, Trigg Island and Hillarys Boat Harbour.

Left: Australian sea lion at Marmion Marine Park. Photo – Peter Nicholas/Parks and Wildlife



Bilby workshop brings together Indigenous rangers

A bilby monitoring workshop involving Indigenous rangers is set to increase knowledge about the species in the Kimberley.

Held in Fitzroy Crossing in March, the workshop was hosted by Parks and Wildlife, Environs Kimberley and WWF Australia.

Parks and Wildlife West Kimberley technical officer Dr Karen Bettink said 42 people attended the workshop, including rangers from the nine ranger groups across the Kimberley with bilby populations on their country.

"The workshop was an opportunity to provide training in bilby survey and monitoring techniques, as well as methods to monitor threats and manage habitat, create networks and share

scientific and cultural knowledge," she said.

"Some participants hadn't seen bilby prints before and others were already monitoring populations on their own country, so there was a range of prior experience and participants found the workshop very valuable.

"With the new skills gained, data collection across the Kimberley will now be more standardised, which will help us gain a better understanding of populations of the species in the region.

"While the greater bilby has disappeared from 80 per cent of its former range, the Kimberley maintains stronghold populations of the species, which are important to monitor and manage to ensure they persist."

Above: Participants of the bilby workshop in the Kimberley. Photo – Kimberley Land Council



1



2



3



4



5

Staff respond to wet and wild weather

Western Australia had a wet and wild summer. Usually the department's busy season for bushfires, staff instead faced heavy rainfall and flash flooding.

They were kept busy managing the weather's impact on parks and reserves, including temporary closures to many parks.

Fitzgerald River National Park was hit hard by rain in February, resulting in the long-term closure of the access road from Hopetoun. A 300m stretch of causeway over Culham Inlet was destroyed and will need to be rebuilt. While the park itself is open, staff and visitors from the east now have a significant detour to enter the park.

Interpretation officer Judymae Napier said it was positive having such a good wet season in the Pilbara this year, despite the management challenges, after receiving very little rainfall last year.

"Karijini National Park was very dry, with the water in the gorges very low. In some places it was not suitable for swimming," Judymae said.

"The rainfall has flushed out and filled up gorge pools – great timing as we're approaching peak visitor season and the sediment in the water is settling and the pools will be fairly clear and perfect for swimming."

Further north, the Kimberley doubled its average wet season rainfall, producing gushing waterfalls, vegetation growth and a dramatic increase in waterbird activity.

In response, the department conducted an aerial waterbird survey at a number of sites including Roebuck Plains (including the Yawuru Birragun Conservation Park), Walyarta Conservation Park (Mandora Marsh) and the nationally significant wetland at Lake Gregory. Staff reported significant breeding events at all sites, though waterbirds were widely dispersed.

In addition, the Ramsar-listed wetland Toolibin Lake, in the Wheatbelt, was full for the first time in 20 years as a result of 160mm rainfall over two days.

It was good news for staff who have been working to manage the hydrology and biodiversity of the lake, and presented an opportunity to test hydrological infrastructure implemented to manage altered hydrology.

1. The road into Fitzgerald River National Park from Hopetoun was washed away after significant rain in February. 2. Waterfall at Joffre Gorge at Karijini National Park. 3. Flooding across a road at Karijini. 4. Staff at Toolibin Lake in the Wheatbelt open the diversion gates to direct much-needed fresh water into the lake. 5. A large breeding event of pelicans, ibis, swans and terns on two islands at Walyarta Conservation Park in the Kimberley. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

Autumn 2017 LANDSCOPE magazine available now

The latest issue of *LANDSCOPE* explores the popular Penguin Island Conservation Park and celebrates 20 years of the iconic Tree Top Walk.

Other stories include:

- *Quolls on Country*: A surprise sighting leads to a fascinating find and a successful partnership.
- *Caring for our rivers*: Volunteer opportunities to help support the Swan Canning Riverpark.
- *Connecting people to parks*: The WA Parks Foundation is providing ways to develop people's connection to parks.

Visit shop.dpaw.wa.gov.au/landscape to get your copy.

