

# NINGALOO COAST

WORLD HERITAGE



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



## Winter News | 2018

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### Trainee rangers in full swing

Parks and Wildlife Service Indigenous trainee rangers Cody Farrell and Jermaine Baron have been in full swing these past months, working with staff on a range of projects such as developing visitor and recreation sites and trapping feral animals in Cape Range National Park as well as controlling weeds along the Ningaloo Coast. Cody and Jermaine are developing a working knowledge of the operations and objectives of the Parks and Wildlife Service, and as their training progresses they will have options to undertake further training and specialise in different fields. They are currently working towards completing Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management.

Left: Jermaine Baron assists to successfully trap and collar a feral cat in Cape Range National Park.

### Turtley awesome Muiron Islands



Above: Woodside's Kate McCallum and Parks and Wildlife Service trainee ranger Jermaine Baron recording a green turtle nest.

Parks and Wildlife Service has been working with Woodside Energy Ltd to better understand turtle nesting along the Ningaloo Coast. The 2017–18 Ningaloo Turtle Program was expanded to include the Muiron Islands and other more remote areas of the Ningaloo Coast where knowledge gaps exist.

In January, Ningaloo Turtle Program volunteers joined Woodside staff and Parks and Wildlife Service staff to monitor turtle activity on North and South Muiron Islands. Birdlife Australia also joined the field trip, and helped count shorebirds, shearwater burrows and planning for future shearwater tracking.

Tracks and nests were recorded for green, loggerhead, hawksbill and even flatback turtles. While on South Muiron Island, staff were lucky enough to observe a female loggerhead turtle who was tagged on the same island 19 years ago to the day. While analysis is still underway, it is emerging that the Muiron Islands are a significant nesting area for loggerhead and green turtles.



Above: Turtle highway on South Muiron Island.

## Rock wallabies

Parks and Wildlife Service recently trapped black-flanked rock wallabies in Cape Range National Park to be translocated for the first time to Kalbarri National Park. The aim of the translocation was to supplement and broaden the genetic diversity in the recently rediscovered Kalbarri population. Time was taken to assess the physical and reproductive condition of the Cape Range wallabies.

More than 30 animals were trapped over five nights, with animals readily walking into traps and some visiting the traps every day. One of the males captured weighed a whopping 6.35kg – much larger than the average 5kg males that have been trapped elsewhere. Almost all females captured had indications of pouch young and several had multiple babies. Many animals were trapped multiple times, indicating that the experience wasn't too traumatic for them.

Two females and three males were selected for translocation to Kalbarri and fitted with radio tracking collars. The animals arrived in their new home and were released within 24 hours of their capture.

The remaining wallabies captured were fitted with a visible ear tag. This will assist staff in estimating the total population within the gorge. Follow up observational counts showed less than half of the wallabies observed had ear tags, indicating that the population of the 100m stretch is well over 40 animals. Observational counts will continue to provide an understanding of how many animals are in the area and will allow for trends to be monitored over time.

If you would like to get involved in monitoring wallabies in the future, please get in touch with the Parks and Wildlife Service Exmouth District office on (08) 9947 8000.

Top right: Staff releasing a tagged female black-flanked rock wallaby. Right: Many females were seen with multiple young such as this female pictured with her 'at foot' joey and small 'pinkie' joey (within her pouch).



## Help us remove guppies from our natural environment

Guppies have been dumped into caves around Exmouth and are impacting on native cave-dwelling animals. Guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*) are best known as aquarium fish. They are not native to Australia, are highly adaptable and thrive in many different environmental conditions.

The Cape Range karst system is home to more than 80 species of cave-dwelling animals. Many of these are unique to only Cape Range and are a key reason for the World Heritage listing. If the guppies are not removed, they can potentially invade deeper into the water table and into the World Heritage area, displacing the native cave-dwelling population.

The long-term survival of cave-dwelling animals is highly dependent on the management of the karst system and the groundwater



contained within. How can you help? Remember what lies beneath, and don't dump guppies and other aquarium fish or rubbish into sink holes and caves.

Parks and Wildlife Service is currently working with the Western Australian Museum and Department Primary Industries and Regional Development- Fisheries to eradicate the guppies from the karst system. If you come across guppies around Exmouth, please contact the Exmouth District office (08) 9947 8000.

Above: Guppy (*Poecilia reticulata*).

## Feeding wildlife

Residents and visitors to Exmouth are being urged to avoid feeding wildlife. There has been an increase in reported sightings of dingoes around Exmouth. The Ningaloo Coast has a diverse array of incredible wildlife that community members and visitors are lucky enough to see regularly. With so many different wild animals on our doorstep, comes great responsibility to ensure that these wild animals remain wild.

For the safety of all please:

- Do not encourage dingoes by providing food and water.
- Keep lids on rubbish bins and store bins behind gates when not in use.
- Do not approach or interact with dingoes – they are wild animals.



## Weeds along the Ningaloo Coast

Parks and Wildlife Service are in full swing eradicating weeds close to the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area. Controlling the spread of aggressive weeds such as kapok (*Aerva javanica*), Mexican poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*) and datura (*Datura innoxia*) is extremely important to prevent the establishment of weeds within the World Heritage area and to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value isn't compromised.

Please help minimise the spread of weeds by checking footwear, clothing, equipment vessels, vehicles and caravans for seeds before entering national parks or going onto islands.

You can also help protect the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area by:

- Disposing of garden waste correctly- tough garden plants can thrive in our arid environment.
- Choose native plants for your garden.
- Avoid driving through kapok patches on road verges (the seeds are very small and are easily caught in roo bars and the underside of cars).
- Stay on designated roads and tracks as much as possible, and avoid driving or walking through weed-infested areas.



Above: Kapok (*Aerva javanica*).



## Coral cactus

Several species of cactus are found along the Ningaloo Coast including in and around the Exmouth townsite, on pastoral stations and other lands. Coral cactus (*Cylindropuntia fulgida*) is a declared noxious weed in Australia. It is a highly invasive species and is difficult to eradicate due to its rapid rate of reproduction. Segments (known as pups) easily detach from the plant and have the ability to stick to any animal or mechanism that can transport it. The pups grow roots where they touch the ground.

Driven by the enthusiasm and knowledge of Aggie Forrester from the Lyndon Land Conservation District Committee (LLCDC), Parks

and Wildlife Service has been working closely with the committee and neighbouring stations to control an infestation of coral cactus on the proposed coastal reserve near the Warroora Homestead. Key actions include limiting the spread of the cactus using herbicide with a mix of hand and mechanical spraying and releasing a biological control called cochineal (*Dactylopius tomentosus*), a small grub, which kills the cactus by drawing moisture and nutrients out of it. The eradication program is necessary to remove the coral cactus infestation permanently along the proposed coastal reserve. This is extremely important before it becomes established over a wider area.

Above left: Fen Forrester from Winning Station and Cody Farrell applying Cochineal biological control to coral cactus. Above right: Coral cactus with pups on the floor which can grow where they are or be easily transported by animals and vehicles.

## Trip over Cape Range

The Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Advisory Committee recently held its 11th meeting in Exmouth. The committee meets bi-annually to discuss the protection and conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage area.

Members raised several issues that could potentially impact the Outstanding Universal Value within Cape Range. These included introduced fish species into the karst system, uncontrolled off-road vehicle access and cave access, and introduced plants and animals.

The committee members took a drive over the range and were introduced to the Cape Range karst system and adjacent coastal plain.

These habitats are part of the terrestrial component of the World Heritage area and are a key feature of the Outstanding Universal Value.



Above: Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Advisory Committee members, consultants and Parks and Wildlife Service staff taking in the view on top of Cape Range.

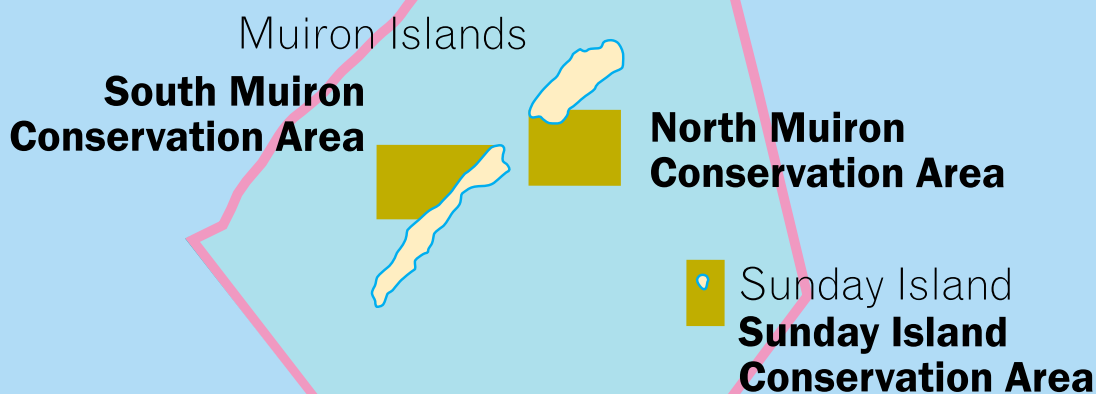
## Ningaloo Coast In Focus

The Ningaloo Coast was inscribed on the World Heritage list for its outstanding natural beauty and exceptional biological diversity. Covering 6045km<sup>2</sup> and stretching more than 300km along the coast the rare mix of intact, diverse and large-scale terrestrial, coastal and marine habitats form an incredible interconnected ecosystem.

These diverse habitats are protected by a marine park, national park and many other reserves.

Each issue will feature one of the many reserves we manage within the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area.

### Muiron Islands Marine Management Area



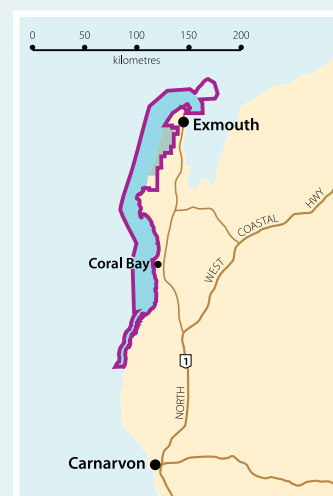
### The Muiron Islands Nature Reserve

Located off the North West Cape, the Muiron Islands Nature Reserve is jointly managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service and the Shire of Exmouth. North Muiron and South Muiron Island are a refugia for flora and fauna. A priority ecological community which is no longer present on the mainland was discovered this year on the islands. Weeds on the islands are limited to only a small patch of invasive buffel grass. The islands provide important habitat for mating and nesting green, loggerhead, hawksbill and flatback turtles over the summer months. They are also an important refuge for seabirds, with the wedge tailed shearwater (*Ardenna pacifica*) nesting in burrows all over both islands.

Visitors have a unique opportunity to explore the recreation zone at the northern end of South Muiron Island. Seasonal camping is permitted here. Be sure to apply for permission first with Parks and Wildlife Service.

### The Muiron Islands Marine Management Area

The Muiron Islands are popular with locals and are a great site for diving, fishing and surfing. All of these activities fall within the Marine Management Area surrounding the nature reserve which provides a similar level of protection as a sanctuary zone within the Ningaloo Marine Park. The Marine Management Area extends to Sunday Island. Access to a number of fantastic dive sites is through public moorings managed by Parks and Wildlife Service.



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