



PARKS AND WILDLIFE NEWS

DECEMBER 2016

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Merry Christmas from the Director General



Above: Numbats in the proposed Dryandra Woodland National Park. Photo – John Lawson

Another year has almost passed, and now is a great time to reflect on and celebrate the department's many achievements in 2016.

The work we do to conserve and protect Western Australia's environment relies on our successful partnerships with the community, businesses and individuals. Our volunteer base this year comprised 5189 dedicated individuals who together contributed 638,747 hours. During the year we also strengthened many partnerships with community organisations and business operators.

I would like to thank all staff, volunteers, community and business partners for their continued support and shared successes.

Just some of the many highlights of 2016 include the opening of new, world-class facilities at The Gap in Torndirrup National Park, the creation of a number of new parks and reserves under the *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*, significant legislative changes including amendments to the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* and the new *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, as well as the joint Premier's Award win for *Western Shield* and the Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary in partnership with the City of Bayswater. We have also worked hard to prepare for the 2015–16 southern bushfire season, working closely with volunteer bushfire brigades and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to strengthen our shared firefighting response capacity.

In 2016 we also saw the launch of the WA Parks Foundation, signalling the start of more external corporate support for the State's national parks and reserves.

I wish everyone a safe and happy festive season. I particularly want to thank those involved in fire management who may be attending bushfires and other incidents over the coming months, and their families for their patience and understanding.

Jim Sharp
Director General

Creation of North Kimberley Marine Park



Above: Balangarra traditional owners, Parks and Wildlife planners and scientists in the King George River Special Purpose Zone. Photo – Chris Nutt/Parks and Wildlife

Balangarra traditional owners joined the State Government on Saturday 17 December to sign an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) and celebrate the official creation of the massive 1,845,000ha North Kimberley Marine Park.

The new park was the final step in creating the Great Kimberley Marine Park, encompassing the four biggest marine parks in the Kimberley. The Great Kimberley Marine Park is the second largest coastal marine park in Australia.

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1. Director General Jim Sharp, Vice Chair of Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation Derek Gallagher and Environment Minister Albert Jacob at the ILUA signing. 2. The launch of the North Kimberley Marine Park. 3. Reveley Island. Photos – Parks and Wildlife

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The new North Kimberley Marine Park protects coral reefs, mangrove-lined creeks and bays, and sandy beaches that are home to a variety of marine species including dugongs, whales, dolphins, sawfish and turtles. The park is also rich in Aboriginal culture, with the Balanggarra, Wunambal Gaambera, Ngarinyin and Miriuwung Gajerrong people having cultural, spiritual and social connections to north Kimberley sea country.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the park would provide employment and management opportunities for these traditional owners and foster growth in ecotourism, while protecting the incredible environmental values of the place.

He said the park's creation meant about three million hectares of ocean – more than half of the State's Kimberley coastal waters – would now be protected in six marine parks.

"Under the *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*, we have successfully established new marine parks at Camden Sound, Eighty Mile Beach, Horizontal Falls, North Lalang-garram, Roebuck Bay and now North Kimberley," he said.

"This has increased the total area of the State's marine parks and reserves by more than 200 per cent, from 1.5 million hectares to about five million hectares since 2008, delivering jobs, ecotourism opportunities and unprecedented environmental protection."

Parks and Wildlife will jointly manage the Balanggarra sea country in North Kimberley Marine Park with the Balanggarra people. A 10-year management plan for the park was released over the weekend and is available at dpaw.wa.gov.au/parks/management-plans/approved-management-plans.

Bobtails bound for Hong Kong rescued

Parks and Wildlife joined forces with Australian Border Force recently to stop the illegal export of 23 native lizards bound for Hong Kong.

Twenty-one bobtails and two western blue tongue lizards were found stuffed in socks with their arms and legs bound by masking tape, concealed in mail items bound for Hong Kong. As a result of a joint investigation between Parks and Wildlife and Australian Border Force, a Chinese national was arrested.

The man was charged with attempting to export a regulated native specimen and subjecting the lizards to cruel treatment, contrary to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Wildlife officer Matt Swan said Parks and Wildlife had received information from the public that led to the seizure.

"We rely on information from the community to help save these reptiles from a perilous and cruel journey," he said.

People with information about the illegal removal of reptiles or who notice any suspicious activity suggesting that reptiles are being illegally removed should call Parks and Wildlife's Wildcare Helpline on 9474 9055 or the ABF's Border Watch on 1800 009 623.



Above: Wildlife officer Matt Swan with the seized reptiles. Photo – Heather Quinlan/Parks and Wildlife



Above: Bobtail being rescued from its wrappings. Photo – Parks and Wildlife



Record spring burning achieved

Above: Prescribed burning in the Perth Hills. Photo – Jennifer Eliot/Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife has achieved more than 167,400ha of prescribed burning from Gingin in the north to Denmark on the south coast since 1 July this year – a significant outcome in preparing WA for the coming bushfire season.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said prescribed burning was an essential tool in minimising the threat of bushfires and protecting communities and Parks and Wildlife was well on its way to reaching the annual target of 200,000ha.

“Favourable weather conditions and the additional funding provided under Royalties for Regions have enabled the department to significantly progress its prescribed burn program with substantial results,” he said.

“Autumn and spring are the ideal seasons to conduct prescribed burning in the south-west and already the department has eclipsed the total area prescribed burnt last financial year, with spring burning alone, with more than 77 burns undertaken.

“In 2015–16, Parks and Wildlife achieved 154,000ha, its best result in the preceding five years, so this spring’s result of 167,400ha to date is considerable.

“While smoke may on occasions impact roads and communities for short periods, controlled burns are a necessity for effective bushfire risk mitigation.”



Bibbulmun Track bridge build starts

Above and below: Construction of the bridge footings underway. Photos – Dave Lathwell/Parks and Wildlife

Work has started on a new \$550,000 state-of-the-art suspension bridge to replace the historic Long Gully Bridge, destroyed in the Boddington bushfires early last year.

The new bridge, spanning 82m with an overall length of 96m, would cross the Murray River in the popular Lane Poole Reserve several kilometres downstream of the old Long Gully Bridge site.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the loss of Long Gully Bridge was a blow to the community because it had huge heritage significance.

“It was a fine example of timber bridge engineering and design that told the story of the development of this part of Western Australia,” he said.

“The new bridge will also have a story to tell, with an innovative design for an essential all-weather crossing point over the Murray River for visitors and Bibbulmun Track walkers.”

Trails coordinator Kerstin Stender said the design included two towers, 12m above ground level with a deck, 4.5m above the summer time river level providing a unique feature and attraction for the area.

“It will be constructed using a fibre-reinforced polymer grating on the deck enabling people to have a clear view to the river underfoot. A double

cable suspension system will ensure added safety and the weathered steel components will provide fire resilience,” she said.

Work has started with the construction of the towers and anchor footings, which are due for completion by the end of May 2017.

The new bridge project has been funded by Bibbulmun Track Foundation, Peel Development Commission, Alcoa Australia and Parks and Wildlife, with support from engineering company BG&E Pty Limited who developed the concept design free of charge.





Parks and Wildlife volunteers celebrated

1. Director General Jim Sharp, Volunteer of the Year award winner Darryl Scott and Environment Minister Albert Jacob. 2. Outstanding Service award winner Ken Suckling with Parks and Wildlife staff. 3. Crooked Brook Forest Volunteer Group receiving their Long Service awards. Photos – Rolf Pery Guildford Photographics/Parks and Wildlife

Earlier this month the department recognised and celebrated the work of exceptional volunteers at the annual Volunteer of the Year awards.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob and Director General Jim Sharp presented the 2016 Volunteer of the Year award to Darryl Scott for his work as a campground host in Stokes National Park and his assistance with numerous projects in the department's Esperance District.

Darryl has contributed almost 8000 hours of service and has become an invaluable part of the Parks and Wildlife team on the south coast.

He said volunteering with the department had significantly improved his health over the past three to five years.

"It'll be the best thing you can ever do if you want to leave your stress behind. Once you start volunteering, you won't stop because the enjoyment is always there. You will not regret it," he said.

"I started off as a campground host, then I got drawn into a few other things around the park, assisting the rangers. If anything was going on, I was the first to put my hand up for it," he said.

Nine Outstanding Service and 10 Highly Commended awards were also presented during the ceremony to volunteers for their work, dedication and commitment, and 25 volunteers received certificates for long service.

Volunteer program coordinator Lee Hollingsworth said the awards were an opportunity for the department to thank volunteers for the important role they play in the community and the tireless and selfless work they contribute to Parks and Wildlife.

"Last year, more than 5000 Parks and Wildlife volunteers contributed more than 630,000 hours to volunteer projects around the State – a record effort," he said.



Above: New facilities at Potters Gorge campground. Photo – Parks and Wildlife

Campground upgrade for Wellington National Park

Sixty new tent and caravan sites have opened at Potters Gorge in Wellington National Park, near Collie, as part of a \$2.8 million upgrade.

Campers will be able to enjoy the tranquil jarrah forest from sites with lake views. Each site has its own fire ring and picnic table. There are also new toilets and camp kitchens, new roads and paths and improvements to the day use area.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the improved camping facilities were an important boost because the national park was increasing in popularity with more people finding it an attractive and convenient destination so close to Perth, Collie and Bunbury.

"Wellington National Park has spectacular scenery and a variety of recreational activities," Mr Jacob said.

"To make this area even more of a must-visit destination, a new mountain bike pump track has been constructed in the campground area, which adds to the many other activities on offer, including fishing, swimming, canoeing, scenic driving and bushwalking."

Regional Development Minister Terry Redman said the Royalties for Regions investment into improving facilities in national parks was helping boost visitors to regional WA.

"We are making it easier than ever to explore and enjoy WA, with improvements to campgrounds providing more sites and better facilities for holiday-makers," he said.

Four hundred new camp sites across WA have been delivered under the \$21.05 million Parks for People Caravan and Camping initiative.

Film premiere screening for volunteers

Forty Parks and Wildlife volunteers were treated to the Western Australian premiere of *Maratus*, an Australian documentary about an unlikely scientific discovery and the persistent man behind it.

Community program coordinator Marnie Giroud said the film screening was organised by the Volunteers and Community Unit and held on International Volunteer Day as a thank you to volunteers for their contribution to WA's environment.

"Volunteers play a massive role in the department's mission to conserve and protect the environment and this was just a small way of recognising that. The attendees loved the film and had lots of queries during the post-screening question-and-answer session," she said.

Maratus tells the story of Canberra man Stuart Harris, who was walking in Namadgi National Park when he photographed what he thought was simply an attractive spider. When he posted it online, Sydney-based scientist Jurgen Otto got in touch with the news that it looked like a previously undiscovered species of *Maratus*, or peacock spider. Then, the search to find another specimen began with vigour. Stuart became transfixed with finding the spider, spending many weekends out in the bush searching. Three years later, in 2011, he succeeded. After a research and peer review process, the species was named after him – *Maratus harrisi*.

Since then, 60 new species of *Maratus* have been discovered, including eight by Stuart, thanks to a renewed interest in the species.

Stuart said he hoped the documentary would encourage more people to take part in citizen science.

Marnie said the film was inspirational.

"It conveys a fantastic message – that you can make a valuable contribution to science, even if you are not a qualified scientist. Citizen science is having a big impact on our knowledge of wildlife and their habitats," she said.

"It's a way for people to get out there and develop a love for, and desire to protect, this amazing environment we have."



1. Stuart Harris, discoverer of *Maratus harrisi*, with Science and Conservation Director Dr Margaret Byrne, at the film screening. 2. Volunteers attend the movie screening. Photo – Parks and Wildlife 3. Community program co-ordinator Marnie Giroud with Stuart. 4. Parks and Wildlife volunteers Trudy and Mike Klessens enjoy morning tea before the event. Photos – Karla Graham/Parks and Wildlife



Above: Feral cat. Photo - Parks and Wildlife

Feral cats targeted in karri forest

A program trialling the use of *Eradicat* baits to target feral cats in timber harvest coupes is underway.

Forestry Minister Mia Davies said the baiting of feral cats would complement the existing fox baiting programs in these areas.

"Foxes and feral cats are a significant threat to native fauna and baiting programs for both introduced predators should result in the recovery of locally threatened native fauna," she said.

The first phase of the trial will gather baseline data at two sites, one where baiting will occur and a control site where no baiting will occur. This will be followed by a four-year baiting program.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said *Eradicat* had previously been effective in the rangelands and semi-arid region and he hoped its use in the karri forest would produce similar results.

The trial is being funded by the Forest Products Commission.

Roadworks mark the start of Kalbarri project

Roadworks in Kalbarri National Park have begun, as part of a world-class skywalk tourism development in the park. Twenty-two kilometres of the park's access road will be sealed.

The \$20 million Royalties for Regions-funded development will see two skywalks built more than 100m above the Murchison River to provide stunning park views.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the upgraded road would provide safe, year-round access for visitors to the spectacular Murchison River gorge sites and reduce the likelihood of vehicles damaging bushland by driving through undesignated areas.

"The first 12km of Loop-Z Bend Road was bituminised in 2014. With the sealing of the final 22km, we can progress the construction of the two skywalks."

Below: Construction on Loop-Z Bend Road. Photo - Rory Chapple/Parks and Wildlife



Above: Mountain biking. Photo - Perth and Peel Mountain Bike Master Plan

Have your say on mountain biking plan

Members of the public are encouraged to have their say on the draft *Perth and Peel Mountain Bike Master Plan 2016–26*, released for public comment last week.

The draft plan outlines the potential delivery of 570km of purpose-built trails across 24 sites including high-priority areas of the Perth Hills around Mundaring, Wungong near Armadale, and Dwellingup.

It identifies the Swan Valley, Jarrahdale and Yanchep as sites of moderate priority, with 18 other sites from Joondalup to Mandurah, and east to Avon and Boddington.

"This plan identifies the mountain bike experiences that these regions can offer while fostering greater community participation and providing tourism opportunities," Environment Minister Albert Jacob said.

The plan can be viewed at westcycle.org.au/images/ppmp_consultation.pdf.

