Message from the AERG Chair

Welcome to the sixth issue of Yarning Time, featuring what’s going on around the State.

The Aboriginal Heritage Unit (AHU) and the Aboriginal Employee Reference Group (AERG) have established Yarning Time to:
- provide an update on Aboriginal staff news;
- inform all staff of the developments in Aboriginal affairs in the department; and
- share stories on the department’s engagement with Aboriginal people.

Please have a read and enjoy.

Dr Stephen van Leeuwen.
Kensington

In Perth, about 50 staff from Parks and Visitor Services (PVS) and River and Estuaries Division (RED) gathered on 27 May for a BBQ breakfast and walking tour along the Swan River, visiting two recently completed interpretation facilities at Point Walter and Bicton Baths. A Whadjuk welcome was conducted by Elder Betty Garlett. Part of the River Journeys project – which encourages people to take their own journeys of cultural and spiritual discovery along Perth’s rivers – the facilities include boardwalks and signs sharing stories of the connection between the Whadjuk Noongar people and the river.

Swan Coastal Region - Wanneroo

The Swan Coastal Region held a reconciliation week breakfast at the Wanneroo work centre where Aboriginal employee Derek Nannup (Visitor Services Personnel) from Yanchep National Park, spoke to the group and showed the YouTube video “Walking Together – Belonging to Country”.

South West Region - Bunbury

Reconciliation week 2016 was celebrated at the Bunbury regional office with the unveiling of a mural on a wall near the reconciliation garden (Kaatamoordoo Kidji Maambakoort).

The mural was painted by Cassie Rampant, the daughter of Paul Rampant (remote sensing officer, GIS branch) who shares the office space near the garden.

In the spirit of reconciliation, Cassie volunteered her time and artistic ability to create the artwork which took many hours over a number of weeks, resulting in a spectacular piece which complements the theme of the garden.

Bob Hagan (regional manager), Peter Henderson (regional PVS leader and RAP rep) and 22 South West regional staff attending the customary activities and native title workshop delivered by the AHU and Simon Choo, senior project officer, thanked Cassie with a lunch and gifts acknowledging her commitment to reconciliation.

Bunbury staff also participated in a total of three Cultural Awareness Training events during this week.

Significant dates

National Reconciliation Week 27 May – 3 June 2016

National Reconciliation week is an important week to celebrate. Building relationships with Aboriginal people, organisations and/or communities through celebrating National Reconciliation Week is a key action of the Reconciliation Action Plan.
NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC stands for National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee. Its origin can be traced to the emergence of Aboriginal groups in the 1920s which sought to increase awareness in the wider community of the status and treatment of Indigenous Australians.

NAIDOC Week is held in the first full week of July. It’s a time to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievements and an opportunity to recognise the contributions that Indigenous Australians make to our country and our society. Events were held at Kensington, Bunbury, Yanchep National Park and the West Kimberley District.

Kensington

Creative Native Aboriginal Art Gallery Team Building

Three divisions - Corporate Services, RED and PVS - combined their efforts to support a cultural activity in celebration of NAIDOC Week.

Creative Native (http://www.creativenative.com.au/) was engaged to run an Aboriginal art workshop for staff on Friday 8 June. Six partially-completed canvases created by Beverley Egan were provided along with art materials. Staff collaborated in groups to try their hand at Aboriginal art techniques and complete the intricate and beautiful dot paintings.

Beverley Egan was born in Mullewa on 21 August 1961. Bev is a Yamatji woman and speaks the Wadjari language. She maintains very strong links with her country and traditional culture in the Murchison/Gascoyne region and regularly returns for family events. Beverley has lived most of her life in Perth with her husband (who is also Yamatji) and her two sons. She began painting five years ago when she was taught by her niece Loretta and has also worked with Bundi Arts, working with ceramic art.

A well-respected artist, Beverley paints women’s stories and stories from her family’s country in the Murchison area. Her work is held in many private collections in Australia and around the world.

Over the past five years Beverley has developed a style of work varying from traditional to bright and contemporary. Her most recognisable paintings feature the turtle or Ganada, which is the totemic symbol of her father. The Ganada is often depicted swimming through the Murchison River in her home country.

Staff members chatted with artists from Creative Native who explained the meaning of many of the symbols in the works. Predominant themes included people interacting with each other, animals and waterways. The stunning artworks symbolize the importance of country and the interconnectedness of life.

Staff were excited to be part of creating something very special by contributing to the artworks during NAIDOC Week.

The completed artworks will be framed and returned to Parks and Wildlife to display

1) Main Waterhole, 2) Women digging for bush potato, 3) Women’s story, 4) Woman’s meeting place, 5) Bush potato dreaming, 6) Murchison River.
Bunbury

Peter Henderson (regional leader PVS) and South West RAP rep) attended an event with the City of Bunbury at the Eddie Bricknell Music Shell. Peter had this to say about the event:

“The Welcome, songs, dance, smoking ceremony and flag rising were an interesting and moving introduction to NAIDOC Week. I appreciated how everyone was made to feel welcome and invited to participate. Hopefully I can encourage more representation from Parks and Wildlife next year.”

Karin Khan (program coordinator AHU) led everyone in a smoking ceremony for the event.

Canteen bush tucker-themed lunch menu

In support of the celebration of NAIDOC Week, the Kensington canteen provided a bush tucker-themed lunch menu on 5 July 2016. Bush tucker included:

- Kangaroo pies
- Buffalo hotdogs
- Kangaroo stew and rice
- Barramundi / salad
- Vegetarian Option
River Guardians

River Guardians members celebrated NAIDOC Week by participating in a guided walk from Point Walter to Bicton Baths in the Swan Canning Riverpark. The activity started with an amazing Welcome to Country by Whadjuk Elder Marie Taylor, who shared cultural stories and welcomed everyone to the special area.

The new interpretive walk provided visitors with signage which started and ended their walk. The information is beautifully integrated with the environment thanks to Parks and Wildlife designers. River Guardians were guided by Ben Ansell (trails project manager) to download the Geotourist App, find the Jenna Biddi Yorga trail and start their experience.

Guardians walked the 2.1km trail listening to stories told by Aboriginal Elders. Recorded stories began playing automatically as participants’ smart phones geo-located them as they walked past sites of significance. The group even encountered some dolphins and birds fishing near Blackwall Reach and were lucky enough to witness an osprey with a fish in its talons flying above the trail!

The event was a fantastic way for people to gain a deeper understanding of the area by hearing about the significance of the land to Aboriginal people, by Aboriginal people.
Yanchep National Park

In Yanchep National Park (YNP), a number of events were held throughout the week, including a guided bushwalk and NAIDOC-themed sports carnival for Yanchep District High School students, but the centrepiece was a special NAIDOC Day celebration on Saturday 9 July. Park manager Julia Coggins said even a hailstorm did not deter nearly 200 people from enjoying the day.

“Visitors enjoyed a bush tucker barbecue and free activities including sand art, traditional face painting, artefact display and Dreamtime storytelling. A warming fire was lit in the Wangi Mia and our staff and volunteers had a great time helping to share Aboriginal culture with such an enthusiastic group of people,” she said.

NAIDOC Olympics 22 June

About 90 year five and six students from Yanchep District High School joined us for our inaugural NAIDOC Olympic Games. Following an acknowledgement the kids were painted up with traditional face painting to reflect each of the three competing teams – Yonga, Wetj & Koomal. Teams then enjoyed a round robin of traditionally-inspired games including Boorna Wanghan (message stick relay through the Dwerta Mia), Klakadoo (bean bag throw – target/hunting game), Ilye (Boomerang game played with Frisbees), Yonga, Wetj, Karda (foot race with children imitating animals eg. hopping like Yonga) and spear throwing. Following lunch the kids were treated to an ‘all in’ Didgeridoo and Dance session, which was extremely well-received. No child missed the opportunity to have a go and the fun and laughs continued all day. Terrific feedback was received and plans are underway to expand the event to include additional schools next year.

NAIDOC Day 9 July

A hailstorm could not stop this event and did not deter a crowd of nearly 200 from enjoying our NAIDOC Day. Artefacts and displays decorated the Wangi Mia and a fire was lit. Derek Nannup mingled with visitors telling stories, making bracelets with children and playing impromptu didgeridoo. Ciara, Yanchep’s volunteer’s coordinator, was assisted by a couple of volunteers to cook a barbecue of bush tucker sausages and damper, which was delicious, with a delicious aroma enticing visitors all morning. Judith Birchall, assisted by many little hands, created a beautiful sand art piece in the Yorga Mia depicting the creation story of the Wagyl reflecting the NAIDOC 2016 theme of song lines. In the afternoon Derek told the story of our canvas in a Kaartdijin Dreaming segment, which was followed up with our regular Aboriginal Experience activity offered at no charge.
**West Kimberley**

The department’s West Kimberley District hosted a number of educational and celebratory events for NAIDOC Week.

Parks and Wildlife and Broome Whale Watching charters provided 20 young Aboriginal people from Broome with a free whale watching cruise off Roebuck Bay. It was a great way to acknowledge those young people who have shown great leadership and achievement. Organisations such as Red Cross, Headspace, Nyamba Buru Yawuru, Broome Families and Youth Hub nominated five young representatives each to attend. Participants spotted dolphins, turtles and jellyfish despite conditions being too windy to get far enough out to spot whales. A big thanks to Cam, our captain, and Amber from Broome Whale Watching, for providing this opportunity.

**Broome**

The Yawuru rangers hosted a NAIDOC afternoon tea with staff from Parks and Wildlife, Yawuru Land and Sea Unit and Shire of Broome to celebrate culture, country and achievement. Jason Richardson, a trainee Yawuru ranger with the Parks and Wildlife joint management program, spoke in Yawuru language to acknowledge the traditional owners of Minyirr Park. MATES trainer and assessor Daniel Balint talked about the significant achievements of the department’s Aboriginal staff throughout the West Kimberley District and we all shared some damper, scones and local bush tucker.
Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park

From 4 to 7 July, Parks and Wildlife’s Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park rangers and the marine visitor interpretation officer ran a fantastic week of school holiday activities at the Eighty Mile Beach Caravan Park. These activities celebrated NAIDOC Week and the start of the school holidays. The week consisted of many exciting activities including a movie night, boomerang painting, ocean bingo, colouring in fun and a sand sculpture competition.

Cultural Awareness training Eighty Mile Beach

On 21 July 2016 Parks and Wildlife staff and representatives from Greening Australia and BHPBIO took part in a cultural awareness session with elders from Nyangumarta country at Eighty Mile Beach Caravan Park. The Nyangumarta people have a long and deep connection with their country, which begins in Manguny (creation time). Since Manguny the Nyangumarta people have faced many changes to their land, from working on neighbouring pastoral stations in the 1900s, to more recently gaining native title rights.

The cultural awareness session consisted of the Nyangumarta elders discussing the workings of their family trees (Waljamarri). The group were then introduced to various words from the Nyangumarta language. Nyangumarta Elder Nyaparu Rose explained the different seasons and how they are determined by the type of native food that is available. The elders took the group to two culturally-significant sites while describing the history, significance and interesting stories connected to these places. They talked about joint management and working together to protect the environment and culture while discussing the way forward for land management in the area.
Training

The following staff members have completed training programs in:

Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management – Kyle Hill, Tristan Jessell and Peter Curtin

Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management – Jason Richardson

Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management – Curtis Robinson

Graduation Ceremony

Awards

Recognising and promoting the achievements of Aboriginal staff is a key element to the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

We would like to congratulate the following staff for their achievements, celebrated at the 1 June 2016 Graduation Ceremony:

Trainee of the Year – Reserve 31165 ranger Peter (Benji) Curtin was awarded the Aboriginal Trainee of Year for taking ownership of his Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management that resulted in him setting a new record – completing the qualification in only 11 months.

Runner up – Curtis Robinson

Kwabalitch Award – Curtis Robinson received the Kwabalitch award for demonstrating tenacity, perseverance and dedication to his studies throughout his traineeship. He was recognised for his continued commitment to the Department, Yawuru rangers and MATES. Curtis is the first Yawuru ranger to successfully complete a Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management.

Runner Up – Tristan Jessell
Employee news

Parks and Wildlife is committed to increasing the representation of Aboriginal employees working within the agency at all levels, occupations and locations.

New staff

The Department would like to welcome 10 new Aboriginal staff members. They will be working in the following areas within the department: West Kimberley District, Swan Coastal District, Blackwood District, Wheatbelt Region South and East Kimberley District.

Departing staff

Since the last Yarning Time, nine Aboriginal staff members have left the department. The department would like to thank them for their service contribution to conserving and protecting Western Australia’s plants and animals. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Special Tribute - Farewell Eugene Winmar

Eugene Winmar, the department’s longest-serving Aboriginal employee, retired in January 2016 following a long and successful career. He started with the Forest Department in 1971 as a forest worker and had a career spanning 45 years. The Perth Hills District organised a farewell for Eugene where staff gathered to wish him luck. There was a great turnout from his colleagues. He will be remembered fondly for his strong work ethic, attention to detail and the way he would go out of his way to pass on his skills and knowledge to other staff members.

To celebrate Eugene’s career, the Eugene Winmar Award for Excellence was established. It recognises outstanding performance and achievement by an Aboriginal staff member. This award is presented at the biennial Aboriginal staff conference to honour and pay tribute to Eugene’s legacy.

We wish Eugene a long and happy retirement.
Around the State

Indigenous Ninu (Bilby) Festival – Gibson Desert

Parks and Wildlife recently jointly sponsored the Ninu Festival, which was held at Kiwirrkurra in the far eastern Gibson Desert. The festival was hosted by the Kiwirrkurra rangers, Kiwirrkurra community and facilitated by Central Desert Native Title Services.

The festival brought together Indigenous ranger groups and scientists working to conserve and manage bilbies in the wild. More than 150 participants attended from all mainland states and territories. A traditional welcoming ceremony was held at an important Ninu Dreaming site. Senior knowledge holders presented cultural knowledge of bilbies and shared stories about the significance of bilbies to traditional owners.

Ranger groups and scientists presented and shared information on research and management being undertaken on bilbies around the country. Science and Conservation Division scientist Dr Martin Dziminski was among the invited speakers, presenting research being carried out by Parks and Wildlife in the Pilbara, Kimberley and deserts in WA, as well as the reintroduction of bilbies to Matuwa.

Afternoons during the festival were spent on practical activities in the field, including identification of food resources used by bilbies, cat hunting and using standardised track plot searches to indicate the presence of bilbies and other animals. Dr Dziminski also demonstrated the use of the newly-developed, user-friendly Parks and Wildlife bilby monitoring method which involves collecting scats along transects to monitor bilby numbers using DNA techniques. Time was also taken to demonstrate how to use remote cameras and the potential value of drones for bilby detection and monitoring.

The festival promoted the sharing of ideas and information and led to stronger links between ranger groups working on bilbies and researchers, to attempt to reverse the decline of one of the last remaining critical weight range and iconic arid zone marsupials.
Kalgoorlie
Matuwa

Early June 2016 saw some significant progress with the land management partnership between Parks and Wildlife and the Wiluna Martu at the 600,000ha Matuwa Kurrara Kurrara Indigenous Protected area (M KK IPA), formerly known as Lorna Glen and Earaheedy, north-east of Wiluna. The MKK IPA management team met over several days and discussed many aspects of land management and arranged several new projects, including a biological survey at Kurrara Kurrara (Earaheedy) in spring, operational activities, prescribed burning, ongoing research and mammal reintroduction and feral predator baiting. The involvement of volunteers and a Bush Rangers reward camp is also being progressed. The newly-established management team processes and project proposal approval methodology resulted in a very successful meeting, with additional substantial projects being referred to the Aboriginal Corporation for further discussion and advice.

This management team meeting was the last for retiring regional manager Ian Kealley and his 16 years of joint management work at MKK was acknowledged by the Wiluna Martu, who invited him back as a volunteer to assist with ongoing management work.

Women’s business trip

The Martu women rangers joined female Parks and Wildlife staff from the Goldfields Region on a ‘women’s business’ trip to Matuwa in June. It was an opportunity to establish a working relationship between the Martu women and departmental staff. The trip involved a variety of works including identifying and cleaning out culturally-significant rock holes and assisting with prescribed burning in the mammal reintroduction compound.

Jennifer Jackson, Parks and Wildlife conservation officer, said it was great to work with the women and to get to know them. “We felt fortunate that they shared their stories with us,” Jennifer said.” It was great to get the rock holes cleaned out so they will hold water for native animals.

“It was just the start of this collaboration and it was great to get the women back on country, sharing their knowledge and getting involved with prescribed burning.” PVS regional leader David Pickles said that with other trips and projects being planned, it was great to build a solid foundation for future works.