



In this issue

- Drain sampling in full swing during wet season
- Smoky vehicle reporting helps keep air clean
- Funds boost wetland conservation
- Wildlife first aid courses offered on mine sites
- Restoring the cove
- News in brief
 - Air Quality Forum to be held
 - Volunteers praised for turtle program

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Drain sampling in full swing during wet season

THE first major downpour of this year's wet season near Broome saw DEC's Yawuru rangers out and about conducting drain sampling to capture 'first flush' data on the nutrient levels flowing into Roebuck Bay.

Yawuru Ranger Curtis Robinson said the nutrients carried in run-off from the town and its iron-rich pindan was thought to trigger blooms of *lyngbya*—a naturally occurring but potentially toxic blue-green algae.

"*Lyngbya* can smother seagrass beds, which in turn impacts on turtles and dugongs as it is their major food source," he said.



"In its toxic phase, *lyngbya* can cause skin and eye irritations and is best avoided.

"It was essential we sampled on the first rain so we can accurately measure the amount of nutrients flowing into the bay and determine any links to *lyngbya* blooms. It was a long wait, as this year the first big downpour came in early January."

Curtis said the Yawuru rangers had been joined by volunteers from the community to undertake the sampling at more than 15 drain sites.

"The support from the volunteers has been great, especially at a time of year when many people are away on holidays," he said.

West Kimberley District Manager Alan Byrne said the sampling was part of a study being done into the triggers of *lyngbya* outbreaks.

"The Yawuru rangers are helping researchers from The University of Western Australia learn more about the hydrology of, and nutrient flows into, Roebuck Bay," Alan said.

Members of the public are being asked to report large algal blooms in Roebuck Bay to the DEC Broome office on (08) 9195 5500.

Right Yawuru Ranger Domanic Matsumoto holding samples of *lyngbya*.

Left Yawuru Ranger Preston Manado collects water from a flowing drain.



Smoky vehicle reporting helps keep air clean

ROAD users can help reduce Perth's air pollution by reporting vehicles emitting excessive amounts of smoke.

Anyone who sees a vehicle emitting visible smoke continuously for 10 seconds can call the DEC Smoky Vehicle Hotline or email the sighting to DEC's Air Quality Management Branch.

Smoky vehicles' are motor vehicles that have internal combustion engines, were built after 1930, and emit visible smoke for longer than 10 seconds (not due to heat or the condensation of water vapour). A properly maintained diesel vehicle will emit smoke briefly, which is why a period of 10 seconds is used to classify a vehicle as 'smoky'.

Manager Air Quality Policy and Programs Peter Musk said Smoky vehicles and other exhaust emissions have adverse effects on human health and the environment.

"If a vehicle is reported, the owner is informed that their vehicle has been observed smoking excessively. It is suggested they seek a mechanic's advice for suitable repairs. If multiple confirmed reports are received for the same vehicle, details are provided to the Department of Transport, the agency responsible for enforcing the Road Traffic (Vehicle Standards) Rules 2002," he said.

"There are a number of reasons that a car may be giving off visible smoke, including poor fuel

quality, fuel filter damage, an overfilled sump, or a malfunction of the car's pollution control equipment."

Peter said the smoky vehicle campaign forms part of the department's CleanRun program that works to develop and implement a range of targeted initiatives to reduce the impact of motor vehicle emissions on the Perth airshed.

Smoky vehicles should be reported to the Smoky Vehicle Hotline on 9324 2835, freecall 1800 0SMOKY (1800 076 659) or email smokyvehicles@dec.wa.gov.au. The reporters contact details will be required as well as identifying information of the smoky vehicle and the time, date and place it was observed.

News in brief

Air Quality Forum to be held in March

THE Air Quality Coordinating Committee, with the support of DEC, is pleased to announce that the first Air Quality Forum will be held on Thursday 15 March 2012, 8.30am to 5pm at the Western Australian Conservation Science Centre.

This forum aims to communicate the achievements of the Perth Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) and receive community feedback for future air quality management actions.

The forum will be opened by the Minister for Environment Bill Marmion, and keynote addresses from Professor Barry Marshall (Nobel Prize laureate) and Associate Professor Dr Andrea Hinwood (Edith Cowan University) will frame the day.

Other guest speakers will present on topics related to the ten AQMP initiatives (including health research, smoke management, modelling and monitoring and community education). There will also be a number of displays on the day including DEC's electric vehicle and some air monitoring equipment.

The event is free and is open to all, but places are limited. To register to attend this forum, please register your interest at AQCCAdmin@dec.wa.gov.au or call (08) 9333 7435 by 1 March 2012.

For more information visit www.dec.wa.gov.au or contact AQCC Executive Officer Caron Macneall on AQCCAdmin@dec.wa.gov.au or call (08) 9333 7435.



Funds boost wetland conservation

RECEIVING funding from DEC's Healthy Wetland Habitats program is the best news of the year for community group Wilson Wetlands Action Group (WWAG), who will use the money to restore a privately owned conservation category wetlands in Wilson.

The Healthy Wetland Habitats program helps private landholders to protect and care for high conservation value wetlands by providing technical advice as well as funding.

WWAG Chairman Russell Gorton said he is excited now that WWAG can proceed with

revegetation and weed control work for the Kent Street Conservation Loop restoration project. He said the work will be conducted on conservation wetlands owned by the Trustees of the Christian Brothers.

"This project extends works undertaken on adjacent public land, making this a great collaborative project," he said.

DEC Healthy Wetland Habitats Conservation Officer Amanda Fairs said on-ground works had begun to control invasive weeds and revegetate bare areas on the site.

"WWAG plan to restore the area and revegetate it with locally native melaleuca woodland species that provide habitat for various local fauna," she said.

"WWAG group have achieved amazing success in the past controlling invasive weed species including Japanese pepper. The funding provided will support this work and allow WWAG to expand the species targeted to include watsonia, cape tulip, black flag and arum lily."

Amanda said the focus of the Healthy Wetland Habitats program is to help landholders develop a voluntary management agreement to protect and care for their wetlands.

"The voluntary agreement identifies priority management actions, such as fencing and weed control, which will ensure the wetland's values are maintained and enhanced for future generations," she said.

Trustees of the Christian Brothers Manager (Brothers Welfare and Property) Vince Sinagra said the trustees were proud to be associated with Healthy Wetland Habitats program.

"We wish to thank DEC, WWAG, the Swan River Trust, City of Canning, other associated groups and many volunteers who have assisted in restoring the Wilson conservation land reserve for the benefit of the community," he said.

The Healthy Wetland Habitats program is an initiative of the Government of Western Australia and is administered by DEC. It is currently funded by Main Roads WA as part of a mitigation strategy for extension works to Tonkin Highway.

The program is currently seeking expressions of interest from private landholders with high conservation value wetlands in the cities of Armadale and Gosnells, and the Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire. For more information contact Amanda on (08) 9219 8788 or hwh@dec.wa.gov.au.



Left to right: WWAG Chairman Russell Gorton, DEC Conservation Officer Amanda Fairs (Healthy Wetland Habitats program) and Trustees of the Christian Brothers Manager (Brothers Welfare and Property) Vince Sinagra in the WWAG Kent Street Conservation Loop restoration project area.

News in brief

Volunteers praised for turtle program

ENVIRONMENT Minister Bill Marmion has congratulated a volunteer environmental community group in the Pilbara for their program protecting flatback turtles.

Following a successful nesting season of the protected species, the Minister said he was impressed with the commitment of Care for Hedland Environmental Association, and appreciated the level of research and planning undertaken to ensure the survival of the turtles.

"At last count, 416 turtle nests have been recorded this season at Cemetery Beach by this outstanding community program, which is linked to a wider marine turtle monitoring program that extends from Shark Bay to the Kimberley," Mr Marmion said.

"Care for Hedland's success in keeping vehicles off nearby Pretty Pool Beach, where 62 nests were recorded this season, has been crucial in avoiding beach sand compression, which can make it impossible for turtle hatchlings to dig out of the nest."

He said the success of flatback turtle nesting in Port Hedland is due in large part to the Hedland community's efforts to help protect the species.

More information is available in the full media statement.



Wildlife first aid courses offered on mine sites

KANYANA Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre has released their 2012 program of wildlife first aid courses.

With a focus on training people who work on mining and construction sites, the program will give attendees the knowledge and skills necessary to care for sick or injured wildlife. Training is being offered on mine sites or at Kanyana's premises in Lesmurdie.

Kanyana's Marisa Locatelli said some resource companies prefer to have trained carers visit staff on site, while others are happy for their workers to attend a course when they are back in Perth.

"The advantage of the Perth course is that it includes a tour of the facility," she said.

"As well as an education and training centre, Kanyana operates a hospital that deals with about 2,000 animals every year. A tour will give people an overview of how it operates and the facilities available for animals once they reach the rehabilitation stage."

She said wildlife first aid training for mine site employees is important because correct handling in the first 24–48 hours can increase the chance of survival for the injured animal. Workers would be much more willing to be involved if they have enough knowledge to make a difference.

First aid courses include information on basic first aid set-up, care of oiled birds, as well as how to transport injured animals safely.

Training dates have been set throughout February, March and April, though these are flexible to suit the needs of organisations and individuals. For more information and specific course dates contact Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre on (08) 9291 3900 or info@kanyanawildlife.org.au.



Restoring the cove

Volunteers plant sea rush in an extensive area originally smothered by the noxious weed kikuyu. Photo – Conservation Volunteers.

THE red-necked stint is just one of many threatened trans-equatorial wading birds that will benefit from work being done to restore the Alfred Cove class 'A' reserve.

With help from a state government Environmental Community Grant, volunteer group Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group Inc (SERAG) is aiming to restore the ecological integrity of the reserve, which provides much needed habitat for dozens of species of native bush and waterbirds, as well as declining numbers of trans-equatorial wading birds.

Alfred Cove is one of three small class 'A' reserves—along with Pelican Point in Crawley and Milyu in South Perth—set aside by the wider community for the purpose of protecting flora and fauna in the Swan and Canning Estuary system.

Providing a suitable habitat for these birds and restoring the area is no easy task. Working closely with DEC marine rangers, volunteers from SERAG and the wider community have begun the challenging task of steadily removing weed populations that have a stranglehold on the area and replacing them with native species.

Marine Ranger Caroline Haynes said the shoreline was originally dominated with sedges, paperbarks and eucalypts, and it was important that this diversity and structure be restored.

"Given their small size, each of the three reserves is under enormous pressure from recreational users, erosion and adjacent land uses," she said.

SERAG Volunteer Coordinator Margaret Matassa said the response of the community to their requests for hands-on assistance had been consistently supportive.

"We've had strong numbers of people turning out to participate in each of our many activity days," she said.

"Conservation Volunteers have also helped us enormously."

Margaret said many thousands of seedlings have been already been planted and many more will be planted in coming years, steadily transforming the area into both a healthy habitat for wildlife and a tranquil bush corridor to be highly valued and enjoyed by future generations of the Perth community.

