



A community group dedicated to the recovery of an unusual bird

*which could soon become extinct!*

[western-ground-parrot.org.au](http://western-ground-parrot.org.au)

Newsupdate no. 51 – November 2011

## *Royal Awareness*

Most of our Western Australian readers will be aware that last month Perth hosted a visit from Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh.

At the State reception at Government House, the Royal Couple met many people and discussed many things. During a discussion with Mrs June Butcher of Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, the Duke talked about one of his projects here – the Noisy Scrub-bird, which is now doing quite well. Nearly fifty years ago The Duke of Edinburgh provided pivotal assistance in the fight for the survival of this species which had then been newly rediscovered.

As the Duke was talking to June he asked her how the Western Ground Parrot was faring. She was able to fill him in on the fact that it is indeed a bird in desperate need of help. Subsequently an email from Buckingham Palace was received by Government House WA, requesting a project outline, which is now being prepared by the Department of Environment and Conservation.



Joy feeding Dawn. Photo: A. Berryman

### **Western Ground Parrot Captive Management Project August – October 2011**

Over the past three months the captive Western Ground Parrots have continued to be maintained successfully with all birds in good condition.

During August, a one year old female (10F01 – “Nellie”) was seen displaying to the one year old male (10M04 – “Storm”) that she is housed with in the aviaries. The display consists of her making a clucking noise as she raises her tail. The male however showed little interest and continued feeding. No further displays have been observed since.

The two year old female (09F04 – “Dawn”) has also been observed giving this clucking display on numerous occasions since late June. Until recently, the two year old male that she is paired with (09M04 – “Joy”) has either continued eating or backed off in response to this display.

On 30 September the female's weight began to increase despite an observed decrease in the number of visits she made to the food tray. In response, observations of this pair of birds were increased and on the 3rd of October the male was observed feeding the female. This is the first time this behaviour has been observed in captivity, and it is known to occur in natural circumstances during the breeding season.

The following day another first was observed when the two year old pair was seen mating. As suspected, the clucking display is the female soliciting copulation and she has been recorded clucking throughout the mating occasions. Since the first observation of copulation, they have been observed mating on numerous occasions over a period of three weeks, often three or four

times in a day. All of the mating that has been recorded has appeared to take place at the front of the aviary where we have a surveillance camera set up to record this activity.

By 17 October the mating activity seemed to be decreasing and the female was seen infrequently during the day. It is possible that she may be nesting at the rear of the aviary hidden away from view and out of sight of the cameras. A camera will be placed at the back of the aviary to monitor the activity there, but only if the opportunity presents to do this with a minimum of disturbance to the bird(s).

*Report by Dr Abby Berryman of the Department of Environment and Conservation's Western Ground Parrot Recovery Project.*



Children in our dress-ups *Photo: C. Johnston*

Diana working on an arm-painting *Photo: B. Newbey*



## Perth Royal Show 2011

For the first time there was a Western Ground Parrot display at the Perth Royal Show organised by our Friends group. It was a success thanks largely to great volunteer contributions. The sunny weather held up for eight days and there were no hiccups of note. It was an awareness raising exercise and it was great to see significant public interest generated in the parrots' plight.

The helpful Royal Agricultural Society (conservation and land management section) provided us with a good lean-to, as well as plant species that simulated Western Ground Parrot habitat, and power so we could run a video.

The position of the stand ensured that there was good exposure to the stream of Royal Show patrons and we gave away many information and activity packs. Diana Rose provided the very popular face-painting activity, and also designed and made the large fabric banners. Thanks again to everyone involved who participated and made the event worthwhile.



## Lotterywest Grant

Friends of the Western Ground Parrot has been successful in obtaining a grant from Lotterywest. It was for \$4653 and is for the provision of much-needed promotional material. As a result we have already obtained some posters and a banner to enhance displays, plus giveaway items such as brochures and small stickers. More promotional purchases are in the pipeline.

Do contact us if you could distribute some of our brochures.

## Western Ground Parrot survey at Cape Arid National Park 7 – 11 November 2011

A VOLUNTEER'S INSIGHT by Dave Taylor

The above survey was conducted by five volunteers in conjunction with, and under the professional guidance of, three Department of Environment and Conservation staff.

2.30 am: Woken to the ringing of my mobile phone alarm. Time to rise, dress and put on the kettle for those members who need to start the day with a hot drink. I am one of them. A lot of rain had fallen during the previous week so tracks may be impassable and the threat of spreading dieback of great concern. Luckily one of the two possible survey sites is still accessible. Arrive at the survey site and given our GPS coordinates for where we are to listen. I set off with dry clothes, GPS in hand and head torch on. On arriving at my coordinates, I put a galvanized post in the ground and attach a sound recording instrument and affix microphones. I record wind speed, direction, listening conditions etc and am ready to go with clip board, compass, time piece and biro in hand.

It is now 1 hour before sunrise and I am ready to start listening. The dawn chorus soon starts and it is beautiful sound to behold. I try to tune these out, particularly the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater. I am sure they are out there trying to trick and frustrate me in my quest to hear and record the calls of the Western Ground Parrot. My ears strain and feel like radar dishes attached to the side of my head. I suddenly hear a distinctive call and I note it down with the time, direction, distance and type of Western Ground Parrot call I just heard. I notice head torches come alive in other locations. Have they heard the call as well? Time will tell when data sheets are compared and are entered into the computer.

A beautiful sunrise this morning with three definite recordings. It is now 5.10 am and time to pack up my equipment and head back to the vehicles hoping that my hearings will correlate with the other surveyors. We head back to camp for breakfast and the start of another day.

The time spent as a volunteer listening for the Western Ground Parrot is very rewarding if you like the solitude at your listening post, the bush, good company, meeting new and interesting people and the chance to hear and possibly see the critically endangered Western Ground Parrot. This is my second survey in this area. Would I go again? Most definitely. Would I recommend to future volunteers? Most definitely.

### Wendy Binks continues to help the WGP

Last month *Invisible Me*, the third in Wendy Binks' Stripey series of children's books, was launched by Jan Nicholls, president of the WA branch of the Children's Book Council of Australia. As a result of Wendy's promise to donate \$5 to the Western Ground Parrot Rescue Fund for each book sold at the launch, she made a donation of \$800 to the fund. She has decided to add to that donation. (See below)

One of the characters in *Invisible Me* is a Western Ground Parrot (WGP), Toot. There he is, alongside other far better known Aussies such as a kangaroo, an echidna and a goanna each of which surprises Stripey the emu chick with the effectiveness of its camouflage. The illustrations in this book are very detailed and colourful. This delightful book would appeal most to children aged from 2 to 7 but holds enjoyment for anyone. What better way to raise awareness of our WGP?

### Buy a book: donate to the WGP Rescue Fund

Wendy has provided two boxes of books to be distributed by the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot. The book price is \$15 and posting will cost an additional \$3.30. Wendy will donate \$8 to the WGP Rescue Fund from each book sold through our group.

To help us this way, contact Brenda Newbey – Perth- (phone) 93375673 (email) [wgpbin@gmail.com](mailto:wgpbin@gmail.com)  
Or Val Hack – Albany – (phone) 0409 443 331 (email) [valh@omninet.net.au](mailto:valh@omninet.net.au)



Wendy Binks (right) with Brenda Newbey at the book launch. Photo: Keith Chappell

Wendy's web address is <http://www.wendybinks.com>

## Rare Footage



Not everyone has seen clear film footage of "Charlie", the adult male Western Ground Parrot filmed in the Fitzgerald River National Park. I have made a short clear clip, the same one used on the 'Meet the Western Ground Parrot' multimedia CD that was given away at the Perth Royal Show.

To see the clip, please go to the website; <http://home.exetel.com.au/wgp/Video/wgp/index.html>  
You need to have Adobe Flash installed. To see the clip press the triangle 'play' icon, which is the left hand side frame (opposite the photo). If it doesn't work for you, email me, Stephen Fryc (Editor). Address below.

### Western Ground Parrot Rescue Fund

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made contributions towards the WGP Rescue Fund. We have received some very generous donations which will enable us to assist the Recovery Project. As you may remember from the previous newsletter, there was a wishlist and one of the items needed was the provision of remote monitoring equipment for the aviaries. With the recent good news about the two birds which have been observed mating, it becomes even more important to have such equipment available should the birds attempt to nest.

We have not quite reached the amount needed for the purchase of the equipment, so we would like to appeal to all those who may be able to make a donation. With a little extra support we should be able to cover the shortfall. Donations can be made online through our GiveNow appeal, by direct deposit into the WGP Rescue Fund account or simply send a cheque made out to the WGP Rescue Fund.

### Wine for the Festive Season?

**Condingup Vineyard** is donating over 30% of the proceeds from the sale of two of its specially labelled red wines to the Western Ground Parrot Rescue Fund. The wine order form is available from <http://tinyurl.com/wineorderform> or our website (see below). It is possible to avoid postage and also to buy small quantities if you are in Albany or Perth. For Albany, contact Dave Taylor and for Perth, contact Brenda Newbey.



### New Secretary for FWGP

At our November committee meeting, new committee member Dave Taylor kindly agreed to take on the role of Secretary, a position which had been vacant since our AGM in September. We offer thanks to Anne Bondin who filled in as Acting Secretary in the interim.

**Contacts:** Brenda Newbey (Chair). Phone (08) 9337 5673      Anne Bondin (Treasurer). Phone (08) 9844 1793  
Dave Taylor (Secretary) 0458 502 836

**Address:** PO Box 5613, Albany, WA 6332      **Email:** [wgparrot@gmail.com](mailto:wgparrot@gmail.com)

**Website:** <http://www.western-ground-parrot.org.au>

**Archive:** Previous issues of our newsletter are available online at <http://wgnewsletters.blogspot.com/>

**Editor:** Stephen Fryc **Email:** [pwazzx@gmail.com](mailto:pwazzx@gmail.com)

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