

Turtle tracking season ends

■ Jon Solmundson

Sunday marked the end of this season's turtle monitoring at Gnaraloo Station, with 305 loggerhead nests in the bay.

The Gnaraloo Turtle Conservation Program crew walked up and down the 7km beach every day for the past four months, looking for turtle tracks, counting nests and mounting satellite tags on a few select turtles.

Program assistant Jordy Thomson said the nest count was one of the lower ones in the program's eight-year history, with turtles still coming onto the beach now, which was unusually late.

"It's usually the case that you see a pronounced peak for four or five weeks around late December, early January, but we didn't really have that this year," he said.

"With sea turtles, what probably influences the time of nesting is sea surface temperatures around their feeding grounds, but that's a big, broad oceanic region you're talking about so it's really hard for us to say what actually causes changes in migration."

Dr Thomson said the crew had seen interesting results from their satellite tagging program, with turtles heading in different directions.

"The really cool thing is the diversity of tracks," he said.

"There's 14 that got tagged here, and about half of them have gone



Gnaraloo Turtle Conservation Program's Mel Do, Nick Goldsmith, Kimberley Nielsen, Skip Green and Jordy Thomson wrapped up their last day of field work on Sunday. Picture: Claire Guillaume

north into the tropics — one of them has travelled 1800km up the coast already, she seems to have set up a foraging ground there."

"Five are around Shark Bay, which is a well-known feeding ground, but one went straight offshore over the continental shelf, so she is probably feeding off the jellyfish that live around the deeper sea area."

This season was also the first

time the program performed nest excavations, with help from the Department of Parks and Wildlife, which involved digging up empty nests, or nest where the eggs had been laid more than 90 days ago, in order to find out more about what went on inside.

Tracks made by the loggerheads, which commonly roost at Gnaraloo, and the much rarer hawksbill turtles are very similar,

so the dig examined five nests to identify the species roosting there — but all were revealed to be loggerheads.

The team will now prepare for a series of school conservation talks with Scitech, arriving in Geraldton on March 29.

The Turtle Tracker app is available for iPhone and Android, and provides a live feed of the Gnaraloo turtles' journey.



Agribusiness consultant Chris Wilkins. Picture: GRDC

Consultant adds insight

■ Aiden Boyham

Badgingarra agronomic and agribusiness adviser Chris Wilkins is set to embark on his second term with the Grains Research and Development Corporation's (GRDC) Western Region Panel, joining 10 other members from across WA.

Mr Wilkins is director of agricultural consultancy business Synergy Consulting WA, chairs the Council of Grain Grower Organisations Ltd (COGGO) and is a member of WA Agriculture Minister Ken Baston's Ministerial Agricultural Advisory Council.

With 24 years experience in WA's agriculture industry, Mr Wilkins said being a member of the panel had helped give him insight into many facets of the industry.

"Being a member of the panel allows you to see into other sectors of the grains industry and look at how they work together to improve productivity and profitability in Western Australia," he said.

"It gives people an opportunity to broaden their horizons and to look beyond the area they work in, whether it's as a grower, researcher, adviser or agronomist consultant."

According to Mr Wilkins, the panel is crucial to the way GRDC functions.

"We're looking firstly at strategy, to make sure we're getting the most out of our investments in WA," he said.

Phone app makes work-related tax deductions easier

Workers are being encouraged to use the myDeductions tool within the Australian Taxation Office's phone app to tally work-related deductions.

Member for Durack Melissa Price has urged the use of the phone tool and said the 2015-16 financial year would be the first

time taxpayers could use myDeductions to complete their tax return.

"In the 2014-15 financial year, 8.4 million individual taxpayers claimed work-related expenses," she said.

"Rather than storing the piles of receipts at home, this is a great tool

to ensure all work-related expenses, including car trips and donations, are stored and accounted for electronically.

"All work-related expenses in the myDeductions tool can be uploaded when tax returns are being filled in, or sent directly to the tax agent."

There are three simple rules to follow:

- The money needs to be spent themselves.
- Expenses must be work-related.
- There must be a record to prove it.

To get started visit ato.gov.au/mydeductions.

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