

Project Objectives

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The Western Australian Museum/Woodside Energy Ltd. partnership project objectives were:

- To document the marine biodiversity of the Dampier Archipelago and produce a detailed inventory of species-level biodiversity.
- To develop a representative *Woodside Collection* at the Western Australian Museum to permanently record the fauna collected.
- To liaise with stakeholders in the Dampier Archipelago regarding the conservation of the marine biodiversity of the area.
- To present information generated to the scientific community and make data available to environmental managers and policy makers in Western Australia.
- To communicate information generated to the public, both in Western Australia and world wide, through a variety of media.

The Western Australian Museum/Woodside Energy Ltd. partnership consisted of several field components. Major diving expeditions were undertaken in 1998 and 1999 to map the marine habitats of the entire Dampier Archipelago and study the marine fauna and flora of the region. Extensive information and material was collected for marine algae, fishes, echinoderms, molluscs, crustaceans, corals, sponges and other marine invertebrate phyla. A dredging and trawling expedition was undertaken in 1999, to document the benthic marine invertebrate biodiversity of northwestern Australia and compare it with that of other areas of Australia. The mangroves on the Burrup Peninsula provided an opportunity to undertake seasonal studies on the functioning of marine invertebrates in this system. The first international marine biological research workshop in northwestern Australia was held in Dampier in July and August 2000.

More than 3,200 species were collected during the project. Many new species and major range extensions of many known ones were also recorded

and first significant collections made of many taxa previously rarely or never studied by scientists in Western Australia. The specimens are collectively known as *The Woodside Collection* and are a perpetual reference to and record of the biodiversity of the area. The collection and GIS spatial data will be readily available and accessible to a worldwide audience through a dedicated, interactive web site.

The innovative, multi-partner approach taken by the Western Australian Museum/Woodside Energy Ltd. partnership has resulted in over 70 scientists from 15 countries co-operating with nine scientists from the Western Australian Museum and staff from Woodside's Environmental teams. Four Australian and four international museums, 23 Australian universities, research institutions and schools, 27 international universities and research institutions and 19 local and Australian organisations, including Western Australian government departments, the local Shire, marine research institute and other resource companies in the Dampier area, have participated in the project to date.