COASTWATCH FINDS BOGGED TOURIST

It was a lucky break for stranded British tourist Howard Holdsworth when a Coastwatch aircraft sighted his sand-scrawled SOS on a remote West Australian beach in December 2003.

The Broome-based Coastwatch Islander aircraft, on a routine patrol up the West Australian coast, sighted a sand-bogged 4-wheel drive vehicle at Cape Bertholet, 75 kilometres north of Broome.

"The aircraft conducted a low-level pass at 100 feet and clearly saw a person waving at the aircraft and S.O.S written in the sand," said the Supervisor of Coastwatch operations in Broome, Richard Harley.

"Two additional passes were made to get photographs and wave the wings, signalling that they had seen the person and that help was on the way."

The Customs National Surveillance Centre in Canberra contacted the local Broome police who mounted a rescue team using the local State Emergency Service (SES).

"Crew on board the Coastwatch aircraft were able to identify the registration of the vehicle and the name of the car-hire company," Mr Harley said.

"The local police were able to use the information supplied by Coastwatch to establish the details of the person they were searching for."

The SES rescue party and local hire company located 54-year-old Mr Holdsworth, pulled out his sand-bogged vechicle and returned to Broome.

The following day Mr Holdsworth waited for the Coastwatch aircraft to land at Broome Airport where he met and thanked the crew that played a pivotal role in his rescue.

Mr Holdsworth was extremely thankful to Coastwatch, WA Police and the SES. He had been stranded on the beach for two days and his supplies were running dangerously low.