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Wellington Discovery Forest Education Programs 2002 News Update



The Wellington Discovery Forest (WDF) Centre has been a hive of activity preparing for the spring influx of students and teachers. More than 2,000 people participated in WDF's program during 2001 (its first full year of operation), so we decided to extend the centre's facilities to better cater for increased demand.

The expanded centre provides more room to house our magnificent display of more than twenty preserved animals, which includes a delicate numbat, a black gloved wallaby, a wedgetailed eagle, a dugite and many other unique Western Australian species. Our 'touch table' items are now on a trolley to give easier access for searching fingers and eyes and a new toilet block and verandahs provide more storage, shelter and shade.

We have also developed an emergency response plan and acquired mobile phones and an emergency landline to ease the minds of Principals who are concerned about issues regarding duty of care. Education Officers that lead all student activities are qualified in Senior First Aid.

The WDF Centre continues to receive interest from government, Catholic and independent schools from the Bunbury, Collie, Harvey and Busselton areas. The centre also continues to form new partnerships with and enjoy the support from the local community, other agencies, the Education Department of Edith Cowan University (ECU) and local TAFE Colleges.

Highlights of 2001

- Students participated in all the available excursions last year, ranging from Early Childhood activities to our Year 11 program. Year 10 and 11 students also took part in new activities for a Biological Field Studies unit and a new Geography excursion.
- The blindfold ropewalk called the 'Sense-ational Trail,' was completed, trialed and applauded as the most popular activity by all age groups (including teachers) even though it was developed for Early Childhood students.
- Attendants of the Geographical Association of Western Australia's (GAWA) state conference for teachers in Bunbury, enjoyed an informative tour of the centre and its educational opportunities.
- Professional Development days were also well patronised by teachers, including attendance by 36 Bachelor and Diploma of Education students and lecturers from Edith Cowan University (ECU).
- A new excursion for Year 4 and 5 students called *Biodiversity's Base – Incredible Invertebrates*, was designed and launched with the help of an ECU student.
- An historical session that focuses on the lives of sleeper cutters in the early part of the last century, was planned and is being led, by a local historian whose grandfather lived and worked at Wellington Mill. During Biodiversity Month, more than 400 students and teachers visited the centre to increase their knowledge of conservation issues and threatened species.

Special Events and Opportunities in 2002

- The Wellington Discovery Forest is now included in Wellington National Park, an area that has recently increased to 17,500 hectares of forested catchment and recognised as having special national significance.
- A new Wellington National Park resource package is being written for upper primary and lower secondary students with a special focus in the Learning Area of Society and Environment. We are currently looking for schools that are willing to trial this package in the second semester of 2002.
- Woylies that were translocated and released into the forest by teachers during 2000, have been found thriving at Wellington Discovery Forest. Only a limited number of student groups camping at Wellington Mills Cottages can take part in this important monitoring program so book now to ensure your place for September's monitoring nights.
- Bookings are coming in for the Threatened Species Day overnight camp from the evening of 6 to 7 September. Features of this special event will include resources for use at school, checking of traps, animal encounters (meet woylies and chuditch), a slide show from our National Park Ranger, good food and spring flowers.
- This year, Greenteach camp will be based at Wellington Mills Cottages on 30 and 31 August and 1 September. All teachers are welcome so come along and join in activities.
- Dardanup Primary School students are helping us to learn more about WDF and have begun special projects in a designated research plot. They are the first school to become 'Friends of Wellington Forest.'

Looking to the future

WDF will encourage more schools to foster a sense of ownership of the area and to become involved in caring for and expanding our knowledge of the forests' ecosystem. We have many proposed projects, including determining the resident frog and fungi species, helping with the eradication of bridle creeper weed, the development of a local herbarium, writing an interpretation brochure for our trails and much more.

We also plan to train Aboriginal leaders so we can offer Aboriginal cultural activities. We will develop a bush tucker garden around the centre by working with the local Aboriginal community.

**Inquiries and bookings can be made at the
Department of Conservation and Land Management's
Wellington District Office.**

**Phone (08) 9734 1988; fax (08) 9734 4539
or email wellington@calm.wa.gov.au.**

