

Jarrahdale eco-experience has children rapt

by Andrew Darbyshire

THERE is much more to creating wildlife corridors than simply planting trees, as Jarrahdale Primary School children discovered recently.

Staff from CALM Jarrahdale and the local primary school are part way through a 10-year planting program at the Jarrahdale Eco-experience Development.

Students plant trees each year throughout the once cleared old forest lease, but survival rates in the past have varied because of strong competition by weeds.

As chemical control is not appropriate in wetland areas, the students have been using a form of permaculture in their planting this season.

This involved using a mixture of worm castings and Dynamic Lifter in the soil, then placing layers of

newspaper completely covering the soil up to a metre around each seedling.

The planted trees were then clearly visible, well spaced and set for a weed-free start to life.

After planting, CALM forest workers gave the Jarrahdale Primary Planters (JPPs) a sneak preview of the guided wetland, fauna and forest experience walk.

One of the male residents of the semi-tame bandicoot colony was called upon to show the value of wetlands as he was released from a trap set that morning.

"There was stunned silence as about 200 wide-eyes watched him slowly wander off into his

melaleuca wetland home," said CALM district forester Ralph Smith.

Ralph explained that feral cats, rabbits and rodents had been removed from the site, and how fox baiting also would help the growing populations of mardos and possums known to live there.

Once completed, the Jarrahdale Eco-experience will be part of a low-cost tourist package suitable for day trippers or an overnight stay within an hour's drive from Perth.

The Eco-experience, along with a combination of bike hire, backpacker accommodation, the high quality jarrah forest of the Mundlimup area, blue rock granite outcrop and the proposed Langford Park camping facility, will provide the complete 'Up in the Jarrah Dales' learning adventure.



Ralph Smith showing Jarrahdale Primary Schoolchildren one of the 'local residents' thought to be a bandicoot. Photo by Marie McDonald



CALM officer - Ralph Smith
- showing Jarraldale primary students
some of the 'local residents'
at the Eco-experience.

(I think it is a rat!)

Could be bandicoot?

Picture - Marie McDonald CALM