

Japanese visit Hills Forest

MORE than 100 junior high school students, interpreters and supervisors from Fukui Prefecture in Japan spent a day at The Hills Forest Activity Centre recently, discovering some of Western Australia's forests, plants and animals, as well as Aboriginal culture.

The visit was part of a ten-day cultural and language exchange program, while the students stayed with Perth families.

The group had requested an eco-experience while in WA, and the Centre jumped at the opportunity to showcase the many activities it offers.

Their day at The Hills Forest began with a brief talk about what CALM is doing to protect our native plants and animals, followed by an Aboriginal dance performance and a traditional Aussie barbecue lunch.

To ensure quality bush experiences, they were split into

by Kate Baxter

smaller groups, accompanied by forest officer Greg Standing, who took them to rarely seen timber areas behind Mundaring Weir for some spectacular views and talks about native and introduced timbers.

Trevor Walley from CALM's Aboriginal Tourism Unit introduced the Japanese visitors to the Nyoongar culture, explaining Dreamtime stories and legends, how Aborigines sought and built shelters, found food in the forest and how they made tools and musical instruments.

Renowned local naturalist Eric McCrum led a short walk to shed some light on the mysteries of the bush, how animals and plants fit into the forest eco-system and how to recognise signs of these animals.

The students then had an opportunity to meet rehabilita-

tion 'patients' from Chidlow Marsupial Hospital, and for a close encounter with joeys, woylies and pygmy and brush tail possums.

A fourth activity option was forest paper making with Mary Woodward, who showed the visitors how to make cards with flowers and natural bush materials, which they took with them as a permanent reminder of the forest.

Programs officer, Jenny Yeatman, said that it had been very satisfying to be able to organise bush activities for this group of students.

"They really enjoyed the Aboriginal dance performance and were fascinated by Eric McCrum's intimate knowledge of the forest."

"We're hopeful that this will open more doors to visiting tourist groups who can take advantage of our tailor-made activity programs," Jenny said.



Trevor Walley shows Japanese visitors how glue for fixing quartzite to the business end of tools (knives, spears, etc.) is made Nyoongar-style. Photo by Kate Baxter









- 1) Trevor Welley / Noel Hannup @ King's Park
with Japanese (young) tourists (filler)
- 2) get a story or filler from Drew Haswell