

Adventure out



Big Kids Campout

Ten-year-old Felix loves adventures in the bush. He takes us through the highs and lows of his fourth Big Kids Campout at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre.

by Felix Steinwandel, age 10



I always love going adventuring in the bush, especially when I am accompanied by my friends — and no parents! This is my fourth time at a *Nearer to Nature* Big Kids Campout.

What is a *Nearer to Nature* Big Kids Campout you might ask? In the school holidays *Nearer to Nature* puts on a very fun camp for kids from 7–11 years of age. Kids can experience nature and learn new things about the bush that surrounds us. And this is how my last adventure begins:

day one

My mum's car is pulling up to the *Nearer to Nature* campground in Mundaring. I can't wait to go to the Big Kids Campout. We are parking the car and I run to the boot, grab all my things and gear, and sprint to the campsite. Then I set up the tent with my friend who is joining me on this camp. Thirty minutes later, all the kids are called to the fire pit near our tents. We are introduced to the leaders and the other kids.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

One of my favourite activities is trapping. In the evening, we go with the leaders into the bush to set up our traps. We can catch brushtail possums, magpies (not intended) and the occasional chuditch. To catch these animals we prepare bait, which is a disgusting mix of sardines for the carnivores, oats for



the herbivores and peanut butter for omnivores. The bait goes into Sheffield traps.

We do the trapping for *Western Shield* research to help find out which animals are thriving in the area. For example, many years ago chuditchs were frequently found here but sadly now, they are hardly found at all.

Another example would be the brushtail possums, which were very rarely seen a few years ago. Nowadays we can find them much easier and more often.

After setting out the traps, we walk back to the campsite with our tummies growling and ready to tuck into dinner. But we all must cook our own (brought from home) with the help from the *Nearer to*



Nature team. I use the barbecue and roast a sausage.

PLAY TIME

Once everyone has finished their dinner and the washing up is done, we gather in the camp shed to decide which game to play. And yay! We play spotlight, my favourite game!

This goes on for a while, until we all have had enough and are keen on roasting some delicious marshmallows over the campfire. Lots of chatter and stories are being told by us and the leaders.

At 9pm we all must get ready for bed and snuggle into our sleeping bags. Some of the *Nearer to Nature* team sleep in tents very close to the kid's camp, so we all feel safe.



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Main Camping at Perth Hills Discovery Centre.

Photo – Dom Lim

Inset from left Setting up camp; roasting marshmallows over the campfire; common brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*); weighing fauna.

Photos – DBCA, Jiri Lochman

Above left Felix in a tent he set up with a friend.

Above Checking fauna traps.

Left Having fun with Bec from *Nearer to Nature*.
Photos – DBCA



● Perth Hills Discovery Centre

day two

It's a very short night at the camp because early at 5am we are woken up by the leaders to get ready for our now very quiet trapping session.

We go and find our trap and see if the door is closed. Mine was closed and I snuck quietly towards the trap with Mr C (one of the wonderful *Nearer to Nature* helpers).

He saw that in my trap was a magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) and quickly opened the trap so it could go and be free again. My friend was more successful with her trap. She caught a brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*). Mr C checked if it had a microchip. It already had one. He then measured and weighed the possum, and checked if there were joeys in the pouch. After that, he set the possum free.

Now we rush back to the camp kitchen and have breakfast (also brought from home). Sadly, that's the time our parents arrive, and we have to pack our belongings and say goodbye to our newly-made friends and the *Nearer to Nature* team.

In the car driving home I tell my mum all about my adventures and I can't wait for the next camp! This was fun!

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Top Checking traps with Richard from *Nearer to Nature*.

Inset above Roasting marshmallows.
Photos – DBCA

Above right Perth Hills Discovery Centre.
Photo – Lauren Cabrera/DBCA

Do it yourself

Where is it? *Nearer to Nature* provides opportunities for children of all ages to take part in hands-on, experiential learning in the natural environment.

Programs are on offer from diverse locations in the Perth metro area, the south-west, and Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk to teach kids to become advocates for the nature of Western Australia, to ensure it is protected and conserved.

Contact: The Perth Hills Discovery Centre ,
380 Allen Road, MUNDARING WA 6073
Ph (08) 9295 2244

Wellington Discovery Forest and Margaret River, Cnr South West Highway and Dodson Road, BUNBURY WA 6230
Ph (08) 9725 4300

Visit: pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/n2n



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