

Adventure out

Wetland wildlife investigators

by Zander Schott

Zander Schott (10) loves learning about animals. He's learned about creatures that live in the Swan River, birds of the night at Piney Lakes, and recently he learned all about the wildlife of the wetlands at Canning River as part of *River Guardians'* Wetland Wildlife Investigators program.





I have always loved wildlife and animals, and I love going to see the reptiles and other animals at the zoo and other places. During the school holidays I go to different classes where I learn about animals and where they live, and I recently learned about the wildlife of the wetlands at Canning River as part of the *River Guardians' Wetland Wildlife Investigators* program.

The class started with Naomi telling us all about the history of the Aboriginal people at Djarlgarro Beelieer (Canning River). She told us how the wetlands are important to Aboriginal people because the river provided food and water as well as shelter for their ancestors. And even though people don't live on the river like they used to, the river is still important to us all today.

Naomi asked us lots of questions and we talked about what different kinds of animals live in the wetlands, like fish, turtles, frogs and snakes. One of the kids had seen a brown snake on a path near where the class was, so we had to make sure we kept a look out for it when we went outside for games!

GETTING HANDS-ON

One of my favourite activities was 'Guess that frog'. Naomi played a frog sound and then we matched it up to its picture. I got most of them right because



I had seen and heard some of the frogs in our pool, so I knew straight away which one was the motorbike frog.

Next, we passed around some snake skins to look at and touch. They feel like really dry paper with bumps, and they are not very strong, so they got a bit ripped when they got passed around. We also passed around a turtle shell, which I thought was a bit sad. I felt sorry for the turtle that had died, but Naomi told us that the turtle had died naturally, so that made me feel a little better. It was interesting to see the spine of the turtle and where the body attaches to the shell. It looked like some sort of strange creature in the video games I like to play!

Then we went outside, and it was so hot it felt like a bajillion degrees. We sat outside in the shade under a tree, while Naomi showed us how to hold an oblong turtle using a toy one. We learned not to hold it by the neck because it might bite

Previous page

Main Canning River wetlands.

Photo – Marie Lochmann

Inset left Discussing types of animals found in the wetlands with Naomi.

Photo – Sonja Rose/DBCA

Inset centre Motorbike frog (*Litoria moorei*).

Photo – Alice McGlashan/Sallyanne Cousins

Photography

Inset right Holding the dried snake skin, from a carpet python (*Morelia spilota*).

Photo – Sonja Rose/DBCA

Above left Naomi showing how to hold an oblong turtle (*Chelodina oblonga*).

Above right Frog racing.

Inset Examining the empty shell of an oblong turtle.

Photos – Sonja Rose/DBCA




Do it yourself

Where is it? *River Guardians* delivers a range of fun and educational events to schools and the community around the Swan Canning Riverpark.

Fun nature-based activities set in a local context are used to encourage a connection to and care for the nature and heritage of our local environments.

DBCA's environmental education programs are designed around a head, heart and hand connection to bring about action by people of all ages to preserve and protect their patch.

Contact For more information on programs we offer, email community@dbca.wa.gov.au

Top Looking for waterbirds in the Canning River.

Photo – Naomi Adamczyk/DBCA

Top right Bird evidence for an investigation activity.

Above Walking with Naomi to outdoor activities.

Photos – Sonja Rose/DBCA

Inset Eurasian coot (*Fulica atra*).

Photo – Jiri Lochman

Right Embroidered baby turtle.

Photo – Sonja Rose/DBCA

you! We got to practise how to rescue and carry a turtle if we found a lost or injured one; that we should use a towel to cover it and put it in a box to keep it safe and not scare it. This is something that I am going to remember for a long time, so I can help any injured turtles I find.

We played a game where we had to find and carry baby turtles. Naomi hid them in the grass and then we had to go find them and carefully carry them back to a box for safety.

WATCHING FOR WILDLIFE

The next activity was to look at pictures of waterbirds and sort them out into groups, depending on whether they had toes or webbed feet. There was one bird called the Eurasian coot that had a mix of both—it has webbed toes and it looks really funny! We then went on a walk around the river for a waterbird scavenger hunt. Even though it was really hot outside, we saw lots of different types of birds hanging out in the shade around the river.

After going back inside for some water and to cool down from the heat, we did another activity where we had to match birds with different pieces of evidence. We had a bag of evidence—things like what the birds eat—and we had to match up the evidence to the bird. Some of the things we had to sort out were feathers, seed pods, eggshells and even pictures of other birds.

CREEPY CRAWLIES

We finished off the day doing an insect scavenger hunt. We went outside looking for evidence of invertebrates. Things like spider webs, cocoons and leaves with bite marks in them. We even found an interesting set of eggs on a fence wire, but even Naomi didn't know what the insect was that laid it!

The best part of the afternoon was learning about looking after wildlife and being able to play with my new friends while we did the activities. I even met up with some kids I knew from another class I went to in the school holidays last year. I definitely want to do more classes like this next school holidays.



Zander Schott is ten years old and his passions include caring for animals, creating art, learning to code and making video games.