



ecoeducation news

Statewide

June 2011, Number 32

2011 International Year of Forests

Hello colleagues,

EcoEducation at Kensington moved recently (still at the same address) so this is the first newsletter of the year. In this International Year of Forests, our focus is on the varied services that forests provide and to immerse ourselves in the wonder of the environment. I encourage teachers and educators to participate in our professional learning excursions into remarkable Western Australian environments. Please see the *Long weekends in the forests professional learning symposia* section in this newsletter for more details.

For the International Year of Forests, a new EcoEducation course on forests has been developed for use in the Bunbury area called *Sustainable forests*. It is aimed at Years 10–12 and contains concepts and skills in ecology, sustainable use of a resource and management principles.

Nearer to Nature has now joined EcoEducation, greatly adding to the variety of environmental education programs offered. Members of the general public now can experience the joy of the natural environment with *Nearer to Nature's* holiday programs throughout the metropolitan area. These are very popular and not just for kids! Parents stay and join in on learning about native wildlife and the world we live in. *Nearer to Nature* also host special nights and events for parents, such as the St Valentine's romantic evening in February which was a great success this year.

The 2011 Bush Ranger Conference was held in Yanchep and I was a participant along with highly motivated Bush Ranger teachers and leaders. We participated in a variety of interesting activities and had many opportunities to share information and plan programs. We also met the new Bush



Dr George Newland demonstrating percussion flaking in stone tool making.

Ranger coordinator for the Kimberley, Sally Johnston, who since then has supported Kununurra and Derby Bush Ranger Cadets in the Gibb River Road Charity Challenge. It was my privilege to accompany Trevor Walley and Dr George Newland in an Aboriginal Archaeological tour for prominent members of the education community. Participants were wowed by the site of historical family activities, including a rocky market garden, a stone tool site, different uses for native vegetation and a chance to chip our own stone tools and attach it to a handle to make a 'tarp' (stone knife).

Teachers of The Arts had a full day of activities and inspiration with a memorable professional learning program led by Juliet at the Perth Hills. Being immersed in the natural environment gave the teachers a sense of serenity and inspired them to create a variety of artistic works. Their students are likely to see a refreshed teacher back at school with new ideas to try out with them.

Some of the interesting activities that I have been recently involved with include: working on the national Sustainability curriculum with DEC's Community Education Branch; DEC's Perth Observatory strategic planning meeting with one result being a renewed education focus; National Geographic seminar (STAWA); astronomy lectures (ICRAR and GDC); a talk and session organised by the Sustainable Energy Association; and an interesting talk (Aquinas College) by Paul Gilding, ex-CEO of GreenPeace, who stated "the world is full" in reference to humans. Many of these were free night-time events that teachers could attend.

All the best with your education programs in the environment.

Regards,
Elaine Horne, **Senior Education Officer DEC**



Bush Ranger instructors exploring a cave at the 2011 Bush Ranger In-service.



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Nearer to Nature Autumn's Aura activity program 2011



Dewy Droplet N2N holiday program for children.

The team at *Nearer to Nature* (N2N) had some special guests on hand during their autumn school holiday program that captured the imaginations of children in order to promote real-life environmental issues.

The program began with an insight into the aerial acrobatics of the dragonfly and a watery exploration into the homes of the area's swamp dwellers. Complete with waders and net, our expert guide delved into the murky depths to find some interesting critters to show the children.

'James Pond' and 'Possum Galore' took the children on a *N2N spy kids* adventure where they tracked down environmental clues to decode an environmental message. The *Birds, bikes and brunch* activity at Jarrahdale was popular for both children and adults. The message of healthy body and environment was reinforced by cycling through the natural environment and seeing some amazing raptors.

The kids were treated to a surprise encounter from 'Dewy Droplets' who shared with them the amazing journey of water's role in the environment. Once again, *Ramble with a ranger* sold out within days. DEC's new John Forrest Ranger, Nick, was truly thrown in the deep end with 12 very enthusiastic junior rangers and an impromptu search and rescue for an injured cyclist being the highlight of the day.

Overall the program was a success and the perfect way to promote 2011 International Year of Forests.

Jill Francis,
N2N Program Coordinator

Bush Ranger news

Six cadets from Kalbarri Bush Ranger cadet unit who are taking leadership roles were chosen to take part in this year's Perup Science Reward Camp. The cadets learnt a variety of monitoring techniques including cage-trap transects to monitor a variety of fauna left in the Perup area, kangaroo and wallaby surveys and a night spotlight survey for possums and other nocturnal animals. The cadets learn how to handle the animals, taking measurements such as weight and head length, checking for gender and possible pouch activity.

During the afternoons the cadets took part in a new activity for the science reward, which involved learning the art of radio tracking. They tracked a woylie population recently released into DEC's new fenced sanctuary at Perup along with a wild population to help identify the reasons for their recent decline. The

cadets had a wonderful experience and DEC science staff Bruce Ward and Graeme Liddelow were very impressed with their animal handling techniques.

The new SMYL (South Metropolitan Youth Link) Community College in Rockingham, opened in 2010, has commenced a Bush Ranger unit. The specialist school caters for at-risk youth in the area. Teachers hope that the Bush Ranger cadet program will be able to engage their students in hands-on activities that are suited for all learning styles while also contributing to their Western Australian Certificate of Education qualifications. They are planning to adopt a piece of bushland opposite the school and take students on camps to learn more about conservation, bush craft and survival.

Hannah Hampson,
State Bush Ranger Coordinator



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Kimberley Bush Rangers rise to the challenge



Bush Rangers and helpers riding the 'challenge'.

In early May a team of Bush Ranger cadets from Kununurra and Derby district high schools and their supervisors participated in the Gibb River Road Mountain Bike Challenge. This year's event had participants cycling along sections of the Great Northern Highway before they finally hit the dirt at the eastern end of the Gibb River Road completing their 700-kilometre ride. Preparation for the event began at the start of the year with the Kununurra Bush Rangers competing for places in the team. The cadets participated in regular training

activities during the term as well as during school holidays. They even assembled their own bicycles when the new bikes arrived.

As a charity event, each team participating in the Gibb challenge is expected to raise money for Police Legacy and another organisation of their choice. The Bush Rangers chose to support CanTeen, the Australian organisation for young people living with cancer. The Kimberley Bush Rangers collected over \$1000 in donations, in addition to selling more than 300 CanTeen bandannas.

Participating in an event like this provides the cadets with the opportunity to develop new skills, interact with people from a variety of backgrounds and work towards an achievable goal. By forming a team with Bush Rangers from both Derby and Kununurra, the teenagers were able to compare their experience as cadets, discuss further joint activities and develop relationships with their peers. In keeping with the objectives of the DEC Bush Rangers program, the cadets learnt more about their natural environment while cycling and camping across the Kimberley and gained an understanding of the need for proper environmental conservation practices. The cadets are now keen to get outdoors and start working on new projects in their local area, and they are already talking about next year's Gibb River Road Mountain Bike Challenge.

Sally Johnston,
**Regional Bush Rangers
Coordinator** (Kimberley Region)

South West news

This year will see some new developments in EcoEducation in the South West. Trevor Walley, a very popular Aboriginal leader from the Perth Hills Centre, has made himself available to us to help kick start our Indigenous cultural program at Wellington Discovery Forest by offering a great alternative excursion, targeted especially at middle childhood groups.

We are also ready to offer Leave no Trace, another new excursion for the South West, which teaches students about minimal impact practices when camping or bushwalking to reduce the effect they have on our unique forests.

For older students we will be launching the new *Sustainable forests* excursion, appropriately timed for the International Year of Forests. This program covers concepts and skills in ecology, sustainable resource use as well as management principles. It addresses

the outcomes of Geography 2B, Biological Sciences, Integrated Science and Earth and Environmental Science. The program includes hands-on forest management activities during the excursion and a comprehensive resource package for teachers including background information and pre and post-excursion activities with solutions.

Martine Shepherd has recently joined our team as a new EcoEducation Officer. Martine is currently finishing studies in marine biology and we will be using her skills to develop a coastal program based around Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park as part of a process of offering a broader look at biodiversity and conservation in Western Australia.

John Anderson,
Project Officer SW, EcoEducation, DEC



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New EcoEducation website

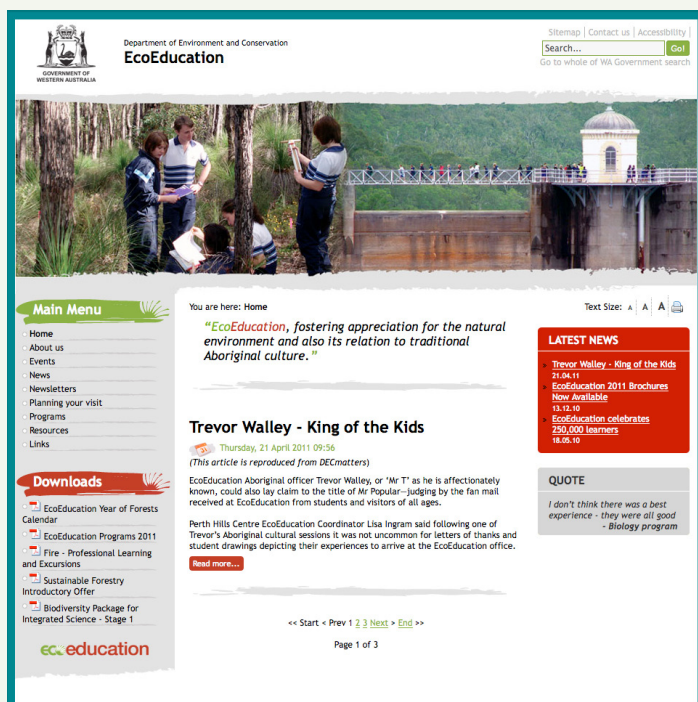
The new-look EcoEducation website has been launched. The website has been redesigned and reorganised to improve access to the information you need about our excursions.

All our programs are now listed by subject as well as by venue to help you choose the most appropriate excursion for your class. Resources for each excursion are available online as well as a range of other useful information, classroom resources and useful links.

The website also has the most up-to-date information about events and special offers. Contact and booking details for school camps at our various venues can be found on the site as well as all the information you need to complete your Department of Education and Training Excursion Checklist.

Visit the site now and bookmark it to your favourites:

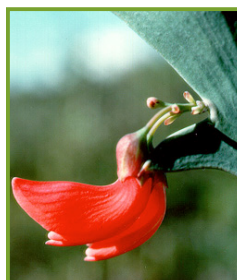
www.dec.wa.gov.au/ecoeducation



The new EcoEducation website.

FloraBase

the Western Australian Flora



Staghorn Bush

Daviesia epiphyllum Meisn.

See what's flowering each month

www.dec.wa.gov.au/florabase

Statewide

Elaine Horne

Senior EcoEducation Officer

Phone: 9334 0387

Mobile: 0407 196 626

Fax: 9334 0498

Email: elaine.horne@dec.wa.gov.au

Hannah Hampson

Bush Rangers Coordinator

Phone: 9334 0137

Fax: 9334 0498

Email: hannah.hampson@dec.wa.gov.au

Perth Hills Centre and Henderson Environmental Centre

Customer Services Officer

Phone: 9295 6149 or 9295 6300

Fax: 9295 3247

Email: ecoeducation@dec.wa.gov.au

EcoEducation in the South West Region

For enquiries, bookings for excursions or PLs contact the DEC Bunbury District Office on 9725 5900 and ask for EcoEducation or contact the EcoEducation project officer on 9725 5944 or email swecoed@dec.wa.gov.au.

Visit DEC's website at www.dec.wa.gov.au.



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Professional learning for teachers and educators:

Professional learning symposium

supported by DEC *Western Shield* and regions



Worsley Alumina Pty Ltd



Sponsors of the *Western Shield* schools program:

1. Valley of the Giants / Perup - Nature's Guesthouse

with keynote speakers Chief Scientist Professor Lyn Beazley and Premier's Research Fellow Professor Shaun Collin



10-12 June

Friday evening to Sunday lunchtime

- accommodation at Perup for two nights, most meals
- activities at the Valley of the Giants
- nocturnal marsupial trapping and monitoring activities

11-12 June at Perup - Cost \$95

Email: ecoeducation@dec.wa.gov.au

SPECTACULAR SUCCESS!

2. Dryandra Woodland Iribina Education Centre

30-31 July

Saturday 2pm to Sunday 2pm

- tour of Barna Mia Animal Sanctuary
- EcoEducation programs offered at Dryandra Woodland
- behind the scenes world of woylies, numbats and bilbies
- nocturnal marsupial trapping and monitoring activities

Cost \$95 - Accommodation and meals included

Email: matthew.harding@dec.wa.gov.au

3. Shark Bay

with keynote speaker Chief Scientist Professor Lyn Beazley

5-7 August

Friday lunchtime to Sunday early afternoon

- see how Project Eden is saving our threatened fauna
- boat trip to view turtles, sharks, dolphins, seagrass, ecosystems and, if lucky, dugongs
- hear about and see research that is being carried out at Shark Bay

Cost \$290

Accommodation at The Homestead, all meals plus a conference dinner, boat ride and four-wheel-drive transportation at Shark Bay* included (*Does not include transportation to Shark Bay.)

Email: melissa.patterson@dec.wa.gov.au

4. Perth Hills Centre, Mundaring Weir

Friday 16 evening and 17 September, mid afternoon

A teacher's comment about A night with nature: "Sincerest thanks for the most remarkable and memorable PL of my 13 year career!!" (2010)

Accommodation - own booking and cost

Cost \$0

Email: ecoeducation@dec.wa.gov.au

5. Wellington Discovery Forest, east of Bunbury (contact Bunbury office)

Friday 2 (pm) to Sunday 4 (am) September

Accommodation at the newly refurbished Wellington Forest Cottages

Email: swecoed@dec.wa.gov.au