

South West Region

August 2006 No 14

Dear colleagues,

There have been two big changes since our last newsletter. Firstly, Janet Date (who many of you would have got to know during the past few years) is taking a year of leave. I will be filling the role of EcoEducation Project Officer for the South West Region in her absence. I am looking forward to an exciting year, leading and further developing the EcoEducation programs established through the hard work of Janet and her team at Wellington Discovery Forest (WDF) and the Margaret River Eco Discovery Centre (MREDC). Please do not hesitate to phone or email me to discuss any ideas or possible excursions to either of the centres.

Secondly, EcoEducation operates under a new department – the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). DEC was formed on 1 July 2006 from the merger of the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) with the Department of Environment. Please note our changed addresses in the 'Contacts' section on page 2.

September is our busiest time of year in the forest, so book all your excursions and PL days soon, to secure your preferred dates and avoid missing out!

Sue Miller, Project Officer, EcoEducation, DEC

Biodiversity Month

Biodiversity Month is a national celebration of Australia's rich diversity of life and of how we can all contribute to help create and restore wildlife habitat.

Biodiversity Month is held each September, the first month of Spring. This month-long event is important to DEC to achieve its goal of working in partnership with the community to conserve Western Australia's biodiversity.

DEC runs many activities and excursions for students and teachers to increase their awareness about the importance of threatened species, habitats and ecosystems throughout Biodiversity Month including National Threatened Species Day. See overleaf for details of special excursion and Professional Learning opportunities at WDF and MREDC.

Threatened Species Day

National Threatened Species Day is held every year on 7 September to mark the day in 1936 when the last known Tasmanian tiger (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*) died in a Hobart zoo.

It aims to raise awareness of Australia's threatened flora and fauna species and encourage all Australians to get involved in helping to save these special plants and animals and the environments they live in.

See page 2 for excursion specials.



Above: A young woylie. Below: The western ringtail possum lives in the State's south west and is currently on the list of threatened species.



Safety first for EcoEducation

Safety has always been of the utmost importance in EcoEducation programs and now you can feel even safer when you bring your students on excursions to WDF and MREDC.

Three of our South West Region EcoEducation team members, Kristy, Carolina and Gene, recently completed the Visitor Risk Management (VRM) course.

This course is run by DEC to train its staff in ways to ensure the safety of visitors to the lands and waters it manages.

Staff are trained to conduct risk assessments of all DEC recreation sites, facilities and visitor services being conducted to identify risks and potential hazards. This information is then used to improve safety for visitors.

EcoEducation Leaders are also trained in first aid and hold current St John's Senior First Aid Certificates.

Special excursion prices - Term 3 2006

Threatened Species Day 7 September: *Back from the Brink* excursions booked for Thursday 7 September receive a \$50 discount per group.

Biodiversity Month: All standard day excursions (except for *Back from the Brink* on 7 September - see above) are only \$6.05 per student. Book now as places are filling fast!

Professional Learning (PL) opportunities

FREE plus \$100 teacher relief per school

Be a Nature Conservation Officer for a Night

Help us celebrate 10 years of the *Western Shield* Threatened Species Schools Program. Lucky dip prizes!

Place: Wellington Discovery Forest

Dates and Times: 5.30pm Thursday 21 September to 3pm Friday 22 September

Cost: Free plus \$100 towards teacher relief per school. Accommodation, resources and meals included.

Place: Margaret River Eco Discovery Centre

Dates and times: 5.30pm Thursday 26 October to 3pm Friday 27 October

Cost: Free plus \$100 towards teacher relief per school. Accommodation, resources and meals included.

These PLs are proving to be increasing popular, year after year, so be quick!

Fire for Life PL at MREDC

You are invited to a PL session that will outline the *Fire for Life* excursion (Years 10, 11 and 12) soon to be offered at MREDC.

Place: Margaret River Eco Discovery Centre

Date and Time: 9am to 3pm Tuesday 12 September

Cost: Free plus \$100 towards teacher relief per school. Lunch, refreshments and resources included.

*Below: Regeneration of plant life six weeks after a bushfire.
Photo - Carolina Paice*



Spring specials

Monitoring Marsupials - WDF

This is a unique opportunity to be part of *Western Shield*, DEC's wildlife recovery program. Students will mix bait, set traps on a transect and return early in the morning to measure and release the animals. This split session is about 90 minutes in the afternoon and again the following morning.

Dates available: 18 to 21 September

Cost: \$5.50 per student

Below: Chuditch are one of the animals monitored in the South West Region. Photo - Babs and Bert Wells/DEC



Contacting EcoEducation in the South West Region

For any enquiries, bookings for excursions or PLs, please contact Kristy Pengelly, Schools Coordinator, at DEC's Wellington District Office.

Phone: 9735 1909

Fax: 9734 4539

Email: wdf@dec.wa.gov.au

For the development of programs and educational liaison, please contact Sue Miller, Project Officer, at DEC's South West Regional Office.

Phone: 9725 4300

Mobile: 0427 980 306

Email: Sue.Miller@dec.wa.gov.au

Further resources and information are available from the 'For Schools' section of DEC's NatureBase website at www.naturebase.net/schools.