

South West Region

November 2006 No 15

Dear colleagues,

Spring arrived in the forest and brought beautiful wildflowers to the Wellington Discovery Forest (WDF) and the Margaret River Eco Discovery Centre (MREDC). The past few weeks have been very busy with EcoEducation staff meeting and leading many students, teachers and parents on day excursions and school camps. We hope they all enjoyed their visits, learnt more about the forest ecosystem and the ways we can all help to protect the plants and animals we are fortunate enough to have living in the South West Region within an international biodiversity hotspot.

We also conducted very successful Professional Learning (PL) camps at both our centres, with teachers taking part in spotlighting activities and *Western Shield* monitoring. Read on for all the details.

As we approach the end of the year, please consider bringing your students to one of our wonderful south-west EcoEducation centres for a day excursion or as part of a camp.

We hope to see you in the forest soon.

Sue Miller, Project Officer, EcoEducation, Department of Environment and Conservation



Ross Sturges, DEC Nature Conservation Officer, weighing a possum at PL camp at WDF.
Photo: Sue Miller

Booking a camp?

You may want to consider booking accommodation at the camp facilities located adjacent to the EcoEducation centres and plan two or three days of activities.

Wharncliffe Mill Forest Camp (co-located with MREDC)

Situated among beautiful karri, jarrah and marri forest, this bunkhouse-style accommodation has 42 beds and camping sites for up to 100 people. Facilities include an ablution block with separate universal access conveniences, bush kitchen with gas cook-top and two refrigerators, undercover gas barbecues, picnic tables with chairs and designated fire rings.

Contact Holly at DEC's Kirup office on 9731 6232 for bookings.

Wellington Forest Cottages (adjacent to WDF)

Wellington Forest Cottages' managers Heather and Rob welcome your enquiries about the hire of their eight cottages, which can each comfortably accommodate up to eight people. Heather and Rob also specialise in camp catering, so contact them for menu plans and all other enquiries by phone (9728 3043) or fax (9728 3315).

Special camp activity: Sense-ational Nightlife

Recommended for Years 6 to 12. Experience the nocturnal habitats of local fauna with a guided walk through the forest. Be challenged by the Sense-ational trail in the quiet of the night! This session is approximately two and a half hours and starts after 6.30pm and costs \$5.50 per student.

Western Shield PL camps

Two groups of teachers attended the *Be a Nature Conservation Officer for a Night* overnight PL camps at WDF and MREDC in September and October. They spent an interesting time with DEC nature conservation officers learning about, and experiencing marsupial monitoring techniques first-hand. The *Western Shield* camps also provided teachers with information about the wide range of excursions and PL opportunities offered at our EcoEducation centres.

Through EcoEducation, Western Australia's students and teachers have been contributing to DEC's native fauna recovery program *Western Shield* for 10 years. In particular, schools have contributed directly to our understanding of native animals' response to fox baiting and teachers and students have helped spread the word about *Western Shield*, which has led to an increased community awareness and support for the project.

PL participants celebrating 10 years of the Western Shield schools program at WDF with Liz Moore and Sue Miller blowing out the birthday candles.



A new teaching resource

Caring for Places - National parks in south-west Western Australia

National parks play an essential role in the conservation of biodiversity. A teaching resource, suitable for all learning areas, is now available to guide students through an investigation of national parks and reserves. It provides a context for understanding sustainability and an insight into the role that schools can play in sustaining our natural environment. The package includes background notes for education, reference sheets, student guides, curriculum activities, EcoEducation guided activities to the field centres, DVDs and posters. The resource is currently provided for free when you attend a PL session or organise an introductory session at your school. It will also be available for FREE download from the internet.

PL session: Wednesday 15 November, 4pm to 5.30pm, Bunbury PD Centre

PL day: Thursday 16 November, 9am to 3.30pm, MREDC (see *Fire – A Force of Life* for further details)

For more information please phone 9334 0387 or 0407 196 626 or email Liz.Moore@dec.wa.gov.au.

Fire - A Force of Life

You are invited to a PL session that will outline the new *Fire - A Force of Life* excursion (recommended for Years 10, 11 and 12). The PL will be offered at MREDC soon and will cover the newly released *Caring for Places* resource.

Place: MREDC

When: 9am to 3.30pm
Thursday 16 November

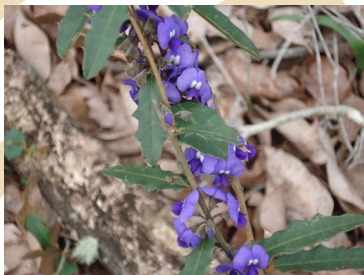
Cost: FREE plus \$100 towards teacher relief per school. Lunch, refreshments and resources included.

What is the name of that plant?

Have you ever been out on a bushwalk and wanted to know the name of a wildflower, tree or shrub? Did you know that you can probably find the answer on FloraBase? FloraBase is the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) database that provides botanical information on all Western Australian vascular plant families, genera and species, and provides identification tools, photos, maps and a database of botanical literature from across the State. FloraBase can be accessed at www.naturebase.net.



Another valuable resource is DEC's Bush Books series. Two titles that are particularly relevant to our region are *Common Trees of the South-West Forests* and *Common Wildflowers of the South-West Forests*.



These full-colour, pocket-sized books can be bought at DEC offices, ordered online at the NatureBase website or from newsagents, bookshops and tourist information centres.

Special excursion prices

December specials

Planning excursions for the end of the school year? All excursions are priced at only \$6.05 per student in the last week of Term 4. What a fantastic way to finish the year by rewarding your students with an adventurous field trip to one of our centres.

Wellington Week

Special prices for Wellington Week include bookings from March 19 to 23 inclusive. All standard day excursions at WDF are only \$6.05 per student.

December and March are both busy times of the year, so book now to avoid disappointment!

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 website at www.naturebase.net/schools.