

Dear colleagues,

If you are considering taking your class on excursion during 2007, then I highly recommend doing so this term. The bush really comes to life at this time of year. The rains bring out an array of colours and fascinating shapes with the emergence of the fruiting bodies of many different fungi. The undergrowth around both EcoEducation centres is teeming with frog and insect calls and the first wildflowers are blooming, spotting a myriad of colours against the luscious green of the forest.

Booking excursion activities at Wellington Discovery Forest (WDF) or Margaret River Eco Discovery Centre (MREDC) with our experienced staff can take a lot of the headache out of the paperwork that must be completed prior to an excursion. Please bear in mind, however, that September is our most popular time of year for excursions, so it is advisable to book with Kristy as soon as possible to secure your preferred dates.

Hannah Hampson, Project Officer, EcoEducation, DEC

## Plants for People (P4P) project

Last term, three school groups visited the Amaroo Primary School quadrat at WDF as a part of their partnership with Curtin University and the P4P project. Amaroo Primary School, Wilson Park Primary School and Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School all came to learn about the biology and traditional uses of some of the Nyoongar plants of cultural significance. All three groups were led on a forest walk then studied the plants and their growth habit in natural surroundings. The students, teachers and Aboriginal helpers all enjoyed a scrumptious sausage sizzle lunch while discussing the potential of different plants for use in the bush tucker gardens they are starting in school.

*Right: Students of Wilson Park PS testing soil samples with Hannah. Photo by Professor Louis Evans*



Margaret River Primary School's Years 3, 4 and 5 students were an inspiration and model of practical sustainability when all 80 students arrived for their two-day camp at MREDC on bicycles! They studied invertebrates of the soil, leaf litter, canopy and decaying logs, finding all sorts of amazing mini-beasts – from scorpions to stick insects. Their action-packed camp didn't stop there though. The students went on to study nocturnal fauna around the centre on a Sense-ational Nightlife excursion that included a night stalk and the challenges of the Sense-ational Trail.

If you want to take advantage of having more than one day of activities at either of our South West Region EcoEducation centres, you could make use of the nearby accommodation facilities:

**Wharcliffe Mill Forest Camp** (Margaret River) – Bunkhouse with 42 beds and camping for 100 people. Contact Julie or Holly at DEC Kirup Office on 9731 6232.  
**Wellington Forest Cottages** – Eight cottages each with accommodation for eight people. Contact managers Rob and Heather on 9728 3043.



*Above: Margaret River PS students bike it to MREDC. Photo by Gary Gibbon*

## Biodiversity Month

Biodiversity is the variety of life: the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, their genes and the ecosystems of which they are a part. The south-west of WA holds a rich array of species, so many in fact that it is considered one of the world's 25 biodiversity hotspots!

What does this all mean for us? Well, in short we rely on biodiversity for life. We need the earth, the water and the air on this planet to sustain life. The systems that exist around the world make use of the interactions between different life forms to filter and clean the air and water and to recycle and form the soils of the earth. We need healthy ecosystems for food, water, medicine, materials and adaptation to change.

Join us for Biodiversity Month; find out what DEC is doing to help conserve biodiversity from the individual species to the ecosystems they are a part of. Learn how the network of parks and reserves helps to keep communities connected and maintains genetic diversity, the essential building block for life on earth.



Students from Bunbury SHS plant a tuart tree each to celebrate the launch of the tuart teaching resources. Photo by Liz Moore

## Upcoming Professional Learning (PL) events:

Bunbury Region - FREE including light refreshments

**Location:** DEC's South West Regional Office, Corner Dodson Road and South West Highway, Bunbury.

**Date:** Tuesday 7 August

**Time:** 4pm to 6pm

This PL session will introduce the new, interactive CD 'Out on a Limb' – Investigating tuart woodlands in the first hour and 'Caring for Places' – National parks in south-west Western Australia in the second hour.

You have the option of attending the whole two-hour session, or just half if you already have one of the resources. Contact Kristy to reserve your place on the PL.

## Special Excursion Prices – Term 3

### Biodiversity Month

Monday 3 September to Friday 28 September – celebrate Australia's rich diversity. All standard day excursions are discounted to only \$6.05 per student (including GST).

### Threatened Species Day

Friday 7 September – take advantage of the **\$50 discount** for all *Back from the Brink* excursions. Learn about Australia's unique native fauna and the success of the Department of Environment and Conservation's *Western Shield* program. Bookings are on a first-come, first-served basis.

## Tuart field kit for loan

The new tuart teaching resource, 'Out on a Limb' has now been officially launched. Visit the EcoEducation page on NatureBase ([www.naturebase.net](http://www.naturebase.net)) to download booklets giving an overview of the CD contents from 'Out on a Limb'. If you were unable to attend one of the recent launch evenings you can still get your hands on the resource. If you have five teachers in school who are interested in finding out how they can incorporate learning about tuart woodlands into their program, please contact Hannah and she will arrange a visit to your school for a free introductory session. For those teachers who are already using the resource, this is a reminder that there are field kits available for loan from DEC that will help students gain an understanding of tuart ecology. The kit can be used in your school grounds, if you are fortunate enough to have tuarts in the area, or on excursion to tuart woodlands.

## Contacting EcoEducation in the South West Region

For any enquiries, bookings for excursions or PLs please contact Kristy Pengelly, Administrative Assistant at DEC's Wellington District Office.  
Phone: 9735 1909  
Fax: 9734 4539  
Email: [wdf@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:wdf@dec.wa.gov.au)

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