

ecoeducation news

South West Region

October 2007 No. 20

Dear colleagues,

Welcome back for the final chapter of the 2007 school year.

Term three proved again to be a very popular time for schools to visit our centres. EcoEducation Officers at Wellington Discovery Forest (WDF) welcomed students from local schools, such as Collie Senior High School, as well as from Busselton, Australind and as far away as Mandurah. Schools from the Busselton area visited Margaret River Eco Discovery Centre (MREDC) where we also hosted Lynwood Senior High School. The school's students attended the EcoEducation Geography excursion as part of their annual camp after last year's students enjoyed it so much.

As visitors to WDF will know, the weather was rather changeable last term, with warm sunny days interspersed with some welcome rain. Students loved the novel experience of 'being out' in the rain – unusual for urbanites normally called inside when it starts to fall. With daily warnings in the media of a dire water shortage we were lucky to have rain to fill our dams. As Wellington Dam began to overflow spectators marvelled as a perfect veil of water cascaded down the side of the dam wall. Did you know Wellington Dam holds 186GL (equivalent to about 75 olympic swimming pools of water) and last overflowed at the same time in 2005?

To celebrate this event, and the end of the year during Term 4, EcoEducation is offering an excursion free of charge with a subsidy for a bus to visit tuart woodland or WDF. Read on to find out more.

I look forward to seeing you all in the forest and wish you a happy end to the year.

Hannah Hampson, Project Officer, EcoEducation, DEC



*A wall of water as Wellington Dam overflows.
Photo – Hannah Hampson*

Meet the animals on the treasure trail

If you are an Early Childhood teacher take advantage of Western Australia's glorious spring weather and display of wildflowers on the 'Busy in the Forest' excursion. Book now for Term 4 or get in early for 2008.

On the excursion take a tour through Wellington Forest letting the local animals be your guide. Find the cryptic black-gloved wallaby and he will give you a clue. Meet the other animals on your way around the treasure trail as you search for the treasures of the forest. The rhyming clues encourage literacy skills in a fun and interactive way. Good listening and observation skills will also pay off as these students will be the first to find the next clue. After lunch, blindfolded students enhance their senses of touch, hearing and smell by exploring the forest on the Sense-ational Trail. All activities are supported by teaching resources for classroom use available for download from the 'Community' section of the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) NatureBase website at www.naturebase.net.

Students from Parkfield and Eaton primary schools were lucky enough to be the first to explore the new



Students from Eaton PS examine some of the treasures of the jarrah forest. Photo – Lorraine Laing

treasure trail. Teacher Lorraine Laing inspired by the excursion said the excursion was fantastic and all the kids had a wonderful experience.

"We saw the lizard and the echidna, but my favourite was the magpie," said one student.

ecoeducation news

Biodiversity Month: a great time for Biology and Geography camps

A group of Year 11 students from Frederick Irwin Anglican School enjoyed two full days of curriculum-linked activities as part of their Year 11 camp thanks to teacher Nigel Stewart who organised the event. The students made the most of staying in one of the World's Biodiversity Hotspots, completing quadrat and transect surveys and investigating the relationships between soils, flora and fauna. They identified important plant families in the jarrah forest, searched

for signs of animals, sampled terrestrial invertebrates and macro invertebrates in the creek. A highlight was taking part in DEC's *Western Shield* monitoring program with Wellington District Senior National Park Ranger Christina Gilbert catching a brushtail possum and taking measurements for DEC's 'Fauna Files'. If all this was not enough, the students searched for animals with spotlights and experienced the Sense-ational Trail at night!



Students complete a vegetation transect.
Photo – Nigel Stewart

Professional learning events

New EcoEducation resources showcased at GAWA Annual Conference

Geography teachers from all over the State gathered recently for the Annual Geographical Association of Western Australia (GAWA) Conference held at the Lord Forrest Hotel in Bunbury. EcoEducation showcased its new teaching resources and opportunities.

The tuart woodland *Field Ecology for a Day* kit is available for schools to borrow from DEC to complete studies on local tuart woodlands. The *Out on a Limb – Investigating tuart woodlands* multimedia resource for Early to Late Adolescence was in demand and continues to attract great interest. Similarly there was enthusiasm for the *Caring for Places – national parks in South-West Western Australia*, a comprehensive resource for Society and Environment students.

Call us if you have missed out on our introductory sessions and the launches.

Attention: Pre-Service teachers!

Are you studying to be a teacher and haven't visited one of our centres as yet? We offer some great professional learning (PL) opportunities for you and welcome you to observe our programs at any time.

Recently we were visited by more than 30 pre-service teachers from Edith Cowan University for a PL day. We gave them an overview of our programs and they took part in a range of activities from different excursions to gain an insight into the fun, hands-on student exercises. Our curriculum-linked resources are available free of charge and are a wonderful support for your practicums in schools. We expect to see many familiar faces next year when they bring their own classes out for a visit!

Upcoming PLs and events

Plan ahead for 2008

Book us for an introductory session at your school to obtain our new resources free of charge.

If you have five or more teachers interested in finding out more about the *Caring for Places* or *Out on a Limb* resources and other excursion activities, we are happy to talk at a staff meeting or another date to suit you.

Win \$150 bus subsidy and a FREE excursion

This picture is of the threatened western ringtail possum. Can your students answer the following questions about this possum?

What are the major threats to these possums? How do these possums benefit from protected areas?

The first class to email the correct answer to wdf@dec.wa.gov.au after 8.30am on Friday 9 November will receive a bus subsidy of \$150 and a free excursion. This must be redeemed in Term 4 2007.



Special excursion prices

December Special

For the whole month of December, all standard day excursions are discounted to only \$6.05 per student (including GST). Why not give your students and experience to remember and treat them to an end of year outing?

If you would like 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:

Wharncliffe 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 (Wellington) – Eight cottages each with accommodation for eight people. Contact managers Rob and Heather on 9728 3043.