

ecoeducation news

South West Region

February 2008 No. 22

Dear colleagues,

Welcome back to a new year. I hope one of your new year's resolutions is to treat yourself to more time in the natural environment. Western Australia has two World Heritage Areas – Shark Bay and Purnululu, one of the most biodiverse reef environments in Ningaloo Marine Park and Australia's only internationally recognised terrestrial biodiversity hotspot – WA's South West. Visit DEC's NatureBase website at www.naturebase.net to find out more about our environment and step out into the great outdoors to observe it first hand.

EcoEducation continues to offer fully escorted, comprehensive activity programs about WA ecosystems and biodiversity with strong messages about caring for our environment. Our programs cater for students from early childhood to late adolescence and are constantly evolving to take in teachers' feedback. As such, Biology and Geography programs are aligned with the new Senior Science Courses, and Earth and Environmental Sciences is well catered for. So there are lots of opportunities to give your students experiences they will remember long after they leave school.

EcoEducation also continues to provide Professional Learning opportunities throughout the year which have corresponding resource packages and student activities. Our trained leaders are available for incursion sessions with kits and activities for your students. These opportunities are limited, so book early.

Camp sites are located near our prime EcoEducation centres, so we can help organise your camping program. See the contacts box to book or discuss your program with a member of the EcoEducation team.

I look forward to working with many of you in the coming year.

Elaine Horne, Senior EcoEducation Officer, DEC

In focus: *Back from the Brink*

The inspiration behind the *Back from the Brink* EcoEducation excursion is the flagship *Western Shield* nature conservation program. *Western Shield* has now been running for 12 years, sufficiently boosting numbers of three marsupials to remove them from WA's threatened species list.

The program uses a synthetic form of a natural poison – 1080 – found in *Gastrolobium* peas from WA's south-west in meat baits to reduce numbers of introduced predators. Native herbivores, predators and scavengers have varying tolerances to the poison, protecting them from the man-made baits.

Western Shield also aims to promote numbers of native mammals. This is achieved by captive breeding populations, translocation of threatened wild populations and protection of remaining wild populations. [Continued on page 2 ...](#)



Left: Tammar wallabies are one species that has been removed from the WA threatened species list. Photo – Babs and Bert Wells

The Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) South West Region's EcoEducation team extends a warm welcome to Elaine Horne – the new Senior EcoEducation Project Officer. Some of you may already know Elaine from her extensive experience as a science teacher or through her more recent work with the Curriculum Council. Elaine has had a long interest in environmental issues and has won awards for her environmental work and teaching. We look forward to drawing on Elaine's extensive knowledge and enthusiasm for environmental education.



Above: Elaine Horne

Elaine takes over from Liz Moore, who was widely recognised as the face of DEC for many teachers. Liz has retired after developing and leading the EcoEducation portfolio for an incredible 12 years. The enthusiasm and dedication that Liz brought to EcoEducation was an inspiration to many. Thanks to Liz's hard work, the EcoEducation team has grown from working out of one metropolitan-based centre to delivering curriculum-linked programs to thousands of students at three education centres as well as providing Professional Learning opportunities for teachers throughout the State. Liz will be sorely missed and the South West Region team would like to wish her all the best for future plans.

On a final note, Janet Date also retired from DEC so I will continue in the Project Officer role for the South West Region. I have thoroughly enjoyed building on the success in EcoEducation for the region and look forward to improving our programs in the future.

Hannah Hampson, Project Officer, DEC.

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Continued from page 1 ... Although some species have become extinct from the mainland (e.g. the banded hare wallaby), wild populations of some of our mammals survive on islands off the west coast in the Shark Bay area.

Bernier and Dorre islands provide refuges for our beleaguered wildlife. DEC and other conservation organisations are now looking to provide safe 'islands' for boosting native population numbers by isolating areas from surrounding bush, constructing predator-proof fencing around an area in Dryandra Woodland and separating the Peron Peninsula from the mainland.

The next step is to re-establish native mammal populations on some of the other islands in the Shark Bay area. The Australian Wildlife Conservancy has started work on Faure Island, where all the introduced mammals have been removed and five native mammals have been reintroduced and seem to be getting bigger than any of the existing populations that they have come from! DEC has similar plans for the larger Dirk Hartog Island.

EcoEducation offers a number of resources to assist with teaching about *Western Shield*, threatened and introduced species:

Western Shield Action Pack – available free at www.naturebase.net

Activities on threatened species for Middle Childhood with teacher notes, resource and activity sheets. Learning area outcomes in Society and Environment, Science, English and Maths.

Back from the Brink Excursion – \$7.15 per student Offered at Wellington Discovery Forest (WDF) and Margaret River Eco Discovery Centre (MREDC). This excursion is suitable for Middle Childhood – Early Adolescence (Years 5 to 9). Learning outcomes will be achieved in Science and English as well as Society and Environment.

Senior Back from the Brink Excursion – \$8.25 per student Offered at both WDF and MREDC for Years 10 to 12. Students learn about trapping and non-trapping methods of monitoring native fauna populations with hands-on activities. They learn about the latest research employed by DEC into feral predator control and reintroduction of native animal populations.



Left: Quenda.
Photo – DEC



Above: An ash-grey mouse, which seeks refuge on Bernier and Dorre islands. Photo – DEC

Monitoring Marsupials Camp Activity – Free, limited number linked to day excursion

This two-part activity can only be booked in conjunction with a day excursion.

Students meet a national park ranger or nature conservation officer to set traps, then return early the next morning to check the traps and take measurements and collect other data from animals caught during the night.

Saving Threatened Fauna – an investigation – Free, limited number offered to Year 9 classes.

A new hands-on resource for science students where an EcoEducation officer will visit your school to teach about *Western Shield*. Students then borrow equipment boxes to complete their investigation.



Top: Measuring head length of a quokka. Photo – Jen Harrison.



Above: Trapping during the Monitoring Marsupials Camp. Photo – DEC



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2008 calendar of events

Date	Event	Special Information
10–14 March	Wellington Week	all standard day excursions discounted to \$6.05
7–11 April	Last week of Term 1	all standard day excursions discounted to \$6.05
2 May	Fire a Force of Life PL	see below for more information
5–9 May	Monitoring Marsupials Week WDF	
22 May	International Day of Biological Diversity	\$50 discount per group
29 May	Investigating Tuart Woodlands PL	see below for more information
5 June	World Environment Day	\$50 discount per group
6 June	Arbor Day	Special event in tuart woodland
30 June–4 July	Last week of Term 2	all standard day excursions discounted to \$6.05
Whole of September	Biodiversity Month	all standard day excursions discounted to \$6.05
7 September	National Threatened Species Day	\$50 discount on 8 September for <i>Back from the Brink</i> excursions
22–26 September	Monitoring Marsupials Week WDF	
27–31 October	Monitoring Marsupials Week MREDC	
1–16 December	End of Year Special	all standard day excursions discounted to \$6.05

Professional Learning events

Fire a Force of Life PL

Time: 9am–3pm

Date: Friday 2 May 2008

Location: Margaret River Eco Discovery Centre

Take a behind-the-scenes look at a DEC Incident Communications Bus, learn more about fire management, prescribed burning and the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Take away resources for your classroom and marvel at the regeneration of the Contos area after the April 2006 fire.

Investigating Tuart Woodlands PL

Time: 9am–3pm

Date: Thursday 29 May 2008

Location: TBA – Bunbury area

Hear from managers working to conserve and protect remnant tuart woodland, encounter native woodland animals, experience hands-on activities for students and take away new curriculum resources for planning and use in the classroom.

Last term's competition winner

Congratulations to Jarron Vanelst, a member of the environmental club of Dwellingup Primary School, for correctly identifying the major threats to the ringtail possum and how it benefits from protected areas.

Keep an eye out for our competition coming up in next term's newsletter.



Above: DEC's Michael Phillips shows two teachers an Incident Communications Bus as part of Fire a Force of Life PL.

Photo – Rhianna King

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

For the development of programs and educational liaison please contact Hannah Hampson, Project Officer at DEC's South West Regional Office. Phone: 9725 5900 Mobile: 0427 980 306 Hannah.Hampson@dec.wa.gov.au

Visit www.naturebase.net for more information about DEC's EcoEducation programs.