

ecoeducation news

South West Region

June 2008 No. 23

Dear colleagues,

This year got off to a flying start with several EcoEducation Professional Learning (PL) events being 'sold out' and teachers taking the opportunity to learn about new EcoEducation resources at their schools. Teachers from primary and secondary schools attended the recent 'Fire – a force of life' PL event and commented that the talk by Rob Turner, the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) Blackwood District Fire Coordinator, was "excellent – very informative about the importance of prescribed burning". They also said that learning about the importance of fire management was the most enjoyable part of the day.

Wellington Discovery Forest (WDF) welcomed students from Edith Cowan University (ECU) for two days in March. The students had a chance to assess the venue and took



ECU students setting Sheffield traps.

part in 'tasters' of the excursion programs on offer. Three students – Ashleigh, Megan and Claire – assisted with our supermarket garden project as part of their 'Active Citizenship' project. If you are hosting ECU practical students they should be able to assist with the planning and preparation of EcoEducation excursion activities.

Some exciting news for WDF is the appointment of Phoebe Houghton as National Park Ranger and Project Officer for the WDF. Many of you will know Phoebe as one of our Indigenous EcoEducation Officers. Phoebe will continue to run the *Djildjit – the Nyoongar Way* excursion with Ken Ninnette, as well as giving the ranger talk and teaching students skills used in her job as part of the new *Caring for Places* program (see below for more information). Phoebe has been assisting with the ECU Active Citizenship project and is happy to help with ideas for other projects or community work that schools would like to undertake.

Please contact me if you would like to arrange a project.

Hannah Hampson, Project Officer, DEC

New EcoEducation programs for 2008

Climate Change – Measuring Baseline Biodiversity

Middle Childhood to Late Adolescence (recommended for Years 6 to 12)

Cost per student: \$9.90*

This innovative program provides an opportunity for teachers and students to learn how to measure biodiversity and be a part of a baseline study in Western Australia. Learn about the resilience of organisms and ecosystems in response to climate change.

Students will:

- learn about field studies and scientific methods in measurement with a range of flora and fauna;
- learn about systems and change with a focus on biodiversity and climate change;
- contribute baseline biodiversity data to scientists and for use in classrooms; and
- become familiar with biota in our natural environment.

The excursion program is supported by teacher notes as well as student pre- and post-excursion activities.

Our South West

Late Adolescence (recommended for Years 10 and 11)

Cost per student: \$8.25*

Learn about the jarrah forest ecosystem, from terrestrial invertebrates to trees. Students complete mapping work, gain an introduction to the ecosystem on a forest walk,

survey quadrats using methods used by DEC field staff and complete a hands-on session to learn about DEC projects that have a positive impact on the environment and ways everyone can help the environment.

Caring for Places

Middle Childhood and Early Adolescence (recommended for Years 6 to 10)

Cost per student \$7.15*

Caring for Places provides a context for students to understand sustainability and investigate a national park. They will examine the role that school communities

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Phoebe Houghton in a mia mia with students during a Caring for Places excursion.

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DEC Nature Conservation officer Ross Sturges examines an ear-tagged quokka.

Mainland quokkas

Did you know that the quokka – a familiar marsupial to those who have visited Rottnest Island – is not just restricted to that island? Scattered quokka populations are found in several areas in the south-west.

One such population occurs in a swamp fairly close to the WDF. The population is monitored each year as part of DEC's *Western Shield* wildlife recovery project.

This February, monitoring was carried out by some of our EcoEducation Officers, along with some work experience volunteers, got up very early in the morning to observe the monitoring. Trap success rates were good with several quokkas found each day, along with brush tailed possums, quenda and several of the reptiles pictured below (see competition). If your students are interested in a career with DEC, district offices accept work experience students once they reach 16 years. Students will get the opportunity to observe many different roles in the department.

A big thank you

Thank you to Michael Digby and the students at Picton Primary School for researching the designs for nesting boxes for ringtail and brush tailed possums, phascogale, cockatoos and bats, making the boxes and donating them to WDF. They are now up and waiting to be occupied.

Continued from page 1 ... can play in sustaining our natural environment, explore the values, threats and impact of people on our national parks, meet a national park ranger and learn about the history and human impact on the park. As active citizens they will lend a hand and learn some of the skills involved in the ranger's management of the park.

The excursion program is supported by the *Caring for Places – National Parks in southwest WA* package. The package is available in the 'Community' section of DEC's website at www.dec.wa.gov.au.

Healthy Parks, Healthy People

Middle Childhood
(recommended for Years 5 to 7)
Cost per student \$7.15*



Parks provide the perfect setting to improve health and wellbeing. This excursion promotes the importance of safe, regular, physical exercise in the natural environment and helps students develop the concepts that relate to a healthy life. Students undertake a bushwalk, stopping to learn the code of conduct, how to prevent the spread of dieback and techniques for safe bushwalking and bush care, compass navigation, safety, signalling, meditation and rehydration.

*Prices include GST, minimum and maximum class sizes apply.

Competition

This beautiful picture was taken by EcoEducation officer Greg Campbell. The subject was caught in a trap on a monitoring transect as part of DEC's *Western Shield* project.



The person to submit the most information about this type of reptile – you don't necessarily have to work out the exact species – by 3pm Friday 20 June will win a free *Back from the Brink* excursion to learn more about the *Western Shield* project. Book two classes on the day and receive a \$50 discount on the second excursion cost.

Email your answer to Hannah Hampson (contact details below).

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.

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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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Visit www.dec.wa.gov.au for more information about DEC's EcoEducation programs.