



Dear colleagues,

With Term 2 now well under way we are heading into our busy time and looking forward to seeing you in the forest again this year. Some early rains seem promising for a good wildflower season.

EcoEducation South West started the year with a few changes. Hannah Hampson moved up to Perth to take over the running of the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC's) WA Bush Rangers program and further her university studies. We wish her well and are hoping to see many more Bush Rangers groups take advantage of the excursions we offer. I have moved up from taking excursions at the Wellington Discovery Forest (WDF) to fill her position. Bonnie Patience, after sorting out our booking and invoicing systems so efficiently, is taking three months of well deserved long service leave and will be replaced for that time by Carolynn Hill. Hopefully things will continue to run smoothly without too many hiccups!

During May we were honoured to have WA's Chief Scientist Lyn Beazley visit the WDF during her tour of the South West Region to observe an excursion. She was very enthusiastic about our EcoEducation programs and had as much fun on the hoses as the students!

On Friday 13 August we are running a Professional Learning Day to introduce our program *Fire – A Force of Life*. This program has been structured to address the outcomes of Geography 2A, the geography of natural hazards, but it is also very suitable for Science, Society and Environment and Outdoor Ed students. It should be



Professor Lyn Beazley at Wellington Discovery Forest.

a great day with plenty of hands-on activities and a chance to play with a fire truck. Bookings can be made by calling Carolynn at the DEC South West Regional Office – details on the next page.

John Anderson, Project Officer SW, EcoEducation, DEC

Inursion programs

Our incursion programs can be a cost-effective way to introduce students to many aspects of our forests. These are a valuable learning experience for the students in themselves or may be booked to complement an excursion at one of our centres. We can offer good discounts for multiple back-to-back sessions or leave resources to enable 'students teaching students' sessions to pass



Students learn about endangered species and Western Shield.

on knowledge to other classes. We hope to be expanding our offerings throughout the year. If there are particular topics on which you would like to see an incursion developed, please contact John Anderson to discuss these.

Wellington Forest Cottages

For those schools interested in night walks and overnight stays, the Wellington Forest Cottages have now reopened under new management. There is still some work to be done but all the cottages are due to be repainted and re-equipped and a new kitchen will be installed for catering. For bookings you can contact Wendy and Ben Perdon on 9728 3043. Their temporary email address is perdon@westnet.com.au. We look forward to a good working relationship with the new lessees.

A biodiversity hotspot

This year is the International Year of Biodiversity so we will be putting a special focus on biodiversity during our excursions this year. Western Australia's south-west is one of 34 locations worldwide that have been identified as biodiversity hotspots by Conservation International. These are places which contain particularly high levels of biodiversity under threat. We are lucky to live in such a vibrant ecosystem but it also comes with responsibilities. So far, 11 species of mammals have become extinct in WA since European settlement and 37 are threatened, all due to human impact of one kind or another.

So why do we have such a unique range of flora and fauna and why is it so vulnerable? Researchers have found that in general as biomass (the total amount of living things) increases, biodiversity (the range of different living things) decreases. Because our climate is quite arid and our soils low in nutrients, it is difficult for any single species to



Students investigate biodiversity at Wellington Discovery Forest.

flourish and dominate, so many species have developed to take advantage of environmental niches. The forest is a system in balance which has evolved in isolation. Introduction of diseases and species such as invasive weeds and predators, without their natural controls, and European practices of land management, which are suited to different soils and climates than our own, can very quickly put our fragile ecosystem out of balance.

What can we do about it? DEC has many programs that address threats to biodiversity. We at EcoEducation believe that the first step to protecting our amazing environment starts with raising awareness in children of all ages and giving them the wonder and understanding to value and protect our natural heritage. For more information look at <http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/hotspots/australia/Pages/default.aspx>

New programs 2010

Caring for Places

A new program for 2010 in the South West Region is *Caring for Places*. This excursion is suitable for students from Years 6 to 10 and looks at the importance of our national parks to the preservation of biodiversity. Students explore the values, threats and impact of people on our national parks. They meet a park ranger and learn about the job they do and the challenges of managing national parks. As active citizens they also have a chance to become involved in regeneration of a degraded part of the park.

Sustainable Forestry

Timber is a valuable and renewable resource and makes an excellent study topic for students doing the new Geography 2A, the geography of sustainable resource use. EcoEducation South West will be offering a new excursion, *Sustainable Forestry*, from the middle of Term 3 which is tailored to the curriculum outcomes of this unit. Students will various aspects of forest management for timber production and learn the importance of integrating this with management for a range of other forest values.

Contacting EcoEducation in the South West Region

For any enquiries and bookings for excursions or PLs please contactCarolynn Hill, Administrative Assistant at DEC's South West Regional Office.
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