



# ecoeducation news

South West Region

Term 3, July 2011, Number 29

2011 UN International Year of Forests

## Dear colleagues,

The school year seems to be flying by and we have had a busy start to the year at both our centres. 2011 is the UN International Year of Forests and what better way to make students aware of the values of our south-west forests than by letting them get out in the bush to hug a tree.

This year will see some new developments in EcoEducation in the South West. Trevor Walley, a very popular Aboriginal leader from the Perth Hills Centre, has made himself available to help kick start our Indigenous cultural program at Wellington Discovery Forest, offering a great alternative excursion, especially for middle childhood groups.

We are also ready to offer another new excursion for the South West, *Leave No Trace*, which teaches students about minimal impact practices when camping or bushwalking to reduce the effect they have on our unique forests.

For older students, the Year of Forests also appropriately sees the official launch of our new *Sustainable forests* excursion. This program covers concepts and skills in ecology, sustainable use of a resource and management principles, addressing outcomes of Geography 2B, Biological Sciences, Integrated Science and Earth and Environmental Science. The program includes hands-on forest management activities during the excursion and a comprehensive resource package for teachers which includes background information and pre and post-excursion activities with solutions.

Martine Shepherd joins our team this year as a new EcoEducation officer. Martine is currently finishing studies in marine biology and we will be using her skills to begin development of a coastal program this year based around Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park as part of a process of offering a broader look at biodiversity and conservation in Western Australia.

Many of you who have been to excursions at Margaret River will have met Michelle Keppel. Michelle has been a valuable part of the EcoEducation South West team at Wharnccliffe since 2008 and has a great knowledge of the

area. Sadly for us, her daughter Millie, born last year and participating in EcoEducation until now in a backpack, has reached a more demanding age and Michelle can no longer continue to offer us her expertise. We wish her all the best in motherhood and hopefully will see her back in a few years either as a leader or as a visiting parent when Millie starts at pre-school.

Regards,

**John Anderson,**  
**Project Officer SW, EcoEducation, DEC**

## Putting a face to a voice

Many of you will have had the pleasure of dealing with the most friendly and efficient Bonnie Patience in the process of booking EcoEducation excursions in the South West. Bonnie is a native of Seattle, as you may be able to tell from her accent, but has been living in Australia for more than 20 years. Her family thinks she sounds like an Aussie. She has been on secondment to the position of administration officer for EcoEducation South West for nearly two years and has now been installed permanently in the position, a blessing to myself and EcoEducation.

When she isn't keeping the office here running smoothly, Bonnie spends her time with her many grandchildren or sailing with her husband on their new yacht while trying desperately to catch that damn mouse.



Bonnie Patience, EcoEducation South West Administrative Officer.



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## New EcoEducation website



The new EcoEducation website.

2011 sees the launch of a new website for EcoEducation across the state. The website has been redesigned and reorganised to improve access to the information you need about our excursions. All our programs are now listed by subject as well as by venue to help you choose the most appropriate excursion for your class. Resources for each excursion are available on the website as well as a range of other useful information, classroom resources and useful links. The website also has the most up-to-date information about events and special offers. Contact and booking details for school camps at our various venues can be found on the site as well as all the information you need to complete your DET Excursion Checklist.

[www.dec.wa.gov.au/ecoeducation](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/ecoeducation)

## Relaunch of Indigenous cultural program at Wellington Discovery Forest

Developing a spiritual connection to the forest is an important part of developing a meaningful conservation ethic. The traditional custodians of the land in the south-west are the Nyoongar people who have had a deep connection to the forests for many thousands of years. By learning about their use and care of the land we can learn much about managing our forests into the future.

With the help of Trevor Walley and in partnership with the Ngalang Boodja Council (NBC) in Collie, EcoEducation South West is relaunching our program *Djildjit – The Nyoongar way* which we have not been able to run for a couple of years due to a lack of suitable leaders.

The partnership with the NBC is intended to explore ways to work together to educate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people about Nyoongar culture and traditional lifestyles as well as developing educational tourism ventures and creating employment opportunities for local Indigenous people. We have begun working with a group of Green Corps volunteers to continue development of the bush tucker garden at the centre.

Trevor Walley works full-time for EcoEducation at the Perth Hills Centre, developing and leading a range of very popular cultural programs and he is helping to update our program at Wellington Discovery Forest. Trevor has worked for DEC for more than 30 years, much of that as a wildlife officer, so his knowledge of our environment combined with his cultural



Trevor Walley leads a cultural program at Walyunga National Park.

knowledge is a powerful mix. In addition to being available to lead excursions in the south-west, he will also be involved in training local people to understand their culture and become excursion leaders for us.

The program is flexible enough to be tailored to any age group but is especially suited to middle childhood. Students learn about the uses of many plants in the forest but also have a chance to try their hand at hunting, toolmaking and other Aboriginal arts and crafts. Woven through this are stories of the Dreaming and experiencing the daily roles of traditional life.



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## Investigating the tuarts



Tuart forests are a valuable habitat at risk in the south-west.

Tuart forest is one of the rarest forest types in the world, naturally occurring only on the coastal limestone band from Busselton north to Jurien Bay. Unfortunately tuart is a species under threat due to clearing for urban development, canopy decline and lack of regeneration due to competition from weeds and excessive grazing.

Tuart Forest National Park, between Bunbury and Busselton, is one of the few remaining intact areas of the tuart forest ecosystem and is the only remaining tall tuart forest. The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) have recently completed construction of a new information shelter and boardwalk at Malbup which serves as an excellent starting point for EcoEducation excursions to look at this rich and exciting ecosystem.

For younger students, a forest walk and activities may be combined with a visit to the National Trust's historic

Wonnerup House to learn about early European settlement in the area. For older students, a bird hide and a nearby area showing the astonishing regeneration of tuarts after fire are highly suited to students of Biological Sciences or Geography.

The tuart forest at Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park represents a different type of tuart forest with a dense and colourful understorey and rich estuarine bird life. It incorporates the old Belvidere settlement which has a rich history, having been used at various times by many different people over many years including Nyoongars, early settlers, Indian labourers, and alternative 'lifestylers', with each group leaving signs of their presence in the local area which presents students with a great opportunity to also study human impacts on our environment.

Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park has the added advantage of being close to Bunbury, making it accessible to local schools.

Both of these areas are a valuable habitat for the endangered western ringtail possum which can often be seen during a guided night walk at either venue.

## Leave No Trace



Starting in 2011, EcoEducation South West offers a *Leave No Trace* excursion teaching students the seven principles for minimal impact skills and ethics promoted by *Leave No Trace* Australia. This

is a national non-profit organisation which builds awareness, appreciation and respect for our natural and cultural heritage and about responsible outdoor travel and recreation through education, research and partnerships.

As our population increases and more people begin to enjoy the wonders of our natural bush in many different ways, all these activities have an impact on the environment and an impact on other forest users. Understanding the fragile nature of our native forests and the way in which our activities affect biodiversity is important to minimising this impact. Whether walking, camping, mountain biking or carrying out any other activities in the bush, an understanding of 'minimal impact' skills and ethics raises awareness in students and helps preserve our natural and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of all users.



Department of Environment and Conservation



# ecoeducation news

## Professional learning symposium

supported by DEC *Western Shield* and regions



Sponsors of the *Western Shield* schools program

### Professional learning for 2011

#### Professional learning – *A night with nature*

*Western Shield* trapping at Wellington Discovery Forest

#### Friday 2 and Saturday 3 September 2011

After very low uptake last year we have had a great response to our *Monitoring marsupials* program and all available dates for trapping this year have already been booked. There is still an opportunity for teachers to participate in the *A night with nature* professional learning (PL) weekend in September.

Limited places are available to teachers who are interested in this program to attend any of our booked trapping nights as a PL experience. If you can't make *A night with nature* but would like to learn more about this excursion, please contact us to arrange a time.

**Due to the high demand for this program, teachers who would like to take part in 2012 should register their interest with us as soon as possible.**

## FloraBase

the Western Australian Flora



Ghost fungus

*Omphalotus nidiformis* (Berk.)  
O.K. Mill.

See what's flowering  
each month

[www.dec.wa.gov.au/florabase](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/florabase)

### Contacting EcoEducation in the South West Region

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

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

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