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## Issue no: 2

Friday, 30 May 2014

Hi <<First Name>> <<Last Name>>

Welcome to the latest issue of *Nearer to Nature News*, the Department of Parks and Wildlife's eNewsletter detailing the latest nature-based education news and events in the Perth area and surrounds.

If you haven't connected with nature recently, or even if you have, read on!

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## A new year for Nearer to Nature

The Perth Hills is buzzing with the sounds of children learning in their natural environment in 2014.



The Department of Parks and Wildlife's Nearer to Nature Schools program is already brimming with bookings for the rest of the year. More than 7500 students are already confirmed for the popular program. Of these, 36 classes will be involved in *Discovery Days*, which engage the whole school in holistic learning about our environment.



The first in line to kick off the new school year was St Luke's Primary School with a visit for the sixth consecutive year.

Nearer to Nature coordinator Lisa Ingram awarded Year 5 teacher Dianne Frapple with a recognition certificate for her dedicated patronage of the programs.

"It is important to acknowledge individuals who see the benefits of engaging children in our natural areas," she said.

"To come back six years in a row demonstrates that our programs are successful in involving children in nature."

*(Above) Nearer to Nature's Lisa Ingram presenting a recognition certificate to Year 5 teacher Dianne Frapple, with Tahlia Chomiak (background).*

*(Below) St Luke's Primary School students Jacob Jay, Jamie Murphy, Kate Lyra, Isaac Tuda, Tia lucas, Keaton Murphy and Max Mann engage in sustainable hunting and fishing methods with Nearer to Nature Aboriginal officer Gudathada Walker.*



## Bush Rangers Conference 2014

Sixty Bush Ranger unit leaders and instructors recently attended the annual Bush Rangers Conference in Perth. The conference, which was held over two days at the Bickley Recreation Camp and the Perth Hills Discovery Centre in Mundaring, saw people attend from all over the State, including Fitzroy Crossing, Wiluna and Esperance.



Parks and Wildlife state bush ranger coordinator Richard Olive said the aim of the conference was to provide an opportunity for units to share their experiences, ideas and knowledge and learn from the guest presenters.

"The presenters bring a wealth of knowledge, with some being with the program for 10 years, while some are very new to Bush Rangers," Richard said.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for our new recruits to share the experience of our seasoned instructors."



"We aim to give instructors as much support as possible and we offer lots of hands-on activities to help the unit instructors develop new skills and understanding."



Day one of the conference involved a series of presentations by Parks and Wildlife staff and other key external providers including representatives from Leave no Trace, St John Ambulance and Lotterywest. A highlight was Parks and Wildlife senior research scientist Neil Burrows' presentation on *Bushfire in the south-west*, which focused on the use of prescribed burning as a fire management tool.



Day two offered practical hands-on sessions and saw participants engaged in marsupial trapping and monitoring as well as geocaching, bushcraft, bush tucker and mapping vegetation using quadrat and transects.

Kimberley regional coordinator and Parks and Wildlife employee Sally Johnston said the conference was a great opportunity to catch up with all the schools involved in the program around the State.

"We all face the same challenges, no matter where we are based," Sally said.

"The Kimberley units are remote and weren't able to attend the conference and I look forward to sharing everything I learnt with them when I return."



"We appreciated that the conference focused on the experiences of the instructors. The practical activities inspired us to incorporate similar activities into our own sessions or camps to further build cadets appreciation and respect for the natural environment," she said.



The Bush Rangers program has 60 cadet units in WA. The instructors and leaders are all volunteers who run the cadet unit in addition to their normal teaching loads. There are around 2100 cadets in WA.

More information on the Bush Rangers program can be found at [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/bushrangers](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/bushrangers).

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## Caring for Places

**Year 5 students from Kalamunda Christian College recently received hands-on experience in investigating environmental issues at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre as part of the *Caring for Places* program.**



Students learnt about issues such as dieback, fire, vandalism, introduced animals, weeds and erosion.

Nearer to Nature schools coordinator Stephen Crane said *Caring for Places* was an investigation into national parks and reserves that gives context for understanding sustainability and an insight into the role that humans can play in sustaining the natural environment.

"Students gain an understanding of how national parks play an essential role to maintain biodiversity and that we all need to care for the environment to protect areas of ecological importance," he said.

Nearer to Nature volunteer coordinator Berdina Ballast and Perth Hills District park ranger Paul Udinga spent time working with the 40 students. The children carried out work in Fred Jacoby Park as well as at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre.

Berdina said it was amazing to see the children's enthusiasm and willingness to take on any task required.

“Having ‘Ranger Paul’ on board gives the children first-hand knowledge and validates the program, encouraging them to take the issues facing our parks seriously,” she said.

For more information about the *Caring for Places* program visit <http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/n2n>.

*(Above) Berdina Ballast with students helping to keep the pond healthy.*

*(Below) Ranger Paul Udinga and students help to eradicate weeds at Beelu National Park.*



## Brave baby brushtail possum

Brave baby brushtail possum 'Summer' was found in the bush by a Bibbulmun Track walker, covered in meat ants and a little worse for wear. The caring walker got as many ants off her as possible and wrapped her in a towel in an effort to keep her warm and to try to make her less afraid.



Summer was given to nearby campground hosts, who handed her to Nearer to Nature staff. By this time she was not in the best health, but she was a little fighter! Staff managed to get a few more ants off her, wrapped her in a fresh, warm towel, and called Sue from Kooikuna Wildlife Rehabilitation.

Sue gave her a full health check and managed to get even more ants off her... they were even in her ears and mouth! After giving her food and a few days of careful monitoring, Sue reported that Summer was making a recovery. According to recent updates, she is getting better every day.



Thankfully the department has contacts like Sue who can be called on when injured or orphaned wildlife are found. If you find an injured animal, keep them warm and quiet by wrapping them in a towel, jumper or t-shirt, and then call the Wildcare Helpline on 9474 9055. The Wildcare Helpline is a 24/7 service provided by Parks and Wildlife volunteers and can provide advice and assistance on the best way to ensure the safety of the animal.

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## Wetlands Connections

**This time of year, a lot of wonderful creatures are active in our wetlands. With lots of rain comes plenty of water for swamp critters to enjoy.**



Wetlands are a fascinating ecosystem with plenty of creepy crawlies, birds and an entire macroinvertebrate community! The Wetlands Connections excursion is available for Years 4-12 and includes comprehensive pre-and-post-excursion materials linked to the Australian Curriculum.

In the excursion students will:

- explore the connections between the main parts of the wetland ecosystem
- assess what the macroinvertebrate community (the wonderful creatures that live beneath the surface) tells us about wetland health
- conduct water quality testing
- consider human impacts and how we can care for wetland environments.





**Location:** Lake Joondalup or Star Swamp (an incursion can also be offered at a wetland adjacent to your school)

**Time:** 10am–2pm (can be adjusted)

**Cost:** \$15 per student (a different rate applies to incursions)

To book, or for more information, contact Nearer to Nature Schools by phoning 9295 6300 or emailing [N2N@dpaw.wa.gov.au](mailto:N2N@dpaw.wa.gov.au).

## Dwellingup to host Nearer to Nature programs

Nearer to Nature programs are so popular at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre they will now be offered from the Forest Heritage Centre in Dwellingup, thanks to Alcoa.



A selection of programs offered at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre are being tailored to suit Dwellingup's environment, so now students from pre-primary to Year 12 in the Mandurah-Rockingham areas can enjoy excursions closer to home.

Program coordinator Stephen Crane said it was important for young people to engage with and learn about the natural environment and it was fantastic to be able to offer programs at another location.

"Alcoa has assisted in creating this exciting opportunity and we couldn't ask for a better setting than Dwellingup," Stephen said.

A professional learning day was held at the Alcoa Huntley mine site recently where Nearer to Nature staff saw Alcoa's forest rehabilitation techniques and programs such as the Catchment Carer's Trail.

Officers went on a mine tour to an active pit where they viewed environmental management, rehabilitation techniques and how Alcoa minimises the impact on vegetation.

*Photo courtesy Peter Russell.*

## Sharing the Dreaming app

Extend your knowledge of Aboriginal culture with the department's free



smartphone application, *Sharing the Dreaming*. The app provides a window into Nyoongar culture and language originating from WA's south-west. It is simple to navigate, provides users with a great audio and visual experience, and features Dreamtime stories that can be read or listened to.



You can learn Nyoongar words and their meanings, and discover the meaning behind symbols used in Nyoongar painting. It also covers the Nyoongar six seasons and where they fall in relation to the more standard calendar.

Nearer to Nature offers a range of activities focused on educating people about Aboriginal culture, such as *Discovering the six seasons* and *Coolangar Dreaming*.

[Download the app here.](#)



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If you would like to contact us, provide feedback or are experiencing problems opening stories please email the Nearer to Nature Team at [n2n@dpaw.wa.gov.au](mailto:n2n@dpaw.wa.gov.au).

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