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### Issue no: 6

Friday, 29 April 2016

Hi Lisa Wright

Welcome to the latest issue of *Nearer to Nature News*, where you can find the latest nature-based education news and events in the Perth area and surrounds from Parks and Wildlife.

Term 2 brings both smoke and water! Smoke will be rising from the prescribed burns Parks and Wildlife are undertaking to protect biodiversity and communities. While water will hopefully be falling from the sky with the start of the 'wet' season. Join *Nearer to Nature* to learn more about these important aspects of our environment.

As mentioned in the last newsletter the *Western Shield Action Pack* was launched by Environment Minister Albert Jacob at Peter Moyes Anglican Community School earlier this year. [Download the full action pack from our website.](#)

Dwellingup is a great place to visit any time of year, but for Term 2 we have a great incentive to visit with your class. For an excursion booked and delivered during Term 2, we're offering a 20 per cent discount. Can't make it this term? Come in Terms 3 and 4 and you'll get a 10 per cent discount. We would like to see more schools use the great facilities at Dwellingup and for schools in the Mandurah area the travel time is quicker than driving to Mundaring!

Using *Nearer to Nature* and our professional leaders greatly helps student learning and understanding. Getting your students nearer to nature is both fun and highly rewarding. Give it a go. And hopefully I'll see you somewhere in Perth's great natural environment!

Mr C

Photo: Year 11 students from Lake Joondalup Baptist College sampling for macroinvertebrates.



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## Phascogales: the little known natives

The brush-tailed phascogale is rare, so you can imagine how amazed local ornithologist Simon Cherriman was to sight one of these animals at the conclusion of a guided evening bird walk on 21 February. A walk participant remarked over a hot cuppa: “Look, there’s a possum on the roof.” The possum was, in fact, a phascogale (pronounced fas-koh-gale). Simon said he leapt across the lawn “in one of the greatest moods of excitement I have ever experienced”.

Most people can conjure an image of a bilby, possum or quenda in their mind, but what is a phascogale? These endearing, small dasyurids (carnivorous marsupials) have grizzled grey fur on their head and body, pale cream fur on their underside and a striking ‘bottlebrush tail’ with dark bristly hair up to 50mm long. There are two species of phascogale.

The endangered red-tailed phascogale lives in isolated nature reserves in the south-west of WA, and the threatened brush-tailed phascogale is found in low numbers in the jarrah and marri forest of the Perth Hills. Our resident phascogale seems partial to our Visitor Centre, and has been seen posing on our sign and scurrying into the roof cavity of the building!

Recently students in Years 11 and 12 have been finding brush-tailed phascogales in cage traps in the [Monitoring Marsupials](#) excursion at Perth Hills Discovery Centre.





The red-tailed phascogale (left) can be distinguished from the brush-tailed phascogale (middle and right, at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre) by the red colouring on the base of the tail.

## Djeran: April–May

### The ant season and the season of adulthood

Djeran season at last sees a break in the really hot weather. A key indicator of the change of season is the cool nights that once again bring a dewy presence for us to discover in the early mornings.

The winds have also changed, especially in their intensity, with light breezes arriving, generally swinging from southerly directions (i.e. south-east to south-west). Many flying ants can be seen cruising around in the light winds.

Bunuru (February–March) was the season of white flowers. Djeran is a time of red flowers, especially from the red flowering gum (*Corimbia ficifolia*), as well as the smaller and more petite flowers of the summer flame (*Beaufortia aestiva*). As you travel around the Perth area, you may also notice the red 'rust' and seed cones forming on the male and female sheoaks (*Allocasuarina fraseriana*). Banksias start to display their flowers, ensuring there are nectar food sources for many small mammals and birds.



*Zac Walker leads 'Six-season Walkabout'*

Traditionally, foods at this time of year include the seeds collected and stored for treatment from last season's zamia, along with the root bulbs of the yanget (bullrushes), freshwater fish, frogs and turtles.

As the season progresses, the nights become cooler and damper and there are some cool and rainy days. This also means that traditionally, mia mias (houses or shelters) were repaired and updated to make sure they were waterproofed and facing in the right direction in readiness for the wintery months to come.

The [Six-season Walkabout](#) excursion at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre, or Forest Heritage Centre Dwellingup, enables your students to learn about the Noongar seasons first-hand.

Source - [www.bom.gov.au/iwk/nyoongar/djeran.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/nyoongar/djeran.shtml) and Sharing the Dreaming app

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## Wildlife recovery – education and activities for students

The new **Western Shield Action Pack** was recently launched by Environment Minister Albert Jacob at Peter Moyes Anglican Community School.

*Western Shield* is one of Australia's largest wildlife recovery programs. The action pack focuses on WA's threatened species and how *Parks and Wildlife* scientists and communities are working to save them.

There are a range of activities for Years 4–6 aimed at key curriculum content. The resource is free to download at:

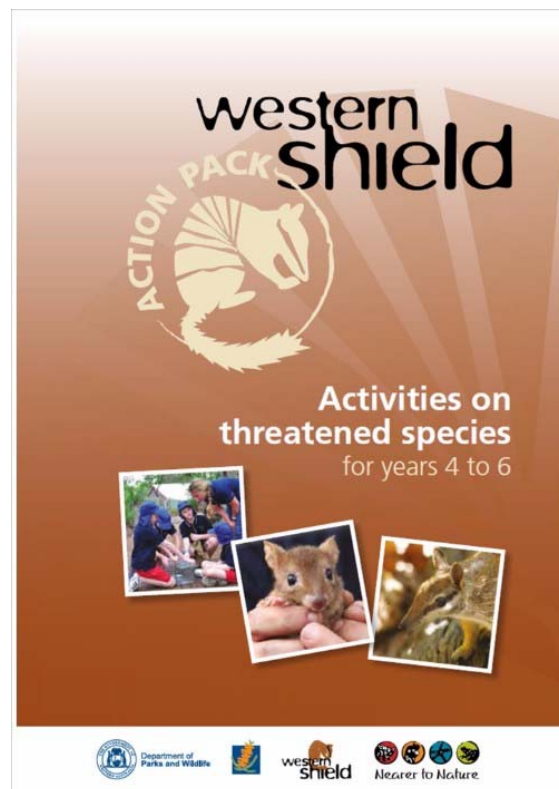
[www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/pests-diseases/westernshield](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/pests-diseases/westernshield).

The action pack complements the 'Back from the Brink' excursion at Perth Hills Discovery Centre, Mundaring, or Forest Heritage Centre, Dwellingup. It can also be done as an incursion in your classroom.

For details, go to [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/schools/excursions](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/schools/excursions).

Students can also get involved in a citizen science project analysing camera data for *Western Shield*. Follow this link for more information:

[www.zooniverse.org/projects/birgus2/western-shield-camera-watch](http://www.zooniverse.org/projects/birgus2/western-shield-camera-watch).



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## Warm up for winter

The *Nearer to Nature* community program is getting ready for the July school holidays. Our 'Warm up for winter' program will feature some great winter-themed activities in the Perth outdoors.

Favourites for this time of year include foraging for frogs and fungi, squelching through our swamplands, rambling with a ranger and many more. The chuditch is our icon for winter and it represents the forest ecosystem, a place which comes alive at this time of year. We will also be running activities from a range of other Parks and Wildlife-managed areas across the Perth metropolitan area, from Yanchep in the north, Perth Hills in the east and Canning River in the south.

To find out more about our community program visit [nearertonature.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://nearertonature.dpaw.wa.gov.au) and click on the 'community' tab. Or follow us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/dpawn](http://www.facebook.com/dpawn).



## Ranger cadet leaders converge

*Bush Rangers* and *River Rangers* cadet unit leaders recently gathered at Ern Halliday Recreation Camp for their annual conference. More than 90 unit leaders came from around the State – all the way from Halls Creek to Esperance – for two days of networking, hands-on workshops and presentations.

Cadet leaders value the opportunity to share ideas and learn from their colleagues: “The best thing about the conference was networking and hearing about other cadet groups’ contexts and how they deal with their challenges,” was one comment.

There were plenty of interactive workshops such as Indigenous Acknowledgement Training, Perth Zoo, Field Botany and Camp Cooking.

Feedback was very positive: “A great mix of people; well thought-out and interesting topics; a broad range of ideas for us to take back to our schools and put into practice with our students.”

The ranger cadet units are run by *Parks and Wildlife* and funded through Department of Local Government and Communities, Cadets WA program. They are voluntary youth development programs with a focus on conservation and community service. *River Rangers* is for Years 4–6 and *Bush Rangers* Years 7–12.

For more information see their websites:

*Bush Rangers*: [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/bush-rangers](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/bush-rangers)

*River Rangers*: [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/river-rangers](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/river-rangers)



*Belinda Cox from Parks and Wildlife’s Aboriginal Heritage Unit runs a workshop on Indigenous Acknowledgement.*

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A blue banner with a white border. On the left, there are four circular icons: a red circle with a black silhouette of a kangaroo, an orange circle with a black silhouette of a koala, a black circle with a white silhouette of a starfish, and a yellow circle with a black silhouette of a frog. In the center is the seal of the Government of Western Australia. To the right of the seal is the text "Department of Parks and Wildlife". On the far right is a logo for "Nearer to Nature" featuring a stylized blue and yellow figure. Below the icons and seal, the text "Nearer to Nature" is written in a white, cursive font. At the bottom, the text "Visit Nearer to Nature at [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/n2n](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/n2n)" is written in a white, sans-serif font.

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