

The latest news from your friendly *Nearer to Nature* team.

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Hi Lisa Wright

Issue No. 10

## Wanju (welcome)

Friday, 9 August 2019

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 the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Our wet season has started quite late this year and was preceded by two bushfire emergencies in the south-west the day before the rain arrived. Here in the Perth Hills several species of wildflowers which should be well in-flower by now are only just starting to show a few flowers.

I was involved with *Western Shield* monitoring of chuditch at Julimar State Forest a last month. Normally by this time of year they would have pouch young 10–20mm long, however our observations showed that no females had young yet.

Our seasons help drive the cycle of life and renewal in the forest.

This year *Nearer to Nature*, through an MOU with City of Canning, has been offering excursions at Canning River Eco Education Centre (CREEC) at Wilson. If you haven't discovered what we offer at CREEC [visit our website](#). CREEC is an amazing venue right beside the Canning River, so water-themed excursions are their speciality.

This year we have offered several new or modified excursions. The response to the changes has been positive, with several teachers offering valuable constructive feedback.

Schools receive a link to our online survey after their excursion.

We strongly encourage you to take the opportunity to provide feedback. Together we can provide students with inspiring experiences in the natural environment and help get them *Nearer to Nature*.

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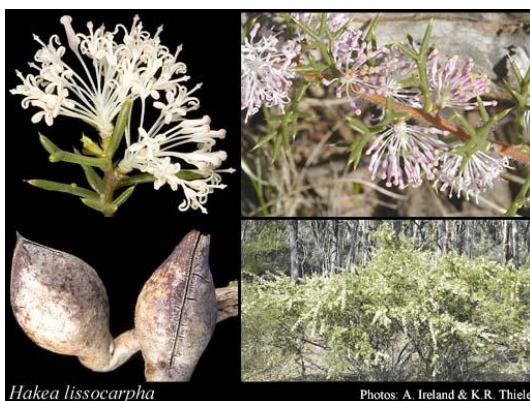
## Farewell Bunuru and welcome Makuru

Cold, blustery Makuru (June and July), the season of first rains and fertility, is in full swing. Traditionally for Noongar people, the first rains revitalised country and inland waterways and signalled that it was time to move to inland hunting areas.

People would shelter in the ranges and escarpment away from the bad weather coming in off the ocean. They collected freshly sprouted tuberous plants and hunted moulting mali (swans) that were unable to fly and easy to catch. By eating foods when they are abundant and in season, and strictly following Noongar law by only taking what they needed and ensuring they didn't disrupt breeding, they maintained biodiversity and made sure plenty of food would be available next year.

The people wore bookas (yonga [kangaroo] skin cloaks) under which they held smouldering poolgarla branches (bull banksia) to keep warm.

Vivid yellow wattle (acacia) flowers brightened the bush, and towards the end of the season white hakea flowers or the blue/purple flowers of the purple flag (*Patersonia occidentalis*) and blueberry lilly (*Dianella revoluta*) signalled the approaching change of season to Djilba (August–September).



*Hakea lissocarpha*

Photos: A. Ireland & K.R. Thiele



Prickly Moses (*Acacia puchella*)

Honey bush (*Hakea lissocarpha*).

## Yoga for a good cause: Koolangka Kids Yoga

Could your child use some peaceful reflection in a natural environment?

On Sunday 11 August 2019 the Perth Hills Discovery Centre is hosting a special children's yoga event.

Run by Alanna Cooper from Koolangka Kids Yoga, this fundraising event will support Be My Koorda, a Perth charity for disabled Aboriginal children and their families.

The event includes children's yoga incorporating Noongar language, natural themes, stories and games. Three session times are available, catering to three different age groups ranging from 3 to 12 years old.

For more information visit the [event page](#).

## Echidna escapade



If you have done one of *Nearer to Nature's* animal encounters, you may well have met Lulu, the short-beaked echidna who loves to show off.

No-one knows how old Lulu is! Even vets cannot tell how old an echidna is. Sue has had her for 10 years, who describes her as a rascal and a

to *Nature* team some time ago after she was hit by a car and sustained damage to her beak. Unfortunately, one nostril closed so she couldn't hunt. Initially, staff from Perth Zoo looked after her and noticed she loved to follow people around.

Concerned she could not be released back to the wild, Zoo staff contacted wildlife carer Sue Turner (herself a long-serving and valued part of the *Nearer to Nature* team). Sue took Lulu in, and began bringing her along to [Nearer to Nature animal encounters](#), where she often steals the show.

Recently Lulu escaped from her crate while Sue was driving. She squeezed past Jet, the red-tailed black cockatoo - and the handbrake, to finish the journey on Sue's lap!

Short-beaked echidnas are covered with long, brown-black and golden spines with fur underneath. Their long, tubular and toothless snout is called a beak. They have a long, sticky tongue which extends into termite and ant nests to catch their food. They are monotremes, one of only two Australian mammals that lay eggs.

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If you see an injured echidna, please check if it is alive then cover it with a thick towel, pick it up and call the Wildcare Helpline.



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## Zamia: a cycad not a palm

Zamias resemble palms with their frond-like leaves, however they belong to a very ancient group of plants known as cycads. Dinosaurs fed on cycads during the Mesozoic period.

There are 283 known species of cycad worldwide with 76 species in Australia. Cycads, like conifers, are gymnosperms; 'naked seed' plants. They make seeds without a flower or fruit. While it is common for plants to have both male and female reproductive organs on the same individual plant, this species has separate male and female plants. Fertilisation takes place with the help of the *Tranes* genus of weevil which is lured between plants by pheromones they produce. During summer the female plant produces a large pineapple-like cone with red fruits that ripen to a deep red colour in March (Bunuru), while the male plant produces smaller cones that stay green.

The female 'nuts' are poisonous and were reported as causing violent nausea in early explorers. The aboriginal people of the south-west of Australia successfully ate them after proper processing, and they are an important food source for emus.

western Australia and is common in the jarrah forest of the Perth Hills Discovery Centre.

[Access information on our flora programs.](#)

**Above right:** *Macrozamia riedlei* at the Perth Hills Discovery Centre.

**Right:** Emu scat with zamia nuts on a track near Mundaring Weir. Photos - Lynette Marshall/DBCA



Nearer to Nature



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