

Check out the latest news from your friendly *Nearer to Nature* team.



## Issue No. 9

Monday, 16 July 2018

Hi Lisa Wright

## Wanju (welcome)

Welcome to Term 3 and the latest issue of *Nearer to Nature News*.

The seasons are definitely changing. In the Perth Hills, mornings are decidedly cool and the days just warm. Students coming up from the Swan Coastal Plain are already noticing the difference in temperature. Please remind your students that it is about three degrees cooler at our centre, so a jumper is necessary on your excursion.

Winter has finally arrived with its welcome rain. While we want it to rain for the environment's benefit, for an excursion it's not so good. At Perth Hills, we monitor the weather forecast and contact schools if unfavourable weather is predicted for their excursion. We will contact primary schools if rain or storms are predicted to see if you are happy to continue. For high schools, if you have concerns please contact us. Students should be able to cope with occasional rain, but if steady rain is predicted we will ring and discuss options with you. For all excursions, a severe weather warning or a severe wind warning will lead to a postponement of the excursion for safety reasons. As soon as we know of the warnings, we will ring the phone number provided at time of booking to advise.

Term 1 and Term 2 have been busy with lots of schools visiting us, so please book in as early as possible. A minimum of one term's notice is suggested.

One opportunity not to miss is the Science Week discount. Throughout August we are offering a full-day excursion at Perth Hills Discovery Centre for \$10 per student. Please call our bookings officer on 9295 2244.

We are currently planning what we offer in 2019, so if you have ideas of excursions and incursions please contact me to discuss. Similarly, if you have suggested modifications for existing excursions please let me know. Your feedback is important in planning for a shared 2019. At this stage there should be something new in both primary and high school offerings.

Mr C



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### **Chuditch (*Dasyurus geoffroii*)**

In early May, 10 Western Australian chuditch (or western quoll) were translocated to [Arid Recovery](#) in South Australia with the aim of building a viable population of the species that once occurred in that state. For several native species, the south-west of

WA is the last remaining area where populations can be found in the wild. At the time of European settlement in Australia, chuditch occurred in all mainland states and the Northern Territory. Now they have lost 95 per cent of their former habitat. The main causes of decline are loss of habitat and predation by foxes and feral cats.

The chuditch is currently listed as fauna that is likely to become extinct in the wild under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* and has been assigned the status of vulnerable using International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria. Their numbers have declined in the Perth Hills, but our long-term fauna monitoring program, *Monitoring Marsupials*, detected a single male twice last year. This year we have captured the male again, along with a juvenile female chuditch. The male chuditch has gained a significant amount of weight since last year.

All our [Western Shield excursions](#) focus on a range of threatened species, including the chuditch.



Above: At Lane Poole Reserve, chuditch are regularly caught both in traps and on motion sensor cameras.

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## Snottygobbles

Bush tucker plants are local, native plants traditionally used by Aboriginal people for food. Many plants were also used seasonally for medicine. An iconic bush tucker plant is the snottygobble (*Persoonia spp.*) If you see a tree that stands out as bright green among the softer grey green foliage of the jarrah and marri it is likely a snottygobble.

The two species found on the scarp are *Persoonia elliptica* and *Persoonia longifolia*. *P. elliptica* is characterised by smooth, thick, fire-resistant bark, green, oval leaves and yellow flowers. *P. longifolia* has long, thin, weepy green leaves, flaky, papery bark and yellow flowers. Interestingly, while both species can be found living side by side south of the Helena River, only *P. elliptica* is found north of this line.

There is also a lesser known snottygobble common on sandy soils on the coastal plain and in some parts of the Avon Wheatbelt. *Persoonia saccata* is not a tree, but a shrub growing to 1.5m tall with thin, needle like leaves and yellow flowers.



**Why the curious name?** These plants produce a small pale green fruit – the size of a grape or blueberry. This fruit ripens and falls from June to July and is considered a sweet, tasty treat by the Noongar people. To eat the fruit, you take one from the ground (not the tree) and squeeze it into your mouth. Inside is a seed and the flesh, which is the colour and consistency of... well... snot. Squeeze a ripe fruit and see if you agree. Unfortunately, snottygobbles are affected by dieback, but they can be treated.

Please note – do not eat bush tucker without having been shown by an experienced person. Some bush tucker, such as zamia, can cause illness if not correctly prepared.



## Prescribed burning in the Perth Hills

DBCA's Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for protecting communities and natural values from bushfires. One of the key ways we do that is by reducing fuel loads such as dry leaves and branches that build up on the forest floor. Prescribed burning is the best tool we have to do that over a large area.

Environment Minister Stephen Dawson announced in May this year that about 216,000 hectares of prescribed burning had been achieved - the second year in a row that the target of at least 200,000 hectares has been exceeded, and the first time for two consecutive years since 1996-97.

Prescribed burning will start again in spring when the forests start to dry after winter rain. To find out where prescribed burns are taking place, you can visit [dbca.wa.gov.au/todaysburns](http://dbca.wa.gov.au/todaysburns) after 10am daily.



Whenever a prescribed burn is planned in the vicinity of one of our education centres, district fire officers inform us of where it is and if we may be affected by smoke. So, if you are heading up the hill and see smoke, don't worry, we are in close contact with fire management staff. When they do need to burn close to an education centre it is done when there are no visitors to the centre. If fire is a topic you wish to explore further with your students, *Nearer to Nature* offers several [fire-related programs](#) for different age groups.

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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@dbca.wa.gov.au](mailto:n2n@dbca.wa.gov.au).

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