

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

[View this email in your browser](#)



Monday, 20 June 2016

Hi Lisa

Welcome to the latest issue of *Nearer to Nature South West News*.

Major bushfires this summer have led to increased awareness and a renewed interest in helping students understand the impacts of bushfires and how we can all be better prepared. The *Living with fire* incursion was held at a large number of primary schools this year. Term 1 was busy with a range of new activities and locations.

An increasing number of school groups have been camping at Conto campground and visiting Giants and Calgardup Caves, so we are now offering a range of excursions at these locations to allow teachers to extend environmental learning opportunities to a wider audience. The excursions offered range from 30 minutes to 3 hours and can be tailored to fit your timetable.

For the first time, *Nearer to Nature South West* offered summer holiday programs at

holidays throughout the year.

It seems like the first half of the year has flown by and we are already looking at the great opportunities for learning in the forest during Spring. Remember, not only does a day in the bush beat a day in the classroom, but research has shown that getting students into nature can improve their behaviour and academic performance, so make sure you book an excursion with *Nearer to Nature* because it can only make your job easier!

John Anderson, project officer *Nearer to Nature South West*, Parks and Wildlife

#### In this issue:

- [New activities at Margaret River caves](#)
- [Excursions at Conto](#)
- [Holiday family fun](#)
- [New coastal ecology excursion at Margaret River](#)
- [St Mary's Anglican Girls' School camp](#)
- [Contacting Nearer to Nature](#)

---

## New activities at Margaret River caves

A number of enquiries have been received regarding the possibility of environmental education during their visits to Giants and Calgardup caves.

Due to limitations on group numbers, larger groups have staggered entry times and teachers find themselves looking for useful activities to keep students busy and learning while they wait. Complementary programs have now been developed based on the ecology and geology of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste karst systems, which are



*The addition of an environmental education program can add value to your cave visit*

Activities offered are:

- Paleo Puzzle
- Microbeasts
- EcoWalk

Each age-appropriate activity takes from 30-60 minutes and will form part of an activity matrix to suit your timetable and number of students. Please see the brochure at [dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/schools](http://dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/schools) for more information.

---

## Excursions at Conto

environmental and sustainability learning to students in a way that is fun, engaging and relevant.

A range of excursions will be offered for school groups staying at Conto campground to enable teachers to incorporate important nature conservation messages into their camp programs. Activities are available for all age groups from Year 4 to Year 12.



They are conducted on site by our knowledgeable and experienced local leaders. Activities can be scheduled as a three-hour morning or afternoon program to suit your timetable, particularly when students may be split into a number of smaller groups doing a range of outdoor activities at different times.

Excursions currently offered at Conto are:

- Biodiversity's Base (Years 4 – 6)
- Living with Fire (Years 5-8)\Environmental Change and Management (Years 9 and 10)
- Back from the Brink (Years 5-12)
- Fire – a force of life and a natural hazard (Years 10 -12)
- Geography/Biology (Years 11- 12)
- Night Walk (All years)

*Photo - Amongst the peppermints at Conto is a great place to find signs of the endangered Western Ringtail Possum.*

---

## Holiday family fun

A range of school holiday activities were offered during the summer for children and families in the Margaret River area. These activities are great fun and at the same time share a conservation message and interesting information about our unique flora and fauna.

Activities took place at Wharnccliffe Mill Bush Retreat and Conto campground. Families at Wharnccliffe Mill participated in night walks, invertebrate searches and the new Forest Detectives puzzle.

At Conto, the younger children learned about the habitats of forest fairies and the camouflage creatures of mud mountain. The activities were popular and well-received so we look forward to continuing and expanding these opportunities in future years, both during the summer months and in mid-term breaks.

More information about school holiday offerings both in the south west and around the metro area can be found on our website at <http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/get-involved/nearer-to-nature/community>



*Photo - Michelle helps build a fairy home with treasures found in the local bush.*

## New coastal ecology excursion at Margaret River

In March this year, 90 Year 6 students from Melville Primary School took part in an exciting new program looking at the coastal ecology of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. Margaret River based outdoor education operators Dirty Detours and Jojara & Associates complemented the excursion with a canoeing activity at Riflebutts Park in Prevelly and at the river mouth on the Margaret River.

Teambuilding activities also took place in the park. The students learnt about some of the special adaptations of coastal plants, turned their hands to some botanical artwork by creating sketches of some flora and worked as a team to create a flora transect.



*Coastal pigface (Carpobrotus virescens) is a fascinating bush tucker and traditional medicine plant which survives a harsh environment to help stabilise our dunes.*

Everyone then took a hike along the coast and finished with a fun sandcastle building activity through which they developed an understanding of issues around coastal erosion and dune management. This activity can also be incorporated into a visit to the historical Ellensbrook House and will be adapted to other coastal areas between Bunbury and Augusta as required.

---

This year in April we were excited to be invited to present a program of activities to Year 5 students from St Mary's Anglican Girls' School during their annual camp at their beautiful property in Metricup. The property has a significant stand of remnant Jarrah forest which is habitat for a range of iconic south west flora and fauna and makes a great outdoor classroom.

During a *Back from the brink* excursion they learnt about the *Western Shield* fauna recovery program and carried out a trapping activity. They also learnt about fire management and bushfire safety before getting a chance to try out the hoses and water cannon on a Parks and Wildlife fire appliance.





For many, a highlight was spotlighting for possums during a night walk and sitting blindfolded in the bush after dark to focus on using their senses of hearing and smell at night. Visits to a prescribed burn site and some areas affected by the Margaret River bushfire of 2011 the following day reinforced their learning.

---

## Contacting Nearer to Nature

For any enquiries, and bookings for excursions or Professional Learning, please contact Julie-Anne Oliver, administrative assistant at Parks and Wildlife South West office:

**Phone:** (08) 9725 4300

**Fax:** (08) 9725 4351

**Email:** [swecoed@dpaw.wa.gov.au](mailto:swecoed@dpaw.wa.gov.au)

For the development of programs and educational liaison please contact John Anderson, project officer at Parks and Wildlife South West office.

**Phone:** (08) 9725 5944

**Mobile:** 0427 980 306

**Email:** [john.anderson@dpaw.wa.gov.au](mailto:john.anderson@dpaw.wa.gov.au)

---



[follow us on Facebook](#)

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).

*Copyright © 2016 Department of Parks and Wildlife, All rights reserved.*

You are receiving this email because you opted in at our website, or signed up via a form.

**Our mailing address is:**

PO Box 1693 BUNBURY 6231 [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription](#)

[preferences](#) <http://us5.campaign-archive2.com/?u=517dd10f77c668193ebf249c0&id=700a965fa1&e=2954b5e6c8>