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Friday, 25 January 2019

Hi Lisa

Welcome back to a new school year. But before we consider what is coming up for *Nearer to Nature* this year, let's look back on 2018.

It was great to have so many of our regular schools visiting over the past year, we always appreciate the ongoing support for our programs. We were also very pleased to welcome many new teachers and schools. During 2018, we were once again involved in partnerships including 'Possum Week' at primary schools in the Margaret River region, the Margaret River 'Bioblitz', two 'Bay OK' days at Dunsborough and Cowaramup and the 'Walk on the Wild Side' day with Dardanup Shire Council.



In addition to our usual school groups, we had the opportunity last year to introduce a number of international visitors to our unique jarrah forest. Students from Singapore Chinese Girls School, hosted by Newton Moore Senior High School, are annual visitors to our centres. We also had visits from two separate groups of students from Setagaya, Japan, and a large delegation of Chinese foresters interested in our forest management practices.

This year schools will notice that there have been some changes at our centres. At the Wellington Discovery Forest we have expanded our taxidermy room and created a new display to bring the animals to life. At Wharnccliffe Mill (now known as the RAC Margaret River Nature Park) some great new walk trails have been constructed that will be available for use during our excursions this year.

We hope all had a safe and relaxing holiday and look forward to seeing you this year.

Project Officer

*Nearer to Nature South West*

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

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## Mobile education trailer

Since it was set up six years ago, our education trailer has been a well-used and popular attraction at many events. The trailer has a mobile taxidermy and touch table display and teaches people of all ages about our amazing biodiversity.

During 2018, it was used at a range of educational and community events including Dunsborough Primary School's 'Bay OK Day' for the fifth year running and the inaugural 'Say G'Day to the Bay' with Cowaramup Primary School.



We also participated in the Margaret River 'Bioblitz', had a display at Dardanup Shire Council's 'Walk on the Wild Side' event to raise public awareness of how to keep native animals safe from our pets and joined in with NAIDOC Week events in Bunbury and Collie.

We can also bring the trailer to schools to conduct a range of activities for all age groups so contact us if you would like us to help bring nature nearer to your students.

*The mobile touch table is always a hit.*

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It is always great to have local school students involved in conservation projects. In August 2018 the Year 3-6 students from Coinda Primary School walked to Koombana Park to assist in a big revegetation project.

Over the previous months, Parks and Wildlife Service employees had removed a significant amount of non-native invasive plants with a view to planting a parkland of tuarts and peppermint gums to provide native cover and a future habitat for western ringtail possums.

The students did an outstanding job, planting nearly 1500 peppermint gum, tuart and coastal species seedlings at the eastern end of the park.

If your school would like to get involved in conservation projects in the area, please contact us since there are a number of opportunities available this year.



*Planting peppermint gum groves.*

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## Up close with native fauna at WDF

At Wellington Discovery Forest we have accumulated a spectacular collection of taxidermy animals over many years through the ongoing dedication and efforts of our Wellington District Parks and Visitors Services leader. Unfortunately, the display room was very small and did not do these specimens justice.

Throughout 2018, Julz and I worked on displaying the animals to best effect,

the results and look forward to welcoming visiting students as well as tourists.



*Animals are displayed in their natural habitat.*

## Setagaya explores the forest

In September 2018, we were delighted to welcome a group of high school students from Setagaya, Bunbury's sister city in Japan, to Wellington National Park.

We met the students and their hosts from Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School at Potters Gorge Campground and introduced them to some of the unique flora and fauna of the jarrah forest with our Forest Detectives challenge.



Along the walk trail they found out about some of the amazing traditional uses of the forest plants and had a taste of what I call 'Noongar wasabi', the flower of the creeper *Clematis pubsecens* (old man's beard).

*Visiting students try to identify plants with the 'in-tree-ductions' game.*

## Western Shield marsupial trapping dates

Our educational trapping program at the Wellington Discovery Forest is an engaging and hands-on way for students to learn about native animals, the threats they face and some of the practical things we can do to protect them.

Students bait and set traps in the afternoon then help clear those traps the following morning so it is a great activity to combine with an overnight camp. Our licence permits us to trap over two weeks of the year.

Dates currently set for our 2019 trapping weeks:

- 27 – 31 May
- 2 – 6 September

**Early bookings are advised.**



*An infra-red camera captures an image of a chuditch during our August 2018 trapping week.*

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## Bushfire ready

During the summer months it is worth reminding ourselves of the natural hazard of bushfires that are an ongoing annual risk.

It is easy to become complacent if it has been quiet so it is important to make sure you remain vigilant and



home, understand the bushfire warning system and have an emergency plan that all family members know and understand.

This year we will continue to offer free incursions to primary schools to raise awareness of bushfire behaviour and safety and an understanding of fire ecology in the south-west.

*Junior fire programs raise awareness and meet the primary school geography curriculum requirements.*

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## Contacting *Nearer to Nature*

For any enquiries and bookings for excursions or Professional Learning, please contact *Nearer to Nature* South West at Parks and Wildlife Service's South West Regional Office:

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