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Term 1, 2022



Dear colleagues

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

The school year has started, as always in the hottest part of the year, the Noongar season of Birak. Over the next couple of months we need to remain vigilant for bushfires, but shortly Mookaroo (the first rains) will come and excursion season will well and truly kick off.

The new year brings some changes to the *Nearer to Nature* team in the South West. The inimitable Julz has moved on from the department and we wish her all the best in the future. In Wellington District we have a new leader in training, Anya, who we welcome to the team. We will also continue to maintain Covid safety plans at our venues and do all we can to keep excursions running where possible.

We encourage schools once again to engage in forest learning with *Nearer to Nature*. The natural environment is a stimulating and safe area for children of all ages and our curriculum-linked excursions always provide an engaging day to remember for teachers and students alike.

Regards

John Anderson
Nearer to Nature South West

Bunuru: second summer

Bunuru is the hottest time of the year with

The male plants display pollen cones in the

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if you're close to the coast. Traditionally this was, and still is, a great time for living and fishing by the coast, rivers and estuaries. Because of this, freshwater foods and seafood made up major parts of the Noongar people's diet during Bunuru.

Bunuru is also a time of the white flowers with lots of white flowering gums in full bloom, including jarrah and marri. However the most striking flower to look out for is the female zamia (*Macrozamia riedlei*), a very ancient type of plant from the age of dinosaurs!

with masses of a cotton wool like substance.

As the hot and dry weather continues, the seed cones change from green to bright red, indicating they're ripening and becoming more attractive to animals such as emus, quenda and wallabies, that will eat the toxic fleshy outer layer.



Above: The fruit of the zamia brings vivid colour to the forest floor.

Farewell Julz!

We wish Julie-Anne Oliver (Julz) all the best as she moves on from her position with Nearer to Nature to pursue other goals. Julz has been involved with Nearer to Nature in the South West Region for 16 years and has been a unique and vital part of our program.

In that time she has brought the wonders of our natural environment to a generation of school children and delighted kids and adults alike with her quirky characters and boundless enthusiasm for her role. Julz will be sorely missed and leaves shoes that will be difficult to fill. All the best, Julz!



Above: Julz leads a group of students on a journey of wonder.

Meet Anya Fey

We welcome a new member to our education team in Wellington District. Anya Fey began training with us during term 3 and will start leading excursions in 2022. Welcome to the team, Anya!



Above: Anya has a love of all things nature.

Treasures of Mangrove Cove

The Mangrove Cove venue on Koombana Drive will be better than ever with a new toilet block and an extensive nature play area. The area is managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service Regional Parks team and includes a purpose-built education pavilion overlooking the ecologically important mangroves of Leschenault Inlet.

Unfortunately, availability of construction materials continues to cause delays, so it is unlikely that we will be able to run our interactive cultural and environmental activities in the first half of the year at this location. We are hoping to have the area ready for use by September. Treasures of Mangrove Cove is a fun and educational day out for children from Years 2-4 with lots of great presenters, so please contact us to register your interest.

In the meantime, we continue to offer many other fabulous nature based excursions for all age groups throughout the year at Wellington Discovery Forest, RAC Margaret River Nature Park and other venues around the south-west so there is no need for your students to miss out. Get in touch to organise a memorable day's outdoor learning for your class.



Discover Deadly brought some sssslippery treasures to Mangrove Cove last year.

Bushfire ready excursions

Understanding the role of bushfire in our ecosystem and the factors which affect fire behaviour are essential to being prepared and staying safe during bushfire season. Developing this knowledge in school students from a young age is a great way to raise bushfire awareness and resilience in the community now and into the future. We have a range of curriculum linked bushfire education excursions aimed at many year levels from Year 5 up to Year 12.

These excursions look at causes, risks and mitigation of destructive bushfires and introduce students to both historic and modern fire management techniques. Where possible, the excursion will include a visit to a recent bushfire site. Last spring we had a prescribed burn in the Wellington Discovery Forest, so this year is a great time for students to see up-close the effect of fire in our forests and the excellent biodiversity outcomes of mild prescribed burns.



Photo: A low intensity prescribed burn protects both biodiversity and community values.

September trapping

We have recently modified our trapping licence to allow trapping on eight individual nights throughout the year to provide the flexibility to make this great hands-on program more accessible for schools. Previously our licensing conditions required us to conduct our educational marsupial monitoring program at the Wellington Discovery Forest in two blocks over four nights in May and September.

The program is suitable for Year 5 to 12 students and is a great activity to combine with an overnight camp at the Wellington Forest Cottages or Potter's Gorge. It would also be ideal for *Bush Ranger* groups. Early bookings are advised.



Above: A mature male quenda is measured and released.

Contacting *Nearer to Nature* in the South West Region

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

Phone: 9725 4300

Fax: 9725 4351

Email: swecoed@dbca.wa.gov.au

For the **development of programs and educational liaison** please contact John Anderson, Project Officer at the Parks and Wildlife Service South West Regional Office.

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