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Term 3, 2022



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

Now is a great time to start thinking about getting students out of the classroom and into the natural environment for some unique learning experiences. Unfortunately, the arrival of COVID-19 into WA had a significant impact on the delivery of our great Nearer to Nature programs early in the year. Cancellation of school camps has been a disappointment for many students, and teachers were understandably hesitant to commit to excursion bookings. However, with the relaxation of restrictions and the community adjusting to living with COVID-19, the uncertainty around school excursions and camps has diminished.

Over the last couple of years, the border restrictions have had the effect of making more people aware of the fabulous natural wonders on our own doorstep, so it is also important to continue raising awareness of biodiversity and conservation issues with students and giving them the tools they need to care for country.

We have had some staff changes over the last months (more on that below), so we look forward to seeing you all in our forests and meeting our new team.

Regards,
John Anderson
Nearer to Nature South West

A return to normal

Recently, we had the John Tonkin College Bushrangers group attend the Dwellingup

They also discovered the range of remarkable uses that our jarrah forest plants

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Aboriginal and contemporary fire management practices and why they can work together to preserve and enhance biodiversity whilst keeping our communities safe during the summer months.

to be in the forest and engage in a range of fun and informative activities.



Above: Students have a go at making a Darp (knife) using balga resin and kangaroo poo.

MAKURU – Season of fertility

At this time of year, we are in the cold and wet season of Makuru. This season sees inland waterways and catchments fill up and so the food sources of the seas and estuaries are replaced with hunting foods of the land such as Yongas (kangaroos), which apart from their meat also provide skins or bookas and bones and sinews for tool making.

The early part of the season can often produce an astonishing array of fungi in the forest, from normal looking toadstools to some quite peculiar coral and jelly fungus. The season also sees flowering of blue and purple colours, giving way later in the season to whites and creams.

Despite the colder and wetter conditions, it is can still be a great time for outdoor activities and being the season when NAIDOC week is celebrated, is also a great time for children to learn about traditional culture and caring for country.



Above: Purple flag (*Patersonia occidentalis*) is a characteristic flower of Makuru Photo: D Blumer

New faces at Nearer to Nature

Jodie Deeley has recently joined the permanent team as our project officer, replacing Julz, and will be out and about on many excursions in the coming months. She has a long background in forestry and conservation, both professionally and in passing on her knowledge to young people in a range of community roles.

Lauren Scanlon, who many of our regulars will have known from over a decade of service in Margaret River, has moved on to focus on her own business and other work for Nature Conservation Margaret River. We look forward to a continuing relationship through our links with that organisation.

In her place, we introduce Leceile Firth, who will be commencing training with us over the coming months. Leceile has a long history working in nature conservation both in the Kimberley and in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park, so will be a great addition to our team.

In addition, Peter Russell will be joining us as he makes the tree change to the South West region. Peter has been delivering Nearer to Nature programs for the Perth Hills for over two decades, so brings a wealth of experience and knowledge.



Above: Jodie Deeley has joined our team based in Bunbury and will become a familiar face at excursions.

Spring trapping

When school camps are once again permitted, why not book in for a night of *Western Shield* trapping this Spring? Students from Year 5 to 12 have an opportunity to learn a little about our *Western Shield* fauna recovery program, then bait and set traps in the late afternoon. In the early morning they then assist with checking and clearing of traps and measuring and recording any animals found. This data becomes part of our statewide database of endangered fauna, so it is a chance to be involved in real conservation science and is a great hands on experience that they will never forget!

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Above: A brush tailed possum ready for measuring.

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:

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