

**Nicole Wreford**

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**From:** Nearer to Nature, Parks and Wildlife Service <no-reply@newsletters.dbca.wa.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 13 December 2023 3:32 PM  
**To:** Lisa Wright  
**Subject:** Nearer to Nature South West, Term 4 2023

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Term 4, 2023



Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



Nearer to Nature

## South West News



Welcome to the final edition of *Nearer to Nature South West news* for 2023.

It has been a great year all round, which has included a bunch of interesting and popular school holiday programs. This summer once again we will be opening the fantastic taxidermy display and craft activities at the Wellington Discovery Forest on certain dates and offer some forest based activities if weather permits. Check out our Facebook page for more information. We will be back with more great activities for the public in autumn next year.

Of particular interest this year has been the use of Mangrove Cove for excursions. We can offer a range of activities for both primary and secondary students and it can significantly reduce bus costs for schools who may find the journey to Wellington Discovery Forest a bit pricey these days. The Mangrove Cove location is an ideal location for excursions with the education pavilion and facilities, access to the inlet and the look-out tower and playground. We also look forward to a brand new redesigned and constructed boardwalk to be completed in mid-2024 that we will enjoy taking students through to explore the myriad of life amongst the mangroves.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a safe and happy holiday and we hope to see you and your students again in 2024.

Regards,

John Anderson

Project Officer, *Nearer to Nature South West*



17 EXCURSIONS @  
RACMRNP  
373 PARTICIPANTS



57 EXCURSIONS @ WDF  
1155 PARTICIPANTS



10 EXCURSIONS AT  
OTHER LOCATIONS  
750 PARTICIPANTS



29 INCURSIONS  
1774 PARTICIPANTS



43 SCHOOL HOLIDAY  
ACTIVITIES  
1106 PARTICIPANTS  
& LOTS OF FUN



4 COMMUNITY EVENTS  
& 1 PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

**2023**

*162 Events  
4032 Children  
953 Adults  
engaged in  
nature-based  
educational  
experiences*

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## Thanks to Jonnie and Ryley

I would like to take an opportunity to extend a huge thanks to our Regional Parks Rangers, Jonnie Cobby and Ryley Clarke, for their ongoing efforts throughout the year to help us with cultural learning experiences for so many schools, especially around NAIDOC. The perspectives of First Nations people and their timeless connection to Country provide unique insights and understandings on how we can connect with nature and best care for the land on which we live.

Jonnie and Ryley present their cultures in ways which are always highly engaging and relatable, as I think the many teachers and students they have reached throughout the year would willingly attest.



**Above:** Rangers Ryley Clarke (left) and Jonnie Cobby (right).

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## Birak: season of the young (December–January)

Traditionally for Noongar people, most of this season was spent by the coast as the weather was warm and seafood plentiful (a great time to go fishing!). The rain eases and the warm weather really starts to take hold. The afternoons are cooled by the sea breezes from the south-west.

It may be hard to believe now with our longer bushfire season but this was traditionally the season for cultural burning. Easterly winds in the morning and sea breezes in the afternoon meant that this was the burning time of year for Noongar people and they would burn the Country in mosaic patterns—they would do this for fuel reduction, to increase the grazing pastures for animals, to aid seed germination and to make it easier to move across the country.

There are many fledglings venturing out of nests in birak, though some are still staying close to their parents such as magpies and parrots. Reptiles will also be shedding their old skin for a new one. With the rising temperatures and the decreasing rainfall, it's also a time for the baby frogs to complete their transformation into adulthood.



**Above:** The WA Christmas tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*) is a familiar sight during this season.

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## Be bushfire ready!

It has been a very dry spring and with a strong El Nino forecast for the summer, there is a significant risk in WA of a severe bushfire season. Our department's prescribed burning program, a vital piece of the puzzle for protecting communities and ecosystems, was cut very short by the rapid drying of fuels across the landscape. It is perhaps a good indicator of how climate patterns have changed—the coming months, birak, were traditionally a time for cool burning by the Noongar people; something that would seem inconceivable this year. Already this season we have seen a number of significant bushfire events, well before the normal commencement of the high threat period.

Along with DFES and local government (through the selfless efforts of our many wonderful volunteer bush fire brigades), Parks and Wildlife Service work throughout the year to try and keep us all safe.



However, everyone in the community has a role to play. Being familiar with the natural role of fire in our environment, understanding the risks in your own area and observing fire restrictions and prohibitions can help make the summer safer for everyone.

Most importantly, if you live in a fire prone area (and most of us actually do!), having a plan, knowing the daily fire danger rating and [keeping up to date](#) are the best ways to protect yourself and your family. The [Emergency WA website](#) is a really important source of information when incidents arise and our [Park alerts website](#) provides essential information about impacts on our campsites and other attractions across the state. In order to get prepared, or to understand what fire danger ratings mean, there is great info and resources available on the web: DFES's [My bushfire plan website](#) is a great first stop, and for more information visit the main [DFES website](#).

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## Home schoolers

During the last couple of years we have run a number of successful and highly popular excursions aimed at home school families. We can offer very specialised knowledge and education specific to our unique South West ecosystems and their management. Mixed age groups and differing teaching methodologies presents challenges, but the excursions offer a great opportunity to address a range of learning areas, in particular the sciences and HASS/Geography, and are also a great social outing.

Next year we are intending to expand these offerings to parents and children in the Busselton/Margaret River region, so please [contact us](#) if you are interested in our opportunities in your patch and keep your eyes on social media for information about upcoming events.



**Above:** Meeting a forest giant.

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## Primary school excursions at Mangrove Cove

For a number of years, COVID and construction works permitting, we have been running our hugely popular Treasures of Mangrove Cove round-robin events at Koombana with the welcome involvement of many engaging environmental educators and volunteers.

This year we launched our first school excursion with the Year 3 cohort from Parkfield Primary School. Students learnt about the importance of invertebrates to the functioning of ecosystems and conducted searches for both terrestrial and aquatic microbeasts, as well as birdwatching. Mangrove Cove is a great venue for school excursions. As well as the educational outcomes which can be met, the lookout tower and awesome all-abilities playground provide an extra dimension and gives the kids a good chance to blow off some steam. In addition, bus costs for

local schools to Mangrove Cove are very affordable which significantly reduces the costs to parents and schools.

In 2024, we will be expanding our offerings to accommodate all primary year groups and also investigate some new ideas for secondary students. Excursions can run from 2 to 4 hours and could be combined with a visit to the nearby Dolphin Discovery Centre.



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### **Contacting *Nearer to Nature* in the South West region**

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

**Online bookings:** [parksandwildlife.rezdy.com/catalog/458491/n2n-schools-south-west-region](https://parksandwildlife.rezdy.com/catalog/458491/n2n-schools-south-west-region)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/NearertoNatureWA>

**Phone:** 9725 4300

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