New burrow & facilities add to Easter Bilby learning success

We at Bunyaville are thrilled with the delighted response of our visitors to the new Bilby Burrow christened this March. Children are greeted by a beautiful desert mural which allows them to easily suspend belief and role play bilby researchers discovering a bilby burrow.

The expansive deck adjoining our spacious new classroom, where the burrow is housed, has for the first time allowed children to sit directly in front of the burrow entrance. This builds great anticipation in the children who can’t wait to crawl inside and begin discovering. Our creative Unit Support Officer has simulated life-like spinifex to replace the pictures previously painted over the entrance. Being able to touch this 3D prop has enabled children’s greater understanding of the importance of the environment to bilbies’ survival. On the walk through the bush back to the bus, one child repeatedly pointed out the “spinifex down there [the track]” and that “there might be burrows hidden there.”

Inside the burrow we no longer read from a big book but project it onto the burrow wall. Every child can clearly see the text and detail of the illustrations so all can easily participate in the conversation and learning. This year we have plainly seen this learning applied during the ensuing forest walk as children immediately identify Flash Rabbit as responsible for the litter they find and as they choose lizards, emus, lady beetles and other insects among the friends for who they want Easter Bilby to leave eggs.

As well as new facilities, this year we were blessed with a variety of weather conditions. Such variety provides many different contexts which bring out children’s otherwise hidden understandings, capabilities and preferences. When light showers prevailed, some children constructed different nests than those on fine days – ones with roofs and pyramid or tent-shaped nests.

As usual visiting teachers have aptly used the Easter Bilby Adventure’s regular features, such as the Bunya Bilby song, to effectively engage children with literacy learning. We were particularly impressed with one child from Ms Riddell’s class who told Professor that bilbies “forage and fossick for food when they are out at night.” Many teachers taught actions to match the song lyrics, a great strategy to scaffold meaning making. Congratulations to all this year’s Easter Bilby Adventurers who successfully took their learning beyond the classroom!
**Around the Ridges and Gullies**

Today’s topic is environmental weeds in Bunyaville Conservation Park. Being involved with Bunyaville Forest Bushcare for the past five years has given me some insight into how weeds get into Bunyaville Conservation Park, and how people’s choices and behaviour can have a major impact.

Weeds are spread by animals such as birds and fruit bats.... Weeds can also be spread by wind and water.... This is where the plants you choose for your garden, particularly if you live near bushland, matter so much. If for example you choose to plant Mock Orange (Murraya paniculata) in your garden, it is more than likely it will become well established in the nearby bushland, courtesy of birds that like its berries. It will become established at the expense of native vegetation, and the myriad of creatures that have evolved to exist with that native vegetation. So if you live near bushland, give a bit thought as to what you plant in your garden. Choose native plants that occur in your region. This is important because Australian natives planted outside their normal range can become invasive. A classic example is the Umbrella Tree native to North Queensland. If native plants aren’t your thing, then choose exotics that are unlikely to jump the fence through dispersal by animals, wind, or water.

Weeds are spread by people moving plants around.... Stand beside the Jinker Track for any time particularly during a weekend and you will see vehicles towing trailers laden with garden waste heading to the tip. Too often some of that garden waste escapes the trailer and finds its way into the adjacent bush. Some weird and alien plants have erupted on the verges of the Jinker Track in recent times. Keep this in mind if taking a trailer load of garden waste to the tip. Secure your load. Some of the movement of plants unfortunately is due to people deliberately dumping garden waste in or near bushland. Be it from the back of a trailer or ute, or over the back fence, the practice is irresponsible, indefensible.

When it comes to environmental issues, environmental weeds do not capture the public’s attention in the same way the fate of furry and feathered creatures do. For this reason I have included a photo of a Morning Glory Vine (Ipomoea indica) infestation in the Cabbage Tree Creek Catchment at the Collins Rd end of Bunyaville Conservation Park. Initially our bush care group put it in the too hard basket. Our chance to make a move came after a fuel reduction burn at the site in 2012. In 2013 we targeted the Morning Glory as it tried to regenerate. The ‘before photo’ was taken in 2011 the ‘after photo’ in 2014.

**Before**

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**After**

Till next time Richard McGuire.
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Richard McGuire.
Easter Bilby dons hairy nose

Once again Easter Bilby has been very busy as he and the staff at Bunyaville EEC relentlessly advocated for bilbies, northern hairy-nosed wombats, Julia Creek dunnarts and all other endangered native animals throughout much of term one and at the beginning of term two. Now that Hairy-nosed Day is almost upon us, Easter Bilby has one more deed before he passes the advocacy baton over to the Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat.

Here he is, with some of Bunyaville’s staff, donning whiskers in support of his fellow endangered wildlife. He encourages all readers to do the same on Hairy-nosed Day - Sunday May 11th and to visit the Wombat Foundation’s website (http://www.wombatfoundation.com.au) to find out what other fun things you can do to help save the Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat.

National Bilby Day
7th September, 2014

School Competition

Save the Bilby Fund offers school students a wonderful opportunity to learn about Australia’s endangered species. “Face The Challenge” Crossword Competition offers fabulous prizes including live bilby school visits, family passes to Australia’s best wildlife parks and much more. The competition starts in June each year and is drawn on National Bilby Day. To enter, go to www.savethebilbyfund.org and click on the competition icon on the home page.