



Education

ANNETTE COOK

Scarlet Honeyeater. Photo: Terry Evans

Harry Potter does not have the monopoly on a love of owls, it seems that these nocturnal hunters hold a fascination for many children who are not wizards. During February, I ran an activity for a group of children from the Home Education Network (HEN) in Melbourne. Through the use of skins from the BOCA collection and posters the children were introduced to Australian owls and their characteristics.

Following the talk, three activities were offered to help children explore these characteristics further. The owl kite template allows children to colour the feathers of the owl as they wish. Many children stuck to brown and black with yellow eyes but there were also a good number of “rainbow owls” flying at the end of the session. Small stones were painted in the colour of natural ochre to illustrate that some of the oldest rock art in the world depicts owls, both here in Australia and overseas. The dissection of owl pellets was popular, as I have found with other groups. Snap lock bags were filled with bones that were discovered in the pellets – the most sought after being a mouse skull.

We finished the morning with relay games outside on the grass – the object of the game was for owl teams to “catch” as many mice as possible in the shortest time.

TOWNSVILLE REGIONAL BOC

TRBOC have developed a PowerPoint presentation to help inform school children about coastal birds and conservation in the region. The presentation is based on the local field guide, *Coastal Birds of the Burdekin Dry Tropics*. Following a request from teachers, TRBOC have requested the development of teacher resources for use with the presentation. This is currently underway and should be available soon.

WATERWATCH WORKSHOPS

Two workshops have now been held for Melbourne Water Waterwatchers. The first, during January, was hosted by Penboc (Vic), at The Briars on the Mornington Peninsula. The second was delivered in Altona by BAYBOCA president, Tania Ireton, with support from MELBOCA members. The Environment Resource Centre, at Altona library, and minibus were provided by Hobson’s Bay City Council.

Both workshops were aimed at beginner birdwatchers with an emphasis on birds that frequent wetlands and waterways. The format of each workshop included a lecture followed by a short field trip so participants could practice their new-found skills. Each participant was provided with additional information about birding and bird conservation, including a beginners’ field guide and identification tool for common wetland species.

BADEN POWELL COLLEGE

BOCA’s newest school Stickybeak members have been studying animals and their habitat during first term. Grades 3 and 4 at the Derrimut Heath Campus participated in a bird presentation during the last week of term 1. Six classes, divided into three groups, saw a presentation that focussed on birds that live easily with humans. These birds were then compared to others that are threatened by human activities. The habitat requirements for feeding and nesting were explored. Many of the children were quite familiar with their local birds and had interesting stories to tell. They were fascinated by the skins from the BOCA collection.

If BOCA Branches have schools in their area that are interested in bird activities, don’t forget that Stickybeak membership is open to the whole school, not only individual children.

BOCA EDUCATION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Late last year the BOCA Education Plan was completed. This was emailed to Branch Contacts and Education Officers in January 2010. The Education eNewsletter is one such action and will assist communication about education activities. Two issues have now been sent, January and March. Position descriptions for education volunteers have also been developed.

There are many ways that volunteers can assist with the development and delivery of BOCA education programs and six roles have been described. These are: Activity, Program or Resource Developer; Bird Education Presenter; Bird Guide; Display and Festival Coordinator; Branch Education Representative and Stickybeak Officer. With the exception of the Stickybeak Officer, all of these positions could be filled by people who live some distance from the National Office with communication being by telephone and email. There are also multiple roles for people in the development and delivery areas, where a range of skills and locations are useful.

At the development level, education programs need people with computer skills, an understanding of education methods and bird knowledge but, more importantly, it needs people with ideas, a passion for birds and for finding ways to share their passion. Education delivery occurs in three main ways: through formal presentations, to children or adults; in the field on outings and displays and information made available at festivals or during BOCA Bird Week. Branch education representatives can help facilitate the communication of education events and activities from National Office to Branches and vice versa. Stickybeaks, the junior wing of BOCA, involves the production of four newsletters each year – additional volunteer support is needed to improve the efficiency of its production.

If you would like to assist in growing BOCA education activities by volunteering in any of these ways please contact Annette Cook, Education Coordinator at National Office – 03 9877 5342 or education@boca.org.au.

BIRDS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Under the guidelines of the BOCA-BA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), BOCA is represented on the Birds Australia National Education Committee. I attended a meeting in Sydney at the BA Discovery Centre in March to assist in the development of BA's National Education Strategy. The strategy describes the overall direction for bird education for BA and includes the importance of working in partnership with other organisations, in particular BOCA. Education for Sustainability principles and the goals of the International Year for Biodiversity help set the scene for the strategy. BOCA and BA will continue to work together on the development and delivery of bird education.



Top: Owl kites of many colours. Middle: Tania Ireton shows watchers how to use the waterbird key. Bottom: Max Burrows pointing out the finer points of using binoculars. Photos: Annette Cook