



September 2011 Newsletter



Back row: Lee Rossow, Priscila Sharpe, Ross Wilson / Front row: Ellie Culpan, Haley Doblo, Sharon Woodward

VOLUNTEER GRADUATES SPEAK OUT!!

The recent graduates of the 2011 Volunteer Training Program, are thoroughly enjoying their first few weeks of lending a helping hand here at David Fleay Wildlife Park. Here's what some of the Volunteer crew wanted to share about their journey so far....

Lee Rossow (Boardwalk Tour Guide)

"I initially started to volunteer at Fleays because my housemate was a volunteer there and used to come home raving about how great the park and its' people are. After volunteering for a while myself, I whole-heartedly agree with her and cannot find a more friendly and helpful group of people anywhere. I have been volunteering every Thursday for the entirety of 2011 as a boardwalk guide. In doing so, I help guests to the park by providing them with information about plants and animals in the park, and assisting them with guidance to shows put on by the park. I have also assisted by compiling two booklets, with the help of several other people (mainly volunteers); one

on the plants at the park and the other on visiting animals to the park. I find working with the other volunteers on a Thursday to be my highlight, but also enjoy assisting members of the community (guests to the park) in enhancing their experience through the provision of additional information about the park."

Ashleigh Featherstone (Wildlife)

"I am really enjoying my time at Fleays. I volunteer on Mondays and usually help Ranger Josh with food prep and feeding the boardwalk animals. My favourite animal would have to be *Lenka* (Dingo). She is so sweet and loves a pat! I'm learning more and more each week about the variety of animals and plants in the park. When I first started here, I couldn't tell you which bird was which species, and now I can identify all the different bird species we have at the park. Volunteering is a great way to become more familiar with our Australian wildlife, and learn more about their behaviours and diets."

Ellie Culpan (Wildlife)

"I always have an awesome time at Fleays. I learn something new every day. Brushing *Lenka* the Dingo is probably one of my highlights...she is so lovely! I also enjoy feeding *Gordon* the emu, and *Danny* the Darter, and love the way they have no fear and come up to you with no worries in the world. I chose to volunteer at Fleays because it's a beautiful place, the staff are so friendly, and doing the Habitat round I get to see and look after so many different animals."

Friends of Fleays Membership

It is tax time and that means it is time to renew your membership of FOF. It is still only \$5.00 per year.

Friends of Fleays looks forward to keeping members informed about the exciting events and activities being planned to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of David Fleay Wildlife Park in 2012.



When you are on the boardwalk look out for the new green electric “Noddy Truck”. This personality laden vehicle will enable rangers to more safely undertake some of the many tasks that require moving heavy or awkward objects from one end of the park to the other. Its great advantage is that it will reduce our carbon footprint, is less expensive to run and it even has a passenger seat.

LACING AROUND by Hayley Doblo

Lace Monitors are one of the largest lizards in Australia. Here at David Fleay’s Wildlife Park, we are lucky to have a new edition to our Lace Monitor Habitat. Our newest lizard Gary, now joins our long term resident Lacey in the enclosure, and the two seem to be forming a close friendship.

The Lace Monitor is usually a solitary species in the wild, but will come together in spring and early summer during breeding season. Most females breed every year, and will lay between 6-12 eggs. The female will dig a hole, to lay her eggs in the side of a termite mound. The termites then close up the hole, keeping the eggs safe and at a constant incubation temperature. After 8-9 months the young will hatch and the female will return to dig them out.

The Lace Monitor is found along the East Coast of Australia. An arboreal (tree-dwelling) species, it will often seek shelter in hollow logs, or tree hollows. With strong claws and powerful legs, the Lace Monitor spends much of its time climbing fairly large trees, digging, or foraging on the ground. In the wild, they are usually found in forests, tall woodlands, and open coastal tablelands and slopes.

Lace Monitors are dark grey to black in colour, with scattered cream, yellow or white scales, which form blotchy patterns over the body. They usually have black bars across the snout, throat, and chin, and are the only lizards to display a forked tongue. A Lace Monitor averages about 1.5 metres in length, but has been known to grow to 2 metres. The tail itself is usually almost twice the length of the monitor's head and body.

The Lace Monitor is sometimes referred to as a Goanna species. They are predators and scavengers, who normally feed on insects, small mammals, nestling birds, eggs, other reptiles and small carrion. After a large feed, they are able to go for many weeks without another feed.

CHARLIE'S SHED – From Tail to Head! By Hayley Doblo

There has always been a great fascination with the way snakes can slide out of their skin. Like other reptiles, snakes undergo a "shedding" process, called Ecdysis. Shedding is recognised as part of a snake's growth cycle, and generally occurs around once a month. Whilst we as mammals grow into our skin, snakes outgrow theirs and will shed the outer layer and start afresh.

To witness the shedding process, is a blessing for any snake lover. To capture photographs, is even more extraordinary. Wildlife Ranger, Samantha Bell, captured these remarkable photographs of one of David Fleay Wildlife Park's stunning coastal carpet pythons, Charlie, during his most recent shed. It is quite rare to attain photographs of a snake removing its 'spectacles' or 'eye caps', but these images show just that!

For Charlie, who has been at the park since 1995, this was quite an unusual shed. While snakes normally shed from head to tail, Charlie's shed began from the tail end. With his head being the final part of the shedding process, he had quite a bit of trouble removing the spectacle scales from his eyes, and used a tree branch to help him along. Samantha was able to capture this special moment.

When a snake is about to shed it is often referred to as being "in the blue". Signs which indicate a shed is about to take place include an increase in nervous

behaviour, the skin becoming dull, and eyes becoming cloudy or 'bluish'. After three to four days, the eyes become clear again and the snake will search for rough surfaces in its enclosure such as branches and rocks. Shedding will then progress in one piece from nose to tail and can take anywhere from seven to 14 days. A snake should not be handled if it is actively shedding, or shows signs of an impending shed, and they will generally not eat during the shedding process.

A snake will shed its skin throughout its entire lifespan. The frequency of shedding depends on the species, age, nutritional and reproductive status, presence of skin parasites or bacteria, as well as ambient enclosure temperature and humidity. As younger snakes grow at a faster rate than mature snakes, they will generally shed more frequently than an adult snake of the same species.



