



## POSTER

**“STUDY NATURE, LOVE NATURE, STAY CLOSE TO NATURE.  
IT WILL NEVER FAIL YOU.” FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT**

By

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Educations programs

University/TAFE partnerships

**SDG 3 Good health and well-being**

Staff/Visitor well-being programs

Zoos/aquariums as natural spaces

**ABSTRACT**

We live in a society where people are spending more and more time indoors and online – especially children (Suttie, 2016). The climate crisis is taking a growing toll on the mental health of children and young people, experts have warned. “Especially important is information on how they (young people) could connect more strongly with nature, ...” (Gregory, 2021).

Jefferson and Anderson (2021) see great potential in using nature (flora and fauna) to foster optimal conditions for feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness, which are critical to creating adjusted and energised learners with better educational outcomes and a stronger sense of wellbeing (Jefferson & Anderson, 2021). The agility of this type of transformative pedagogy has been tapped into at TWPZ. Agility refers to the availability, flexibility, and speed of response. Agility in education refers to an approach that implements change, embraces innovation, and transcends traditional conservative patterns of conduct and thinking (Morien, 2018). Pedagogy is an encompassing term concerned with what a teacher does to influence learning in others (Australia, 2017).

TWPZ collaborated with Paula Peeters, Paperbark Writer (Peeters, 2022) to design a customised nature journaling experience for our education centre. Elder (2022) describes some observed benefits of Nature Journaling to include:

- A healthy pursuit, combining both mental stimulation and physical activity.
- A shared class activity, which can be enjoyed by all ages and abilities.
- Allows time for quiet contemplation, meditation, and mindfulness of your surroundings.
- Provides a much-needed break from our technology-filled world.
- Deepens observational skills, balancing out the use of all five senses.
- Strengthens hand-eye coordination.
- Pride of accomplishment in *creating* instead of *consuming*, stimulating more areas of the brain.



- A multi-disciplinary activity that can incorporate such diverse subjects as science, language arts, visual arts, and even math.

These sentiments are reiterated by Peeters (2022) who describes spending this time in nature as a personal record of experiences, more personal and cherished than simply a smartphone full of photos. It is something unique that is between you and the nature you responded to. No-one else will have a journal like yours (Peeters, 2022).

To compliment this resource Sydney University fourth year Primary Pre-Service Teachers specialising in a Science and Technology elective are creating a complementary unit of work for the TWPZ Nature Journal. This will take the form of 10 lessons aimed at Stage 3 students culminating in a visit to our zoo to experience natural journaling in all its glory.

*Keywords (use Keywords style): Wellbeing, Nature, Journal, Zoo, Education*

## BIOGRAPHY

Paula Peeters:

Paula Peeters spent 13 years working as a scientist in wildlife conservation in South Australia and Queensland, before concluding that conservation is primarily about changing human behaviour, and facts alone aren't very effective in doing this. Since 2015 Paula has been exploring other ways of connecting people with nature, through the combination of art, writing and science, documented in her website and blog [www.paperbarkwriter.com](http://www.paperbarkwriter.com). She is a major force in the rise in popularity of nature journaling in Australia, leading regular workshops and appearing on Gardening Australia and The Nature Journal Show. She has self-published two nature journaling books, a work of children's fiction, and four colouring books about threatened species and ecological communities, with a further two colouring books in progress.

Kelly Pfeiffer:

A human network architect, dedicated educator, author, blogger and presenter, Kelly has a Master's in Education, is the point person for PBL Global in Australia and an innovator in distance education Project Based Learning (PBL). She co-created the widely-adopted Dark Sky PBL unit, nominated for the Dark Sky Defender award through the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA). In 2019, Kelly won the Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools (AADES) for Teaching Excellence. In addition, her Dubbo School of Distance Learning Futures Team received the New South Wales Department of Education Technology 4 Learning (T4L) award for Leader in Developing Digital Collaborative Communities. With over 20 years' experience in education Kelly is the Senior Education Officer at Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo, NSW Australia.

Dr Christine Preston:

Dr Christine Preston has a unique teaching background having taught science in NSW schools at both the secondary and primary level. She has experience as a science teacher education lecturer in early childhood, primary and secondary science. Since 2004 Christine has continued to teach kindergarten science in a Sydney school to maintain current field experience. Her current research interests are: primary children's interpretation of scientific diagrams, teaching and learning science using toys, early childhood science, effective science education practices for preservice and in-service teachers and use of representations in science education. Christine completed her PhD in 2012 titled: Science Diagrams: Their effects on primary students' conceptual understanding.

Ashley Mulcahy:

Senior Zoo Education Officer at Taronga Zoo Sydney with a background in Science Teaching in Western Sydney at the foot of the Blue Mountains. Having such a beautiful natural resource so close to his school led Ashley to base much of his teaching outside the classroom and learning about the importance of interactions within ecosystems. To maximise the opportunity for students to be engage

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with nature, Ashley developed cross curricular units with other faculties to instil these values into other teachers at his school. In 2017 he was selected by the Australian Science Teachers Association to be the NSW representative at BushBlitz Bradshaw, spending time with scientists working alongside scientists who were monitoring species present. This inspired Ashley to return to tertiary studies where he is now studying his Masters in Zoology at University of New England. Upon taking the role as Senior Education Officer at Taronga Zoo Sydney, Ashley now wants ensure students all around the state (and world) have the same passion for the wonderful world that exists outside their front door.

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