



Students discover fishy side of seaweed

School students in Lancelin have discovered the fishy side of seaweed at a workshop held at Lancelin Bay last week.

Year six and seven students from the Lancelin Primary School took part in hands on experiments to gain a greater understanding of the tiny animals grazing on the wrack that washes up on our beaches.

Dr Nick Dunlop from the WA Conservation Council said that large amounts of seagrass and algae detach during storms and swells, forming the seawrack found on our beaches. The composition of seawrack plays an important role in our coastal and marine environment and can vary with location and season.

“While seawrack may seem unsightly and smelly at times, it provides nursery shelter and food for many coastal and marine species,” said Dr Dunlop. “If you pick up a handful of seawrack you will see a build-up of seagrasses, algae, shells, and the remains of animals such as sponges and sea urchins. Even though much of this material is dead, it is a vital link in our coastal and marine food web, particularly for re-supplying nitrogen to the inshore marine environment.”

Students took samples of water lapping against the seawrack and discovered tiny animals grazing on the wrack, including amphipods, kelp-fly larvae and small shrimps.

“Seagrasses and seaweeds provide habitat for fish, rock lobster and other animals when alive in the ocean. But the wrack is an equally important contributor to the food chain when it is decomposing on our beaches,” said Dr Dunlop.

“The wrack provides a prime feeding place for billions of amphipods, insects, larvae and other fauna. These tiny animals play a crucial role in recycling nutrients and transferring energy up the coastal food web to animals like crabs, fish, shorebirds and seabirds.”

“Seawrack on our beaches also acts as an important barrier for the protection of dunes against storm surges and winter swells,” said Dr Dunlop. “Seawrack captures sand and plant seed and often begins the formation of the dunes that protect our houses and roads from the ocean’s impacts.”

The Seawrack Workshop was made possible thanks to a partnership between the Friends of Lancelin Coast, the WA Conservation Council’s Citizen Science Program and the Lancelin Primary School.

For further information go to www.nacc.com.au or contact Ashley Robb, Coastal Program Coordinator on 9938 0125 or email Ashley.robbs@nacc.com.au

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NACC is supported by the Australian Government through the Caring for Our Country Program.





Above: Dr Nick Dunlop of the WA Conservation Council explains the importance of seawrack to Lancelin Primary School Students.



Above: Students examining water samples for living organisms.



Above: Dr Dunlop examines seawrack with students from Lancelin Primary School.

