Sarah Comer

Living in Cowaramup in the idyllic Margaret River district, Sarah developed a passionate interest in nature conservation. To satisfy a long-term ambition to obtain employment in the bush assisting with the conservation of native fauna, Sarah recognised that she needed professional qualifications in biological sciences, conservation biology and environmental management. Consequently, she relocated to Perth, enrolled at Murdoch University and completed a Bachelor of Science degree with a double major in Biological Sciences and Environmental Science. During her Honours year in Biological Sciences, which was supported by RGC Mineral Sands, Sarah studied the distribution of honeyeaters at a mine site near Capel which had been revegetated 20 years earlier, and investigated the appropriateness of the plants in the area to function as food sources. Sarah found that though the same species of honeyeaters occurred at the mine site and in a nearby naturally occurring woodland, the mine site had more honeyeaters and fewer small spinebills. Sarah suggested that the difference was due, in part, to the clumping of the replanted species on the mine site, which allowed large aggressive honeyeaters to defend the rich nectar sources, but largely excluded the smaller nectar-seeking birds. This finding has important implications for the way in which revegetation should be carried out in mine site rehabilitation projects.

After graduating, Sarah obtained valuable work experience whilst employed on short-term contracts with CALM, local catchment groups and Geocatch before being appointed to the Position of Ecologist in CALM’s Albany District Office. Much of her time is now consumed with her responsibilities as Project Leader for the Noisy Scrub Bird Recovery Program. This involves a lot of fieldwork, monitoring populations of birds in the Two Peoples Bay area, capturing and relocating them and analysing their calls as an aid to determining their distribution patterns. Sarah also participates in other wildlife management and recovery programs for bird species in the South Coast Region, including the Western Bristlebird, the Western Whipbird and the Western Ground Parrot. She also contributes to ecological projects involving invertebrates in the Stirling and Porongorup Ranges. Sarah describes Murdoch as a great place to study. “It has great academic staff, fabulous fellow students and the facilities are terrific”.
Cristy Burne

Cristy Burne completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Biotechnology at Murdoch University and after graduating spent two years in Japan teaching English to High School students. With her enthusiasm for kids, science and communication, Cristy has now joined the growing band of scientists who work at communicating and educating. She was awarded a highly coveted Questacon (National Science and Technology Centre) scholarship to study for a Graduate Diploma in Science Communication at the Australian National University in Canberra. A major component of this course is an outreach program which tours Australia six times a year. Cristy hits the road with over 50 hands-on exhibits performing entertaining science shows at schools and at public exhibitions in regional areas throughout the country. She says the Shell Questacon Science Circus provides her with a great opportunity to travel all around Australia and meet all kinds of different people.

Cristy, whose long-term career goals revolve around science festivals, discovery centres, media and education, loves what she does. “I get paid to make thousands of kids scream with laughter while they learn”. Cristy, who is holding the yellow paddle aloft in the Science Circus photo, described her Biotechnology degree as three years of fun and hard work. “A big thank you goes out to my Professors at Murdoch for their enthusiasm and commitment. Available, approachable and dedicated, I know why they say Murdoch is the friendly University”.

an outstanding australian university