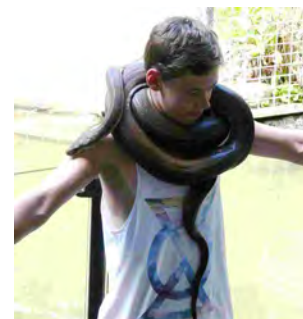


Science - Reef and Rainforest Trip and Competition

After getting up early all term a very tired, but excited group gathered at Christchurch airport at 4.00am on the first Saturday of the July holidays. After two years of fundraising and preparation, 16 Science/Biology students and two teachers were finally off on the Reef and Rainforest trip to tropical Queensland. The trip turned out to be an amazing experience as we explored the only place in the world where two World Heritage Sites meet, the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropical Forests of Queensland. We constantly improved our knowledge of these special ecosystems by immersing ourselves in them and listening to a series of excellent guides and educators. Some highlights were:

- Staying overnight on a dive ship 40km off the coast of Cairns. Hours of snorkelling time, in which wonderful creatures were seen: turtles, rays, cleaner wrasse, schools of squid, spectacular coral formations, giant clams, multitudes of fish, and yes, Nemo was there too!. Plus some of us took the opportunity to have a day and night-time scuba dive.
- Jungle surfing on a series of giant flying foxes through the Daintree Rainforest canopy. This forest is 130 million years old, a relic from Gondwanaland, still with trees the dinosaurs would have browsed on.
- A night trek through the forest with an excellent guide, learning the ancient secrets of the plants. He got us to turn off our torches and sit in the dark listening to the sounds of the forest, then played an amazing 'song' on his didgeridoo.
- A fast boat ride out to the northern reefs with detours to view breaching humpback whales.
- Visiting a crocodile farm to see the truly awesome crocodile, Ted, a 5 metre monster, followed by an exciting show in which the crocodile ranger persuaded Bart, a hungry male croc, to display all his hunting skills. The crowd were genuinely worried for the ranger as Bart lunged at his legs, rather than the chicken he was supposed to go for.



Many more activities were packed into the twelve day trip requiring lots of early starts and late evenings. All the students were fantastic ambassadors for Cashmere High School, often impressing the guides with their existing knowledge and questioning skills to learn more. There was lots of fun and laughter too, with the whole group getting on really well together.

So what are the main things we learned? That these incredibly beautiful ecosystems, which have been in existence for millions of years, are under serious threat from the changes we humans are making to our planet. Increasing carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere cause the oceans to become warmer and more acidified. These twin effects weaken corals and make them susceptible to severe damage from yearly cyclones and run off from farming and industry. The rainforest plants and animals suffer from encroaching land use for housing and farming, and some will be unable to adapt fast enough to cope with rising temperatures. We need to protect these magnificent areas, and can help even from New Zealand through small steps like recycling and making sure waste does not reach the sea, and by supporting policies that lead to a sustainable future for all life on our planet.



On the trip: Cameron Avery, Gaby Collie, Catherine Hattaway, Ross Hulley, Jemima Huston, Matthew McNeil, Tessa O'Brien, Ariana Painter, Jacob Paterson, Liam Patman, Riley Payne, Fiona Porter, Lawrence Sheddon, Nick Smith, Charlotte Sullivan Ben Sutton, Mr Paterson and Mrs Merchant .

David Paterson
Head of Faculty



2013 Dunedin Brain Bee

The Brain Bee is a Neuroscience competition for Year 11 students held at Otago University, consisting of team and individual quizzes on knowledge of the brain. The quiz began with a preliminary round at school, and then the qualifying participants advanced to the quiz in Dunedin. In Cashmere's first year of entering, four students, Nicole Till, Esme Hall, Emily Hamilton and Rebecca Till, were able to go to Dunedin to compete in the quiz, accompanied by Mrs Langford. It started off as a road trip in which we crammed on brain vocabulary (and lollies) after which we arrived at the Dunedin Museum, our accommodation for the night. A number of schools were staying at the museum and were given the privilege of a tour of the University's private anatomy museum. It was not for the faint hearted, as it housed parts of real preserved humans, both behind glass and through the fascinating process of plastination, in which dissected body parts are preserved in plastic and are able to be handled. The museum also boasted a large array of diagrams and models, which we found very helpful for our brain study! 'The Night at the Museum' was very interesting as we received a private visit to the Tropical Butterfly Forest, as well as some exhibits.

Emily Hamilton made it into the individual semi-finals and our team made the finals, however both prizes were taken out by Villa Maria College. It didn't matter though because the Brain Bee was so much more than the quiz element. There were fun teacher competitions and spot prizes; however the most valuable parts were the talks we received from Dunedin University Neuroscience lecturers. We gained a real insight into what it was like to study Neuroscience and Sciences in general at Dunedin, and our interest in Neuroscience was piqued. In general the hospitality and ceremony of the event made us all feel very complementary towards Otago University as a whole.

By Esme Hall



CONNECT

