

## Animals in our Eco-Centre

### Bearded Dragons:

Our Bearded Dragons were obtained 12 months ago and are juveniles (half grown). Nacho is our female and Taco is our male, both live in a large enclosure with two blue tongue lizards. We learn a lot about diet, physical features, habitat, life cycles, behaviour, movement, courtship and handling from these animals. Their enclosure provides them with heat lamps, ultraviolet light, basking rocks and logs. As predators, they require live food such as meal worms or crickets as well as chopped up vegetables and fruit.





### Blue Tongue Lizards:

Our two blue tongues are different species; one is Northern Blue Tongue and the other is a Blotched Blue Tongue. The photo above is of the Blotched Blue Tongue (Pepsi) who is almost fully grown and loves to eat the snails we find in the school garden. He also likes mashed banana and dog food. You have to be careful if you feed snails to your blue tongues in case they have eaten snail pellets. This can be deadly to lizards. Our vegetable gardens are organic and we don't use harmful chemicals.

Our Northern Blue Tongue is from northern Australia and likes a warm habitat. He tends to stay hidden for a lot of the winter (even though his enclosure is heated) and becomes more active in the warmer months. Blue tongues are ground dwellers and like to hide themselves under vegetation or beneath logs and rocks. Bearded Dragons, on the other hand are climbers and prefer to climb trees, fence posts, even tombstones where they can soak up the sun (they are cold blooded).





#### Green Tree Frogs:

We have been very fortunate to receive three very beautiful green tree frogs from a frog enthusiast parent. We have learnt to wash our hands before handling them and to keep our hands moist. We feed them crickets and keep their tank clean and their water fresh. Frogs are important environmental indicators and we can learn a lot from their presence or absence in a watery habitat as they are very sensitive to pollutants. We don't use any cleaning products in our eco-centre that are harmful to our frogs (we have made glass window cleaners using vinegar and table cleaners with lux soap and cloudy ammonia). We have native brown tree frogs living in our wetlands as well as Banjo Frogs and striped marsh frogs.









#### Guinea Pigs:

Because guinea pigs are mammals they are good to compare to reptiles, birds and amphibians. We know they are warm blooded, have fur and give birth to live young which they feed with their own milk. We observe our guinea pigs scientifically and label our drawings accurately to learn about their physical features. We also compare our animals'



scats (droppings) as this tells us information about their diet. Tracks and traces of animals give lots of information about animals in our neighbourhood, it's a good way to study the presence of nocturnal species.



Drawing our guinea pigs



### Stick Insects:

We have had a number of stick insects including the Thorny Stick Insect and the local *Didymura violescens*. The picture below is of our female thorny stick insect. The females grow a lot bigger than the males and will lay many eggs which can take from 3 – 9 months to hatch. Their body shape, colour and movement resembles a dried up leaf or a stick on a tree so they are easily camouflaged.

Our stick insects are very easy to look after as their diet consists only of gum leaves. They gain sufficient moisture from the leaves and a daily spray of water.









#### Budgies:

Our budgies are called Pearl (white), Sapphire (blue) and Opal (Green). We have two females and one male and their scientific name is *Melopsittacus undulates*. We have learnt that they are native to Australia but are a popular pet in many countries. They are usually green and yellow in their natural habitat but breeders have created many shades of blue, green, yellow and white. We are currently training our budgies to be able to leave their cage and fly around our Eco-Centre.



#### Rabbits:

We have had a number of rabbits and the students love to learn about them through direct contact. In this image a project on rabbits is undertaken with the subject close at hand.

