Recently, teachers and parents in NSW were lucky enough to hear American author, Richard Louv, speak at a forum on reconnecting children with nature. Louv’s book Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder offers a vision of the future in which children’s lives are as immersed in nature as they are in technology. The open forum considered the benefits nature offers for children’s creativity, mental health, cognitive development and emotional well-being.

YHA has teamed up with the NSW National Parks Wildlife Services and The Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, Mount Tomah to create affordable two- or three-day excursions for students in the Blue Mountains and Thredbo. These educational packages are tailored to the NSW K-12 school curriculum, and were developed by, and led by, the specialist Discovery Rangers, Education teams and Aboriginal Discovery Rangers. They offer a diverse range of environmental bushwalks and cultural programs.

Accommodation and meals are provided at two award-winning properties, the Blue Mountains YHA and Thredbo YHA, offering a comfortable, safe and affordable option for travelling school groups.

YHA has over a century’s experience in connecting students to ‘the classroom of the outdoors’ having recently celebrated the 103rd anniversary of German school teacher Richard Schirrmann’s founding of the youth hostel movement.

Inquiries and educational packs:
Blue Mountains YHA
bluemountains.groups@yha.com.au
tel (02) 4782 1416 or
Thredbo YHA
thredbo@yha.com.au, tel (02) 6457 6376

“They are a wonderful injection of energy and talent into our school”

- Mary Pendergast, Warrnambool Secondary College
Nuance unveils Dragon Dictate for Mac 3

Dragon Dictate harnesses the power of the Dragon NaturallySpeaking voice recognition technology to let Mac users to speak and see their words instantly captured in real time on their screen. Dragon Dictate for Mac 3 is the most robust version of Dictate yet, with a 15 per cent increase in accuracy, new Smart Format Rules and new correction capabilities for a personalised experience, wideband Bluetooth support, and the ability to transcribe recorded audio files from a single speaker.

With the Vocabulary Editor, alternative written forms of words or phrases (e.g. grey vs. gray) can be set. First, Dragon Dictate delivers an Express Editor so the user can dictate into a text field for which it does not have Full Text Control. After dictating is finished, the text is transferred from the Express Editor to the desired application quickly and easily by voice. In addition to general support for Mac OS X Mountain Lion, Dragon Dictate for Mac 3 offers built-in commands for the new Notes and Reminders applications in this latest OS release.

Dragon Dictate transcribes recorded audio files to enable the user to capture thoughts while they’re still fresh in the mind using a digital voice recorder, iPhone, iPad or iPod touch. First, a user profile for a digital voice recorder is attached and Dragon Dictate quickly and easily transcribes the recorded audio files. Dragon Dictate for Mac supports .wav, .m4a, .m4v, .mp4, .aif, and .aiff audio file formats, as well as any recorded notes using the free Dragon Recorder app for iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch (4th gen).

Dragon Dictate now features support for 16kHz wideband Bluetooth wireless headset microphones, allowing for further increased accuracy for Bluetooth headset users through a higher-quality audio signal. When Dragon detects that a certified microphone is paired with the Mac, Dragon offers Enhanced Bluetooth as an audio source type. The improved audio quality eliminates the requirement for Bluetooth users to do initial voice training, allowing them to get started faster.

http://australia.nuance.com/dragon
tel 1300 550 716
Emergency alert for WiLAS system

Designed for environments where ambient noise is a problem, or where hearing impaired people are on a site, the WiLAS system can be supplemented with a wirelessly controlled light module that can be wall or ceiling mounted. Activated by any siren station or any remote control within range, the module is fitted with three bright flashing beacons; one to advise of a Lockdown Alert (amber), one for an Evacuation Alert (red), and one for an All Clear notification (green).

The flashing light warning units are intended to be used to enhance but not in place of Siren Stations. They are designed for indoor or covered outdoor applications, e.g. covered walkways, covered entries as they are not IP rated (weatherproofed). Light colours are as per Australian Standard AS2220 requirements for emergency alerts.

www.schoollockdown.com.au
tel (02) 8037 5500

Push to improve mental health in schools

*beyondblue* has welcomed an announcement that the Federal government will send mental health specialists into secondary schools in the aftermath of a student suicide. *beyondblue* CEO Kate Carnell said the $20 million policy will save many lives as the teams identify warning signs and prevent copycat suicides.

She said the push to prevent student suicides and improve young people’s mental health has been strengthened with the recent release of a new online e-learning module designed by *beyondblue* to help school teachers improve students’ resilience.

“The module, which is aimed at improving teachers’ understanding of the link between students’ thoughts and behaviour, forms part of *beyondblue’s* successful SenseAbility program,” she said.

“The SenseAbility program is a series of teaching modules designed to enhance the ability of students aged 12–18 to deal with challenging emotional and psychological situations through classroom activities such as role-playing and group discussion.

“Young people who possess good social and emotional skills are better able to cope with the stresses of daily life and tend to have better relationships and perform better academically.”

The take up rate for SenseAbility has underlined the demand for classroom based mental health programs, with 57 per cent of Australian secondary schools ordering a kit since the program started in December 2010.

www.beyondblue.org.au/senseability

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