



Alex Robertson, Web Manager GTASA The Point of No Return...?

Disasters have featured very prominently in the media since the Sumatran Boxing Day earthquake and tsunami almost 12 months ago. It has been an interesting twelve months where natural events have been increasing in coverage and the numbers and severity of hazards have been increasing. Events such as the Pakistan-Kashmir earthquake, Hurricanes Katrina, Dennis and Rita, as well as the Port Lincoln bushfires, heighten our awareness of needing to live sustainably in our local environment.

It also brings up a point of whether we have been too careless with our use of environmental systems. Have we changed the functions in ecological processes so much that these systems are now operating in new and different ways, beyond their normal limits? What does this mean for our climate, our biosphere and ultimately, how we interact with our environment? The following links provide information in the vein of sustainability and how humans are changing their practices to cope with this "brave new world" humans have created via our industrialised and urbanised world.

Ecovoice Online/Environment South Australia:

<http://www.ecovoice.com.au/index.htm>

<http://www.environmentrsa.gov.au>

These South Australian newspapers have their own website, including some of more relevant articles featured on both sites. (The Ecovoice newspaper has also included offers for schools to on sell the papers as a fund-raising initiative for the school's environment programs. This is worthwhile in its own right to encourage students to be more environmentally aware.)

The website is a taste of what is contained in these publications. Whilst the Ecovoice newspaper is currently free at public outlets (in metropolitan Adelaide) and advertising supporting its distribution, both publications are worth obtaining and supporting for the articles they contain: something worth keeping sustainable...

University of Leister: Virtual Field Course

<http://www.geog.le.ac.uk/vfc/>

The University provides a variety of linked software (freeware) on a variety of fieldwork site types. Beware, your school's settings may not be able to access the pages because of the implications of downloading software. If you can, view this at home).

As the name implies, the virtual fieldwork uses virtual reality modelling software to create or recreate environments. Some of this software is basic, others, more complex and state of the art.

The site gives examples of relevant exercises students could complete; in the crawling before walking category, I would check out the relevant programs and data before lunging headlong into the projects.

It is food for thought on what may be possible in a secondary classroom and the new builds of the various software is better with an up to date feel (rather than a Windows 98SE feel to it).

With virtual reality style programs a step away from video games, the ability to draw students in to make their own environment has great potential.

Programs on this site could be utilised with a Stage 1 Geography course, or even combined in a middle school or senior school multidisciplinary course combining ICT and Geography or the new Sustainable Futures course.

Keith Lightbody's ICT in Education Home Page

<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~cumulus/index.html>

Although an ICT educator, Keith's pages have relevant information for all teachers, especially in adapting classrooms to new technologies.

His main page links include topics on digital cameras and digital video, time lapse photography, data projectors, visual literacy, and the teacher's role in encouraging students to heed to copyright. These recommendations show many hints to the pitfalls of purchasing relevant technology and how to use these topics in the classroom.

Birds in Backyards

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>

The site, as the name suggests, gives data on different species in an Australian context. Although it is Eastern states-based (concentrated on New South Wales and Victoria), it provides valuable information on the promotion of habitats and similar useful tips.

There are other pages besides the identification section which make the site worthwhile for solutions to encourage native species in your local area.

This is a site for primary and secondary students in order to engage them in studying biodiversity and give a little of the "wow" factor, given the avarian illustrations and beauty of these creatures, being prepared to do something about their environment.

Griffith University

hosting the: 'Southeast Queensland Fire & Biodiversity Consortium' at <http://www.fireandbiodiversity.org.au/> and the 'Centre for Innovative Conservation Strategies' at <http://www.innovativeconservation.info/>

These two sites are connected to research departments for Griffith University. The Innovative Conservation Strategies site was only launched this year and is in its infancy.

It will be one to watch for senior Geographers and those teaching vegetation related topic over the next year or two as research material and publications are put on the site.

The Fire and Biodiversity Consortium has been operational for much longer and provides a range of publications via PDF files, a software program showing fire intensity and other purchasable materials on fire management.

These resources would be relevant for a senior hazards topic, (contrasting South Australia's or the Northern Territory's fires), vegetation management strategies or even background material for an independent field study in developing similar strategies/manuals and proformas for their local area.

Mountain Forum:

<http://www.mtnforum.org>

The Mountain Forum is an organization promoting the education, research and study and promotion of mountain cultures.

The Site has relevant maps of significant landforms: (currently the Flinders and MacDonnell Ranges feature in this international exposure but the Mount Lofty, Gawler and Musgrave Ranges miss out) and a library of relevant articles about contemporary issues.

There are plenty of links, as the name suggests, and there are opportunities to contact others on the list in their research specializations/interests via their websites or email.

The forum and the site itself have been recently updated, providing an advanced search facility (still with a few bugs in it). A perfect reason to visit this site is International Mountain Day (December 11), along with the Food and Agriculture Organization site:

(http://www.fao.org/mmts/intl_mountain_day_en.asp)

Lowband:

<http://www.lowband.org/>

Frustrated by image rich sites and the speed at which they load? For those still in the world of dial-up internet connections, or for students with lean balances on their school internet accounts, this site provides a low cost solution for research.

Lowband is a transmitter of other internet sites, providing a text only version of any site after entering its URL. Whilst there are disadvantages in this method with Geography being an 'image rich' subject, the ability to use a text only version has its merits in some circumstances.

It is also perhaps advantageous for vision impaired students, where the text can be read out without the distractions of titled captions, advertisements and suchlike.

National Hurricane Centre/Tropical Prediction Centre Archive of Past Hurricane Seasons

<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/pastall.shtml>

The National Oceans and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) has an excellent record of past seasons and events on record. The site has a track record of the hurricane paths for the season and the individual track.

There is a description of the physical conditions of the hazard and satellite images to back up the mapping component.

With the recent disasters, the home address <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/> is also a relevant place to look at the changes in technology in regards to landfall strikes and predictions on intensity and the associated warning systems compared with the technology and resources available to the less economically developed countries.

Smithsonian Environmental Research Centre

<http://www.serc.si.edu/education/index.jsp>

This excellent set of resources could be used as a comparison between the Gulf region of South Australia and the Chesapeake Bay area of the eastern USA. The K-12 programs and the Distance learning (with Electronic Fieldtrips) links to localized and overseas locations are combined along with other external links/sites.

The links to high graphic areas (eg: QuickTime video footage on the Apple fieldwork project links) is of excellent quality but it will make this a painful experience in some regions as these need to be downloaded (rather than 90 minutes of high quality streaming.) The make this a wonderful series of sites for estuarine studies.

Environment Australia's Biosphere Reserves

<http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/biosphere/index.html>

The Biosphere system is a part of the UNESCO organization to help save significant sections of the world's habitat, similar to the World Heritage sites.

This Federal Government site lists Australian locations, with state based links to the various sites of significance. The site would be useful in studying natural heritage, vegetation, the diversity in habitats and other similar content.

The page's quick links are also useful for contemporary analysis of the Australian environment. As our remote habitats become more fragmented, these locations will increase in importance. This is a site and an issue to watch as it unfolds in the next few decades.

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