



The River of Life

The quarterly e-newsletter of the Rockhampton Diocesan Commission
for Environmental Awareness

Edition
10
June
2009

Each year the United Nations and other governmental organizations declare the year as being 'The International Year of...' or 'The Year of...' This edition of the DCEA e-newsletter centres around the International Year of Natural Fibres and The International Year of Astronomy.

International Year of Natural Fibres 2009

The Sunbird

A tiny feathered
creature
Who carries the sun on
its breast,
Is hooded in iridescent
blues and greens,
Displays style and
fashion by wearing its
vest.

It seeks a sheltered
place
Often around human
habitation
Away from wind and
weather;
In trust of humans, after careful
observation.

Within a matter of days
A nest is built with great ingenuity.
It hangs from the line in the carport.
Revealing a shape and structure of
rustic beauty.

The amazing shape emerges
After natural fibres are collected.
All are woven together and
strategically placed.



With finesse, an awning is erected.
The sunbird depends on nectar
For itself and its young to thrive.
Are we a help or a hindrance
In allowing this beautiful creature to
survive?

Web, tea tree bark, grass
And wattle flowers for decoration
Are all found in the natural
surroundings
Built without cost and need for
reparation.

Reflection - The Fibre of One's Being

What are the fibres (gifts, dispositions etc) that make up your being and personality?

Which are natural?

Which are synthetic?

How do you see yourself as a thread or fibre within your family?

Within your household?

Within your community?

In what ways are your fibres and threads being used to do something of beauty within your environment?

What image, story or parable from scripture speaks to you of fibres, threads or fabric?

What is it calling you to?

You may like to create a symbol of your family, household or community using natural fibres gathered from your local environment.

International Year of Astronomy 2009

International Year of Astronomy (IYA)

In 2009 it will be 400 years since the Italian scientist Galileo Galilei turned a telescope to the heavens. The International Year of Astronomy (IYA2009), a global celebration of astronomy and its contributions to society and culture, marks this event. With the theme of "The Universe, Yours to Discover", IYA will help reconnect people with the night sky, the common heritage of humanity.

Australia has a proud history of achievement and involvement in the field of Astronomy. One example is the establishment of The European Space Agency's (ESA) first deep space ground station in the Western Australian town of New Norcia in March 2003.

The 35 metre radio dish which sits out at New Norcia was the first such constructed by ESA. It is designed, and positioned, so that it will play a

vital role in the communication with deep space projects, such as the successful Mars Express probe launched in 2003. New Norcia was chosen as the site for ESA's first ground station as its combination of weather conditions, telecommunications infrastructure and latitude make for the perfect site.

New Norcia is the only monastery town in Australia and has all the sense of being a transplant of a piece Europe directly into the Australian desert. Its rich history is not the subject matter of this article, but there is a fascination in the way in which some of the oldest European technology in the country sits side by side with some of the most modern. New Norcia now boasts an excellent education facility which attracts students from schools all over Western Australian. One part of the display is that provided by the ESA. The ESA also provides on-line information and resources for use by teachers, the resources being particularly suitable for students aged 14 - 16. To learn more you can visit <http://www.esa.int/> [a very interesting site with various images and information].

The station at New Norcia will continue to be used in ESA current and future deep-space missions. It is still providing daily support to Mars Express and Rosetta. It also hosts an antenna for the Global Positioning System - Tracking and Data Facility (GPS-TDAF).

Berneice Loch rsm

Has Space run out of Space?

In this International Year of Astronomy, a recent article printed in "The Sunday Mail" on February 15th 2009 and quoting from Giles Whittell of "The Times", London, posed the question "has space run out of space?".

The article reported a recent collision between a "retired" and disintegrating Russian military satellite and an American civilian satellite, the probability of such an occurrence being millions or maybe billions to one. The occurrence of the collision coincided with a meeting of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to discuss getting satellite operators to put space safety before commercial factors, as well as the need for some kind of international space air traffic control. The article stated that very few of the 6,000 satellites launched since Sputnik have been returned to earth, with space agencies preferring to spend their funds on keeping satellites operational rather than disposal of outdated satellites. The author

foresaw that, if present behaviour continues, an ever-expanding band of "space junk" would surround the earth, with unknown consequences.

In the last fifty-two years, since the launch of the first Sputnik, advances in the study of astronomy have led to journeys of exploration being undertaken by many different national space agencies. As a result some amazing images have become available for our inspiration and education, and scientific studies have yielded vast bodies of knowledge about the composition and behaviour of planets and stars, those nearest and those much farther from earth. Satellites affect our everyday lives in some ways of which we are aware, e.g. satellite maps used by weather forecasters, satellite technology which makes possible the exchange of knowledge via internet, observations of the effects of gravity, and even testing the properties of various materials used in spacecraft and space travel, They also affect our lives in ways of which many of us would not be aware.

In spite of the obvious benefits of such endeavours, there are, as the writer of the article proposes, questions which need to be asked (apart from the perennial question of balancing the cost of such explorations against that of other needs of humanity), like the question of the responsible disposal of "space junk". The fact that such debris is "out there", a long way away, and normally not brought to our consciousness does not mean that it doesn't matter. The question is related to that of responsible disposal of debris here on earth, as opposed to the attitude that if we throw it "away", far out of sight, even in the depths of the ocean, it won't affect anyone or anything. We now know that the latter attitude is very far from the reality, and efforts are being made to educate and legislate to prevent pollution of planet Earth. I have no answers to propose for the solution of the "space junk" problem, but it would seem that some standards and action need to be agreed on internationally before the dangers of possible future collisions and the pollution of space (with its presently unknown consequences) become an insurmountable problem within the universe.

Margaret Rowley rsj

The Keck Telescope

Among the countless man-made wonders of our world, we now have in Hawaii the revolutionary Keck Telescope, which probes

into Deep Space much further than the renowned Hubble Space Telescope. Hubble has given us such wondrous, beautiful images

of galaxies and supernovas, stars and planets, and the amazing varieties of colour produced by their encircling gases.

Those of us who are intrigued to explore the wonder of this Telescope in Hawaii can 'google' "Richard Hammond's Engineering Connections- Deep Space Observer" to view the programme which was aired on SBS Television on Saturday June 6, 2009.

Using one of Archimedes' discoveries, Richard and those assisting him demonstrate how

ancient knowledge enables us to perfect today's state of the art technologies.

It's the wonder of Creation that these discoveries are just part of the wealth of existence which is ever unfolding.

Truly, "to walk humbly with our God" is the only appropriate response to the awesome wonders of life. How great is our God! How magnificent! How limitless!

Margaret Airoidi

Last Call for Registrations for the DCEA July 18th-19th Conference

The DCEA is delighted to have Doctor Veronica Lawson rsm, a biblical scholar and experienced educator as the presenter of the 2009 conference.

Sister Veronica will be speaking on the topic of 'Ecological Conversion- a Biblical Imperative'. The input will link the Christian scriptures with the call to live out our ecological vocation as spiritually alive people, who read the scriptures with ecological eyes.

Contact the Conference Registrar for further information: bmloch@bigpond.com.

In the Pipeline

[Diocesan Assembly](#)

The DCEA is preparing a display for the Rockhampton Diocesan Assembly, September 21st- 24th (at St Brendan's School). The display will

showcase the many initiatives of the DCEA as well the aims and objectives of the Commission.

It is hoped that the first volume of 'Landscapes of the Diocese' will be printed for release at the time of the Assembly.

A workshop on the broad topic of 'issues of environmental sustainability' will be offered by members of the DCEA as a part of the Assembly.

[Landscapes of the Diocese 2010](#)

Following the very successful series of visits to various parts of the diocese in 2008-2009, the program will visit the area around Emerald and the gem-fields early in 2010.