



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** G'Day from Down Under **Name:** Rachel Swick  
**Other Team Members:**  
**Program:** Wisconsin Program  
**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001 **Location Visited:** Australia  
**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** My fellowship was granted so I could explore the animals and ecosystems of Australia. Spending three weeks in Australia this summer is the most amazing adventure I have ever been on. I teach young children. Learning about animals and their habitats is a big part of our curriculum. We also have a unit about trees so I spent several days in the rainforest. I had always dreamed of getting to see and learn about the animals in Australia because so many of them can only be found in nature on this continent. Well, all my dreams came true! In the inland forest areas I was able to see platypus swimming down a muddy river, view endangered tree kangaroos and watch wallabies bouncing around a meadow. While hiking through the coastal Daintree Rainforest, I spotted three endangered cassowaries. The father and his two chicks were foraging and doing their job to help spread seeds throughout the forest. I also spotted insects, bats, including a rare tube nose bat, and hunted for the white lipped tree frog. To top it all off I got the chance to cuddle a real koala! I also took a guided hike given by an Aboriginal woman that had grown up in the rainforest. She taught me about the trees and plants that were used for food, shelter, and even burial grounds in the forest. Some of the trees are a thousand years old. In the outback I saw herds of wild camel, emu, and incredible birds. The terrain and plants are so different in this area. Vermilion-red clay soil, green trees, clear royal blue skies, and giant rust-covered rock formations were common sights. On the Great Barrier Reef, I saw a rainbow of coral and plants along with some of the most breathtaking sea creatures including starfish and turtles. Each day brought a new experience, different flora and fauna, and new learning opportunities. I was energized every time I saw a rare animal in its natural habitat. It was motivational as a teacher to learn as much as I could with the idea that I would be bringing this information home to my young students and school community.

**Career Impact:** My time down under led me to a new adventure and was personally challenging on a daily basis. I walked through the rainforest where some of the most deadly spiders and snakes on our planet live. I camped under the southern sky and hiked through the outback where I climbed some of the steepest rock formations I have ever seen. I swam on the Great Barrier Reef where sharks and whales feed. Overcoming my fears in all these situations was fulfilling. The idea of sharing my stories with my students and families kept me willing to continue exploring each day. I learned how to use a blog for this fellowship. My students had a real reason to use reading and writing skills this summer. I was as excited to receive their questions in Australia as they were for the answers! So many families have talked to me about the blog since returning to school. They loved reading together with their kids, writing comments, and following my fellowship. I also came home with several ideas for new art projects. I would like my class to create dot art and cave drawings modeled off of the artwork of the Aboriginal tribes in the outback. I also want them to experience the music of the didgeridoo.

**Classroom/Community Impact:** This fellowship is already benefiting my students by giving them new learning opportunities. My students practiced reading and writing during the summer by participating in our blog. I was able to bring home puppets of several Australian animals. We will use these during learning activities and storytelling. My students will also take home an Australia bag for a night to share with their families. It has a toy koala bear, factual stories, and fictional folk tales from Australia. The factual literature will help my students learn new information, while the folk tales will help my students and their families gain insight into a new culture. They will use these objects to inspire writing at home. I am working on creating a photo presentation for my students and co-workers to see firsthand what my travels were like. I learned that my young students can use technology for communication and I want to blog with them more during this school year. I also hope to help them create other technology projects such as a Voicethread to share some of the new things they are learning.

**Open Response:** Where will this adventure lead my students and my teaching this year and in the future? I cannot wait to create a habitat in our classroom with my students. One of our first science units is about trees and plants. I think building an Australian rainforest will help my students gain an understanding of plant parts and needs. They will also gain an understanding of how critical these ecosystems are to the survival of animals and our earth. My students will participate in activities throughout every curricular area through learning about the rainforest. They will complete integrated social studies, science, math, reading, art, and music lessons. Later this year we have an animal unit and I again look forward to using my learning to enhance this unit for my students. My grade-level colleagues have asked if I will be sharing what I learned with them and I look forward to planning an in-service for some time later this school year! It is my hope that they can use even one small idea with their students and the learning from this fellowship will

keep spreading.

**Quote:** Fund For Teachers allowed me to participate in a once in a lifetime adventure. It re-energized my teaching by giving me a chance to learn something new everyday. I can't wait to share it!

Photos:



The views of Sydney Harbor were stunning.



Everywhere I looked the views were awe-inspiring. This was taken in the Olgas.



It's pretty incredible to see wild camels walking around behind you!



Snuggling a koala bear was a dream come true.



Hiking through the rainforest delivered the most amazing sights.



This is Rosie, the Aboriginal guide that taught me about life in the rainforest.





I happened upon this endangered cassowary while hiking in the rainforest. Wow!



This is Cape Tribulation where the rainforest meets the Pacific Ocean.