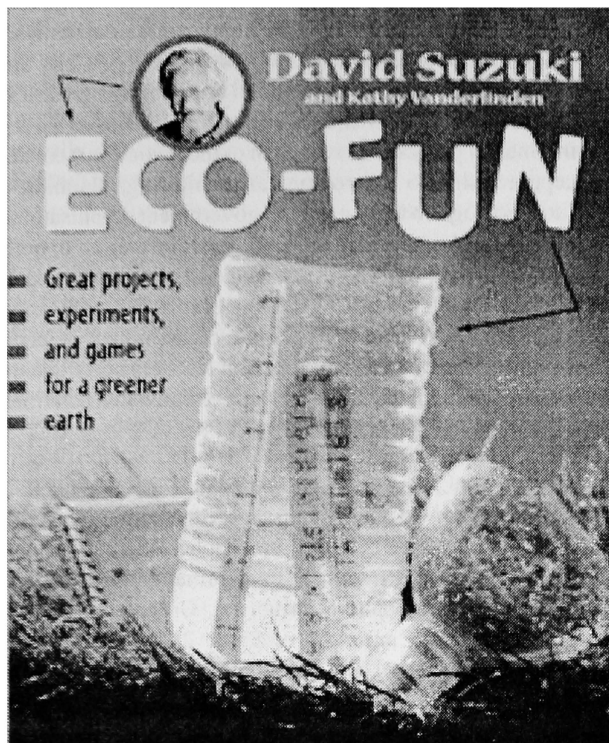


BOOK REVIEWS




David Suzuki and Kathy Vanderlinden 2002, *ECO-FUN: Great Projects, Experiments, and Games for a Greener Earth*, Allen and Unwin, RRP \$18.95, ISBN: 1865086355, 127pp.

DESIGNED FOR: Teachers, Primary School Students, Lower Secondary Students, Environmental Educators, General Science Enthusiasts, and is also suitable for anyone looking for some interesting (and environmentally) friendly party tricks!

David Suzuki and Kathy Vanderlinden have put together a collection of activities suitable for primary students to undertake. The activities are all to do with various elements of the environment and have been separated into sections accordingly. There are five sections with activities that centre on air, water, earth, fire (candles) and flora and fauna. Each of the sections includes a page explaining the importance of the element to the Earth and to human existence. Many of the activities are science based, although there are a substantial number that involve drama, art, technology, and even English.

Each of the activities has an explanation that, where appropriate, goes into the science that is taking place so even those amongst us who can do the trick but don't know the theory can easily answer the inevitable question 'why is it so?' In addition, there are safety tips scattered throughout that warn young environmentalists to be careful when carrying out the exercise, and a glossary that defines some of the more complex terms.

There are many books of this ilk around, some user-friendlier than others. This is probably one of the better ones and is certainly well laid out and easy to use. The pictures used throughout make it enticing for young students and the activities are simple and foolproof. The explanations are easy to understand although I think they merely scratch the surface. For instance, I would have preferred a more in-depth explanation of the water cycle, but perhaps, in all fairness, this was not the appropriate vehicle for something so complex. On a more environmental note, most of the activities teach in or about the environment, there are very few that attempt to teach for the environment, and even these are superficial. Teacher direction is needed for this to occur.

Overall, this is a good book for getting ideas for teaching primary or early secondary science through a cross-curricular approach and can be used directly by the students. 

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Monitoring Ecosystems Units 1 & 2 and Issues of Sustainability Units 3 & 4 (2001), various authors, Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Carlton. \$37.45 each.

The Victorian Association for Environmental Education (VAEE) has a long history of providing good quality affordable student support materials for the Victorian senior secondary level subject which has variously been called *Environmental Science* or *Environmental Studies* since 1975 (see Fensham 1990 & Mitchell 1999 for some background to the politics behind the subject).

For the previous study design VAEE were associated with two different sets of resources—a series of four student guides, one for each VCE unit (VAEE 1995abcd), and two texts published by Cambridge University Press (VAEE, Preuss & Duke 1996, and VAEE, Preuss, Duke & Rogers 1998). The former guides were matched closely to the *Environmental Studies* (Board of Studies 1994) study design and related to its specific content, whereas the latter two texts were more general in their content and could be used to supplement or support other courses (where they existed) across Australia. Teachers and students of *Environmental Studies* relied heavily on these materials for teaching and learning the subject and generally found them more useful than the text produced by the Australian Academy of Science (1994).

Thus it was not surprising that with the change of the study design to *Environmental Science* (Board of Studies 2000) from 2001, that VAEE would produce new student materials to support teaching and learning of the new content, and these