

LAND FOR WILDLIFE

& GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife Central Australia Newsletter

September 2020

From the Land for Wildlife Coordinators

Hi everyone

Despite the seriousness of the current global health crisis, we would like to bring due attention to the celebrations of Biodiversity Month. These celebrations are held in September each year and aim to promote the importance of protecting, conserving and improving biodiversity both within Australia and across the world.

Simultaneously, the Garden for Wildlife program has been receiving a flurry of membership applications. Consequently, we are not short of content for inspiring stories of our local biodiversity champions busily creating crucial habitat and increasing regional biodiversity right here in Alice Springs. Our newest members were keen to share their experience of creating gardens resplendent with Central Australian biodiversity. In this edition we provide readers with real-life examples of the importance of biodiversity and our new members have offered their own tips on how you can help protect biodiversity at a local level, including important actions and considerations to apply in your own gardens.

Happy Biodiversity Month!

~ Kate and Bill

***“We are the leaders we
have been looking for”
- Grace Lee Boggs***

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The registered Garden for Wildlife front garden of biodiversity champion, Siri Omberg, exemplifies the beauty of natural habitat growing in Alice Springs gardens.



A very big thanks to the following volunteers and financial donors for their generosity and willingness to contribute to Land for Wildlife & Garden for Wildlife Central Australia

Sara Weir

Liz Olle

Claire Treilibs

Daf Hewson & Jude Muller



Increasing habitat connectivity in Ilparpa



Anna and John Huigen purchased their Ilparpa property just over 18 months ago. At the time the sizeable block was already providing native habitat in the form of Mulga woodlands with Needlewood, Corkwood, local Eremophila species and Sennas. Similar to many other Australian gardeners, the previous owners love of plants also included non-local Australian plants and exotic cactus and succulents, which had also been incorporated into the garden.

Soon after the couple moved in, Anna took 4-months long service leave and spent 2 of those months working on the garden. Anna dug out most of the cacti and succulents and replaced them with Australian natives, both local and non-local. Owing to a shortage of suitable native plants for sale in Alice, she started collecting seed from the commons behind their property. This seed providence has produced local Mallee, Needlewood and Whitewood seedlings that will soon be ready to plant out. Anna intends to grow a greater variety of seeds and is currently experimenting to determine which seed species requires what treatment before being able to germinate e.g. scouring, flame exposure, smoking etc. Anna now spends at least half a day a week in the garden, pruning excess Mistletoe, extra watering, planting out, seed germinating and keeping Buffel and other weeds at bay etc.

The woodland area of the garden has no watering system provided and all of the trees and shrubs are becoming stressed from lack of rain over the past two years. New plants, citrus and non-endemic species closer to the house (formal garden area) are either on automatic reticulation or bucket water and are watered twice a week until the new plants become established. Because of the lack of rain, new plants on the property have been receiving bucket watering all this year to facilitate their establishment in the dry conditions. The Huigans installed a 4500L rainwater tank which is used exclusively for the extra bucket watering.

Contd. on page 4

WATCH THIS SPACE



One of our new Garden for Wildlife members has travelled from Australia's most southern and coldest State with his girlfriend to arrive in Alice to continue a journey that involves art, plants, community and creating change. Jorgen and Hanna currently live in an old renovated bus surrounded by outdoor artworks and native bushland. Their home is part of a Land for Wildlife property located in one of the more industrial areas of town. However their nearby neighbours also include a Cordwainer (artisan shoemaker), Aboriginal art gallery, artist-in-residence and a yoga studio. This uniquely Alice Springs lifestyle lends

itself well to being creative and thinking outside the box and Jorgen, not content with creating habitat *in situ*, has worked magic transforming the available garden areas surrounding 'Watch This Space' art studio at 8 Gap Rd. The former service station was re-birthed as an artist run initiative and provides artistic space for local and visiting artists since 1991. While the interior was supporting activity and lively colour of contemporary artists, the exterior was a bleak landscape of concrete slabs. That was, until Jorgen used his creativity gifts on an ecological stage. He joined the 'growers group' in Alice Springs, learnt how to successfully propagate native seed and started a backyard nursery. And 'Watch This Space' has reaped the rewards of Jorgen's success as a native plant grower. He has now planted up every available garden space of the art gallery with native species and increased the biodiversity of the property overnight.

Make a time to visit the gallery to check out the local art....both inside and OUT!!

contd. from previous page...

The property has so many local bird species visiting and resident of the garden and Anna particularly enjoys planting bird and insect attracting species to support them. This was also another reason for removing the cacti and succulents. The garden now has several Eremophila and the nectar-drinking birds love them. The previous owners had turned the Mulga woodland into a 'parkland' by removing every dead twig or branch that dropped on the ground, cutting off lower limbs on trees and removing the small shrub layer. To increase the natural habitat availability and diversity of this area, Anna and John leave the deadwood as it falls which creates habitat for small creatures and birds, and no longer trim the native species unless it is necessary. They have also removed most of the garden kitsch (statues/pots etc) so that the garden now more closely resembles the beauty of the local natural environment. Vehicular traffic on the property has been restricted so that the soil structure isn't disturbed and lots of herbaceous species and grasses now pop up after rain as a result of less soil compaction. The Huigen's plan is to continue to increase the natural biodiversity on their property by planting more local species which Anna has enjoyed successfully growing from seed.

GARDEN FOR WILDLIFERS JUMP RIGHT IN

*The Druce's support the three tiers of sustainability in Alice Springs:
social, environmental and economic.*

*Their focus is on providing the local community with all-age
learning, knowledge sharing and increasing biodiversity.*

Bronwyn and Marcus Druce arrived in Alice only a couple of years ago, but you would be forgiven for thinking they were native-born and bred in Alice. Since arriving, the couple have become an entrenched and well-loved part of the Alice arts community, culture and education spaces. Who amongst us, for instance, has not appreciated Red Kangaroo Books' existence in Alice, especially now? If you have never stepped inside the independent Australian bookshop, be prepared for some unconscious natural meditation while browsing the shelves, as the atmosphere seems to exude the same relaxing qualities as taking a walk in a habitat garden!

The Druce family live in a suburb of Alice Springs that has a growing population of Garden for Wildlife registered properties. Braitling now has 26 residential properties registered with the Garden for wildlife program, and 7 of them are located in Priest St where Bronwyn and Marcus live. The front garden of the Druce property is resplendent in natural habitat (*above and below right*) and a constant hive of wildlife activity that are either resident or visiting the garden too utilise its abundance of natural resources. In fact, one of the favoured activities for the Druces' is to spend time bird watching from their large picture window in their front room. The garden has many bird-friendly species including *Eremophila*, *Grevillea*, River Red Gums and *Acacia* species. A range of ground covers, bark, twigs and leaf litter provide plenty of protection for lizards, skinks and an unimaginable number of insects to reside in, around and under the garden 'floor'.

While the front yard of the property is awash with native plants and wildlife activity, the backyard provides a separate environment. At the moment, it offers recreational space with a relatively large lawn area and introduced flora along the fence lines. Nevertheless, plans are in place to employ a landscape gardener to install a native habitat garden with winding paths and secret nooks. It will be a complete makeover for the backyard and will increase the number of native species, both flora and fauna, overnight. The transformation will also immediately introduce more of a 'natural native garden' feel marrying well with the front yard and creating habitat connectivity between the two areas. An enormous *Grevillea* tree already existing on the back fence, will be a key feature of the native garden. Tens of years old, it currently provides natural resources for birds, insects and reptiles and shade and leaf litter for the yard. Because of the height (~12-15 m) it also creates visible tree canopy connectivity through the street, suburb and town.



A GIRL AT HOME IN HER GARDEN



Emma Williams, husband Chris, and pet puppy, Polly, initially moved into their home as renters. Four years later they purchased the property and Emma set about creating a diverse garden of delightfully different spaces which provides wildlife habitat as well as an outdoor living area for all seasons. The courtyard provides winter warmth from early morning sunshine and a cool escape in summer with leafy green vegetation and shade. It also accommodates habitat with Zebra Finches nesting in the Yucca!

When Emma and Chris arrived in 2013, the garden had a distinct lack of diversity and no native plants growing successfully. They spent a large amount of time repairing the soil health because of high clay levels and a lack of attention from being a rental property for 10 years. The soil base is now quite sandy and Emma is revegetating the remaining bare areas with native groundcovers such as Ruby Saltbush. Over the last 3-years, Emma has built a flourishing, vibrant and diverse native garden filled with ground covers, small native flowering trees and a couple of citrus (one, a lemon tree given as a wedding present by her 99-year old Grandmother). The native plants have proven a good choice as local species have naturally evolved hardy characteristics to tolerate the harsh climate of Central Australia. Emma also loves them for the visual pleasure of their beautiful blooms. Native plants provide critical resources for wildlife and increases the diversity of wildlife using her garden. Emma's watering regime is species specific, but also accounts for when the plant was planted and the current climate. Vegetable and herb planter boxes are recent additions to the garden and are already providing fresh produce and fill the bare areas on the block. They are also easily transportable so can be moved around to different areas to follow the sunshine.

When I asked Emma what her favourite plant was she said it was hard to choose just one because "they all offer something special, but the one I'm most proud of is the Sticky Blue Rod. I bought it at the Alice Springs Show a few years ago as a tiny seedling and it's grown into a lovely bush that each time I brush past, gives off a lovely aroma." Many plants in Emma's garden originated as cuttings and seeds from both her Mother and Grandmother's gardens in South Australia. She increases her gardening pleasure as she recalls fond memories of her family's matriarchs in their gardens while she tends to her own.



Emma has found much joy in creating her flourishing garden and now spends happy weekends planting at least one native (though sometimes it's three or four!) She enjoys passing time 'pottering' in her live playground and describes it as "...my escape and reward with [fresh] produce, new growth or a flower on a bush that hasn't flowered before." A particular favourite end to Emma's busy work day is to spend time relaxing by hand watering her garden. These times allow her to wind down and provide opportunity to quietly observe the garden during that special evening time of 'settling' across the lands.

- Emma's Top Tip:

"Natives don't need to be ugly! Given the right amount of care and pruning, they can look just as beautiful as a southern cottage garden. Coming from South Australia, I've had to learn to let go of my idea of a pretty garden full of roses and daisy bushes and instead plant natives that are suitable to the Central Australian climate. Given the right attention, native plants [and the wildlife they support] are also beautiful!"

Is your property ready for a predicted 'high fire danger' season?

Forecasts for the coming summer months are predicting to be an above-average risk of fire danger. The Top End is already experiencing plenty of fire activity and with the heat and warm winds already drying our bones and rattling our windows, they are telling signs that we need to be prepared for fires.

Are you ready? It is a requirement of land owners to prepare their property accordingly for the fire season ahead. The most important consideration in any Fire Plan is the provision of access to your property. It is imperative that you are able to leave your property under fire conditions and that Emergency Services are able to enter the property, unhindered. During a fire emergency, if you are able to leave entrance gates open, you should consider doing so. For instance, it maybe impossible to exit a vehicle to open a gate to gain access to a property. Additionally, don't lock gates if you evacuate your property as Emergency Services may need access onto a vacated property.

Place clear signage on larger properties where water can be accessed for fire-fighting resources.

Plan an exit strategy—Will you leave? At what point do you decide to go? Where is the safest place on your property to shelter if it becomes impossible to leave? Do you have a specified evacuation point on your property?

These questions and many more will need to be thought through to prepare a responsible and appropriate fire safety plan. It's better to be a little 'over-prepared' than a little 'under-prepared' in these situations, especially if you have no previous experience in a high-risk bushfire situation.

Check the [NT Emergency Services](#) website for more details of fire safety planning and property owner responsibilities. You can also access their Fire Safety Planning Booklet by clicking on the link in the 'Further resources' section on page 10 of this newsletter.

Images (L-R): The 'Commons' (see article page 2) of Ilparpa Valley showing the southern side of Mt Gillen; *Eremophila* spp. displaying delicately spotted and slightly hairy, pink, throat; *E. spp.* providing nectar-loving wildlife with dozens of delicately-coloured pink flowers amongst it's healthy green foliage.



A Sydney Girl Comes to Town...

Kimberley Morgan has an adventurous spirit and discovered a home and an opportunity to start a niche business in the central Australian outback

Kimberley Morgan has travelled an extraordinary journey to Alice. Originally from rural Qld, she has trained in the humanities and worked in industries such as sports, music, policing, social services, transport and tourism. Adding to a diversity of work experiences, she has ridden solo on her Triumph motorbike 3,784 km around Australia. Now settled in her home in Alice, Kimberley has established a niche tourism operation in 'Wild Honey Travels' and remains the only female owner-operator



who personally provides specialised tours, bush passenger and charter services in Central Australia.

Kimberley readily admits to feelings of release and relief as she arrives home from another long day's work and steps through her front gate. The allure of native floral fragrances and colour provide a gentle, soothing balm to over-stimulated senses.

When she moved in to her flat, only a couple of native bushes were established in the garden. Since then, Kimberley has planted grevillea, Senna and fostered the reappearance of native herbs and forbs from seed banks in the soil. Kimberley has plans to augment the natural habitat of the rocky rises on the gardens fence line by planting more native grasses as well native shrubs flowers.

The garden is assisted through the long hot months of summer by an in-built irrigation system, which rations water to the native plants.

Kimberley takes a great deal of pleasure in sharing her living space with wildlife including:

legless lizards,
ants,
grasshoppers,
butterflies,
crows,
kites,

galahs,
white plumed honeyeaters,
western bowerbirds and
willy wagtails

Images: Grevillea sp. (Above); Native herbs and forbs growing from a natural seedbank (above right); Kimberley holding her GfW membership sign (top right); Senna sp. creating a colour contrast against the blue sky and Rocky Rise on her boundary (right); Grasshopper sp. utilising the rocky habitat of Kimberley's garden (below)



Kimberley's Top Tip:

"Neighbours are a great resource for learning, inspiring, sharing initiatives & helping one another."

September Quiz

1. What extraordinarily long-lived Australian conifer is the only member of the *Lagarostrobos* genus (hint: it grows in far wetter and cooler climates than Central Australia)?
2. What and where is the Gngangara Mound? (bonus: What is the name of the second, smaller Mound to the south of the Gngangara Mound?)
3. *Callitris* ('Cyprus pine') is a southern hemisphere genus, with 13 of the 16 recognised species native to Australia. What country are the other three species native to?
4. What extinct Australian relative of Indonesia's Komodo Dragon was the largest terrestrial lizard that is known to have ever lived?
5. What line, drawn up by a famous English evolutionary theorist, marks the division between the fauna of South East Asia and the fauna of Australia?

Credit and thanks to [NRMjobs](#) Quiz where these questions were sourced.

Answers in the next edition

Genera Of The Month

Prickly Wattles!

Juvenile leaves of an *Acacia* plant often first appear on the stem as compound leaves that are divided twice (bipinnate). The bipinnate leaves do not persist into adulthood and are in fact reduced to flattened leaf stalks known as phyllodes. In some *Acacia* species the phyllode is modified into a thorn, or a thorn may sprout from a node where a leaf stalk would otherwise develop. A selection of *Acacia* species in Central Australia have evolved to exhibit spines on their stems and are found in many habitat gardens of our members, such as the *A. victoriae*. Lesser known thorny *Acacia* species include *A. wiseana*, *A. pickardii*, *A. acanthoclada*, *A. strongylophylla*, *A. basedowii* and *A. synchronicea*. The fiercest thorns are found on the formerly named *A. farnesiana* which has been reclassified as *Vachellia farnesiana*. This spiky species is said to have been the plant that was used as the crown of thorns that was placed on the head of Jesus of Nazareth...not a pleasant experience I would imagine!

A few species of *Acacia* have hollow thorns in which ants live and often form colonies. Research has shown the ants will ring-bark branches of nearby trees which encroach into the living envelope of their *Acacia* homes. If the ants are removed, the *Acacia* ceases to thrive, a possible consequence of insect attack, increased competition for limited resources from nearby plants, or both. *Acacias* that are not normally colonised by ant species usually have bitter-tasting chemicals in their tissues, which has the same effect for deterring predators.

Modified spiny phyllodes (flattened leaves) of the *Acacia tetragonophylla*, commonly known as Dead Finish



Is there a plant or animal that you want to know more (trivia or) interesting facts about? Send an email to lfrw@lowecol.com.au

July Quiz Answers

1. The Northern Territory's faunal emblems are the Wedge-tailed Eagle and the Red Kangaroo. The Wedge-tailed Eagle has an average wingspan of 2.5 metres, making it Australia's largest raptor. The Red Kangaroo is Australia's largest marsupial. Males can grow up to 2 metres in height and weigh over 75 kilograms.
2. It's taken 6 Land & Garden for Wildlife members, and many trapping nights, to catch over 400 feral cats in Alice Springs. That effort equates to 4,400 wildlife saved...**PER YEAR!!!**
3. The Northern Territory's Finke River is the oldest river system in the world, with parts possibly dating as far back as 340 million years
4. Bandy Bandys kink the middle of their body into a raised loop when threatened. They are active at night and are thought to only eat blind snakes.
5. *Acacia latzii* (pictured in the [July newsletter](#)) is endemic to the Fink Bioregion where only TWO disjunct populations (separated by 200 kms) are known to exist. It's common name 'Tjilpi' Wattle refers to 'Old man' Wattle and is the nickname of Peter Latz, who first described the species.

CAT TRAPS & FLOWERS FOR SALE!!!

Land & Garden for Wildlife currently has **NATIVE PLANTS HAMPER**s available for sale to our members.
WE CAN TAILOR HAMPERs TO YOUR PROPERTY'S REQUIREMENTS OR YOUR DESIRES.
Hampers are in high demand and stock is running out fast!!!

Traps \$70 ea.






GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

TO ORDER
 Click on the link to [email](#) LfW
 or phone: **89 555 222**
Free delivery in Alice Springs


LAND FOR WILDLIFE

CAT TRAPS



Further Reading Click the link symbol to be redirected to the website		FloraNT. This website is the primary online resource for information on the Northern Territory's flora.
		Australian Plant Society Alice Springs Inc. Link to the APS AS Facebook page for more information and great photos of <i>Acacia sp.</i>
		Austraflora Photography Club: nature photographers both professional and amateur can share photos of Australian native flora, fauna, nature and landscapes.
		NT Government Bushfire Safety Plan Booklet
		Although this website is based in Sydney, it's packed full of useful tips and information about creating biodiversity in your garden.

Happy reading!
Please consider donating to Land for Wildlife (see right). Your money will help us to continue to support you...



...to support our wildlife
Kate and Bill

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Low Ecological Services

Contact Us

Land for Wildlife & Garden for Wildlife Central Australia
Low Ecological Services
P.O. Box 3130
Alice Springs NT 0871
(+61) 8 89 555 222
lfw@lowecol.com.au
wildlife.lowecol.com.au

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