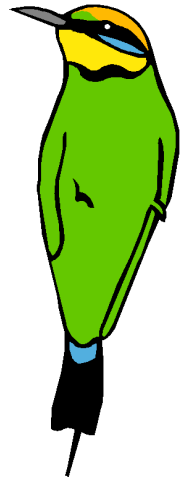


# GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

## Butterfly Gardens

It's warming up oh so suddenly and you may have already noticed a few more insects hop, crawl, flit, or buzz by that were not with us over the winter. In anticipation of the warmer weather, and to take advantage of the flowering plants and flourishing host plants I have noticed two butterflies very common to Alice Springs flutter about in greater numbers. The Caper White Butterfly, *Belenois java teutonia*, and the Chequered Swallowtail, *Papilio demoleus sthenelus*.



### Caper White:

Caper Whites are visible around Alice most of the year, but you may find that after rain there is a big boost of these butterflies hovering around. If you have *Capparis spinosa*, Wild/Bush Passionfruit, in your garden Caper White butterflies will swarm over it, laying eggs under every leaf as it is the caterpillar's food plant. You will be able to watch the destruction of the leaves on this plant as caterpillars hatch and munch every leaf down to the stem! Never fear, the plant should regenerate once the caterpillars form chrysalises and hang from stems. You can watch butterflies emerge about a week later (two weeks if the weather is cooler). Upon emergence butterfly wings are very damp, delicate and crumpled and butterflies need to hang upside down, often holding onto their empty chrysalis shell, and pump blood into their wings. This inflates and strengthens the wings, and butterflies will rest there for most of the day upside down until their wings are dry and ready to use in flight. By late afternoon they will fly off to find their first feed on your flowering plants and to find mates ready to start the cycle again.



The Caper White Butterfly can occur in a pale or a dark colour form,. Both forms can occur together in the one population at the same time. Females are shown on the bottom row. (users.sa.chariot.net.au)

Chequered Swallowtail, *Papilio demoleus sthenelus*. (www.pbase.com)

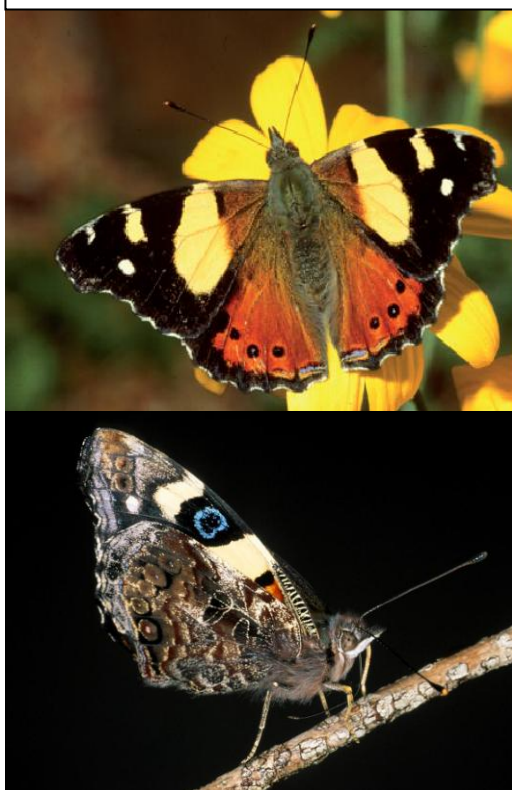


this butterfly's host plants are False Lucerne *Cullen (Psoralea) spp.*, it will utilise *Citrus* as a host plant if *Cullen* is

### Chequered Swallowtail:

The Chequered Swallowtail is a beautiful species and a powerful flyer, flying 1 -2 metres above the ground. If disturbed before ready to fly it will suddenly open its wings, scaring predators with a flash from the two eyespots on its hindwings. You may notice this species hovering around your *Citrus* trees. Even though

**Australian Admiral, *Vanessa itea***  
([www.butterflygardeninq.net.au](http://www.butterflygardeninq.net.au))



not abundant or there is competition for the resource. Last year over the summer I was taken out to Ilparpa to find a large patch of *Cullen patens* sighted the week before, but we searched high and low and couldn't find the plant, flowering at that time, anywhere. We eventually realised it had ALL been eaten to the ground by a recent swarm of grasshoppers!

Another butterfly to watch out for is the **Australian Admiral, *Vanessa itea***, a close relative of the more commonly seen **Australian Painted Lady, *Vanessa Kershawi***. The Australian Admiral will often accompany the Australian Painted Lady on its migrations.

The Australian Admiral's host plant is normally plants of the Urticaceae family, and in the Territory these include *Parietaria cardiostegia* (mallee smooth-nettle), *P. debilis* (smooth nettle), *P. judaica* (wall pellitory) (introduced), *Urtica incisa* (scrub or native stinging nettle), and *U. urens* (stinging nettle) (introduced). *Parietaria cardiostegia* is listed as Near Threatened in the Northern Territory (*Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000*), as

buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is invading its preferred habitat, and rabbit grazing may also contribute to its rarity. Interestingly in some areas of Australia the Admiral larvae prefer to feed on the introduced species of its host's Genus, which in cooler climates is the cause of great pain, the Stinging Nettle, *Urtica urens* (although it does make great tea)! However loss of host plant species will detrimentally affect butterfly populations and biodiversity. Growing host plants in your garden and allowing caterpillars to munch at parts of them will support butterfly populations and the ecosystem that depends on them, and if you have flowering plants (*Eremophilas*, *Sennas* and *Acacias* are looking beautiful at the moment) and a keen eye you may notice butterflies feeding with their long proboscis. A reminder that there is a great article 'Central Australian Butterflies and their food plants' by Stuart Traynor in your Garden for Wildlife resource packs listing butterflies of the region and their food plants!



Australian Painted Lady, *Vanessa kershawi*. ([www.genehanson.com](http://www.genehanson.com), [upload.wikimedia.org](http://upload.wikimedia.org))

**Reference:**

R. Grund, 1998, South Australian Butterflies, <http://users.sa.chariot.net.au/~rbg/datasheet.htm>.

## Dates to remember

### August

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>: Wearable Arts Awards

### September

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup>: EPA information session on Environmental Impact Assessment  
5.30pm-7pm, Andy McNeill Room, Town Council (Community News)

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>: last day to vote for Land for Wildlife in the People's Choice Awards! Go to  
<http://www.landcareonline.com.au/> to vote (follow links to Landcare Heroes)

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>: NT Landcare Forum, Darwin

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>: Alice Desert Festival (program at <http://www.alicedesertfestival.com.au/program>)

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>: desertSMART EcoFair – Olive Pink Botanic Gardens

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>: Bush Foods weekend (see Desert Festival Program)

## Announcements

Garden for Wildlife has a display in collaboration with Olive Pink Botanic Garden on Plants in Flower from Vegetation Community 17 (see the map to determine whether your house has Veg. Com.17), in the gazebo at OPBG.

See Below for more announcements....

Alice Springs Landcare Inc. (ASL) is a community managed group formed to tackle weeds and other issues relating to native vegetation in Alice Springs.

Alice Springs Landcare took the attack to a prickly garden escapee in the Spencer Valley this winter. Known as Boxing Glove Cactus or *Cylindropuntia fulgida* this weed related to the Prickly Pear has begun to take hold in a few locations of the Valley.

Although not a notifiable species in the NT it has become naturalised in broad parts of Queensland and NSW where it is a declared noxious weed.

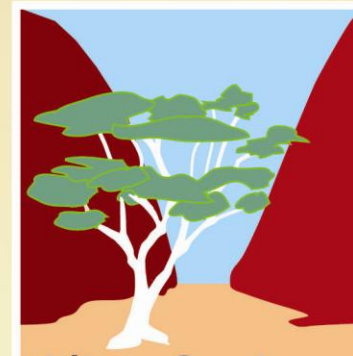
ASL also has been active on Northside, conducting a very successful tree planting for National Tree Day on 31st of July this year. Students from Braitling

Primary School and Batchelor College, as well as Landcare volunteers, planted, mulched and irrigated over 200 trees in Dixon Park.

Alice Springs Landcare needs your help. They have a strong and active committee, but with the AGM drawing closer and numerous environmental issues to address, ASL is seeking more members.

Membership costs \$10 and puts you in touch with the ongoing work of Alice Springs Landcare, as well as voting rights at the AGM.

Your \$10 will be used to purchase the tools and the herbicide for volunteers to put to good work, restoring native vegetation communities, protecting old trees from wildfires and bringing together the local community.



Alice Springs  
Landcare Inc

Look for the Alice Springs Landcare Inc stall at the desert SMART ecofair at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens on the 19th September.

Further information contact: Tim Collins on 8952 2631