



Land for Wildlife

Conservation is in your hands

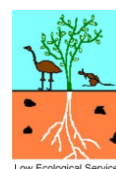
Ptilotus sessilifolius (Crimson Fox Tail) and *Triraphis mollis* (Purple Plume Grass)
(left) flower and seed prolifically on a rocky slope.



NEWSLETTER

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PowerWater



Alice Springs Municipality | July 2010

 Northern Territory Government

Land for Wildlife Update



Congratulations to Land for Wildlife member David Woods, who won **first** and **second** prize at the Alice Springs Show for his Eucalyptus blooms this year! David encourages all members to enter their garden blooms next year.

Land for Wildlife is encouraging members to **register your block for re-assessment** with us. The re-assessment will be conducted by Dr. Bill Low and the LfW coordinator, and is an opportunity for you to be trained in self assessment methods and measure your land management outcomes over time. Conservation priorities can be identified and land management plans modified. It's a *free* service! Contact us on 8955 5222/ lfw@lowecol.com.au to book an assessment or for more info.

Share purchase of **Pindone** rabbit bait with LfW members and save money. Please see the article 'Rabbits' below for more info. Let us know if you are interested and we can put you in touch other concerned members.

2010 Biodiversity Surveys are in early planning phases. This year we are planning on drawing comparisons in areas previously surveyed (pre significant rain event) with this year's good season. Please let us know if you are interested in a biodiversity survey being conducted on your property.

Workshops

Upcoming LfW Workshop:

Information & Trap-making for the feral Spotted Turtle-dove



Photo: Wikipedia Commons

With the recent rains these pests are breeding up in town. Help control the feral population by participating in a backyard trapping program. Land for Wildlife is re-running this popular workshop:

When: Sunday August 22nd, 9 – 11am

Where: Bloomin' Deserts Nursery

RSVP: Ilse 8955 5222/lfw@lowecol.com.au

Bring: gardening/protective gloves, wire cutters, and any chicken wire/weld mesh or similar that you have lying about the yard! Materials will also be supplied at the workshop.



Preparing to save seeds from the winter garden. Seedsavers meeting with Chris Brock

Sunday August 1, 10am, 43 Madigan Street.
'For those who have not saved much seed, we will be working through winter vegetables and talking about how to best save seeds from them. We will cover hybridising, pests and assessing ripeness of seed.'

Articles

Managing your block:

Rabbits

Hi Ilse

Just recently a small problem of rabbits visiting at night has grown to a bigger problem (mostly obvious in our veggie patch) of at least three permanent resident rabbits by the look of it. Wondering if you have any suggestions? I'm making sure that our rabbit proof fence is working and we'll close our gate if it will help but first have to get the little devils off our block.

Rabbits are becoming a serious problem again for many residents! They breed best in winter after rain, as winter rains cause lots of green shoots to appear which provide plant estrogens to stimulate their breeding. They will produce young in shelters above ground, but have more success in underground warrens. They can



Rabbit diggings and scats – a telltale sign of their presence on your property.

breed 3-4 times a year, but in Central Australia usually breed 1-2 times a year, depending on how good a year it is. Feral rabbits kill vegetation that native animals rely on for food and shelter, displace native animals from their habitat, and have thus contributed to the extinction of many native animal and plant species.

Minimise the impact of rabbits on your block by removing places where they can hide, and protecting plants from browsing. We recommend the following:

- piles of debris such as roofing iron, timber, mounds of dead branches etc. provide a good place to hide and protection while digging holes – get rid of them and you may well get rid of the rabbits (why not scatter those dead branches around the place to provide habitat for lizards, small birds, etc.)
- block holes underneath buildings to prevent rabbits from living there
- look for warrens, and if you find one block the holes with newspaper they don't like digging through it) and then cover with dirt.
- protect plants from Rabbits and Euros using mesh or plastic tree guards
- If you do use chicken wire for fencing, be aware that lizards (e.g. Blue-tongues) get trapped in chicken wire and starve – so such fencing should be checked very regularly.

Pindone poison oats can also be used to eradicate rabbits from your property. Pindone is as an anticoagulant, causing rabbits to simply run out of energy, and needs to be used with caution. It takes quite a large quantity, and animals can recover fully from a sub-lethal dose.

Pindone can only be bought in 10kg buckets, and as you would only need about half a kilo we recommend members sharing the purchase of a bucket. If you are interested in purchasing some Pindone let us know and we can put you in touch with like-minded members.

Please ensure you have read the guidelines for Rabbit control using Pindone poison at:

<http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/dpi/nreninf.nsf/childdocs/-89e7a8dafa417624a2568b30004c26a-3db1800178777eb4ca256bc700811d61-c5fb00dc3f8d200c4a256dea00274bc2-38cd9c4aba1252bbca256bcf000ad587>

Some advice from Bill Low:

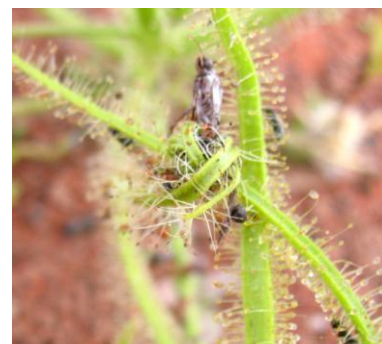
Start with laying some un-poisoned rolled oats on the ground in the area where the rabbits are feeding; it will get them used to eating oats. Hoe a shallow furrow to put the oats into as rabbits are attracted to the turned dirt and will find the oats quicker. Next replace the un-poisoned oats with some anticoagulant oats from the Stock & Station Agents and put it out for a few days so the rabbits get a

good feed. If there are ground feeding birds like Crested Pigeons around only put the oats out late in evening and bury them the next morning (it is easy to push the dirt back over the furrow you have made in the earth). Rabbits have good noses and will dig for the buried oats once they know to look for it. The bait will not work in rainy weather as the Pindone is soluble and washes off and breaks down.

What's this?:

Sundews

Among one of the more unusual plants flowering at the moment is *Drosera indica*, commonly known as Sundew. *Drosera* is one of the largest genera of carnivorous plants in the world, with at least 188 species. These members of the family Droseraceae lure, capture, and digest insects using a thick, gluey substance, mucilage, excreted from stalked glands covering their leaf surface. This is a form of the 'flypaper trap'. The leaves are shaped like long tentacles, which frequently grow fast enough in response to prey to aid the trapping process. The tentacles of *D. burmanii* (also found in Central Australia) can bend 180° in a minute or so! The insects caught are used to supplement the poor mineral nutrition that Sundews are able to obtain from the soil in which they grow. *Drosera* are native to tropical countries and found on most continents, but are most diverse in Australia. They are absent from the neotropics. The flowers are white or lilac in colour.



A Sundew leaf wraps around an insect caught by sticky mucilage.

Still here!



Photo: Michael Barritt

Channel-billed Cuckoos have been spotted around town several months after they would normally have left for the warmer northern tropics of Queensland, Indonesia or New Guinea. Juveniles have stuck around Alice Springs during this great rainy season, and have been photographed (below) by Michael Barritt near Lovegrove Drive. In his photograph a Crow feeds a juvenile Channel-bill it has been tricked into raising after eggs were sneakily laid in the Crow's nest by an adult Channel-bill (which has presumably left for the north already and left the Crow with all the hard work). The juvenile Channel-bill is fast outgrowing the Crow. Pat Hodgins from Parks&Wildlife Services NT comments:

It will be very interesting to see if they hang around all winter once they have independence, they surely must be nearing independence after 7 weeks... I have heard the occasional mention of young Channel Bills overwintering in Alice so it's great that we now have the evidence!

Have you seen any Channel-billed Cuckoos?

Letters to the Editor

Watch out for this weed!

Mexican Poppy (*Argemone Mexicana*)



G'day All,

You are receiving this notification because you are folk I know or suspect may be concerned or at least interested in the Mexican Poppy issue, and /or spend some time in and about the Todd, Roe and Laura Creek, etc.

This is merely a reporting, sharing and collecting information exercise.



We do not know exactly what triggers off a Mexican Poppy germination - last September I think it was, they really went off, a long time after any rain. There is also a thought that cool periods set them off. For example, last month we observed a germination in Roe Creek, but what appears to be quite localised (I hope!). At the same time, ASTC is reporting no germinations in the Todd through town.

Thanks & cheers

Rod.

(If anybody sees Mexican Poppy - particularly first germinations, but also first flowering and first seeding - in their patch, let Land for Wildlife know so we can pass the information on to nearby residents and encourage management and vigilance! Mexican Poppy is only spread through seed, and is easy to identify as it stands out as



something very dissimilar to most of our native plants. It can be easily pulled out (Ouch! Make sure you use gardening gloves!) and seeds should be burned. Mexican Poppy is a highly invasive plant introduced from Mexico, that grows in river sand. —Ed).



Hi Rod,
Just letting you know I found some Mexican Poppy on our block in Ilparpa, which was a surprise! Nothing serious, and all plants have pulled out at juvenile stages, prior to seeding. About half a dozen plants appeared after the rain last month, in an old unused garden bed created with river sand from who-knows-where at some stage in the past 5 years.
Cheers,
Ilse



Announcements

Counting our Stilts Before they Hatch: Banded Stilts Breeding at Lake Eyre

(From Birds Australia e-news).

After torrential rains earlier this year, the inland has experienced a veritable bonanza, with perennially dry watercourses suddenly brimming, and gradually inundating Lake Eyre, with a corresponding boon for all living things in the area. The Banded Stilts have taken advantage of the damp conditions. Flying in from who-knows-where, thousands of Stilts have congregated on low islands in Lake Eyre to breed for the first time since 2000. They were first seen there a few weeks ago and now there are many thousands of eggs being incubated — it has been estimated that 6000–7500 chicks will fledge.

The Banded Stilt is regarded as vulnerable in South Australia, so this — just the seventh breeding record in the state in the past 70 years and the first in a decade — is a significant event.

National Tree Day

Help plant 1million shrubs and native trees in 2010. Participate with the Alice Springs Town Council at

Lyndavale Park. Go to <http://treeday.planetark.org/> for more info.

When: Sunday, 01 August 2010, 8:00am to 10:00am

Aims of the project: To plant natives trees in an established Park.

Organisation: Alice Springs Town Council

Directions: The tree planting is at Lyndavale Park in Alice Springs which is situated on the corner of Patterson crescent and Lyndavale Drive.

The tree planting will start at 8:00am till 10:00 am on Saturday the 1 August 2010.

Suitable for Children: Yes

Accessible for disabled: Yes

Notes about the day for Volunteers: Please wear appropriate clothing (hat, long sleeved shirt and long pants recommended) and sunscreen.

Activities that will take place on the day:

- Tree Planting
- Bush Regeneration

Volunteer RSVP to Scott Allen 08 89500 581

Websites Worth a Look

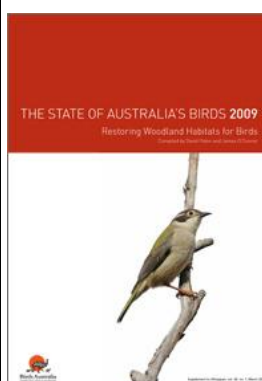
Pallid Cuckoos in Alice: Visit our local ethno-ornithologist Bob Gosford's blog:

<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/northern/2010/07/19/birds-of-the-week-pallid-cuckoo-more/>

Some news on **Cane Toads:**

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/cane-toads-set-up-in-sydney/story-e6freuy9-1225894627596>

Recommended Books



New publication: The state of Australia's birds 2009; restoring woodland habitats for birds.

Compiled by David Paton and James O'Connor, this Birds Australia's seventh *State of Australia's Birds* publication, and it's **free** at:

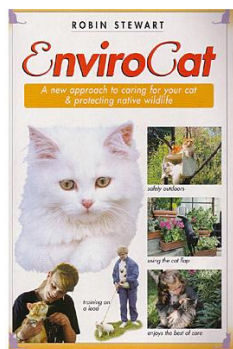
www.birdsaustralia.com.au/images/stories/publications/soab/SOAB-2009.pdf.

The report focuses on the revegetation of agricultural landscapes, primarily the wheat and sheep belts of SE and SW Australia, and will be of interest to anyone wondering about, or seeking information and advice on:

- the benefits of revegetation for birds,
- the importance of size of a revegetated area,
- or its characteristics and relation to corridors.

Previous years reports can be found at:

www.birdsaustralia.com.au/soab/state-of-australias-birds.html.



EnviroCat by Robin Stewart

A new approach to caring for your cat and protecting native wildlife. The book focuses on responsible cat ownership, with instruction in training and care of kittens or cats, solving problem behaviour, and even understanding sounds and gestures.

Calendar of Events

Sunday 1 August - Seedsavers meeting, *Preparing to save seeds from the winter garden*, 10am at 43 Madigan street.

- National Tree Day, Lyndavale Park 8 – 10am with ASTC

Wednesday 4 August – Australian Plants Society meeting. Andy Vinter speaks on *Buffel control and plant regeneration in Northside parks: a review of 7 years of spraying efforts*. 7:30pm at Olive Pink Botanic Garden

Sunday 8 August – Field Naturalist walk along Bridle Path at Standley Chasm. Contact Colleen O'Malley on 0420 719778 for more details.

13 – 15 August – Australian Nuclear Free Alliance meeting, Alice Springs

Sunday 22 August – **LfW workshop: Trap-making & Information for the feral Spotted Turtle-dove.** Bloomin' Deserts Nuresry, 9 -11am

Saturday 18 September - DesertSmart EcoFair at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens. Volunteers needed.

9-11 November - 4th Desert Knowledge Symposium - Alice Springs Convention Centre, see www.desertknowledgesymposium.com for more information.

Don't forget to check out the LfW & GfW website at www.lowecol.com.au, you can download membership application forms, newsletters, vegetation type species lists, and find out about upcoming workshops!

This newsletter has been produced by Ilse Pickerd and Bill Low, LfW coordinators, W.A. Low Ecological Services, Contact Ilse on 89555222 or lfw@lowecol.com.au



Take care,

Ilse & Bill
Land for Wildlife Coordinators

