



**NT**  
**LANDCARE**  
**AWARDS**<sup>09</sup>  
CATEGORY FINALIST



# Land for Wildlife

Conservation is in your hands

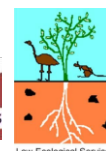


## NEWSLETTER

**PowerWater**



**Alice Springs Municipality October 2011**



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### On our cover this month...

It isn't just property owners and their livestock that have to cope with bushfires burning across central Australia. Wildlife also faces challenges ahead in vast areas of burnt out country. This Australian Ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius*) provides a spark of colour in the gloom of a smoky Hamilton Downs Station.  
Photo: Jesse Carpenter

## Articles

### Hung up on Hakeas



*H. divaricata* blossom

Hakeas are trees or shrubs that belong to the family Proteaceae. Together with Grevilleas, Banksias and a few other genera, they are a distinctive component of Australia's flora. Both Hakea and Grevillea can be found in Central Australia, with species found from the sandy deserts of the south

west NT to the hills and ranges around Alice Springs. Due to their flower shape and inflorescence, Hakeas are often confused with Grevilleas. However, their hard, woody seed pods are diagnostic. There are three common Hakea species that are common within the municipal boundaries of Alice Springs.

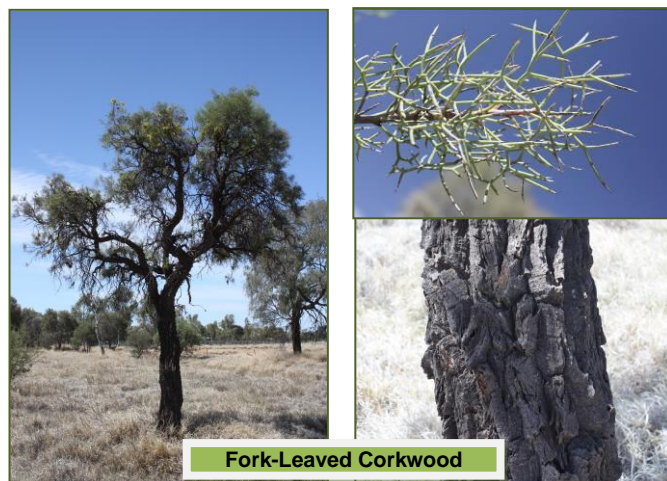
#### Fork Leaved Corkwood – *Hakea divaricata*

This Hakea is distinguished from the following species

by foliage that forks into several sharp, tough needles and is dull green in colour.

*H. divaricata* occurs as scattered trees in floodplain woodlands around Alice Springs, although they can be the dominant canopy species over small areas. They are the common Corkwood that grows in the company of Ironwoods (*Acacia estrophiolata*) on the alluvial flats south of Heavitree Gap.

The flowers occur in spikes 5-15cm long and are yellow-green.



Fork-Leaved Corkwood

#### Long Leaved Corkwood – *Hakea lorea*



Unlike *H. divaricata*, this gnarled shrub to small tree has long, cylindrical leaves that can grow up to 30cm long. The leaves are tough and greyish in colour.

Although growing in a wide variety of habitats, this species often replaces *H. divaricata* on stony hills and slopes at the base of the higher ranges.

#### Needlebush – *Hakea leucoptera*

Needlebush is a large shrub with short (8cm), rigid, cylindrical leaves that end in a needle-sharp tip. Flowers are cream or white and occur in clusters of 18-45.



This shrub often occurs on saline soils of depressions and relict drainage channels, where it can occasionally be the dominant shrub species such as around the Brewer Estate south of Alice Springs.



*H. leucoptera*

Its bark is smooth and grey and never forms the course, wrinkled corky growths of *H. divaricata* and *H. lorea*.



Needlebush



### Rain Brings out the Snails in Time for Biodiversity Surveys

Jesse and Chris have been busy organising and carrying out this year's Land for Wildlife biodiversity surveys on a few properties along Roe Creek. On Tuesday the 4<sup>th</sup> of October we experienced a bit of light rain in the morning followed by some veritable downpours later in the evening – perfect weather for land snails!

We were lucky enough to be out on one of the properties during the light rain in the morning and were stunned to find a multitude of snails, out and about in a recently burnt patch of ground along the creek line. These snails have been identified as *Sinumelon expositum* by local expert Mark Carter. While not necessarily rare, this species has a limited distribution and is difficult to find except in perfect snail weather.



Inland land snails are among the least studied of the Northern Territory's fauna and some are only known from a single population making them prime candidates for extinction resulting from habitat destruction. There are more than 80 species of land snails described around central Australia and there are surely a few more out there yet to be discovered.

While it seems obvious that aquatic snails will persist in permanent waterholes, it is genuinely surprising that we have such a diverse range of *pulmonate* (air-breathing) land snails. These moist little creatures don't always have to be near water – indeed some of them thrive in mature spinifex communities and high in the ranges beneath the luxuriant shade of native fig trees *Ficus platypoda*. In dry conditions many of these species can survive for very long periods by simply sealing up their shell and going into a lowered metabolic state called *aestivation*.

There are few field malacologists (mollusc scientists) working in the arid Northern Territory today but we hope that a decent survey of this fascinating fauna will occur in the not-too-distant future to make more comprehensive knowledge of these species available to land managers across the region.

## Announcements

### Biodiversity Surveys

Land for Wildlife biodiversity surveys have been going ahead on four properties in the Ilparpa district over the last two weeks. Although most of the traplines so far have not enjoyed a very high catch rate, the fauna we have seen has been very interesting. We have identified at least three distinct species of wolf spider (Lycosidae) but are yet to get them nailed down to species level. Ants have also been plentiful and the *Sinumelon* snails mentioned in the article above were also found during the surveys.

(dunnart picture)

One of the biggest (albeit pleasant) surprises so far has been the total absence of feral house mice in our mammal traps. Apart from the occasional Euro or Black-footed Rock Wallaby, the only mammals we have seen were two Stripe-faced Dunnarts *Sminthopsis macroura* that we trapped on the third night.

We still have another 4 days of trapping to complete, so we will let you know what else we find.

### Landcare Awards

Jesse, Chris and Bill, have recently returned from Darwin where we were very happy to win the Toshiba community group category of the NT Landcare Awards.

This is great recognition for all Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife members who continue to support the program so well. Membership has increased this year and participation at all of our workshops has been steadily improving.

Thank you all, and here's hoping we can repeat the success at the national finals in Canberra next year.

We weren't the only Centralians having a win at Parliament House; Tim Collins won the individual landcarer category and took away the NT Landcarer of the year award. Many people will be familiar with Tim's work over more than 10 years in Alice Springs. He has been a tireless campaigner for Alice Springs Landcare and a constant presence anywhere buffel has been busted. Congratulations Tim!

Two other Centralian groups figured in the awards, receiving highly commended awards within their categories. Glenis McBurnie was there to represent the Centralian Land Management Association which

was recognised in the Australian Government Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices category.

The other Centralian highly commended recipient was the Muru-Warinyi Ankkul Ranger Group who were recognised in the Leighton Holdings Indigenous Award category.

Congratulations everyone and we hope to see you all representing Central Australia at future awards presentations in the future.

### TNRM forum

While in Darwin for the Landcare Awards, Jesse and Chris also attended the Territory Natural Resource Management forum. This was an intensive day of short presentations from conservation and NRM groups around The Territory.

After a thought-provoking opener from Dr. Ashley Sparrow about gradual decline in biodiversity, the presentations came thick and fast with organisers scheduling them at fifteen minute intervals. Despite this lively pace, the day was beautifully managed and ran right on time.

We heard about some fantastic work being done in all parts of The Territory and there are a few examples that follow, which you can investigate for yourself online.

### Ghost Nets Australia -

<http://www.ghostnets.com.au/>

This is a truly eye-opening project. *Ghost Nets* are damaged or tangled nets that are cast adrift by the commercial fishing industry. These nets can drift for thousands of kilometres across the Arafura and Timor Seas, ensnaring many hapless marine creatures as they go. These ghost nets are found on our beaches with damaged, dead, and dying sea turtles, dugongs, dolphins, sharks, and many other forms of wildlife trapped within. Ghost Nets Australia mobilises indigenous communities around the Gulf of Carpentaria to retrieve the nets and rescue any wildlife that is capable of rehabilitation. Since its inception, the program has retrieved more than 7500 discarded nets totalling hundreds of tonnes of marine debris removed from the pristine beaches of the gulf. The nets are recycled where possible and have become a weaving medium for use in many local arts and crafts.

Their website makes for very interesting reading.

### Crocodile Islands Rangers

<http://crocodileislandsrangers.com/>

The Crocodile Islands are a remote group of small islands in north-east Arnhem Land. The ranger group here has been doing some great work with the help of a generous donation from their senior traditional owner Laurie Baymarrwangga (known locally as *Big Boss*).

Through her donation Laurie has fostered a thriving junior ranger program and has provided equipment for the daily running of the main ranger program into the future.

### Yanyuwa Songline Animations

<http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/non-cms/research/projects/independent/countrylines-archive/index.html>

During the forum we were privileged to view the premiere screening of *The Osprey and the Sea Turtle*. This is the eighth in a pioneering series of productions aimed at visualising traditional knowledge of country through modern animation techniques. This is part of a long term ethnographic and linguistic project by renowned anthropologist John Bradley assisted by the prodigious artistic talent of Brent McKee.

At the Monash University website address listed above you can view all of the animations for free in Yanyuwa with English subtitles, or spoken in English – I recommend the former.

This is exciting work and the potential for this project to spread and shed light on indigenous knowledge in other regions is huge.

## Websites Worth a Look

<http://compostguide.com/>

This useful site provides information and links to other sources, for all of your composting needs. While Centralian soils are more than adequate to support all of the native plants in your garden, if you aspire to grow your own fruit and veggies than your soil might be in need of some enrichment; this is where compost comes in.

Ants down under -

<http://anic.ento.csiro.au/ants/>

Ants must be one of the most overlooked groups of animals around our homes. They perform vital function in Central Australian. Of the 101 genera here are nine commonly found genera of ants around Alice Springs and at least one introduced pest; the dreaded Big-headed Ant *Pheidole megacephala*.

### Nestboxing!!

<http://www.gardenexpress.com.au/native-nest-boxes/>

An interesting website exposing the benefits of installing nest boxes in your backyard to replicate the habitat provided by trees which are hundreds of years old when your trees are only a few years old.

<http://www.sustainablebluemountains.net.au/locallivin/g/more/files/Nestboxes-for-native-wildlife.pdf>

A great factsheet providing information about the dimensions and types of nest boxes required for various types of wildlife.

## Recommended Books

### The Flaming Desert

By Peter Latz

Peter Latz delivers another winning edition to the body of knowledge about central Australian ecosystems and their relationship with fire. The changes in fire regimes across Australia are still poorly understood but it is now widely accepted that these changes are a contributing factor to the gradual degradation of biodiversity.

This book seems all the more relevant at the moment considering the fires presently cutting wide swathes across our landscape.

### The Nestbox Book

by?

Installing nest boxes for native wildlife is not a new idea. By building artificial nests for wildlife we can provide shelter and breeding spaces for a diverse range of species that might otherwise be absent from our area. Tree hollows take many decades or even centuries to develop to a degree where they become



inhabitable by wildlife. In a newly planted garden environment it will be practically impossible to attract any of the large number of hollow nesting and roosting animals without installing nest boxes.

This box covers the nest box requirements of all the native wildlife you could ever possibly expect in your yard. Complete with plans and details for a wide range of boxes for birds, bats, and arboreal mammals, it also covers how to deal with feral animals (introduced bees and birds) that might take over some boxes.

## Calendar of Events

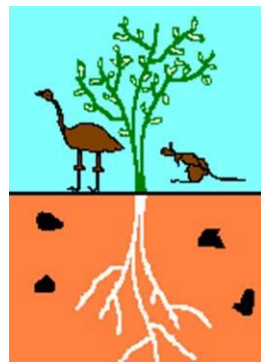
29/10/11 - ASFNC Wader count at Alice Springs Sewage Ponds – 7AM, all welcome



Take care,

Jesse, Chris & Bill  
Land for Wildlife Coordinators

Sponsors:



**Low  
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