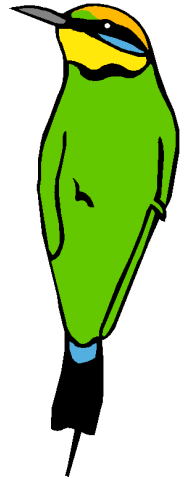




GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

Channel-billed Cuckoos



This beautiful photograph was taken by Ethno-ornithologist Bob Gosford in his backyard last week. They have arrived! The first sightings of Channel-billed Cuckoos, *Scythrops novaehollandiae*, were in mid-November, and they can now be heard all over Eastside, in North side and along the Todd River at Telegraph Station. They have travelled from the tropics of New Guinea and Indonesia and some only from tropical Queensland to sneak their eggs into crow's nests, which saves them the effort of raising their own chicks. Channel-bills will also head to northern and eastern Australia to parasitize Kurrawong, Magpie, Butcherbird and Crow's nests, and once these poor host birds run themselves thin trying to feed the massive chicks the Channel-bills will leave us and head north again around February or March. Have you seen them? Bob Gosford is recording sightings of Channel-bills this year in an attempt to know more about their breeding habits in the Centre. So keep your eyes out for juveniles in a crow's nest, or adults chasing crows around, or very irate crows trying to chase Channel-bills away! If you spot any or if they wake you up every morning with their banter **let us know** where and when!

Weed Profile: Fountain Grass



Photo Credit: C. Martus, www.cal-ipc.org

Alternative Names: Tender fountain grass, African fountain grass

Family: Poaceae

Species: *Pennisetum setaceum*

Form: Grass

Origin: Native to east Africa

"The Northern Territory Government through the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport is pleased to sponsor Land for Wildlife. This publication may not represent the views of the Northern Territory Government"



Fountain Grass is a densely tufted perennial that grows to 900mm. It lives for many years and the long feathery spike of the flowerhead makes it attractive for garden cultivation. It spreads by seed which is adapted to sticking to fur and clothing, but can also be transported by wind and water or carried in dumped garden waste or mud on vehicles.

Pat Hodgins, a Garden for Wildlife member, has spent many warm days removing the grass from his front yard, and has persuaded a neighbour to do the same. "When we bought our house in Old Eastside it was advertised with a 'beautiful native garden', but in fact there was only exotic Fountain Grass growing everywhere. I removed all of it using a crowbar, as it has a really thick root mass, and have removed as much of the top seed as possible. Since then we have planted native grasses, and the Fountain Grass has not returned. However we haven't had any rain since then, so we shall see what happens after a downpour." Pat would like people to be more aware of the grass, that it is not an ornamental plant, but in fact a weed. "I have seen people *planting* Fountain Grass on their footpath." Several other Land and Garden for Wildlife members have had the same experience of Fountain grass taking over their blocks. It is as good or better than Buffel Grass at overdoing its welcome. For more information on weeds around town and beyond, check out the new book launched by Greening Australia: '*Weeds of Central Australia: a field guide*' by Sunil Dhanji – a fantastic resource available from Red Kangaroo Books and Greening Australia.

Announcements:

So what is the latest on feral Spotted Turtle-doves?!!

Spotted Turtle-Dove control is currently entirely in the hands of the community. There has been a recent enquiry as to whether Spotted Turtle-Dove trapping is still taking place within the community, and an email I sent out to all members reassured us that there are many of you putting in the effort to help eradicate this feral species from town. There was also an overwhelming request for traps which is fantastic! It's great to see the enthusiasm for this project especially because we as the public are the only active workers on the ground trapping. Unfortunately there is a shortage of traps, apologies to those in waiting. Land for Wildlife will be running a trap making workshop in the new year so stay tuned, but until then **can anyone who has a Parks & Wildlife or a home-made trap that is not currently using it and wouldn't mind lending it to other GfW/LfW members please let me know** on 8955 5222 or lfw@lowecol.com.au. Thanks!

Funding

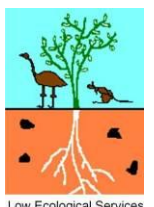
We need your help to boost our visibility!

Land for Wildlife/Garden for Wildlife has recently been unsuccessful in obtaining funding through the Town Council. We would like to raise the profile of the program, to let the Council and wider community know that the landholders of Alice Springs are concerned about and active in conservation on their lands, and that the program plays a key role in providing landholders with support and advice. If you feel that you are gaining from the LFW and GFW programs please take any opportunity when in discussion with town councillors or NT legislators to let them know the benefits of our program, so that we may better our chances to secure funding in the future to support the program.

Photos from the Tanami

The photographs below were sent to us from the Tanami desert and feature a Black-headed Monitor, *Varanus tristis*. *V. tristis* can be found in timber country, around hill country, and around houses around town that have walls that can be climbed. Olive Pink Botanic Garden had heaps of

"The Northern Territory Government through the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport is pleased to sponsor Land for Wildlife. This publication may not represent the views of the Northern Territory Government"





them a few years ago, and I recently saw one hanging from the wall of the office! The Black-headed Monitor is long and slender with a black tail and neck – but not nose! It is a good climber and likes to eat the geckos around the house. This fella is very old but it appears he gets a lot to eat! He has a chunk off the end of his tail, as the last part of the tail is smaller than the main part of the tail indicating possible regrowth, which may be due to a run-in with a Dingo.



Merry Christmas!

Enjoy the Christmas period, whether you're staying in Alice, or escaping the heat for awhile. Remember to make sure any irrigation you have is functioning properly, the timer is working, and the pipes aren't leaking, so your plants survive the summer! Ensure your garden mulch is topped up to retain moisture and repress weeds.

Have a wonderful break and see you all next year!

Take care,
Ilse & Bill

Garden for Wildlife Coordinators
Low Ecological Services P/L
P.O. Box 3130, Alice Springs, N.T. 0871, Australia
ph (08) 89 555 222, Fax 08-89 555 722
Email: LFW@lowecol.com.au

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!

"The Northern Territory Government through the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport is pleased to sponsor Land for Wildlife. This publication may not represent the views of the Northern Territory Government"