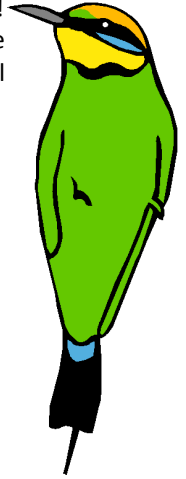


GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

Welcome to Garden for Wildlife's first newsletter for the year! It is with great pleasure I announce Land for Wildlife's success in gaining \$20 000 funding through the Caring for Country's Action Grants program! A great start to the New Year! We are one of four landcare organisations in the Northern Territory to have been awarded funding through the Action Grants program. This reflects largely on the contribution that all of you as members of Garden for Wildlife make to conserve our natural history and natural resources.

Garden for Wildlife wrapped up 2009 with a membership of 126 properties, which is 70 433 square metres of conservation protected land in town! This year we hope to add many more properties to our membership to expand wildlife corridors between town and nature reserves. We will be running some great workshops this year, with the first two already booked for February (see details below)! We will also be resurrecting the feral Spotted Turtle-dove eradication program formerly run by Parks and Wildlife, and will have traps available to loan you shortly. Please let me know if you would like to borrow a trap: 8955 5222, lfw@lowecol.com.au. We will be circulating traps, recording catch numbers, and are available to help with advice and disposal. Later in the year there will be volunteer opportunities during our annual Biodiversity Surveys on Land for Wildlife properties (the December 2009 survey report will be available online in February: www.lowecol.com.au). Speaking of Land for Wildlife, this year we will welcome our first member property on Aboriginal land.



Thank you everyone for your support of the GfW/LfW programs. As a result of your support landcare groups of Alice Springs will be meeting with the Alice Springs Town Council this month to discuss the council's future support of local landcare and natural resource management.

A New Years Resolution for us all: **Look after the land you live on!** If you need help, or would like information on anything that will assist you to create wildlife habitat on your block this year let us know. Do you have a request for a workshop topic? 8955 5222, lfw@lowecol.com.au.

Rain!



The Todd in flow. Photo: Ilse Pickerd

With rain comes change; a poignant sign for us at the beginning of a new year?! All around us things are coming to life. What happens after rain? What can we expect to see? The desert is green with seedlings and bouncing with grasshoppers, moths, flying termites, flies and mosquitoes – and lots of frogs to eat them! Waterholes are flushed and full, and food is plentiful. The rivers have flowed and water has gone deep enough to replenish the root systems of trees. Plants are flowering and birds are active, quickly nesting to make the most of the suddenly abundant food source. Ibis and Spoonbill have arrived in town, feeding and roosting at the Sewage Treatment Ponds, and the gecko's are having a field day feeding on moths around household lights. Euro's have dispersed now food is plentiful and are not seen so regularly by Ilparpa residents.

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But how much rain do we need to rejuvenate the land? The rule of thumb for pastoralists for rainfall to be effective and promote plant growth is: during winter at least half an inch of rain is needed (approximately 12ml), and during summer one inch is needed (25.4ml). This January we have received 125ml (around 5 inches)! Your garden will be very happy, and we should see the effects of this rain for a few months to come with plants flowering and seeding. But don't forget that this is a time for invasive species to flourish too. **Help our natives by getting on top of your Buffel Grass infestations now before they go to seed!!!** Whether you choose to chip or poison, now is the time.

Another invasive species flourishing after the rain are Spotted Turtle-doves. Keep your eyes out for them nesting in your backyard. Be sure to remove nests if they are, and deter them from hanging around your property.

Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes



Photo courtesy Bob Gosford

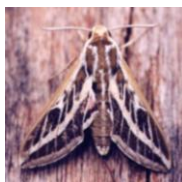
Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes, *Coracina maxima*, have been recently spotted in Alice Springs! The Ground Cuckoo-Shrike is in the same family as the Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike that we see regularly around town, but this bird is the largest of the cuckoo-shrikes and the only cuckoo-shrike adapted to foraging on the ground. It is an uncommon bird, endemic to Australia, which lives in small family groups of 3-4. It feeds on insects, preferring inland woodlands and open grasslands for habitat. The Ground Cuckoo-Shrike is what is colloquially termed a 'rainbird'. Rainbirds follow the rain around, or become more active, noisy and visible with rain, because rain provides food. Rainbirds are thought to sing before the rain, and are used as rain signals. Other rainbirds include Pallid Cuckoos, Channel-billed Cuckoos, and Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. Ground Cuckoo-shrikes will breed after rain, so there will hopefully be a lot of activity after this month's downpour.

Announcements:

Start growing your Christmas tree for next year! Grow a native tree, like a Mulga or a Coolabah which have relatively fast growth speeds, for your next year's Christmas tree.

Could anyone that has a Parks & Wildlife or a home-made Turtle-dove trap that is not currently using it and wouldn't mind lending it to other GfW/LfW members please let us know on 8955 5222 or lfw@lowecol.com.au. Thanks!

See end of newsletter for an announcement from Northern Territory Government, Dept. Health & Families regarding mosquito-borne diseases.



Hyles livornicoides is a species of Hawk Moth (left) that appears en masse after rain. The moth is the adult stage of a Yeperenye caterpillar (right).

Photo credit: H. Cross



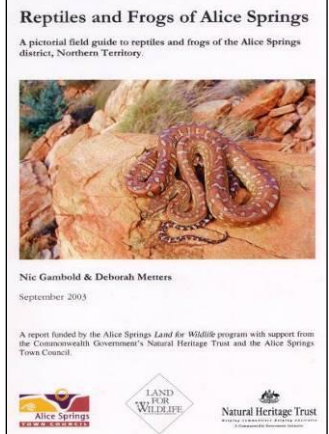
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What Garden for Wildlife/Land for Wildlife members have seen in the rain:

Frogs! The cacophony of frog calls from water holes is deafening this month with frogs such as Spencer's Burrowing, Maine's frog, and Red Tree Frog all trying to attract mates. You will be able to identify Main's Frog without even seeing it – it's the one that sounds like a bleating sheep! The Red Tree Frog calls rapidly and lightly. Spencer's Burrowing Frog has quickly dug itself out from deep down in the sand of desert rivers and creeks, where it has been waiting for a rainfall event just like this one. The female will lay her eggs in a foam nest, which breaks down after 24 hours, leaving a thin layer containing the eggs at the surface of the water. Once hatched, the tadpoles will complete their development in around 6 weeks. Frogs need to start breeding and laying eggs as quickly as they can so that tadpoles have time to develop into frogs before the water dries up. Tadpoles also need to hatch before fish eat them, as frogs are not the only creatures taking advantage of the rain! As the desert dries up again and the weather cools down, and the insects populations reduce the burrowing frogs will disappear underground again, and the waterholes will fall silent.



A Spencer's Burrowing Frog (far left) and Main's Burrowing Frog (left) at a property in the Airport/Winery region of town. Rd.



A great field guide for Frog & Reptile ID, 'Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs' by Nic Gambold & Deborah Metters, is available from us for \$20. Contact us for a copy!



A Land for Wildlife member in Ilparpa had a visit from an Australian Tarantula (Barking Spider), who came inside looking for some shelter from the rain!

Winged ants and termites fly to light. This is part of a 'dispersal' flight triggered by rain and moisture where winged adults search for a mate, shedding their wings before breeding (never to fly again), and then scout a location to start a new colony. There are many websites that can help you identify a winged ant from a winged termite. Try http://www.bugz.com.au/pest_info.htm



A very green Red gum in the Todd gathers foam floating down the river (foam is caused by plant 'sweat' - organic compounds transpired from trees – or salts in the soil dissolved by rainwater).

Ants quickly build a tower over their nest entrance to avoid flooding during the rain.



A Bearded Dragon basks in the morning sun on a roadside after a day of 'cold' rain and cloudy weather.

Workshops!

Feral Dove information & TRAP-MAKING workshop



The feral Spotted Turtle-dove population of Alice Springs is estimated to be above 9000.

Come along to learn how this impacts Alice Springs' locally native species.

Learn how to make a feral dove trap using easy-to-find, cheap materials.

Make one to take home for your own backyard and participate in the eradication program.

A coordinated community effort can help to reduce this feral population!

Where? Blooming Deserts Nursery

When? Saturday 6th of February 9:30am – 11:30am

RSVP? 1/2/10 to 89 555 222 or lfw@lowecol.com.au



Spiders!



Tuesday February 16 – Garden for Wildlife workshop on Spiders at Olive Pink Botanic gardens! Robbie Henderson will be our host for the evening and will help us improve our spider ID, will give us tips on photographing spiders, and will take us spotlighting around the botanic gardens. Bring your torches and your cameras! For more information or to RSVP contact Ilse: 8955 5222/lfw@lowecol.com.au

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Gardening

Geof Miers Garden Solutions Nursery are conducting some fantastic Gardening Workshops over the next few months. See 'Dates to remember' for more details.

Announcement:



Northern
Territory
Government

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILIES

media release

Red Centre rain brings warning of mosquito-borne diseases

Monday 11 January 2009

Residents of Central Australia are being urged to protect themselves against mosquitoes that could carry Ross River virus (RRV) and Barmah Forest virus (BFV) following rain in the area.

Symptoms most commonly associated with infections from RRV and BFV include painful or swollen joints (particularly in the hands, ankles and knees), sore muscles, aching tendons, skin rash, fatigue, fever, headache and swollen lymph nodes.

"The main mosquito that transmits RRV and BFV is the common banded mosquito. Receptacle-breeding mosquitoes are also potential carriers of RRV," said Nina Kurucz, Operations Manager, Medical Entomology, Department of Health and Families Centre for Disease Control.

"Mosquitoes breed in grassy depressions and drains, water-filled containers including pot plant drip trays, old tyres, drums, boats, disused pools and fish ponds, roof gutters, and even palm frond bases.

"Residents are urged to check roof gutters to make sure they are free-draining, tip out anything that can hold water, and store containers under cover," added Ms Kurucz.

Measures to prevent mosquito bites include:

- avoid outdoor exposure around dusk and at night, near rivers and areas of dense vegetation, and any areas of high mosquito activity
- use mosquito-proof accommodation and camping facilities at night
- between dusk and dawn where mosquito bites are likely, wear protective light-coloured clothing with long sleeves, long trousers, and ankle protection with socks
- use a protective repellent containing 20 per cent DEET or Picaridin as a supplement to protective clothing when outdoors at night
- ensure children are adequately protected against mosquito bites
- contact the Alice Springs Environmental Health Office on 8955 6122 if you have concerns about mosquito breeding sites

Symptoms of infections from RRV and BFV can last from a few weeks or months, with some people experiencing symptoms for up to one year. Children are generally less affected by RRV disease than adults, and tend to recover quicker.

There is no vaccine to prevent RRV or BFV infection. Protection from being bitten is the best course of action to prevent these diseases.

More information: www.health.nt.gov.au/Medical_Entomology

Media contacts: Chelsea Rogers 0401 114 113, Darrel Trueman 0401 116 203

Dates to remember:

Saturday 6th February – GfW/LfW Workshop: ‘Feral Spotted Turtle-dove trap-making & information’, Blooming Deserts Nursery, 9.30am – 11.30am. Free

Sunday 7th February – Gardening Workshop with Geoff Miers: ‘Growing Tomatoes successfully – using companion planting’, 2pm – 3pm, \$10. To register call 8953 7477 (limited 20 places)

Sunday 21st February - Gardening Workshop with Geoff Miers: ‘Identifying & Managing Summer Pests – organic options & chemical fixes’, 2pm – 3.30pm, \$15. To register call 8953 7477 (limited 20 places)

Sunday 7th March - Gardening Workshop with Geoff Miers: ‘Establishing & Maintaining an Organic No Dig Garden’, 2pm – 3.30pm, \$20. To register call 8953 7477 (limited 20 places)

Sunday 21st March - Gardening Workshop with Geoff Miers: ‘Secrets to Successful Composting’, 2pm – 3pm, \$15. To register call 8953 7477 (limited 20 places)

Sunday 4th April - Gardening Workshop with Geoff Miers: ‘Planting Citrus with Confidence’, 2pm – 3pm, \$10. To register call 8953 7477 (limited 20 places)



The office after the rain, and one of our vehicles well and truly immobilised until it all dries out!

Take care & happy weeding!

Ilse & Bill



Garden for Wildlife Coordinators

Low Ecological Services P/L

P.O. Box 3130, Alice Springs, N.T. 0871, Australia

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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!