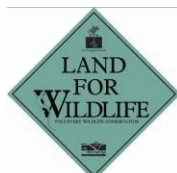
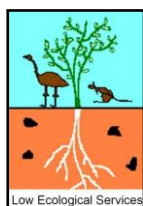


GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE



Newsletter, July 2011

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On our cover this month...

The Desert Mouse (*Pseudomys desertor*), next to a glove for size comparison. This is a relatively common inhabitant of desert habitats and semi-arid shrub lands. Features that will help you tell this animal apart from introduced house mice are the orange eye ring, long, dark guard hairs and the large, 'Roman' shaped nose. This one was caught in an Elliott trap north east of Alice Springs.

Garden for Wildlife News

Melaleuca Awards

The annual Power Water Melaleuca awards were judged last month, with award ceremonies in both Darwin and Alice Springs. The awards recognise outstanding contributions of individuals, companies and organisations towards environmental sustainability and awareness.

Land for Wildlife's sister program, Garden for Wildlife, has been a past winner and this year was a runner up in the community category, won by Desert Smart Cool Mob for their 'Closing the door on Climate Change' project.

Congratulations to all our Garden for Wildlife members, whose participation is helping to connect wildlife corridors across town and reduce the use of water and other resources in people's backyards.

Congratulations is also due to Land for Wildlife co-coordinator Chris Watson, who received an individual award for his bird watching blog site, www.comebirdwatching.blogspot.com

Junior Rangers Workshop

On Saturday, 18th June, Land for Wildlife teamed up with coordinator of the Junior Ranger program, Jacelyn Anderson, to deliver a feral dove trapping workshop.

Held on the Telegraph Station lawns, about six of Jacelyn's Junior Rangers and their parents learnt about feral doves and the impacts they and other introduced animals have on the environment. Land for Wildlife coordinators also spoke about how to identify the feral Turtle Doves and what to do with any birds that are caught.



A dove's eye view of a Junior Ranger.

We then got stuck into the practical part of the morning, making our dove traps. The kids came up with some new and simple designs that should work just as well to catch Turtle Doves in their backyards.

It was great to work with the Junior Rangers and we hope to work with them again in the future. Thanks to Jacelyn for the opportunity to be involved and the pancakes she cooked on the morning!

The Turtle Dove trapping program is an ongoing effort to reduce the numbers of these feral birds in Alice Springs. Many people around town participate by trapping the birds in their homemade traps and taking them to the Desert Park for humane disposal

Recently, feral doves have been seen on Heffernan Rd, towards the airport. This is of concern as until now, the birds were restricted to the town, mainly north Heavitree Gap.

Garden for Wildlife can help you begin a trapping program on your property by providing you with resources to get started. Contact us if you'd like to be involved.

Articles

Predators on the Porch



Kultarr (*Antechinomys laniger*). Photo: Bob Purvis.

These cute marsupials may not come to mind when you think of a predator, but what they lack in size they more than make up for in tenacity.

These two carnivores have recently made an appearance on some properties around Alice Springs, taking advantage of a boom in resources that's been experienced in the last couple of years.

The Kultarr

Land for Wildlife was sent this photo of a Kultarr (*Antechinomys laniger*) by the Puvises of Woodgreen Station, north east of

Alice Springs. Several of these brush-tailed marsupials have been making regular night time visits to the Purvis's homestead garden, collecting insects attracted to veranda lights.

Kultarr populations fluctuate widely with conditions. They can suddenly appear in areas they haven't been seen in for years. They were seen on Colonel Rose Drive near Alice Springs Airport back in 2000.

Typically, they prefer open, treeless plains and scalded clay pans, sheltering in nests built of dry grass in burrows and soil cracks. Dainty but voracious predators, they feed on terrestrial vertebrates including spiders, cockroaches and scorpions.

The Kutarr's size, colouring and long, brush-tipped tail means they can be confused with the common Spinifex Hopping Mouse. However the Kutarr has a pointed snout (photo opposite) filled with the pointed, sharp teeth of a carnivore, rather than the large, rounded nose and large incisors of the Hopping Mouse – a rodent.



Fat Tailed Antechinus

Like many Alice Springs residents lately, Geoff and Denise Purdie of Ilparpa Rd have been overrun by mice in recent months. Their control program: mouse traps in the house and on the back porch.

The Purdie's noticed that trapped mice were being eaten while in the traps, with traps dragged some distance from where they were set – even under fridges! Occasionally, half consumed mice were left for the Purdies to discover.



Fat Tailed Antechinus

The culprit was this Fat-tailed False Antechinus (*Pseudoantechinus macdonnellensis*), who at least on one occasion, trapped itself on a night-time raid.

The antechinus is an inhabitant of rocky hills around Alice Springs and elsewhere in Central Australia and can be relatively common in places at times, but are not often seen due to their small size and nocturnal habits.

Predators of large insects and smaller vertebrates such as geckos and rodents,

they can be identified from similar animals by the orange fur behind their ears, clearly visible in the photograph above.

We should mention that this antechinus was released promptly and unharmed to continue its night time forays on the Purdie's porch.

Native Grasses for Your Garden

Central Australia is rich in native grasses, with over 50 species of grass just around the Alice Springs area. With so many different species, they all have different places in our ecosystems. There are both annual and perennial species, but all flourish after infrequent high rainfall events. Learning about, and planting, the grass species which are native to your area can make the difference between a standard garden and a garden which will attract local wildlife.

Many animals share special relationships with different grass species. We have many bird species which feed mainly on grass seeds. Many of our small mammals also require grasslands, both for the invertebrate life which forms part of their diets and for the cover it provides from predators.

Spinifex grasses (*Triodia sp.*) are probably one of the best-known examples. Except for a few species most of the Spinifex grasses are spiky and unpalatable to grazing animals. This makes them perfect for other animals to move in. Termites are one of the few animals that can harvest Spinifex and they form a large percentage of the biomass of outback ecosystems. Termites, in turn, are an excellent food and attract a range of lizard species to these areas. Many small mammals and birds choose to nest in and under Spinifex clumps including one of the most enigmatic of all Australian animals, the Night Parrot.

But you don't need to fill your yard with Spinifex in order to attract grass-dwelling species to your garden. Below, we have set out a few species of grasses which are native to the common land types around Alice Springs. By trying to limit your grass planting to these species you might find you can enrich your garden and appreciate a broader diversity of wildlife.



Hard Spinifex (*Triodia basedowii*)

This is the common spinifex that grows in deep sand and on dunes. It forms prickly hummocks of bright green leaves up to 40cm high and 2-3m wide. Summer rains enable the plant to flower and set seed, the straw coloured seed heads reaching up to 70cm tall.

This plant is highly flammable and its spread is aided by fire. Long unburnt plants develop a ring shape, as the centre of the hummock dies off, leaving an outer ring of up to 3m in diameter.

The sharp pointed, needle-like foliage offers protection for small animals that are able to crawl within the hummocks. It is a hardy, drought tolerant grass that can offer valuable habitat for small wildlife within your garden.



Native Lemon Grass (*Cymbopogon ambiguus*)

In the bush, this grass grows on rocky hill slopes, stony creek beds and floodplains. It grows in dense, erect tussocks up to 1m tall. The leaves are blue-green and have a strong lemon scent when crushed.

This is a widespread species, and many different forms of the grass occur. Some forms grown as garden plants are aggressive colonisers and can quickly become a problem in your garden, invading garden beds and nearby bushland if not kept under control.

It is recommended that when using this species, you purchase plants of local provenance (ie. plants grown from seed collected locally) to prevent invasive strains of the grass escaping into bushland.



Silky Browntops (*Eulalia aurea*)

This species has attractive, silky golden-brown seed heads that grow above a dense tussock up to 1m tall. It grows in moist areas on flats and along creek banks. Although drought tolerant, it will do best in a garden situation if watered regularly.

This species is palatable to livestock, especially when young, and in areas where heavy grazing occurs, it is favoured over less palatable species.

The above species information is taken from the Central Australian Grass Guide. See the Recommended Books section of this newsletter for the details of this publication.

Workshops & Announcements

2011 Biodiversity Surveys

Each year, Land for Wildlife coordinators conduct a comprehensive biodiversity survey of between four and six member properties. These surveys have generally taken place in September or October.

These months usually see the warming of temperatures after the winter season, resulting in a heightened activity of wildlife. The beginning of the warm weather is a perfect time for wildlife observation and trapping, as many animals that have been less active during cold nights begin to wake up.

The surveys are a fantastic way of assessing the success of land management activities carried out on properties, such as weed control or re-vegetation. They're also a good way of coming face to face with some of the more secretive animals that use your property and learning the techniques and methods used for biological surveying.

Last year, we surveyed properties in the Ross Highway area, east of Alice Springs. We're in the process of planning this year's survey to take place elsewhere in the rural area. If you're interested in participating as a volunteer, contact Jesse or Chris on the details at the end of this newsletter. You could be involved in setting and checking animal traps, vegetation transects or bird watching activities.

Websites Worth a Look



<http://inhabitat.com>

This is an interesting site which maintains that "design will save the world". It has lots of news from around the world on the latest eco-friendly developments in design and architecture – fascinating stuff. I enjoyed the latest crazy developments in Dubai.

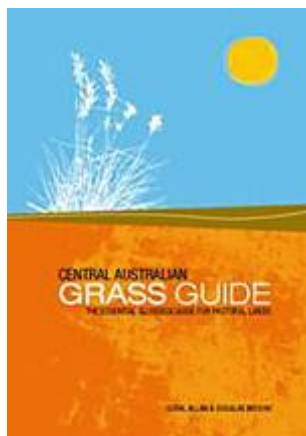


<http://www.ecogeek.org/>

“Brains for the earth”, is the tag line for this website aimed at exploring the connection between nature and technology. This is a great website for all of you who like the latest gadgets.

There is some seriously technical information here, but it is all aimed at directing consumers towards the most efficient appliances and products in our new carbon-conscious world.

Recommended Books



Central Australian Grass Guide The Essential Glovebox Guide for Pastoral Lands

Authors:

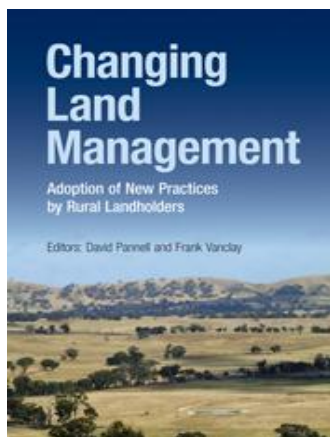
Coral Allan

Douglas Wilson

Publisher: Central Land Management Association

This is a perfect pocket guide to over 50 species of common grasses that grow in Central Australia. It contains colour photographs and detailed descriptions of all species covered by the guide. A valuable book, whether using it in the field or as a planting guide for your garden.

The book is available from the Central Land Management Association, www.clma.com.au



Changing Land Management Adoption of New Practices by Rural Landholders

Edited by:

Frank Vanclay

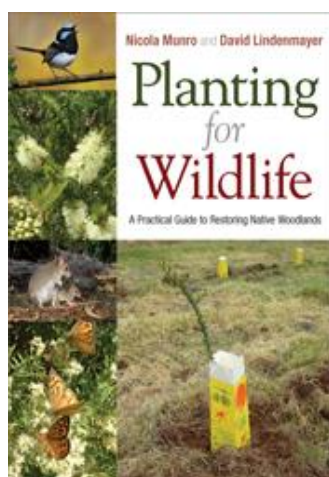
David Pannell

Publisher: CSIRO PUBLISHING

Changing Land Management provides insights from past and new research, supporting decision-makers as they attempt to influence or assist rural communities adapting to changed circumstances, such as new

technologies, new environmental imperatives, new market opportunities or changed climate.

Common themes are the need for an appreciation of the diversity of land managers and their contexts, of the diversity of factors that influence land-management decisions, and of the challenges that face government programs that are intended to change land management.



Planting for Wildlife

A Practical Guide to Restoring Native Woodlands

Authors:

Nicola Munro

David Lindenmayer

Publisher: CSIRO PUBLISHING

Planting for Wildlife provides the latest information on restoring woodlands, with particular emphasis on plantings as habitat for wildlife. Topics include why it is important to revegetate, where to plant, how to prepare a site, how to maintain and manage plantings, and how they change over time.

Although this book's focus is on the south-eastern grazing region where domestic livestock grazing and/or cropping have been prominent forms of land use, similar principles apply to former grazing land in central Australia.

The book includes high-quality colour photographs to support the themes discussed. It is ideal for natural resource managers; field staff from state and federal government agencies; landholders; hobby farmers; vineyard owners; naturalists interested in birds, conservation and revegetation; as well as policy makers in regional, state and federal government

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Details
19-20 August	Desert Smart Eco Fair	Olive Pink Botanic Gardens Contact ALEC for more details www.alec.org.au , www.desertsmart.net.au

Take care,

Chris, Jesse & Bill



Garden for Wildlife Coordinators

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