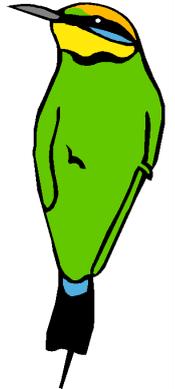


GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

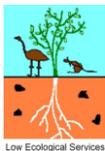
Stimpson's Python feeding on a Red Tree Frog, *Litoria rubella*, at Simpsons Gap.
Snakes will not be very active or visible during these cold winter months.
Photo courtesy Land for Wildlife member, Glen Marshall



NEWSLETTER

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Low Ecological Services

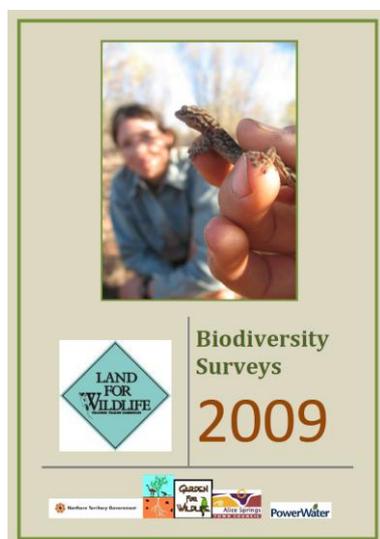


Alice Springs Municipality | June 2010

Garden for Wildlife News

I have just returned from Canberra to represent Garden for Wildlife at another awards ceremony! Garden for Wildlife was a finalist for the National Landcare Community Award, and the ceremony was held at Parliament House on the very day Australia found itself with new Prime Minister! I received all sorts of text messages saying "See what happens when Garden for Wildlife goes to Canberra!" Unfortunately we did not win this one folks! All the finalists were an incredible group of national projects, each very different to the next. The winner of our Community category was a fantastic project from Melbourne; the 'Friends of Westgate Park', who have over the past 12 years revegetated and maintained 64 hectares of land under the Westgate Bridge (http://svc009.wic050p.server-web.com/nationalawards2010/?page_id=624). The Garden for Wildlife program received a lot of interest and congratulations, so well done to all of you again. Your efforts are nationally recognised. The NT was well represented this year, but alas claimed no winners. Below are the finalists for the NT:

Aust. Govt Coastcare Award	<u>Darwin Council</u>
Aust. Govt Individual Landcarer Award	<u>Glenn McFarlane</u>
Leighton Holdings Indigenous Award	<u>Tjuwanpa Rangers</u>
Local Govt Landcare Partnership Award	<u>Darwin Council</u>
Aust Govt Local Landcare Facilitator	<u>Joye Maddison</u>
Aust. Govt Sustainable Farm Practices	<u>NT Horticultural</u>
Toshiba Community Group Award	<u>Barkly Landcare</u>
Urban Landcare Award	<u>Gdn for Wildlife</u>
Westpac Education Award	<u>Darwin High</u>
Woolworths Primary Producer Award	<u>P&A Howies</u>



Finally, it's here! Land for Wildlife's 3rd annual Biodiversity Survey Report is online. The report publishes the results of fauna surveys undertaken on Land for Wildlife member properties in the Racecourse/Winery area. The report also includes;

- A Local Guide to Identifying Tracks, Scats, Burrows, Nests and Other Signs
- Fauna profiles
- Flora profiles
- A comparison with the Arid Zone Research Institute property

Go to www.lowecol.com.au/lfw/lfw.htm.

Thanks to all the Garden for Wildlife members that volunteered during the surveys. Stay tuned for 2010 volunteer opportunities!

Soil Erosion

Land for Wildlife recently hosted a Soil Erosion & Conservation workshop with Soil conservation Officer Col Stanton. The workshop looked at two Land for Wildlife property case studies, one property with minor erosion problems, one with major. The latter property owner bought the site with major problems with a view to rehabilitating the block - a big job and we wish her all the best! Col showed us the signs of and causes of soil erosion, and we learned how to rehabilitate the sites.

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For more information on soil conservation see our website: <http://www.lowecol.com.au/lfw/gfwmeminfo.htm>. You will find 'Land Notes' on topics such as Understanding Water Movement, Road Drainage, Whoaboy Construction, Rehabilitating Degraded Sites, Gully Rehabilitation, Building Tracks & Roads to Minimise Erosion. Erosion is not a common problem on urban blocks, however if anyone is interested in having Col Stanton come to have a look at any problems you think you may have on your property, contact him on colin.stanton@nt.gov.au or 8951 9208. The consultation is free and well worth it. Col visited the block I live on and I now know where to put my whoaboys, and how to minimise problems in the future from water movement down the slope.

Things we learned in the workshop:

- Soil erosion is a natural process as water moves along natural drainage channels or as wind shifts sand dunes, however with human interference erosion is accelerated and the landscape cannot cope with the change in water flow. Some of the results of accelerated erosion are demonstrated in the pictures below.
- Let water flow where it wants to naturally flow historically. By altering flow direction problems will arise and greater efforts will be required to prevent erosion.
- Build roads and tracks along the contour of a slope. If tracks are built straight up the slope (the steepest, but most direct route) water will be funnelled down the tracks, washing soil away and creating a gully
- Do not rehabilitate gullies by simply throwing logs or debris into them. It may create larger and deeper gullies. Geo-textile fabric should be laid down first to help marry the infill to the gully.
- If you notice new gullies, rills, sheet erosion, tunnel erosion or wind erosion look upslope for causes or changes. The problem is always upslope from the gully head. Pictured below Col points out a gully forming caused by a mound of dirt piled upslope changing and intensifying the flow of water. The gully head can be repaired, but will only form again if the cause of the problem is not dealt with first. Once the cause of the problem is fixed, the gully will fix itself. Pictured left are exposed Hakea tree roots caused by the gully as soil washes away. In many cases this can result in the tree falling down or dying from lack of water.

Right: A gully head worms its way through the soil. The cause is an unnatural change in water flow upslope. This site has severe erosion problems. The photos below demonstrate minor, easily repairable gullies.





Below: Arrows point to an exposed tree root.
Left: Col points out a small gully and talks about rehabilitation.



- Pictured **right** Col points out the difference between the colour of soils at the front of the block, one soil is foreign to the land unit. The lighter coloured soil has been washed down from the range trapped along gullies caused by accelerated erosion during rainfall events. This is a sign that there is an erosion problem somewhere. Some back tracking upslope will find the source of the problem!



- Can you spot the problem in the picture to the **left**? The left side of the fenceline has healthy vegetation growing (note trees with green leaves, and grass covering the ground), the other is barren and the trees are struggling. There is a problem here somewhere! We looked upslope and found human disturbance on neighbouring properties had altered the flow of water. A track along the fenceline (against the contour of the land) cut the landscape in two preventing water reaching the other side of the track. When it rains water is diverted down the track like a river. You may notice this sometimes if you are driving around the country side. One side of the road is healthy and lush, the other barren.

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- Car tyre tracks can cause major erosion. Driving a car off-road when the soil is still moist will leave deep tracks which trap water during the next rainfall event. The water washes soil down the tyre tracks, altering its natural flow and depriving nearby vegetation of water. The track becomes a gully and other problems occur in a domino effect. Be sure to drive along the contour, and preferably not when soil is still wet underneath. The image (below left) I found at 'Effects of Off-Highway Vehicles on Archaeological Sites in Red Rock Canyon' www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24576. It demonstrates vehicle tyre damage (25 years after the sites closure) as several tracks are made across the slope's contour i.e. straight up the hill



and not zig-zaging along the contour. You can see the light soil that has washed down.

- Vegetation holds soil together. Overgrazing of stock results in reduction or absence of grass and shrubs, which causes wind and sheet erosion. Care needs to be taken when removing weeds from sloped environments.
- To see an example of a worst case
- It is a land owner's responsibility to repair erosion damage. It can unfortunately be very expensive to repair major erosion problems, but it is very very cheap and easy to fix problems in their beginning, or to prevent them from occurring – once you have the know-how. **Contact Col!!**

A site with major erosion problems: Below water gouges its way through the landscape. This is an example of accelerated (unnatural) erosion caused by human interference. It is not a natural drainage channel.



Letters to the Editor

The Bowerbird Mystery

Five months ago I went to visit a new Garden for Wildlife member's property. There in the front yard under a mandarin tree was a feisty male Western Bowerbird tending to his bower. How lucky to have a bower in your front garden! 'Bob' the Bowerbird has been building bowers in Megg's front garden for years. During the visit we watched Bob rearrange his white and green ornaments decorating the entrance to his bower. Megg, the property owner, explained how she used to leave pretty white objects around such as shells, for him to add to his bower. This was to avoid a front garden full of plastic straws, bottle tops and other white rubbish! Alas, other Bowerbirds would

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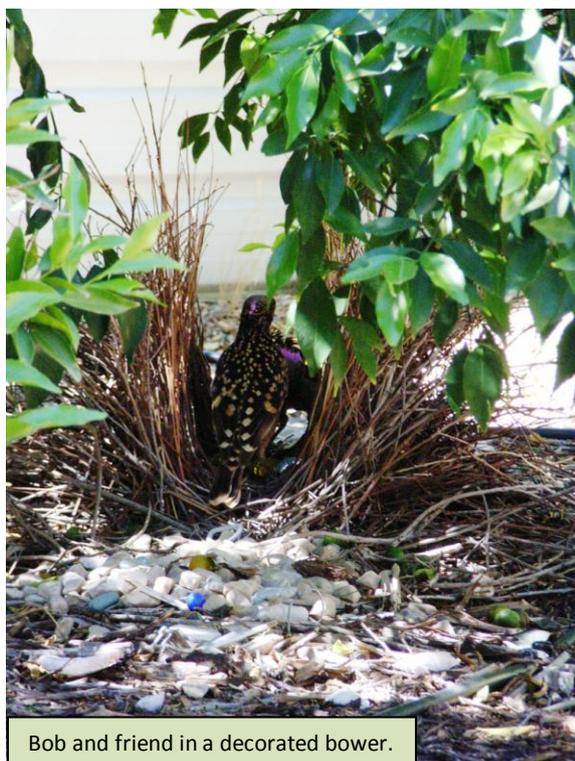
come to her garden and raid the bower. In turn Bob would disappear and return with less attractive urban debris – so Megg gave up on this after a while. Megg told me that someone somewhere else in Eastside must have a beautiful bower in their garden decorated with all her stolen shells and pebbles! In addition, Bob particularly liked bright green baby capsicums to adorn the very centre of his bower.



Later in the year I was visiting the garden of another new Garden for Wildlife member, Rhondda, on Eastside. She gave me a tour of her garden; where the Galahs and Port Lincoln Ringnecks would sit and chatter in the afternoon, the unidentified lerp eating her Eremophila, and a small vegetable garden. Capsicum plants grew in this garden, she told me, but a Bowerbird kept stealing the capsicums before they got big enough to eat. I exclaimed “I know exactly where those capsicums are going!”

I emailed Megg, and she told me to pass on the news that Bob has had a fetish for green mandarins lately. “At the moment the centre of the active bower is full of new small green completely unripe mandarins. A few weeks ago it was full of green dates! This might be a window of opportunity for Rhondda to have capsicums without them being stolen!” she wrote. She also asked if Rhondda would like to put something obviously green and 'unique' in her garden, and if it disappeared to let us know and we could see if it appeared in the bower at Megg’s place! Rhondda was going away for a while, but assured us to keep an eye out on any comings and goings of Bob or any of his associates. Rhondda wrote, “I have planted several more capsicums and they are just starting to produce (enough for both households). This is an exciting adventure – ‘The Bowerbird Mystery’!”

“Also to let you know,” Megg writes, “that this weekend I noticed that Bob has changed bowers. The one that has been active for the last three years looks 'flattened' and has nothing 'inside'.” New objects appeared in a bower next to the old one. “... does this mean a new bird has taken over or the same bird has had a change of aesthetic???? How long does the average bower bird live?”



Bob and friend in a decorated bower.

It is difficult to tell Western bowerbirds apart – males have a larger pink/purple patch on the back of their head than females, but to identify one individual from another can be tricky unless there was some distinctive mark, characteristic or leg band on the bird. Younger birds are not as bright in colour and the purple/pink patch on the back of the head will not be as marked. The Alice Springs Desert Park suggests a Western Bowerbird normally lives for at least 20yrs, however no studies have been done (a banding study would need to be conducted). It is anticipated that sexual maturity would not be reached until at least 3 years of age, and in Satin Bowerbirds (only occurring on the east coast) it is not reached until around seven years!

Shortly after the rains in early March Megg confirms a second bird appeared and was residing in the yard. “We may have a breeding pair? I guess if that was the case, bower activity may eventually drop until the clutch is fledged... But for the moment they are both still very active!”

Rhondda replied: “I thought the Bowerbird had found a girlfriend a couple of months ago as he did bring a lady into the tree in my backyard and there was quite a bit to do going on and I haven't lost anymore capsicums since then. It is interesting to know his thing about green edibles, as I thought the local Bowerbirds had a thing about white objects like bone, shells etc. I am not supplying him with the dates or mandarins so he has found a new source of supply. This guy is a real character.” Indeed Western Bowerbirds do have a thing for white objects, as well as green objects. The green objects tend to be put closer to the bower entrance or inside the bower, while white objects are more plentiful and obvious scattered widely from the bowers entrance. The Alice Springs Desert Park tells me that golf balls (among other strange objects) have been found in bowers significantly far from a golf course. How does a Bowerbird manage to transport something so large and smooth with only a beak and small claws to work with?!

I then hear from Megg again that shortly after the second bird arrived in her garden there was much bower construction under the mandarin tree, and much decorating of and dancing in the bowers. “This appears to be prime Bowerbird real estate – (I could be a rich woman if only they paid rent!)” Megg writes. Bob had now moved out of the bower he has danced in for the past 3 or so years and back to his original bower. Megg reported a lot of strange and quirky behaviour from the two birds, but we came to the conclusion that the second bird was likely Bob's mate (he must be a good dancer), and hopefully with all this rain they disappeared up into a tree into a nest! The capsicums, mandarins and dates will get a chance to grow big and fat as Bob and partner forage for grubs to feed their chicks, and Megg's front garden will have a break from construction and courtship activity. Stay tuned for the next chapter of “Birds and the City”!

Announcements

Garden for Wildlife Competition!

At the Melaleuca Awards Power & Water kindly gave us a free Level 1 Water Audit. We would like to give it to one of our Garden for Wildlife members, and so have designed a competition to win it!

Making Windows Safe for Birds Competition

This is a competition for the best ‘Bird-proofing of Windows’ idea. Windows are a major contributor to bird deaths globally. Birds see only the tree reflected in a window, or the plant behind the window, not the glass itself. To stop these collisions we need to make glass *visible* to birds or to stop the birds from flying where the windows are.

What are your tried and tested methods or your ideas? Email us with your favourite technique at lfw@lowecol.com.au to win a Power & Water Level 1 Water Audit.

Closing date Sunday August 1st 2010

Some websites for inspiration:

<http://www.birdsandbuildings.org/problems.html>

<http://www.flap.org/new/prevent.htm>

<http://www.buildinggreen.com/auth/article.cfm/2005/8/1/Design-for-the-Birds-Protecting-Birds-from-the-Hazards-of-Glass/?&accessCode=%20odynj2>

<http://www.duncraft.com/Window-Strike-Solutions-C227.aspx>

<http://www.wildbirds.com/dnn/ProtectBirds/WindowHazards/tabid/681/Default.aspx>



Power & Water Level 1 Water Audit is an evaluation of a site's overall water consumption to determine whether water use is excessive or reasonable. The overview identifies water use and costs to enable control measures to be implemented and reviewed and encourages water conservation and efficiency. Financial and environmental benefits are gained by using water efficiently, and the Water Audit will help to determine ways to reduce consumption and conserve our most important resource in a country suffering shortages.

Alice Springs Landcare Inc.



Hello,

Alice Springs Landcare spent some time last year removing an invasive species of cactus (**Boxing-glove Cactus - *Cylindropuntia fulgida***) from Spencer Valley.

Recently a Landcare volunteer mentioned to me that they had seen the same cactus in the Telegraph Station Reserve, just north of Spencer Valley. This sighting has led to the discovery of a large number of cactus plants in the hills of the Telegraph Station Reserve, and a plan by the Telegraph Station Rangers to map it's distribution and then strategically spray and remove it.



Photo courtesy Brett Carlson, DCQ,
www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_10179.htm

The Rangers have asked if Alice Springs Landcare volunteers would be interested in assisting by spending a morning looking for new infestations and recording their location. This information will then be used by the Rangers in their control program. If you are interested in a bit of a bush walk and volunteering, let me know. Have a look at the attached photos and map, maybe you have seen this plant whilst riding or mountain-biking, if so please let me know.

Thanks

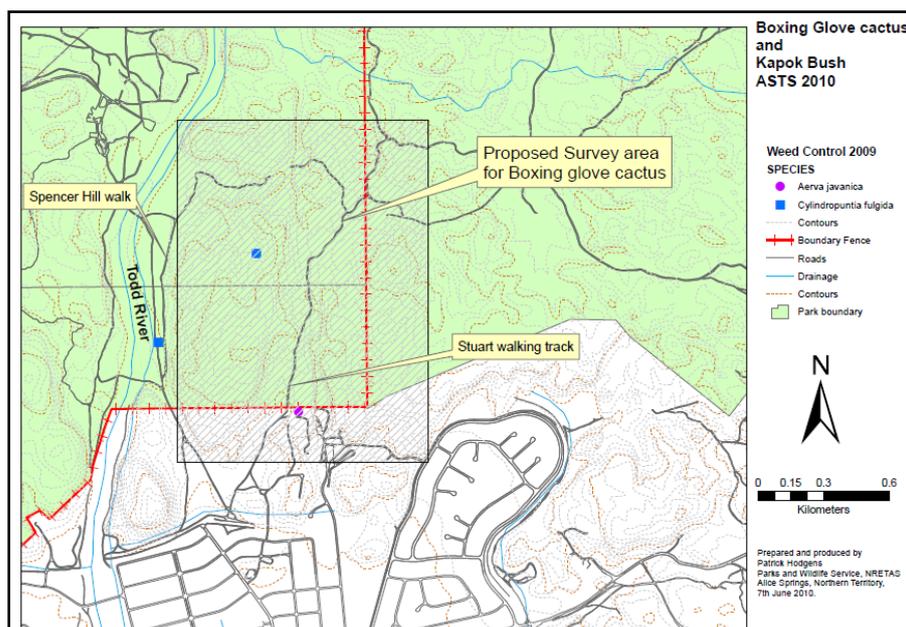
Tim Collins, Chairperson

tim.collins@aapt.net.au

NEW! Alice Springs Landcare Inc. Website

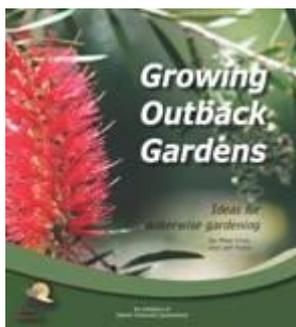
www.alicespringslandcare.com

Be involved and keep up to date with the actions of Spencer Valley Landcare, Northside Landcare, Lower Todd Landcare and Ilparpa Landcare. Check out the new website!



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Recommended Books



Desert Channels Queensland has produced a book titled, *Growing Outback Gardens Tips for Waterwise Gardening* which we believe is a wonderful resource for gardeners in most of Australia. Growing Outback Gardens is a 116 page, full-colour, practical, how-to book that sets you on the journey to making an attractive garden that can cope with the harsh extremes of the Outback environment. With a combined four decades in the Outback, and having conducted numerous gardening workshops over the last 3 years, authors Mike Chuk (formerly from Alice Springs) and Jeff Poole take you through how to plan a garden, select plants, irrigation systems, mulches, worms, vegetables fruits and flowers. What more could you ask for if you're into sowin' things and growin' things?

Calendar of Events

Sunday 11 July – Field Naturalists: Day walk on the southern side of Heavitree Range starting near The Little Sisters Camp. Return the same way. Walking is mostly on tracks, some a little rough and rocky but not difficult. There is no real destination – just wander and check out the scenery and plants for as long as we like. Contact Connie Spencer on 8952 4694 for information on time and place to meet.

Wednesday 14 July – Field Naturalist meeting: Ashley Sparrow presents *Landscape ecology in Antarctic dry valleys*, 7.00pm at CDU Higher Education Building Lecture Theatre

Saturday 17 July – Field Naturalist Bird watching trip with Mark Carter to the vicinity of Kunoth Bore on the Tanami Road. Meet at 6.40 am sharp, at the end of Sargent Street on the North Stuart Highway. Contact Barb Gilfedder 89 555452.

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

Thursday 28 July - Tourism and Uranium Mining Discussion & Drinks @ALEC Haaren House, 5:30pm. If you are involved in tourism and would like to come along please rsvp by email to jess.abrahams@alec.org.au

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.

NOTE: POSTPONED – DesertSmart coolmob Greywater Reuse Workshop, coming soon...

Take care,
Ilse & Bill



Garden for Wildlife Coordinators

[Low Ecological Services P/L](#)

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

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Email: LFW@lowecol.com.au

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