

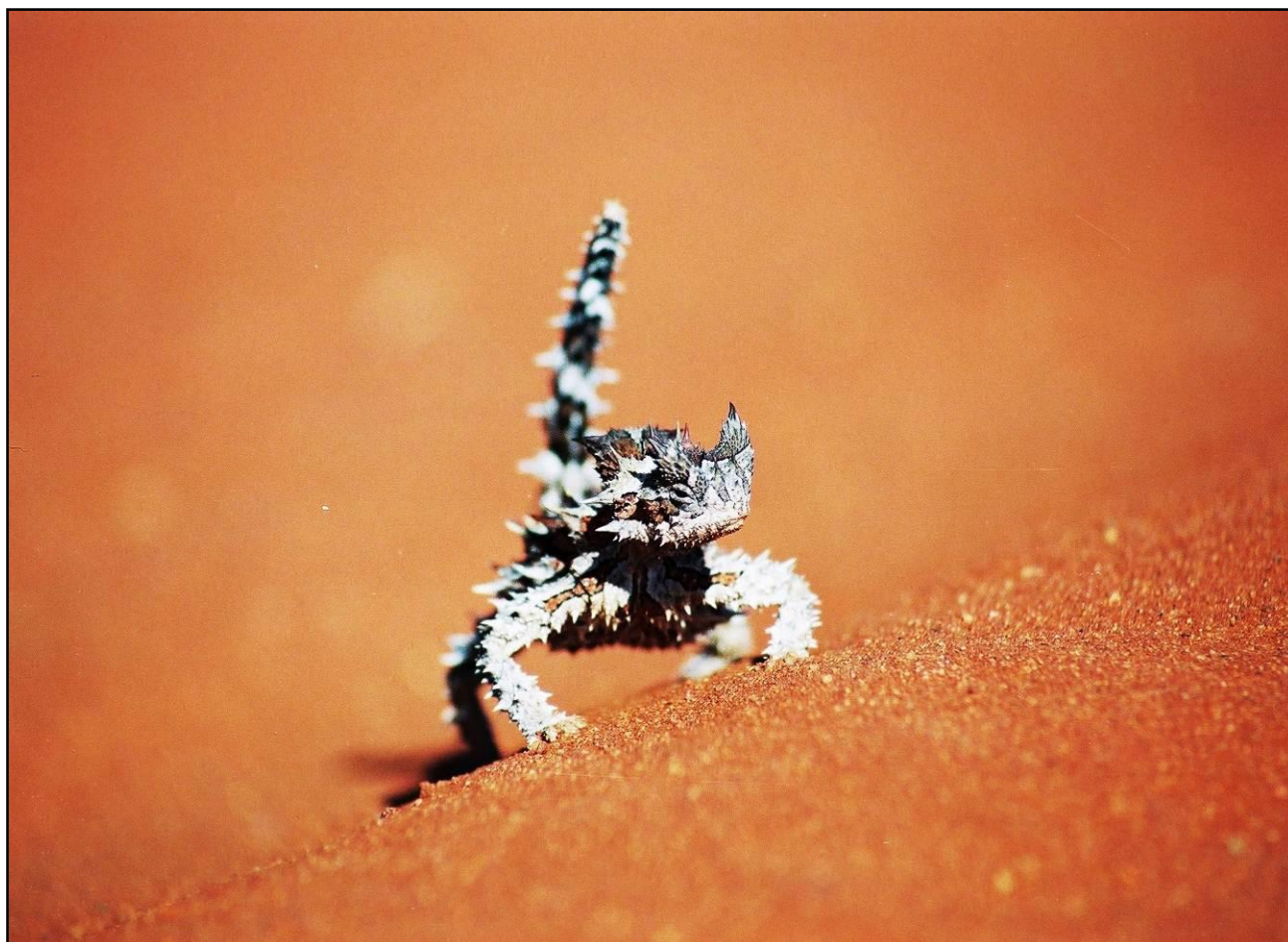


NT
LANDCARE
AWARDS⁰⁹
CATEGORY FINALIST



Land for Wildlife

Conservation is in your hands



Spring in Central Australia: Above, Thorny Devil. And below, Simpson Desert wildflowers. Photos: Jesse Carpenter



NEWSLETTER Alice Springs Municipality August 2011



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On our cover this month...

Most Centralians would be familiar with our August cover – the Thorny Devil (*Moloch horridus*). These beautiful and unique arid zone reptiles are well known for their gentle nature and ant-eating habits. This fellow was snapped in sand dune country south of Alice Springs. With a few days of warm weather over recent weeks, lizards of all shapes and sizes are again becoming a feature of people's backyard wildlife.

Land for Wildlife Update

New Resource Management Plan Launched

On Tuesday, 23rd August, the new NT Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan was launched in Alice Springs.

Prepared by Territory Natural Resource Management, the new 2010 – 2015 plan aims to;

- Guide investments and activities in Natural Resource Management in the NT
- Encourage greater involvement in NRM in the Territory
- Identify opportunities for new partnerships
- Direct future NRM policies and priorities of the NT and Australian Governments and
- Encourage increased funding into NRM in the Territory.

Unlike the previous plan, the newly released version has a regional focus, with regional action plans developed for the four regions of the Territory, Top End, Gulf Savannah, Table Lands and the Arid Lands. These regional Action Plans identify key NRM issues/priorities and outline actions by which to

address these. Priorities for NRM have been developed through extensive consultation with NRM groups and the general public in each region.

The plan can be reviewed through various interactive tools or by downloading the complete document from the Territory Natural Resource Management web site www.territorynrm.org.au.

Alternatively, you can contact TNRM Arid Lands Regional Coordinator, Heidi Groffen on 8951 9284.

2011 Eco Fair

All the action was at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens from the 19th-21st August for the annual DesertSmart Eco Fair.

The weekend saw many Alice Springs NRM and community groups participating by holding stalls or workshops over the three days.

Land for Wildlife again operated an information stand and it was great to see many of our members out and about and have the opportunity to catch up.

The Garden for Wildlife program prospered on the day, with 12 new members signing up over the Saturday and Sunday.

Thanks should go to Jimmy Cocking and the crew from ALEC, who were responsible for the organisation of a great weekend.

Workshops

Schools @ the Eco Fair

As part of our Eco Fair presence, Land for Wildlife took part in the Schools day, held as part of the fair on Friday 19th August.

Various environmental groups from Alice Springs, including the Desert Park, Alice Solar City and others conducted 40 minute workshops for school classes throughout the morning.

Our Land for Wildlife workshop covered the topics of habitats and biodiversity. In all, four classes participated, with groups from year 6 – 9 taking part in a 'biodiversity survey' of the gardens.

Biodiversity Surveys

This year's Biodiversity survey is scheduled to take place over two weeks in October. Properties in the area of Honeymoon Gap and Roe Creek have been targeted, with four property owners having agreed to participate.

All members (and interested non-members!) are invited to take part as volunteers in animal trapping, vegetation surveying and bird watching activities that will be carried out during the field component of the project.

Two properties will be surveyed over three trapping nights from the 9th – 12th October and a further two properties from 23rd -26th.

This will be a fantastic opportunity to learn some new skills in surveying techniques and flora and fauna identification - skills that can be applied to your own property to assess the success of your management activities. No previous experience is necessary.

Please contact Jesse or Chris at Land for Wildlife if you're interested in taking part as a volunteer.

Articles

Put Your Fire Breaks in Now!



Above: A recent bushfire on the outskirts of Alice Springs

Summer's not even upon us yet, but already the Centre's had its share of wildfires. Over the past few weeks, fire fighting personnel have been kept busy bringing several fires on the outskirts of Alice Springs under control.

Alice Springs Town Council is reminding

people to ensure that their properties are adequately protected from fires by adhering to the council by-laws in regards to fire breaks.

Fire breaks are important not just to protect yours and neighbours' properties from the spread of fire, but also to allow access for fire fighting crews, should the need arise. Adequate breaks can stop a fire under mild

conditions and provide control lines from which back burning can be undertaken.

Landowners are obligated by both Territory and Local Government legislation to minimise the risk of fire spreading to and from their property.

The Territory Government's *Bushfires Act* 2004 outlines the responsibilities and legal framework for bushfire management. The Act places the responsibility for bushfire management on the Landowner, primarily by maintaining fire breaks on property boundaries and assets.

To comply with Bushfires NT's guidelines, firebreaks must be either;

- A minimum of 4m wide and graded to bare ground, or
- A minimum of 4m wide and vegetation slashed to a maximum height of 50mm with all slashed material removed, or
- Lawn or cultivated garden.

For further information on the *Bushfires Act*, including penalties for non-compliance, contact Bushfires NT direct on 8952 3066, or visit www.nt.gov.au/nreta/natres/bushfires.

The Alice Springs Town Council's Flammable Plants by-laws also stipulate the responsibility of landholders in regards to reducing the risk of fire. Provision 7 of the by-laws states that;

- "The occupier or, where there is no occupier, the owner of land shall ensure that grass, weeds or other growth on land do not accumulate on the land in such a way that they constitute a danger by fire to life or to property or cause a nuisance."

These by-laws are available in full from the Council's web site. www.alicesprings.nt.gov.au.

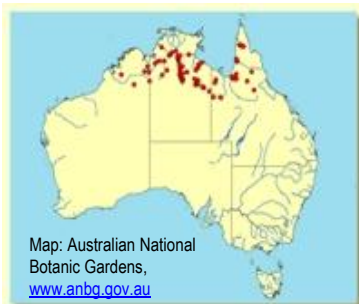
Confusing Coolabahs

The taxonomy of eucalypts is indeed a confusing and continually changing science. From what was, not long ago, a single genus, we now have a complicated assemblage of 7 genera; *Eucalyptus*, *Corymbia* (represented by Bloodwoods and Ghost Gums in the Centre) *Angophora*, *Arillastrum*, *Allosyncarpia*, *Eucalyptosis* and *Stockwellia*.

Division between the 700 - 800 species is also complicated, with single species being split based on genetic research or, in some cases several species being united.

One such complicated assemblage of species are the three (or four, or six!) *Eucalyptus* generally referred to as Coolabahs, or Bastard Coolabahs, or various other common names.

***E. microtheca* – Northern Coolabah**



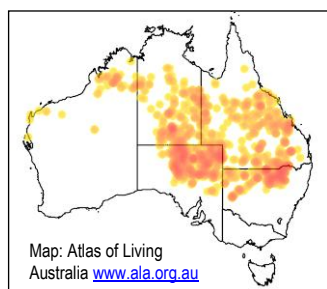
Rough bark of *E. microtheca*

Until recently, all trees referred to as Coolabah were considered to belong to this species. The species was thought to be widespread across inland Australia and included both rough and smooth barked trees with various leaf, floral and habit variations.

The species has since been divided into as many as 5 new species, with the name *E. microtheca* applying to a species found from northern NT to Cape York, with an isolated occurrence in north east SA. It grows along watercourses and in seasonally inundated swamps and wetlands.

The distinguishing characteristics of *E. microtheca* are the flaky, fibrous, grey bark from the trunk to the tips of the branches (picture above) and the small fruit size. Also its distribution – you are unlikely to see this species in the wild around Alice Springs!

***E. coolabah* – Coolabah**



This is a small to medium sized tree that grows on seasonally flooded areas along river floodouts and inland swamps, often on saline soils.

You can see this species around Alice Springs in places such as St Mary's Creek, where some quite large examples occur, and also in swamps alongside the Palmer River at the Stuart Highway crossing. Characterised by

rough grey-brown bark on most of the trunk and the



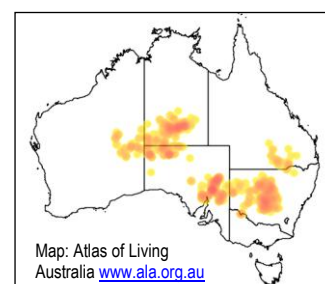
E. coolabah. A large tree, left and blossoms, right.

base of large branches, smaller branches are smooth and white barked.

Flowers and fruit occur in groups of 3-7 and are small, being about 5mm long.

In low lying, saline and temporarily water logged soils, these trees can become the dominant upper storey species in woodland communities.

***E. intertexta* – Bastard Coolabah**



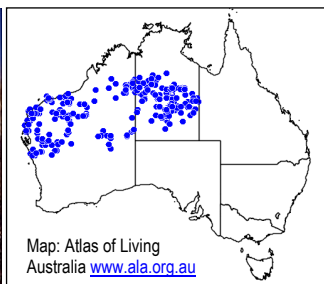
E. intertexta. Photo: Brooker & Kleinig [Australian Plant Image Index](http://www.australianplantimageindex.org)

This small to medium sized tree rarely exceeds 20m in height. Rough, grey-brown bark is usually persistent only on the lower part of the trunk, the upper trunk and branches being smooth and white or greyish – although this is variable.

These trees can occur in similar areas to *E. Coolabah*, although in less waterlogged soils. A well-known woodland of this species occurs in Ilparpa Swamp, where some large, old examples occur. This tree also grows in valleys and gorges of the central ranges. The fruit is larger than that of *E. coolabah*, being about 7mm long. Fruits open in 4 – 5 valves to release the seeds, as opposed to the 3-valved fruits of Coolabah. Other noted examples are at the bend in Larapinta Rd on the west side of the Rail line east of Hong St. Traditional owner approval to remove a huge tree is commemorated by the plaque mounted at the

corner and all the young trees result from seeds taken from the mother tree for germination.

***E. victrix* – Smooth Barked Coolabah**



The smooth trunk of *E. victrix*. Photo
Connors, J.R. [Australian Plant Image Index](http://www.australianplantimageindex.org)

Smooth Barked Coolabah occurs in areas north of Alice Springs in the Tanami Desert region. It is usually confined to floodplains and creek lines.

The fruit, flowers and foliage of this species are similar to its relative *E. Coolabah*, however it's smooth, white, powdery bark is distinctive. In fact, you're more likely to mistake this tree for a Ghost Gum (*Corymbia apparrerinja*) than more closely related trees.

And just to confuse things further, look out for these two species if you're travelling around the Barklys north of Alice Springs:

E. barklyensis

A small tree with smooth bark on the smaller branches.

E. cyanoclada

Rough bark on all branches; bluish leaves, buds & fruits.

This article's caused a stir around the office, prompting quite a debate as to the differences between these species. If you have anything to add to the conversation, send us an email!!

References

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- Moore, P. (2005). *A Guide to Plants of Inland Australia*. Sydney: Reed New Holland.

Thanks also to Jenny Purdie, author of *Plants of the Barkly Region*, and Emma Lewis, researcher at the School of Botany, University of Melbourne, for their help with this article.

The Changing Status of NT Wildlife – Your Chance to Comment

All wildlife and plant species in the NT are currently categorised according to their status. There are many factors that influence what category a species is listed as, including population size and trends, distribution and threatening processes.

The NT is the only Australian state that uses similar guidelines as the IUCN for listing species and these include threatened and non-threatened categories. Categories include:

Non-threatened	
DD	Data Deficient – not enough data to classify as a threatened species
LC	Least Concern
NT	Near Threatened
Threatened	
VU	Vulnerable
EN	Endangered
CR	Critically Endangered
EW	Extinct in the Wild
EX	Extinct

Every five years, the status of NT species are reassessed and potentially changed from one category to another. The NT Parks and Wildlife biodiversity unit, under the direction of Simon Ward here in Alice Springs, is currently in the review process.

A number of changes to the list of threatened species have been proposed, including several central Australian species. These changes include the downgrading of the Emu from VU to NT and the Australian Bustard (see Dave's photo in 'Letters' section) from VU to LC. A full list of proposed changes can be viewed on the NRETAS web site www.nt.gov.au/nretas

Before these proposed changes can become permanent, a public consultation process must be carried out. There are several reasons for this, including the opportunity to gather further data on species that researchers may have overlooked, such

as wildlife observations made by community members over time.

You are currently invited to make submissions regarding changes to the NT threatened species list. If you would like to do so, visit the NRETAS web site and follow the links to Proposed Changes to the NT Threatened Species List. The public has until the 9th of September to make submissions. Make your submissions via the NRETA web site.

Letters

This great photograph of an Australian Bustard was sent in by Dave Price. Dave wrote:

"The basic principle of Warlpiri ornithological taxonomy is pretty simple, you can eat it (kuyu) or you can't. This lovable, lumbering giant is very edible and a favourite meat. Poor bustard (wiyarra wardilyka!).

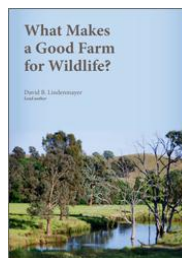
Dave"



Above: The Australian Bustard (*Ardeotis australis*). One of the species that may be taken off the NT threatened species list.

If you have any photographs or interesting wildlife stories to tell, send us an email. We'd love to have your letters in newsletters to come.

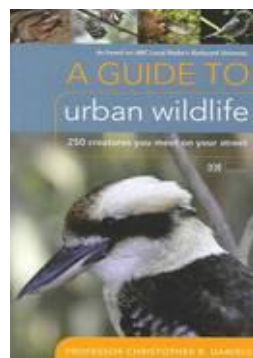
Recommended Books



What Makes a Good Farm for Wildlife

David B Lindenmayer
CSIRO Publishing

Based on 13 years of research, this book includes information on vertebrates and invertebrates on farms and their relationships with significant vegetation and environmental assets: woodland remnants, plantings, paddocks, rocky outcrops and waterways. It is a useful resource for landholders, hobby farmers, vineyard owners, naturalists interested in birds and other native animals.



A Guide to Urban Wildlife - 250 Creatures you meet on the Street

Christopher B. Daniels

In every Australian suburban street there is a secret world; a world seen but not really understood, of animals that live alongside us. Professor Christopher B. Daniels introduces you to 250 creatures that live on your street, in your backyard, in the air, at your local beach or even in your house, and takes you on a tour of their world, a world increasingly affected by its interaction with its human neighbours. In this fascinating book, you will learn how to recognise the animals you live among, and learn of their behaviours, communication, eating habits and peculiarities. Beautifully illustrated with full-colour photography, this book is the essential guide for any nature lover, or anyone who wants to learn more about the world around them.

Calendar of Events

1/9/2011 – 16/10/2011 – Annual Tiwest

Nightstalk. Details at

<http://www.perthzoo.wa.gov.au/act/tiwest-night-stalk/>

1/10/2011 – 8/10/2011 – Red Centre Birdweek.

The full program of events will shortly be available at;

<http://www.alicespringsdesertpark.com.au/plan/events.shtml>

9/10/2011 – 12/10/2011 – First set of Land for Wildlife biodiversity surveys along Roe Ck.

23/10/2011 – 26/10/2011 – Second set of Land for Wildlife biodiversity surveys along Roe Ck.

29/10/2011 – Alice Springs Field Naturalists quarterly wader count at Alice Springs Sewage Ponds.



Take care,

Jesse, Chris & Bill
Land for Wildlife Coordinators

This newsletter has been produced by
Jesse Carpenter, Chris Watson and Bill Low, *LfW*
coordinators, W.A. Low Ecological Services,
Contact us on 89555222 or lfw@lowecol.com.au