

LAND FOR WILDLIFE NEWS



Newsletter of the Land for Wildlife Scheme in Alice Springs Municipality, NT

January 2006

Land for Wildlife Update

Welcome to the summer edition Land for Wildlife newsletter for Alice Springs. I hope you have as much fun reading it as I did in putting it together!

Membership

We now have 34 properties registered with Land for Wildlife. Welcome to our newest members: Peter and Thea Toyne, Jim and Trudi Luedi and Julia Burke & Marcus Williams. If you have a friend or neighbour who you think might like to be involved, please let them know about Land for Wildlife. Brochures are available at the council, or we can send them one.

Future

Land for Wildlife is currently funded by a grant from the NT Government, which will keep us going until mid-year. We have applied for funding for the next couple of years from the federal government's National Heritage Trust, through the Regional Investment Strategy of the Integrated Natural Resource Management plan. Try saying that 3 times fast! We should hear about that soon, and will keep you informed.

Workshops

In October we held a weed workshop in conjunction with the Lower Todd Landcare Group. Sunil Dhanji from Greening Australia gave us a presentation on local weeds and how to control them. I have a copy of his presentation on CD, so if you were unable to attend and would like a copy, let me know.

We are looking at holding a bird watching workshop with the Field Naturalists Club in early March, and will let you know the location and date soon.

Advisory committee

We are still looking for someone to represent the Land for Wildlife members on the advisory committee. The advisory committee helps guide the direction of the Land for Wildlife program, and all that is required is a willingness to attend a meeting for a couple of hours, once every six months. If you have the time and want to join us, please let me know.

Happy reading!

Cassie Wright and Bill Low, Land for Wildlife Coordinators

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Sunil Dhanji from Greening Australia helping us discover just what is a weed, along the lower Todd in October.

Photo: Rob Gray

Practicalities

Fauna profile

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo

The **Red-tailed Black Cockatoo** is a magnificent cockatoo widely distributed throughout Australia. Five different subspecies occur, including a small and threatened subspecies (South Eastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, *Calyptrorhynchus banksii graptogyne*) in western Victoria and eastern South Australia. Around Alice we see the Inland Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptrorhynchus banksii samuelli*), scattered populations of which occur throughout western and central Australia.



Photo: Cassie Wright

Red-tailed black cockatoo at Owen Springs

The Inland Red-tailed Black Cockatoo has adapted well to agriculture in the wheatbelt region of Western Australia and is in fact spreading its distribution due to favouring seeds of the introduced Caltrop.

Once mature, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos are easy to sex. Males are a slaty-black colour with a black bill and a vivid red band in the tail. Females are black but with numerous yellow spots and yellow fringed feathers. The beak is a light grey and the tail banding is from yellow through orange to red (variations do occur between subspecies). The juveniles look more like the females, but tend to be greyer.

Threats

Due to the dependence of these large birds on large hollow logs for nesting, any disturbance to the natural vegetation of an area which reduces the number of old trees has the potential to

threaten the population of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. This effect can often be masked by the fact that they live for a very long time, and only produce one young at a time, and thus may continue to give the impression of a healthy population whilst they're not actually breeding very successfully.

Apart from habitat destruction the other major threat to their survival is from poaching of eggs, or chicks from the nest, to be sold on local or overseas black markets. Not only does this practice reduce the number of chicks for the season, but the poachers often also destroy the nest hollow in the process and render it useless for further breeding attempts. Poaching is illegal and if caught, poachers face heavy fines or jail terms.

The NT leads Australia in having a management plan in place, whereby an egg collector is licensed for a particular area, where they can carefully collect eggs early in the egg laying cycle. This encourages the female to lay more eggs. The removed eggs are hatched for commercial sale of young birds, which helps to reduce the need for the illegal bird trade.

Source: www.perthzoo.wa.gov.au/index.html?wildlife_facts_au_redtail.html

Flora profile

What plants have come up on your block following the spring and summer rains? Here are a few common species, which you may have seen around.

Tar Vine - *Boerhavia coccinea*



Photo: Cassie Wright

Aboriginal people found lots of uses for Tar Vine. The roots can be eaten, raw or lightly toasted. A green caterpillar, the larvae of a large

hawkmoth (Yeperenye to the Western Arrernte) is found on them and also eaten. Pitjantjatjara children put the sticky vines around small waterholes to trap small birds. (Latz 1995).

Swainsona spp.

There are 16 *Swainsona* species found in the southern half of the NT, from prostrate creeping purple peas to shrubs. This one is likely to be a Grey Swainsona, *Swainsona canescens*.

Photo: Cassie Wright



***Tribulus eichlerianus* (Caltrop, Bull-head, three cornered jack, Double Gee)** not to be confused with *Tribulus terrestris*, the introduced weed! On the rural blocks, you are most likely to see the native *T. eichlerianus*, not *T. terrestris*. How to tell them apart? *T. eichlerianus* has much larger fruits, which are large, hairy (almost woolly), with shorter spines (in relation to the size of the fruit). *T. terrestris* (the weed) has much smaller fruits, leaves and flowers. The fruits are not very hairy, and have much sharper spines.

Photo: Cassie Wright



***Euphorbia drummondii* (caustic weed, milk weed, mat spurge)**

Photo: Cassie Wright



This plant emits a milky sap when broken, and is used by Warlpiri and Arandic people as medicine for

skin complaints. Pitjantjatjara people sometimes turn it upside down and use it as a wig, or a hat for babies! (Latz 1995)

Photo: Bowman et al.,
Common Grasses of Central Australia



Enteropogon acicularis (curly windmill grass)

The stems of this grass, which is 45-80cm tall, can be used to make a hook, to extract witchetty grubs from trunks of trees (Latz 1995). It is often associated with mulga, ironwood and coolibah (Bowman et al. 1998).

Dichanthium sericeum (Queensland Blue grass)

This grass is a tufted, slender perennial about 60cm high, which has a high moisture requirement. It is associated with floodouts, drainage floors, with soils of medium or fine texture, and cracking clays. It is found on grassland plains, with Coolibah, river red gums, ghost gums and mulga (Bowman et al. 1998).

Photo: Bowman et al., Common Grasses of Central Australia



References:

Bowman et al. (1998) *Common Grasses of Central Australia, Identification and Propagation*, NT Dept. Lands Planning & Environment CD ROM.

Des Nelson, personal communication.

Latz, P. (1995) *Bushfires & Bushtucker – Aboriginal Plant Use in Central Australia*.

Weed profile - Couch

Do you have a problem with Couch? If horses have ever been kept on your block, this may apply to you. Couch, *Cynodon dactylon*, a native of Africa, is a popular lawn species, and is also considered one of the worst weeds in central Australia. It has completely smothered and replaced native plants in many of the natural drainage systems in our region, with devastating effects on species diversity and food availability for animals.



Photo: Cassie Wright

How does it spread? It is capable of invading well watered loamy areas after little or no disturbance, and expands both above the ground and below, through the growth of underground stems (rhizomes). Seed is also dispersed by water, or by vehicles and machinery, with most seed germination occurring with rains during the warmer months.

Description: Couch is a deep rooted grass to 30cm tall, forming dense mats and living for many years. The reproductive structures are arranged in spikes (4-7), which radiate from the top of the stems. It closely resembles the native species *Brachyachne convergens*, which has fewer spikes (2-4).

How do I control it? Unfortunately, Couch is not an easy weed to control, as even a small piece of stem left behind can develop into a new plant. If you don't want to use chemicals, you can control small infestations by digging it out, with care. It is important to remove the underground stems by following them and gently digging them up, or they will regrow.

Larger infestations can be controlled by smothering the area with something to block the light, including black plastic, old carpet, etc. for a minimum of 6 months. One of your fellow

Land for Wildlife members Des Nelson recommends glossy magazines!

If you are considering using chemical control, the time is when the plant is growing rapidly, and is green and healthy. If using roundup, there needs to be enough leaf material above the ground to carry the poison through the plant to kill the roots, so don't mow or cut it before applying the poison. If you do mow to encourage new growth, wait till there is sufficient above ground leaf material before poisoning.

Be aware it may take two to three applications to effectively control it. Alternatively, a week after you first spray it, you could cultivate the area to bring the rhizomes to the surface to dry out.

References:

Albrecht, D. et al (1999) *Weeds of the Tanami*.

University of California, Integrated Pest Management.
www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7453.html

Urban Food Garden website:

http://users.ncable.net.au/~urbanfoodgarden/Web/Vegetables/VEGETABLE%20PATCH%20%20MANAGEMENT/VEGETABLE_PATCH_MANAGEMENT_9.htm

Bush Detective

In this new section, we will uncover just what kind of critters make some of the strange things you find in the bush – like in the picture below! If you've ever wanted to find out what makes something, take a photo and send it in.

Who built this?



Photo: Cassie Wright

Did you know
moths
are a bit
like
hermit
crabs?

This is a larval case, made by the caterpillar (also known as a larvae) of a case or bag moth (Order: lepidoptera (moths), Family: Psychidae).

These moths build cases to protect themselves, and carry them around just like hermit crabs do!

The cases may be plain, or ornamented as this one is by sticks, leaves or other materials.

Only the head and three pairs of legs or the larva emerge through the open upper end of the case, to move it, or for feeding. Faecal pellets are discharged through an opening at the lower end of the case.

At maturity, the larva anchors its case and pupates within it. The females of most species remain wingless and are confined to their cases. They are fertilised through the open lower end and lay their eggs within the case. The newly hatched larvae leave the case and spin tiny cases of their own.

Source: Association of societies for growing Australian plants Acacia study group newsletter no. 79, May 2001. <http://www.worldwidewattle.com/socgroups/asg/newsletters/79.pdf>

Problems with pests?

Feral Cat control

In late September we were fortunate to have a visit from Mike Johnston, of the Department of Primary Industries in Victoria. Mike gave us a seminar regarding the work his group has been doing, developing a bait and toxicant to be used for managing feral cat populations throughout Australia. For those of you who were unable to make it to his seminar, here is a summary of what he's been up to:

" The project is a collaboration between WA, VIC and Commonwealth agencies that has so far demonstrated the development of an effective bait sausage, pioneered the development of a new toxicant compound and also demonstrated a technique that promises to provide a highly target-specific mechanism for exposing cats to the toxicant but not native wildlife species.

The bait, consisting of a blend of kangaroo, chicken and flavour enhancers has been the outcome of a long term study in Western Australia that has provided answers to key questions regarding the 'right' time to distribute

baits for feral cats. Baits must be laid when other food alternatives are at their lowest if a feral cat baiting program is to be effective.

A toxicant, known as para-aminopropiophenone (PAPP) was identified as an ideal compound for use with this bait. Cats are highly susceptible to the effects of the PAPP relative to other wildlife species (ie. brush-tailed possum is 90 times less susceptible than a cat) and importantly PAPP causes a humane death which is similar to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Despite the difference in susceptibility to PAPP between feral cats and wildlife species, this project is very keen to ensure that measures are taken to optimise the target-specificity wherever possible. By implanting a large pellet of PAPP inside the bait we can effectively eliminate exposure of many wildlife species due to differences in their feeding behaviour. We are exploiting the fact that feral cats will readily swallow large food items while native wildlife tend to chew their food more prior to swallowing. Our studies have so far indicated that a range of wildlife species will reject a pellet when implanted into the WA meat bait by either eating around it or spitting it out.

Our current aim is to finalise the toxicant formulation that will be inserted into baits. Field trials of the new technique will be conducted in a variety of areas as soon as practical. A DVD describing this project is available from Mike by phoning 03 9785 0111.

NB. A feral cat = an animal that receives no food, shelter or veterinary care from humans. When commercially available, this bait will be subject to regulations that restrict its use in a similar way as fox baits are currently managed. "

So what can I do?

If you've seen feral cats on your property and would like to try to trap and remove them, here are some options.

The council lends out cat traps at no charge. Council officers deliver traps to residences within the municipality, including rural blocks. When a cat is caught, council rangers collect the trap and the cat is impounded. Council only have

a limited supply of traps, and usually request that you return the trap within two weeks, unless multiple cats are being trapped.

If you would like a more permanent option, you could look at purchasing a cat trap. You may not be aware that one of your fellow LfWers has invented a sturdy cat trap, made out of old shopping trolleys! He's now in the process of designing a dog trap too. Mal Crowley will be featuring on the New Inventors TV show on Wednesday the 8th of February, at 8pm on the ABC, so you can see it for yourself.

Mal sells his traps for \$95 and can be contacted on 0427 505 625 or kdeent@bigpond.com.au



Photo: Mal Crowley

Watch out for

Spotted Turtle-doves

Feral spotted turtle-doves have been around Alice Springs since the early 1990's. While they do best around urban areas, they have been spotted in the Emily Hills and Heffernan Rd areas, and at the Arid Zone Research Institute.

" With the lack of rainfall over the past couple of years the rural dove population is currently fairly static, but numbers will inevitably build up in these areas if left unchecked, particularly if we have another run of wet years. " says Steve Eldridge, Biodiversity Conservation Scientist with the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Feral doves compete with native birds, and in some areas have all but replaced them. We can all help to prevent this from happening by watching out for spotted turtle-doves. A feral dove flyer has been included with this newsletter, to add to your Land for Wildlife folder.

If you do have a turtle-dove problem, you might be interested in the trapping program being run by the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service. If so, you can apply to have a dove trap placed in your yard for a period of time. Trapped birds will be euthanized by Parks staff, or you can take them to a holding aviary at the Desert park where they will be disposed of humanely.

I also have some information on dove traps, and a range of designs, so if you'd like to make or buy your own please contact me on 89 555 222, lfw@lowecol.com.au or P.O. Box 3130.

Ants driving you crazy?

We've heard lots of reports lately of ants in houses, ants here, ants there, ants, ants, everywhere!

If that sounds like your place, and you'd like to try a few non-chemical alternatives to ant control, you might like to consider the following:



Firstly remove the attractants; food and water. Wipe up all crumbs and sticky spots, and keep the honey jar in a plastic bag or in the fridge.



If this doesn't work, try some natural ant deterrents such as cucumber peels, mint tea bags or leaves or cloves. Place these where the ants are most active, or at their point of entry. You can also make a line at their point of entry from any of the following: cayenne pepper, citrus oil (soaked into a piece of string), lemon juice, cinnamon, coffee grounds.



If you still have no luck, a bait can be made from honey, borax (available from pharmacies) and aspartame (Equal, nutrasweet etc.). Put it in a small bottle, on its side with the lid off in the area of most activity. **IMPORTANT:** Borax is poisonous, so keep out of reach of children and pets, and only use indoors. This bait may also work on cockroaches.

Source: http://eartheasy.com/live_natpest_control.htm

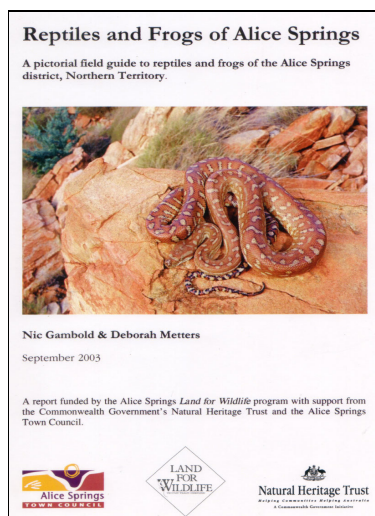
Young Lfw'er

It seems a bit unfair to me that this newsletter is aimed at the adults, with nothing for the kids to do to get involved!

So this column will now be exclusively for those under 16. This issue we'll start with a competition for the kids too – we're calling for the best drawing, painting or photograph of some wildlife you've seen on your property!

Entries are due by February 28th, and can be emailed to lfw@lowecol.com.au, or posted to Land for Wildlife, PO Box 3130, Alice Springs, NT 0871.

The best entry as chosen by the LfW coordinators will win a copy of the fantastic book, 'Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs' by Nic Gambold & Deborah Metters, valued at \$20.



So get cracking and send them in!

Photo competition

Since we can't leave the adults out entirely, here's a chance for those over 16 to show us some wildlife you've seen on your block.

Have you taken some good photos of birds, euros or wallabies, lizards, insects, or anything else?

If so, then now is your chance to show them off!



You have until the **end of February** to send in your photographs of wildlife, on Land for Wildlife

properties.

The most interesting photo, as judged by the Land for Wildlife coordinators, will win either some native plants or a bottle of wine from a wildlife-friendly vineyard.

I must admit I have an ulterior motive – I'm speaking to the Field Naturalists about Land For Wildlife and need some photos to show them what it's all about. So I'd really appreciate any photos you could lend me (digital or hard copy) for this purpose. The photographers will of course be acknowledged in the presentation.

Research

Does Roundup kill frogs? The latest information suggests that, in the United States at least, it just might. Read on to find out more, and get the update on the Australian situation...

Worldwide, amphibians are dying. And University of Pittsburgh ecologist Rick Relyea said he knows one way to kill them: Spray them with a little Roundup, the best-selling weed killer from Monsanto.

In a new study from Relyea, published in this month's issue of the journal Ecological Applications, Roundup killed 98 percent of tadpoles during a three-week test in simulated shallow ponds. In a separate dry experiment, Roundup killed 79 percent of young frogs and toads after just one day.

"It's much deadlier than we thought," Relyea said.

Monsanto says that Roundup isn't meant to be used near water and that its directions clearly say so. But many amphibians live in shallow puddles, Relyea said. He said he worries that wetlands within fields and forests are accidentally being sprayed.

Something clearly is killing amphibians. They have declined drastically since the 1970s, biologists say. Nearly a third of the world's amphibians are threatened, according to a global survey last year by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. By contrast, 12 percent of bird species and 20 percent of mammals are threatened, according to the union's Web site, www.redlist.org.

"The debate is whether amphibians are the canaries in the coal mine," Washington University biologist Jonathan Chase said. There are reasons to suspect they are."

Amphibians' permeable skins make them vulnerable to toxins. Global warming, acid rain and increased ultraviolet light all seem to harm them. So even if Roundup has a toxic effect, Chase said, it's unlikely to cause the global declines on its own. Rather, there are likely many causes with the biggest being loss of habitat, he said.

"The No. 1 cause is that we're building parking lots and malls and expanding our footprint on the world," he said. Relyea said he agrees that habitat loss is the most important factor. There isn't evidence yet that Roundup is contributing to the worldwide decline, he said. But his experiments show its striking lethality.

Relyea added one tablespoon of Roundup Grass and Weed Killer to 250 gallons (950L) of water in cattle-watering tanks where tadpoles were growing with soil and food. That amount mimicked a worst-case accidental spraying of a small wetland, Relyea said.

But Monsanto spokeswoman Mica DeLong said Relyea's concentrations were too high and unlikely to be found in nature. She also criticized the artificial setting of Relyea's dry experiment, in which he sprayed frogs and toads who sat in plastic tubs lined with moist paper towels.

"We believe this needs to be studied in a natural setting where other factors come into play," she said, citing a field study last year by Canadian scientists, published in the journal *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry*. It

shows that even when small wetlands are accidentally sprayed, Roundup concentrations never come close to the levels Relyea applied.



Roundup is a product name for a herbicide, one of many in a general class that use the chemical glyphosate, which Monsanto pioneered. Glyphosate is now the top agricultural pesticide in the U.S., according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

In 1993, the EPA renewed its permit for Roundup. It noted that glyphosate itself is not toxic to aquatic life. The problem was with one of its common surfactants, which is toxic. A surfactant is a soapy additive used so glyphosate can stick to and penetrate plants.

In Australia and Europe, Monsanto sells Roundup Biactive, a version with a different surfactant that doesn't harm amphibians.

"Why don't we have the other surfactant?" Relyea asked. "Either it's less effective at killing weeds or it's more expensive to make."

Monsanto toxicologist Donna Farmer said the surfactant in Roundup Biactive was less effective on North American weeds and also would be subject to a cumbersome EPA approval process.

Source: Eric Hand from the St Louis Post-Dispatch, E-mail: ehand@post-dispatch.com

So what's been happening in Australia?

Glyphosate was the subject of a special review by the National Registration Authority in 1996 because of reports from Western Australia of toxic effects on frogs and tadpoles. The review

found that certain surfactants used in some glyphosate formulations are acutely toxic to tadpoles, but the active ingredient was not harmful. Seventy-five registered products were assessed, and the NRA has redefined the surfactant formulations for products that will be used near drains, channels, dam margins etc.

It's worth knowing that labels for products registered solely for home garden use weren't amended, as the risk of significant aquatic contamination from home garden use of products is considered to be very low.

So what's the moral of the story?

Make sure you buy the right sort of glyphosate – that is one that has been modified and doesn't harm amphibians (such as Roundup Biactive).

We reckon it's probably best to avoid spraying roundup in the immediate vicinity of ponds, waterholes and watercourses with water in them, just to be on the safe side.

References: NRA website, EPA Australia Report 1996, www.apvma.gov.au/chemrev/glyphosate.shtml

Australia State of the Environment Report 2001
<http://www.deh.gov.au/soe/2001/land/land06-4.html>

Books Worth a Look



A Field guide to Mammals of Australia, by Peter Menkhorst and Frank Knight, 280 pages, second edition published by Oxford University Press in 2004. RRP. \$39.95.

This is the first complete field guide to Australia's mammals. It provides concise and accurate details of the appearance, diagnostic features, habitat and key behavioural characteristics of all mammals known to have

occurred in Australia or its waters since the time of settlement by Europeans. There is a map showing the distribution of each species, which makes it easy to see what's found (or used to be found) around here.

So if you see a little furry thing in your backyard, you can look it up and see if it was a stripe faced dunnart, a wongai ningauai, a fat-tailed false antechinus or a kultarr (or even a house mouse). It's also useful for school projects, or to take on holidays.

Wildlife Calendar

What kind of critters are you seeing at the moment?

Some things we've been seeing over the last month or two include:

Bearded dragons, long nosed water dragons, parenties, black-headed monitors, fat-tailed geckos, spiny tailed geckos, staghorn beetles, processionary caterpillars, crested longhorn grasshopper, cicadas, red tailed black cockatoos, budgies, diamond doves, centralian tree frog, spencer's burrowing frog, golden orb-weaving spiders.

What else have you seen?

Write in and let us know: lfw@LowEcol.com.au, P.O. Box 3130, or 89 555 222.

Some tips for wildlife spotting over the next month or so:

Hopefully we'll keep getting the odd warm rainy night. I've been going driving or walking on these nights and have seen lots of frogs, geckos, an unbanded burrowing snake and a python.

Birds come to water when the countryside dries out. So check out the water holes, and see what you can find! At birthday waterhole recently I saw a rainbow bee-eater, nankeen night heron, and two spinifex pigeons, which was very exciting.



Ochrogaster lunifer moth, also known as processionary caterpillars or itchy grubs
Image @ CSIRO

What's on around town?

Not much, as usual over a Centralian summer! So I thought it was a good opportunity to catch up on what some of the local environmental groups do, and how you can get involved, if interested.

Australian Plants Society

For those of you not yet aware, the Australian Plants Society, Alice Springs, is a group of people with an interest in knowing and growing Australian native plants. They meet on the first Wednesday of each month at the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens at 7.30pm, and visitors are welcome.

Members of the Society enjoy the benefits of access to a specialised library, herbarium to aid identification, as well as receiving journals from the South Australia Regional Group and the national *Australian Plants* quarterly magazine. Interstate conferences also provide an opportunity to meet other knowledgeable plant enthusiasts.

For more information, check out <http://www.users.on.net/~opbg/aps/index.htm> or contact Tim Collins, Ph: 8952 2631 (AH) or email: Tim.Collins@nt.gov.au

GREENING AUSTRALIA

Greening Australia (GA) works with the community for the protection, restoration and management of native vegetation. This includes providing the community with technical advice and support, and plants to schools and community groups.

Many of you have probably visited the GA nursery and bought plants grown from locally collected seed, at very reasonable prices.

GA members receive newsletters, and discounts on plants. If you are interested in joining GA (\$10 concession, \$27 individuals) have a look at www.greeningaustralia.org.au/GA/NAT/ or call Peter, Sunil or Julia on 8953 2882.



Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA)
COOLmob is a community interactive project that is focussed on raising awareness of energy/water/waste emissions and sustainable living practices that can assure us of a prosperous future in Central Australia. It is an expanding network of 500 houses implementing basic systems and smart technologies to lessen our impact on the environment and ease the pressure on our power / water bills. The information gathered through experience can be fed back into the group and shared with the wider community to help with making the most sensible decisions for our desert lifestyles.

Some of the projects that DKA COOLmob is undertaking are:

- Home Energy Audits - A trained auditor does a walk through energy audit of households and identifies some simple, cheap and effective ways to make houses more energy efficient and lower greenhouse gas emissions and power / water bills. Audits take about 1.5 hours and a subsidised rate of \$20 for COOLmob members.
- Towards a Plastic Bag Free Alice Springs - A group of retailers and other interested parties have been developing some ways to promote the use of re-usable bags. A new initiative will be released later this year and into the new year.
- Providing information to the community – COOLmob is a resource of information on products and technologies that can help to make your lifestyle more efficient and greenhouse friendly. They are developing a website that will be permanent database of information, where members can add their experiences and ideas.

There are many more initiatives they have operating, and seeking input from the community. If you are interested in being a member, getting an audit done or want some more info - call Scott Large on 8952 0299 or email coolcentre@ozemail.com.au

Alice Springs Field Naturalist Club

The object of the club is to promote interest in all aspects of natural history. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of every month (except December and January) at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, on Tunck Road. There is usually a guest speaker, and visitors are welcome.

A variety of outings are held throughout the year. Contact Bob Read rlread1@bigpond.net.au
<http://members.octa4.net.au/~alicensats/index.htm>
Ph: 89521935

Calendar of Events

Wed 1st February – Australian Plants Society
Social Event at Araluen. 6pm – Connie Spencer leading a walk talking about the Araluen gardens. 7pm – BYO dinner to BBQ. Ph. Tim on 8952 2631 (AH).

Sat 4th February – Alice Springs Field Naturalist Club. Birdwatching at the Sewage Ponds at sunrise. Meet at the gates to the ponds 6:15 AM. Contact Bob Read 89521935.

Wed 8th February - Alice Springs Field Naturalist Club. Land for Wildlife coordinator Cassie Wright speaking. Meet 7:30pm at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Ph Bob Read 8952 1935.

Saturday 11th February – Alice Springs Field Naturalist Club. Moonlight walk/bike ride to picnic area on Simpsons Gap Bike Track. Meet 6pm Flynn's Grave.

Sunday 12th February - Lower Todd Landcare Group Working Bee. 8 – 11am.
Meet on the Ross Highway, south of the John Blakeman Bridge - look for the Lower Todd Landcare sign.
Working Bees held on the second Sunday of every month. Any enquiries, call Michelle on 8953 0444.

Saturday 25th February – Alice Springs Field Naturalist Club. Walk in *Eucalyptus intertexta* forest near the Ilparpa claypans followed by BYO breakfast. Meet Information Bay opp. Old Timers at 6am.

Wed 1st March – Australian Plants Society. Alex Nelson speaking on backyard propagation and arid zone plants + showing his invention, which featured on the ABC TV show New Inventors.
Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, 7.30pm. Ph. Tim on 8952 2631 (AH).

Wed 8th March – Alice Springs Field Naturalist Club. Andrew Greenwood speaking on *Ipomoea sp.* Meet 7:30pm at Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Ph Bob Read 8952 1935.

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) have the following trips lined up and are seeking volunteers.

Newhaven Bird Sanctuary

17th to the 28th April 2006

Newhaven has spectacular wildlife and biodiversity in a great remote location. Help to preserve it by conducting vegetation mapping, old fence removal, track construction, signage and weed removal.

Uluru - Kata Tjuta National Park weed management program

6 - 24 March 2006

3 – 14 April 2006

Learn about Uluru's rich environment and culture! A great way to see this world icon by staying on the edge of an Aboriginal community, and contributing to the local biodiversity by removing weeds at the base of the rock.

To get involved or find out more about any of these projects please contact Conservation Volunteers Australia on 8953 6411, check out or email alicesprings@cva.org.au

Activities at the Alice Springs Desert Park March 15 – 26 Desert Athletes

Discover the athletic prowess of our desert plants, animals and people by following a discovery trail of medal finalists around the park.

April 1 – 9 National Youth Week

Come behind the scenes on a careers tour of the Desert Park. See how you could become a Zoologist, Horticulturist, Botanist, Vet Nurse and see what they really do! General Public on Saturday and Sunday.

April 14-17 Easter – Looking after Bilby's home.

Learn about Bilbies and how you can help look after their fragile home. Play some games and make some Bilby masks. You too can become a Bilby friend and spread the word. Bilbies are best!

This newsletter has been produced by Cassie Wright and Bill Low, *LfW* coordinators W.A. Low Ecological Services with the assistance of the NT Government, Alice Springs Town Council and the Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust EnviroFund. Thanks to Erin Moon, Rob Gray and Amelia Graham for looking at the manuscript. Contact Cassie on 89555222

