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Land for Wildlife

Conservation is in your hands



The Desert Mouse



NEWSLETTER

Alice Springs Municipality 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.

Land for Wildlife Update

Rock Wallaby Project Winds to a Close



Funded by the Federal Government's Caring for Our Country program and Territory Natural

Resource Management, Land for Wildlife's Black-footed Rock Wallaby project has now reached its end.

The project took place on four members' properties where populations of the wallabies occur, with the focus on predator removal to aid wallaby survival. Management plans were produced for each property with guidelines on maintaining wallaby habitat including weed control, fire management and control of feral pests.

Introduced predators that impact on wallaby populations include foxes and cats, but our project focussed on feral dogs, that are prevalent around many parts of the Alice Springs rural area.

A trapping program was implemented on the four properties and took place over the past four weeks, with cage traps placed in areas where feral dogs have been seen regularly by property owners.

Unfortunately, no dogs were trapped during the project. There could be a number of reasons for this, but likely the high amount of resources available to predators under current climatic conditions means they have no need to enter traps! Certainly fewer dogs have been seen on the properties in recent months than in dry times.

The project culminated with a workshop on management of rock wallaby habitat on the last weekend of June at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, where members of the public not involved in the trapping project were able to participate in learning how to help protect these threatened residents of the rocky hills around Alice Springs.

Several lasting benefits have come from this project, including the long term management plans developed for each property involved and generally raised awareness of personal responsibility for control of pet dogs in the rural areas. Land for Wildlife now also has the equipment necessary to run similar programs in the future.

Anyone interested in more information on the project or having trouble with feral dogs can contact Land for Wildlife for advice and support. We now have four dog traps that can be loaned to members. The Alice Springs Town Council can also be contacted to help with removal of feral predators.

Remember though, that the trapping of any animal comes with obligations for its humane treatment and disposal.

Thanks to Denise and Geoff Purdie, Brendan and Carmel Ryan and Olive Pink Botanic Garden for the use of their properties for the project.

Land for Wildlife Expands

Land for Wildlife is continually working to expand the network of properties who participate as members of the program. Recent months have seen the program begin to expand beyond the Alice Springs area, with properties such as the Tennant Creek Airport and Pistol Club signing on as members.

Work is also underway to prepare property assessments and reports for properties such as Glen Helen Resort, the camel farm at Stuarts Well, and a few pastoral properties.

Although properties in the rural area of Alice Springs are important and essential to a successful Land for Wildlife program, by expanding our membership base to more remote parts of Central Australia, we're working to establish connectivity of land managed for conservation.

Garden for Wildlife – 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 'Close 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

Workshops

Junior Rangers Trap Making

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.

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!



A dove's eye view of the Junior Rangers program

The Turtle Dove trapping program is an ongoing effort to reduce the numbers of these 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 and providing "natural" foods for park animals.

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 of the Gap.

Land 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.

Black-footed Rock Wallaby Habitat

Saturday 25th June saw the culmination of our Rock Wallaby project with a workshop at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens.

The workshop discussed the natural history of the Black Footed Rock Wallaby, including life cycle, habits and habitat requirements, with a talk delivered by Clare Ciechanowicz, head curator of mammals at the Alice Springs Desert Park.

Land for Wildlife coordinators then discussed the

project funded by the Caring for our Country program and how to manage habitat for the wallabies and maintain it in healthy condition.

About twenty people attended, including Land for Wildlife members and interested members of the public.

Thanks are due to Clare for the donation of her time to help deliver the workshop.

Coming Workshops

Future workshops are in the planning stages, with a Land for Wildlife workshop run as part of Red Centre Bird Week due to run in October.

The weekend of the 12th-14th of August sees the annual ALEC Eco Fair at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens. Friday the 12th is a schools day and Land for Wildlife will be participating by running workshops for classes throughout the day. If you'd like more information on the Eco Fair schools program, contact Emily Findlay, 8952 3924.

We'll keep you up to date with developments as they occur and don't forget to check out our blog page for regular updates of Land for Wildlife news and events.
www.landforwildlifealicesprings.blogspot.com

Articles

Predators on the Porch

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.

Kultarr



The Kultarr. Inset - showing the profile of its pointed nose.

Land for Wildlife was sent this photo of a Kultarr (*Antechinomys laniger*) by the Purvises 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 and the population south of Heavitree Gap is booming at present.

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 Kultarr's size, colouring and long, brush-tipped tail means they can be confused with the common Spinifex Hopping Mouse. However the Kultarr has a pointed snout 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 False Antechinus

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

The Purdies 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 Purdies' porch and presumably better educated about avoiding house mouse traps.

Prepare Now for Summer Fires

Following Central Australia's rain over the past 18 months, large amounts of vegetative growth, particularly of grasses and ground layer plants, has resulted in excessive fuel loads across the region.

The rain has stopped (almost!) and cold winter temperatures and frosts have resulted in much of this growth beginning to die off. As a result, the coming summer is likely to be a dangerous fire season, both around town and further afield.

Bushfires NT, NT Fire and Rescue Service and the National Parks and Wildlife Service have been carrying out prescribed burning activities over the past few months in areas close to town, including Simpson's Gap, the airport property and crown land adjacent to Flynn's Grave.



Prescribed burning in Ironwood - Witchetty Bush country.

All this burning outlines the importance of being fire ready before high temperatures of late spring and summer arrive. Developing a fire plan for your

property should be considered to minimise the risk of wildfire and it's uncontrolled impact.

If you're interested in carrying out burn offs as part of a fire plan on your property, you should contact Bushfires NT (details below) and seek their advice and arrange a permit, as burning can only be done with a permit issued by the relevant authority.

Land for Wildlife can also provide advice on developing fire plans. Remember that time is of the essence and with the first electrical storms in summer, we may see some extensive fires across Central Australia. Let us know if you need assistance in making sure your property is suitably prepared.

Announcements

NRM Bi-Monthly Meetings

Once every two months, Land for Wildlife coordinators attend a meeting with other NRM bodies from Alice Springs, including Land Care, ALEC and CLMA to name a few.

The meetings are hosted by Territory Natural Resources and discuss resource management issues and, as well as exploring ways of working together towards common goals and outcomes.

If you have any issues that you'd like us to discuss at these meetings on your behalf, contact Chris or Jesse. We'll be more than happy to take your thoughts along with us for discussion.

Land for Wildlife Annual Biodiversity Survey

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 you've carried out on your property, 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.

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, either by having your property surveyed or as a volunteer, contact Jesse or Chris on the details at the end of this newsletter.

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.

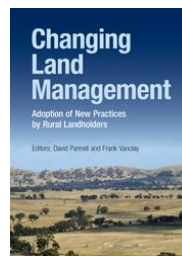


<http://www.ecogeek.org/>

"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



Changing Land Management Adoption of New Practices by Rural Landholders

Edited by:

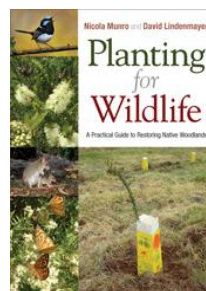
Frank Vanclay

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

19th-20th August – Ecofair, Olive Pink Botanic Gardens



Take care,

Jesse, Chris & Bill
Land for Wildlife Coordinators

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