



Land For Wildlife Update

Welcome to the Winter 2007 edition of the Land For Wildlife newsletter for Alice Springs. Firstly, for those of you I haven't met yet I'd like to introduce myself as the new(ish) Land for Wildlife Coordinator. I'm looking forward to continuing the amazing work Heidi's been doing on the program. Heidi has taken on a position in the zoology department at the Alice Springs Desert Park before taking 12 months maternity leave. She is still a member of the Land for Wildlife Advisory Committee and will continue taking a keen interest the progress you're making on your properties.

Having moved to Alice Springs from NSW, I'm eager to expand my knowledge about the beautiful and diverse area you all live in. My background is varied, as I've moved from a degree in Politics and International Relations, to completing my Certificate in Conservation and Land Management, to teaching environmental education and organic farming in Uganda, to working in bush regeneration. I'm excited to have found a job that combines my interest in restoring remnant vegetation, with being involved and active in the community.

Huge thanks to all those who supplied articles to this month's newsletter, it's fantastic to have contributions from individuals, organisations and businesses who are directly involved with Land for Wildlife. If you would like to contribute anything, from a brief letter to a photo of something you've observed on your property to a whole article, please email it through!

Danielle O'Hara.

Happy reading!

Danielle O'Hara and Bill Low
Land for Wildlife Coordinators

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Land For Wildlife Update

Green Corps

Throughout April, we were fortunate enough to have Green Corps teams assist two different Land for Wildlife members' complete work on their properties. Conservation Volunteers Australia employs young people for six months to complete a major environmental project, while working towards their certificate in Outdoor Conservation and Land Management. Team members, as well as gaining experience in the Conservation field, acquire many skills which make them qualified and employable.

As well as one major project, the teams are required to complete some minor projects which teach them a variety of skills. Rachel, a Green Corps team leader, contacted Heidi to ask if there were any Land for Wildlife properties that needed work done on their land that would be appropriate for the group.

Land for Wildlife and Green Corps teamed up with property owners and sought assistance and approvals from NRETA Land Management officers and Town Council. All parties involved benefitted and it was fantastic to work with a group of enthusiastic young people with an interest in the environment.

The first task was to assist Ilparpa property owner Penelope McDonald to create a 'wildlife corridor'. Rachel's team worked hard at installing new irrigation before planting out the area with many native species. This work will increase the abundance of wildlife visiting Penelope's property, especially birds as well as provide a corridor for wildlife to pass through and onto the neighbouring properties. The involved Green Corps team even featured in the Advocate....



Green Corps, left to right, Michael Foster, Rachel O'Leary, team leader for Conservation Volunteers Australia, land owner Penelope, and Claire Bastin (20). Picture: JUSTIN BRIERTY

The second was to help Jan and Chris Ferguson with remedial works to stabilise an eroded public roadside verge on the edge of their property. The area just above the roadside had been cleared of buffel grass and had a number of Acacia seedlings regenerating. It was therefore important to be careful and ensure there was no clearing of vegetation or soil surrounding the eroded area.

Work started at 8am with the arrival of the council bobcat and the necessary material. Due to a hardworking and enthusiastic team, work was completed on that day. Firstly, a layer of geo matting was laid out, which stabilises soil whilst retaining porosity for water to infiltrate. The team then installed a rock lined flume and rock armoured apron.

A big thank you to Col Stanton for providing expert advice on the day, Town Council for assistance with the bobcat and the Green Corps team who laboured away all day!



The Lillecrapp Rd erosion before the Green Corps team



The successfully completed project

Workshops

Erosion, erosion, erosion...

On the 24th of May, Col Stanton took 14 Land for Wildlife members on an 'Erosion Tour' of LFW properties along Lillecrapp Rd. The purpose of the workshop was to examine the causes of erosion and demonstrate effective ways of addressing it which could be implemented with readily available materials and resources. The types of erosion observed were common to many properties in Alice Springs. Although erosion is commonly caused by lack of consideration for rainfall runoff and drainage lines when planning developments, and may not be the fault of

the current owner, small, seemingly inconsequential erosion can escalate into a damaging, expensive problem.

Erosion is a natural process, but it can be accelerated through changes in land use, reduction of vegetative cover and lack of consideration of drainage patterns. The major agents of soil erosion are water, wind and gravity; with water being the most significant agent observed on Lillecrapp Rd. Erosion caused by water can be defined as splash, sheet, rill, gully, riverbank and tunnel erosion. The best protection against increases in these processes is through maintenance of surface cover allowing runoff to follow natural drainage patterns. Vegetation and ground cover also protect the soil from wind erosion.

Meeting at Heidi and Pat's at 9am, the workshop commenced with a look at the eroded gully running straight through the middle of their property. Gradually, with no shortage of explanation or lack of humour from Col, we moved along Lillecrapp Rd, looking at examples of erosion on driveways, along roadsides and in heavily used areas on blocks. Col outlined the successes and failures of the previous and current efforts to deter the erosion occurring.

Lillecrapp Rd is situated just along the base of the Blatherskite Range, with many houses on the southern side of the road built on the lower edge of the slope. This positioning means that when heavy rains do occur, the water follows its natural course down the range and through the properties at its base.

One aspect that makes this problematic is that driveways have been constructed running up the slope, the most direct route from road to house. Therefore when rain occurs, the water gushes straight down the driveway, preventing the even dispersal of water throughout the block. This also tends to cause erosion along the side of the driveway edges where channels have been constructed or on concrete driveways have been placed on top of the ground, leaving an edge for water to start cutting underneath. For blocks on the lower side of the road, water cascades down the driveway, following the driveway to the house or carport, causing flooding problems when heavy rains occur.

One solution Col suggested was to construct a number of 'Whoa Boys', starting from the highest point, which divert water off the driveway to follow the natural slope of the land, preventing erosion and dispersing much needed water to the vegetation on the block. The steeper the gradient, the more frequent the Whoa Boys need to be. For more information on Whoa Boys please see your Land for Wildlife folder or NRETA web site.

However beyond purely practical applications, Col encouraged participants to develop the broader ability to scrutinise *why* erosion is occurring and to develop foresight when constructing any sort of structure or road. Seemingly simple but often neglected skills. Another important consideration is to consult with your neighbours to ensure your developments don't cause problems for your neighbours.

A big thanks to Col for sharing his very extensive knowledge in an engaging way. Thank you also to the Lillecrapp Rd Land for Wildlife members who opened up their properties to some constructive "no punches pulled" comments on the erosion occurring on their land.



Wildcare Workshop

What do I do when an unsuspecting Euro decides to take a joyful leap in front of my car? Should I feed the butcherbird who persistently demands my attention? Tania McFadden, Wendy Vismans and Jon Delaine answered such questions at our combined Garden for Wildlife/Land for Wildlife workshop on 14th June at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens.

25 Garden for Wildlife and Land for Wildlife members and interested public turned up to learn how we can live most harmoniously with our native wildlife. As larger and larger areas have been inhabited by human beings, our interaction with native animals has increased dramatically. Daily we encounter birds in our yard, snakes in our wood piles and roos and Euros crossing our roads. This has increased lately due to the dry weather- even at my home in Eastside we've had a cheeky euro or two in

the backyard searching for water.



Mammals, birds and reptiles were discussed, both how to prevent injury and what to do when you encounter an injured wildlife so it stands the greatest chance of being rehabilitated and rereleased.

One of the most important points when it comes to wildlife interaction is minimal interference- wildlife doesn't need our help to survive. Although we often believe we are assisting wildlife by feeding them, native animals have adapted their particular diet and our harsh climate, and altering this may lead to obesity, nutrient deficiency, diseases or viral and bacterial infections. By feeding them, we are encouraging animals to become dependant on our food source, so when this routine is altered- you move or go away on holidays - the animal has lost the instinct to fend for themselves and may be too habituated to human contact.

Rather than feeding them, encourage native animals to come to your garden by planting native trees and shrubs, providing nesting boxes, hollow logs, bird baths or ponds. When it comes to injured wildlife, the key is to get the animal to Wildcare as soon as possible. If you come across a roo that's been hit by a car, move it to the side of the road immediately. If it's a fatality, check the pouch for young and if present, carefully remove it from the pouch and gently wrap it in a towel and place in a warm, dark box. If you don't have a container you can always place it down your shirt!, put it somewhere warm and dark (for instance, down your shirt!) and get it to Wildcare. Never feed a joey, or any animal, cow's milk, as they are lactose intolerant.

Birds do not typically demonstrate stress as much as mammals, but if injured, assume that they are infat, extremely stressed. DO NOT keep the bird, put it in an existing cage or feed it as birds very easily become 'imprinted' by human contact, making rerelease near impossible. Put it somewhere warm and dark and contact Wildcare immediately. An exception may be a bird that has crashed into your window and is only stunned. Put it in a box with a towel or some such to hang on to and after a few hours open the box to see if it will fly away. If not call Wildcare.

For more information, or if you come across injured wildlife, please contact Wildcare on 0419 22 11 28 or check out their website at www.wildcareasp.org.au. Injured wildlife can be dropped at Alice Springs Reptile Centre or Alice Springs Vet Clinic on Bath Street during business hours.

Thanks again to Tania, Wendy and Jon for providing us with valuable information on how we can help injured wildlife.

Wildcare Echidna Release

During May, Land for Wildlife received a call from Wildcare worker Marg asking whether we knew of any Land for Wildlife properties which had habitat suitable for the release of an echidna. It was decided that Denise and Jeff Purdie's block was an ideal location. Situated at the base of the Blatherskite Range, the Purdie's have ample fallen logs and branches, tree stumps, rocks, leaf litter and debris all of which provide ideal habitat for echidna.

Echidna's are know to live along the ranges within the West Macdonnell area and although they may not be seen regularly as they are some what elusive but they are present within Central Australia and the Alice Springs region.



Articles

Collecting and Propagating Seeds of Mulga and Witchetty Bush

by

Tim Collins, Alice Springs Desert Park

Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) and Witchetty Bush (*Acacia kempeana*) are large shrubs with excellent value as habitat, and in the garden.

Collecting seeds and propagating plants is relatively straightforward, but you should follow a few simple rules so that you are well prepared and avoid any pitfalls.

Before collecting seeds or cuttings from native plants, *naturally occurring or growing in the wild*, you must acquire a permit from The Department of Natural Resources Environment and The Arts (NRETA).

Permit application forms can be obtained from the internet: (<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/wildlife/permits/index.html>)

Or, by contacting:

Parks and Wildlife Service Permits Office

Ground Floor, Goyder Centre

Chung Wah Terrace

PO Box 496

Palmerston NT 0830

Tel: (+61 8) 8999 4795 or (+61 8) 8999 4814

Fax: (+61 8) 8999 4524

Email: pwpermits.nreta@nt.gov.au

Once you have obtained the necessary permits, or if you are collecting from a cultivated plant, your powers of observation will be required.

Both Mulga and Witchetty Bush have what is termed "dehiscent" seeds. That is, the seeds are released from the pods when they become ripe. Other local plants with dehiscent seeds are Corkwoods, Sennas, Bloodwoods and most Acacias and Eucalypts. Being observant, you will find that not all of the plants in a population will produce seeds in a season. Mulga and Witchetty produce seeds in pods which become dry and turn light brown when the seeds are ready. After good rainfall Mulga and Witchetty flower and if there is sufficient soil moisture or good following rains, seed pods will form. Without the necessary rainfall the flowers will not set seed. Cultivated plants will regularly flower and set seed, unlike their wild counterparts.

Ripe seeds are dark brown and have a very hard seedcoat. Unripe seeds are usually green and larger than when ripe. This is due to the drying of the seeds as they approach ripeness – the seeds actually shrink.



Photo: Horst Weber
Ripening seed pods on a Mulga

Ripe seeds should be collected by hand and placed in paper or cloth bags. Plastic bags should be avoided as seeds can sweat and become mouldy in a few days. Good quality Acacia seeds, stored in paper bags away from mice and extremes of temperature, can remain viable for many decades, but don't collect more than you need as seeds are food for many different animals. A rule of thumb would be no more than 20% of seeds on a plant.

Mulga and Witchetty can be germinated by pre-treating the seeds with boiling water. Simply boil the kettle and pour the hot water over the seeds. Leave the seeds to soak overnight and then sow into pots or punnets of good quality "seed raising media". This is important as many seeds are killed by soil fungi. Seed raising media can be bought relatively cheaply at most garden centres or nurseries. Place the pots in an area protected from the sun and wind, as they are vulnerable to drying which can kill them. Transfer individual seedlings into small pots after they have germinated and keep them well watered. Although these plants grow in the desert, they usually only reproduce in years of above-average rainfall and so home-grown plants need daily watering.

Plants should be ready to plant-out in April/May if you sow the seeds in January/February. By sowing the seeds in mid-summer you can take advantage of their faster summer growth and establish the plants in your garden as the weather cools.

Indicators of fruit and seed maturity – an extract from the notes: "An Introduction to the Morphology and Anatomy of Seeds" by Wolfgang Stuppy, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

General information for all fruit types

- Read the fruit and seed descriptions for the target plant in the Flora of Central Australia to get an idea of what you are looking for or at. It may be necessary to look at the genus or family descriptions in some cases.
- Seeds should be harvested at the peak of their maturity, which is when they have reached their maximum dry weight.
- Ideally, seeds or fruits should be collected when they are on the point of natural dispersal.

Determine seed or fruit maturity by:

- Cutting a sample of seeds and fruits in half to examine the colour, texture and odour of the fruit, colour of the seed coat and texture of the endosperm/cotyledons. Compare this to the description of the seeds and fruits in the Flora of Central Australia.

Indehiscent fruits (i.e. seeds retained within dispersed fruit)

Fruit maturity is indicated by:

- Change of fruit colour; dry fruits change from green to shades of brown and fleshy fruits turn into bright colours such as red, yellow, orange, blue or dark purple.
- Fleshy fruits change of texture (usually from hard to soft).
- Fruits change of odour (from odourless to scented).

Seed maturity is indicated by:

- Seed coat usually changes from white or green to shades of brown or black.
- Depending on the seed type, hardness/firmness of the seed coat and endosperm can also be good indicators of seed maturity.
- A change in the consistency of seed reserves (endosperm or cotyledons) from soft to hard.

Dehiscent fruits (i.e. seeds released from ripe fruits)

Fruit maturity is indicated by:

- Opening of the fruit wall to release the seeds (dehiscence).
- Ripe fruit turning hard, eg Corkwoods, awaiting a fire or summer heat to cause them to open.

Seed maturity is indicated by:

- Seeds are released from the fruit
- Seed coat usually changes from white or green to shades of brown or black.
- Depending on the seed type, hardness/firmness of the seed coat and endosperm can also be good indicators of seed maturity.
- A change in the consistency of seed reserves (endosperm or cotyledons) from soft to hard.

Jessie, our 'enviro-Cat'

By Sue Morrish, Garden for Wildlife member

I grew up with cats and, having been adopted by a few over the years, have tried to take a responsible attitude with them. For example when I returned to Melbourne for a year from Alice Springs the cat which had adopted me (following the departure of its owners, my neighbours) was surrendered to the RSPCA. She was an intrepid hunter and I couldn't find her a home, so it seemed the best thing to do.

Anyway, I was pretty happy not to have a cat eating all the birds, and was busy enough with a young family for a long time. But then when my kids were a bit bigger the

whole 'pet' thing started coming up. The chooks sufficed for a while. Then goldfish. Too many visits to the Reptile Centre had my eldest son asking for a bearded dragon, but sometimes they visit for free, so that seemed silly. And anyway, I was, at heart, a cat lover so wasn't that the answer?

Having joined Gardens for Wildlife, and found out about cat parks that can keep cats away from the birds and reptiles, we decided to try that. I wanted a kitten we could train to be an inside cat, not an adult which was used to having the run of the yard. So we went off to the RSPCA on the 1st of June and it was flooded with kittens. I'm not sure why I took all 3 of my offspring – they all had their own opinions, which all differed from mine. Eventually after lots of lobbying ('look at mine, mine's the best!') we settled on a tortoiseshell shorthaired 3 month old kitten, 'Jessie' and home we went. We then rang our handyman, and several hundred dollars later we had a nice mesh cat park off the side of the house with a cat flap and a gate for us. I furnished it with a tipshop ironing board and some tree prunings, some toys and some piles of sand. I also grow wheat grass for her to eat, in a pot, using wheat from the chook food. She loves this!

I had borrowed the 'Enviro-cat' book from the library and was sold on how easy it was going to be. Plenty of cats live entirely indoors in big cities elsewhere, it wasn't cruel, no worries. However there have been a few things that have made it tricky. In retrospect I didn't put in enough effort to train her to want to stay inside. The Enviro-cat book suggests allowing her to try to escape out a door and lying in wait outside and spraying her with a water mister. I did try this once or twice, but it wasn't enough. Maybe if I'd had more time I could have done this better.

My youngest son was 3 when we got the kitten, because I figured this was about the youngest I could train him to shut the door whenever he went in or out of the house. I hate mozzies or flies in the house so we have a pretty strict attitude to doors anyway. However our back door is a wooden door that doesn't always shut well, so we've had to get the handyman back a few times to get it all working well – if it is at all ajar Jessie pushes her way out and escapes.



Jessie the enviro-cat very content in her cat park

So basically I can sum up the good things and the bad things about our enviro-cat experience so far.

Bad Things:

1. Jessie does escape. It's good exercise for the kids to catch her, and they are truly amazing at it, but she does escape especially when we have visitors. In the time she is out she probably has managed to kill lizards and grasshoppers but so far there has been no sign of bird deaths. [One exception – a feral dove got stuck in our (empty) chook run, so I locked the cat in there and the dove was dead within minutes! And that was a cat that had been locked up for most of its life, between my house and the RSPCA's cage.]
2. It is annoying to have a major mouse problem in your backyard, and a cat, and not be able to put the 2 things together. We did recapture her once with a mouse in her mouth, but the cat-and-mouse game that ensued for the next 2 hours was so macabre I couldn't bear it. So maybe I couldn't stomach the cat solution anyway... We have bought a lead and harness from the petshop, so maybe next time the mice increase we could let her out on that under supervision. The kids have tried taking her for 'walks' but all she wants to do is hunt when she is out of the house. The lead is handy for going to the vet though.
3. Unless I get a housesitter, I feel bad leaving her at home for long stretches and just getting the neighbour to feed her (as you would normally with a cat) because she is locked up and I worry she'd get lonely with no other living things to interact with. And for a housesitter, the whole escaping thing is pretty annoying I imagine. At least we now know that she never goes far.



There are plenty of levels and stimulation for Jessie in her outdoor play area

1. Until the cat park was up and running, we were using kitty litter which I found horrible. Buying this stuff was an environmental minefield – the clay-based stuff (which I found cleanest and easiest to use) was mined from somewhere (where? What was the effect of it?). The paper-based stuff was messier and bulkier and I felt weird putting it in the wheelie bin but it was apparently unsafe for composts. So once the cat park was finished we moved her litter tray out there but happily she started just using the ground there for her toilet. It means I have to go out and pull on the gloves and lift out all her pooh every week or so, and I put fresh sand in there from time to time – but compared with daily cleaning a litter tray,

this is nothing! And because she can't get into the yard we don't have to worry about cat pooh in the kids' sandpit.

2. Although she escapes, basically I feel that the bird population is safe, and the lizards to a lesser extent. I have lived with a cat that hunted and finding wings of red-backed kingfishers is not my idea of fun.
3. We do spend a lot of time inside, especially on hot summer days, and it is nice to have a cat for company. In winter she has lots of sunny spots to lie in, and the kids love her. It has really helped our family dynamic to have a pet – someone 'around' to distract them, who isn't a human to fight with! She loves playing hunting games with them, and I think having children around definitely makes for a happier indoor cat.

So in conclusion I'm not sure that I'm a good role-model for an enviro-cat owner. My cat wants to escape all the time, and is desperate to kill every bird and lizard she sees. However she is still a very contented cat and my kids love her. I would too if she would just sit on my lap occasionally! Getting someone to build the cat park with new materials was expensive, and with the tip shop not so flash at the moment it might be even harder to find recycled materials. But I would still recommend to a frustrated catlover to give it a go, if they have the resources and the time to train a cat – or kids willing to catch one!

Note: I was recently at a workshop where a discussion was held about the benefits of Recycled Kitty Litter...this website contains an apparently very effective recipe <http://alliesanswers.com/tip-of-the-day/tip-of-the-day-make-your-own-kitty-litter/1044>
Danielle

Termites in your Garden... **'Friend or Foe'?**

By

Dave Billington (owner of Red Centre Pest Control and fully licenced technician)

This all depends on what species they are and what you are trying to protect. Termites have been around long before us, but you know that already, so here are some things about termites that you may not know. This is a very brief overview and I have tried not to get too technical.

In Alice Springs and surrounds and up to the Tropic of Capricorn some 30 km north we have four species (excluding grass eating species) of termites that we deal with. They can be categorised into 'aggressive' and 'non-aggressive' species of which there are two of each.

Aggressive: **Coptotermes** **ssp** **and** **Schedorhinotermes ssp**

Non- Aggressive: *Nasutitermes* ssp and *Heterotermes* ssp. These species will still devour 'timber in service' i.e. houses etc if left untreated but they are very slow and prefer rotting timbers, mulch, bark and loose timber on the ground. On the odd occasion when they have attacked houses the damage was very minimal and easy to control.

Grass eating species eat mainly *Spinifex* and make those hard mounds on the ground which you see when you drive into rural areas and around town. **Don't kill yourself trying to dig them up or poisoning them as it really is a waste of time.** They are only doing what comes naturally and are no threat to your property unless you have a grass farm.

Copto's and Schedo's (pronounced *shedo's*) are the number one damaging termites in this area for houses, sheds, pergolas and almost any other timber product which is placed in contact with the ground. They usually have large amounts of termite mud (reddish brown in this area) associated with their workings and nests.

Copto's usually make their nests in the root crowns of large trees and favour gums and peppercorns but are not limited to these trees. They have one queen and are noticeable by a mud pack around the base of the tree or where a limb has been removed and the end has been mudded up. In the case of young nests however there is sometimes no outward sign of the nest.



Copto nests often look like this

Schedo's on the other hand can make 'sub' nests spread over a large area and usually establish nests underground which makes them hard to spot. They usually then pop up under pallets and loose timber and sub floors etc.

Nasuti's are small slow and have black brittle mud (looks like its burnt) associated with their workings and often these workings are seen on top of the ground with black tubes running everywhere.



Example of Nasuti mud

Hetero's are also slow and are known for their thin brown mud tubes that usually come up about 2 feet from the ground up trees and other structures. They are also known for coming out of walls and ceilings in mid air as shown in this picture in an Ilparpa house.

As bad as this might look this species cause very little damage in most cases and are simply foraging for food.

Treatments

Most pest controller's eyes light up at the word termite treatment because it usually means they can now get that extension on their house that their partner has been on at them about for some time. At Red Centre Pest Control we try to limit the costs as much as possible by firstly trying to eliminate the labour intensive treatments that so many of our competitors enjoy doing. Unless there is no other alternative, we prefer not to drill holes in floors and concrete and put moats full of repellent chemicals around properties.

This is 'old school' and used to be referred to as a 'barrier' treatment. This is costly, looks terrible when holes have to be drilled and is difficult to predict at what point it 'wears out'. Another downside of 'old school' treatments is they are often using toxic smelly chemicals that kill just about everything (including the pest controller by the time they are 50). The old adage that 'if it doesn't smell it doesn't work' is just that, old.

If this type of treatment is unavoidable there are environmentally friendly chemicals available that actually cause colony elimination once termites come in contact with it rather than trying to keep them out and only killing a few while the colony makes more replacements.

Bait boxing on trees is a waste of time and money as this method is not even recommended by the manufacturer of the bait box. The reason for this is simple, termites are fickle. If the tree has a hole drilled into it and then a box full of bait is placed over the hole then there is nothing stopping the termites from mudding up the drilled hole from inside the tree and never going into the box. In the event they happen to go into the box, in most cases the bait is consumed before colony elimination is achieved, unless the technician returns to refill the box before the

termites vacate. This is also a 'one off' treatment that doesn't protect the tree from future attack. The cost of this method is usually in the hundreds of dollars and in most cases will fail.

Direct treatments on large trees done by Red Centre Pest Control are self contained within the tree, have no effect on other animals, achieves colony elimination within 2 weeks, saves the tree, lasts for up to 8 years and requires no further maintenance. They also have techniques for direct treatment of buildings and small shrubs to protect them from termites which are also long lasting and cost effective. Red Centre Pest Control also use the 'Green Termite Baiting System' for long term protection of buildings. Red Centre Pest Control is a family owned and operated business. For more information or to make a booking, email sales@redcentrepestcontrol.com or call on 08- 8953 5562.

Ed note: Thanks to Dave for providing this article on termite control and we hope it provides some useful information for LfW members. As Dave points out, not all termites are pests. Termites play an important and complex role in nutrient recycling, aeration of soil and providing food for numerous geckos, skinks and dragons as well as birds and native mice. Additional information is available in your GfW/LfW information pack or reference books listed there. Extensive information is also available on the web by Googling the termite names used in Dave's article

LfW in other states

There are Land for Wildlife properties in all corners of Australia. The following is an article describing the observations and emotions experienced by a Victorian Land for Wildlife members when their property, 'Waterholes Guest House' was involved in the Gippsland fires last summer.

A land of drought, fire and flooding rain...

The Waterholes Guest House near Bairnsdale has been severely affected by drought, fire and flood.

The native animal population seems to have coped very well with the adversity and the kangaroo population is building up to new heights. We observed only two dead wallabies two weeks after the fires and put this down to the lack of browsing material and state of health or age and thus the inability to relocate to unburned forest.

The local Bird Observers Club is monitoring bird populations here since the fire on a regular basis. We have observed that birds such as Wrens and Willy Wagtails have raised at least three clutches this summer. We do not know whether this is excessive or not but

there are certainly more baby birds in the garden than there usually are this time of the year.

A newly mature Satin Bowerbird built his love bower very visibly in a little patch of bush just outside our gate. He was very inexperienced and we had a lot of amusement watching his attempts to prove his worth to the ladies. Every little exciting article he collected for his display was nicked by the older males while he was off getting more. Every time a young female showed interest in him the older ladies drove them off with dire warning about young handsome males with nothing behind them. Even after the season was over he continued practising for the next year- chirring and dancing, collecting etc....Then the fires came.

After it all slowed down we were delighted to discover his little bower intact- the flames had come within a metre of it but there it was with his bits of blue all around it. Two days later we heard the most glorious carry-on up at the bower. Absolutely triumphant chortling and chirring- the whole gamut of the bower-bird repertoire. He had found his bower all perfectly safe and was letting the world know that he had the best real estate on the block! It was lovely. I hope he does very well next spring!



Male Satin Bowerbird
Photo by Richard Cridland

The variety of plant species and the abundance of bloom has been astounding throughout the burnt areas. After 32 years here, we are seeing very unusual biennials such as the Incense Plant or Plume Bush, *Calomeria amaranthoides*, which we have never seen before. It has appeared in thousands along the severely burned river bed here.

All the usual glider possums are in evidence at night but as yet we have not had time to look out for the Greater Glider.

We have felt privileged to live here during a time of natural stress and recovery. It has been very exciting!

Kaye Munro, LfWer, Waterholes via Bairnsdale
Waterholes Guest House:
www.waterholesguesthouse.com.au

Bits and Pieces

If you want to contribute a cartoon, poem, photo, story, drawing...anything, to our new section 'Bits and Pieces', email lfw@lowecol.com.au

Native plants outside their natural range can also be invasive

*It isn't that I don't like
European trees.
Why, my great-grandfather came from...
Some of my best friends are...
But huddled together
in clumps and plantations
or lining the roads
like an official welcome
they look a bit lonely
slightly on guard, rather formal,
wishing the visit was over;
like the staff of an Embassy
at a party they don't really trust.*

(Judith Wright, *Oaks etc*, 1976)



AT THE WORST POSSIBLE MOMENT LEX LUTHOR REALISES HIS ERROR IN HIRING AN OUT OF WORK SOIL CRUST SCIENTIST AS HIS HENCHMAN...



Photograph: http://www.wildcareasp.org.au/gallery/Birds/slides/100_2422.html

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Hi, just a quick question, I noticed we have got a pair of Black Backed Magpies in the yard, coming and going. In my book they say that they are rare and local to the northern parts of Australia, is this right? Or is there another bird that looks similar to them.

Thanks,

Apples

Hi Apples,

I'm not sure about that one, so I have forwarded your email to our resident bird expert at the Desert Park. I will get back to you early next week with an answer!

Cheers,
Danielle

Hey Danielle,

There are three distinct races of Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*:

- *hypoleuca*. This is the White backed magpie, which is the race that most people from South/eastern Australia are more familiar with

- *dorsalis*. This is commonly called the Western Magpie of SW West Australia and looks similar to the White backed.

- *tibicen*. This is the Black backed magpie, the nominate race, and is the one that is found in Central Australia and up to the Top End. They are not rare, but are certainly not common all times of the year from my experiences in Central Australia. They seem to be around town quite a bit at the moment and will possibly start nesting soon.

The only other bird that they could be mistaken for is the more common Pied butcherbird or even the Grey butcherbird (which are not overly common but are around at the moment too). However, if they have identified the birds as Black backed magpies it sounds like they have a fair idea about bird ID's.

I hope this helps. I am more than happy to help out with any queries.

Cheers Pat

Help needed...

Land for Wildlife is currently looking for volunteer workers to assist us with property assessments and self monitoring. If you would consider yourself to have good plant or animal

ID skills and would be willing to donate 2-3 hours of your time a month to attend assessments, walk around blocks and assist us with flora ID please throw me an email or give me a call.

Webpages worth a look

Creating a 'weed planner'

http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/documents/fs58_garden%20weeds_tactics.pdf

This fact sheet gives suggestions about developing and outlining a weed management plan. It recommends a succession of tactics for different phases of eradication. The most useful part of this fact sheet is the blank 'weed planner' which helps you to create a structured, organised plan for your property. Useful for organising to tackle persistent buffel invasion!

For the avid bird lovers among you

<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/>

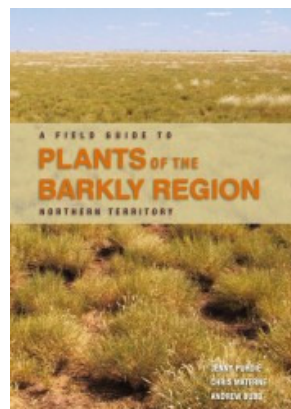
This site has been created by a group who exist to conserve Australia's native birds and their habitats by the expansion of scientific knowledge. It contains an extensive atlas of Australian birds, an image library and educational resources. Being Australia-wide, it can be general in places, however is a collaboration of vast networks of research, so worth a browse.

Think you know your native plants?

<http://asgap.org.au/quiz.html>

The Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants has this quirky, 10 question quiz which tests your knowledge of native Australian plants. Challenging.

Books worth a look



A Field Guide to the Plants of the Barkly Region of the Northern Territory

Jenny Purdie, Chris Materne and Andrew Bubb

Written primarily for the pastoralists in the Barkly region this book will also be of relevance to those with an interest in native plants. It contains descriptions and photos of 374 plants with references (and some photos) of a further 125 species. The plant descriptions are written in plain English, there are also distribution maps, information on habitats, nutrition data and notes on whether a particular species is a weed, an indicator of pasture condition or contains a poison.

All profits from the book go to the Barkly Landcare and Conservation Association to be used for conservation projects such as weed control.

The book is available from www.barklylandcare.org.au (plus postage and handling) and, in Alice Springs, from Greening Australia, the Desert Park, Dymocks, Book City and Red Kangaroo Books.

Calender of Events

OLIVE PINK BOTANIC GARDENS

5th and 7th August *In the footsteps of Miss Pink* guided town walk lead by Miss Pink's biographer Prof. Julie Marcus. The walk will take you on a journey around town sites of significance for the Garden's founder, Miss Pink. A mini-bus will take participants between more distant sites. The walk will take around 90 minutes in total, and will start and finish at Olive Pink Botanic Garden where afternoon tea will be served. Cost is \$20 per person, including afternoon tea and minibus travel. Seniors rate is \$5, as this event is part of Seniors Month. For more information please ph 08 8952 2154 or e: garden@opbg.com.au

15th August – 9th September Exhibition of new works by local artist Sally Mumford.

24th August *Bent and Twisted* craft fair. Be dazzled by the range of beautiful crafts put together by this group of local craftspeople. Glass, mosaics, quilting, papercraft, leatherwork, paintings, pottery and much more on display and for sale.

6th September – 8th October *Replant* national touring exhibition of cross-cultural collaborative works between Yolgnu and non-indigenous artists and botanists at the NT Herbarium. There will be a series of workshops and forums

associated with this exhibition. Watch this space for more information.

20th September Desert Garden and Sustainability Fair 8am - 6pm. Information, activities, games, demonstrations, competitions, product promotions, plant sales and more to promote sustainable living and gardening in our desert regions. e: garden@opbg.com.au for more details.

Australian Plant Society

21st-22nd June APS Trip to *Acacia latzii* site to encourage seedling growth. Contact Connie Spencer on 8952 4694

2nd July meeting. Olive Pink Botanic Gardens. Colleen O'Malley talking about plant families

Field Naturalists Club

7.30 pm on the second Wednesday of the month. Meeting at Olive Pink Botanic Garden, Tuncks Road

9th July. Meeting. Speaker Peter Nunn on Reptiles.

13th August. Meeting. AGM and member's night