



NT
LANDCARE
AWARDS⁰⁹
CATEGORY FINALIST



Land for Wildlife

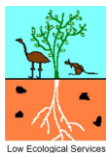
Take care of the land you live on

Snout-nosed Moth, *Entometa guttularis*



NEWSLETTER

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PowerWater



 Northern Territory Government

Alice Springs Municipality | April 2010

Land for Wildlife Update



Managing Director of Power and Water, Andrew Macrides, presents Garden for Wildlife Coordinator Ilse Pickerd from Alice Springs with the Community Award at the Melaleuca Awards ceremony in Darwin last Friday.

Hello All,

I have returned from the Simpson Desert to **lights, cameras, action!** I have fantastic news: the Garden for Wildlife program has won a **Power & Water 2010 Melaleuca Community Award** AND Land for Wildlife has been awarded a **Melaleuca Environment Grant** to support the Feral Spotted Turtle-dove Eradication program!! A big thankyou to Power and Water for recognising environmental excellence by hosting the Melaleuca Awards, and for supporting the program over the years. Congratulations to all our LfW and GfW members for your conservation efforts and looking after your private little piece of Alice Springs. For more information on the Melaleuca Awards and winners go to: http://www.powerwater.com.au/environment/melaleuca_awards/previous_winners/.

More good news: As you may remember last year Land for Wildlife was a finalist for the Community Group NT Landcare Award, and Garden for Wildlife won the NT Urban Landcare Award. Garden for Wildlife's win has led the program to be a Finalist for the **2010 National Landcare Awards**, and will represent Urban Landcare in the Northern Territory at the Ceremony in June. Fingers crossed!

In addition, the People's Choice Award is open for voting for the 2010 National Landcare Awards! **Vote for Garden for Wildlife**, and help to support and recognise local landholders contributions to regional and national biodiversity conservation. The website is below: go to Northern Territory – 'Gdn for Wildlife' - Urban Landcare category.

http://svc009.wic050p.server-web.com/nationalawards2010/?utm_source=Landcare+Australia+Ltd+List&utm_campaign=c6c7caaf3e-Landlink_June_2010&utm_medium=email

Help show the rest of the country that big conservation efforts are being made in the NT!

Even more good news: Territory Eco-link, an NT Government initiative, has extended its support to the Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife programs. As our programs (and your property!) contribute to the cross-continental conservation corridor planned by the initiative, Territory Eco-link has dedicated \$30, 000 a year to the program over a three-year period! For more information on Territory Eco-link see:

<http://www.greeningnt.nt.gov.au/ecolinks/eco.html>.

Are strange things popping up in your yard with all this rain?! If you would like anything identified and explained send us a photo or give us a ring! We are always happy to help shed some light: [lfw@lowecol.com.au/8955 5222](mailto:lfw@lowecol.com.au).



Let me know if you would like to borrow a feral Spotted Turtle-dove trap and participate in some backyard trapping. With some recent trap construction, we now have five traps in circulation and the wait is not too long! 8955 5222/lfw@lowecol.com.au.

The next Land for Wildlife **Workshop** is focusing on **Soil Erosion**. If you have minor or major erosion on your property keep this Saturday the 19th of June free and come and learn how to identify, rehabilitate and prevent erosion! Please see the 'Workshop' section for more details.

Botanist Boyd Wright who conducted **Seedbank Surveys** on Land for Wildlife properties in November last year to look at the effects of the presence and removal of Buffel grass on native seedbanks contacted us recently with an update. Thankyou to all those volunteers that helped him out. Below is his email:

Hi Ilse

Re: the Buffel project, no way am I anywhere near the analysis phase. Still have to get in and find the seeds from all the dirt I collected. That's gonna take months. I also want to put soil from each of the sites in germination trays and put them in the desert park nursery, if they have space. It's very difficult to pick up daisy seeds using the

flotation seed extraction method, so I want to try to germinate too. Plus, I'm thinking of doing another round of sampling on the sites now that we've have some rain. It will be nice to have a pre- and post- rain comparison of the veg and seed bank. Ill keep you posted on how it's all going. If any one wishes to participate in seed work please let me know. Ok mate, hope you've had a good past few months, how was the light in Broome?

Cheers

Boyd

Ed - Would anyone like to help Boyd out with some seed work? Please express your interest to us at Land for Wildlife (lfw@lowecol.com.au) and we will keep you informed as to when and where he needs vollys!

Thankyou everyone for **feedback** on Newsletter content and length. The consensus was that the length is OK! But I'll do my best to keep them concise!

Wildlife News



Snout-nosed Moth caterpillar: around 10cm long! The head is to the left of both pictures, the picture on the right demonstrates the two spikes behind the head, and the two blue collar stripes evident during movement.

We have recently had a stunning caterpillar, found cruising the concrete outside the old Commonwealth Bank near the ancient River Red Gum on Parsons St, identified by Dr Michael Braby, Curator of Entomology at the Museum and Art Gallery (Darwin) NT who was recommended to us by the Desert Park as a specialist in Butterfly identification. We had never seen its likes in town before and thought we were onto something special, but in moth form it is not so uncommon to us. Probably because the larvae is so well camouflaged and spends most of its time high up in trees underneath the bark, it is rarely seen. Luckily the larvae pupated the next day, its cocoon furry and white, and emerged in moth form a couple of weeks later later. Below is the correspondence.

Dear Ilse

Thanks for your pics of the caterpillar. The larva is a snout moth, *Entometa* (*Lasiocampidae*). They usually feed on eucalypt leaves. The only species I am aware of that has been recorded from the NT is the Boxtree Moth *Entometa guttularis*.

Kind regards

Michael

Patrick Honan,
Invertebrate Specialist at
Melbourne Zoo adds:

These caterpillars have a fringe of hair down each side of the body that blurs their outline and leaves no shadow when sitting on a branch, making them hard to spot for birds. In fact we have an almost identical version in Melbourne called Entometa fervens (the Gum Snout Moth) that feeds on gum leaves, and occurs along the east coast and in South Australia. They're called Snout Moths as the adults have a long projection in front of the head, but you'll rarely if ever see one of these. I hope this helps and that it's not too late.



Interestingly we have had four Snout Nosed Moths turn up at the office! Below are some photographs and you can tell a male from female moth by the length of its antennae (male's antennae are much longer). And the caterpillar that pupated emerged and immediately laid about 50 eggs each a mm in diameter and stuck to the surface of whatever was handy, but in the wild would have been on the under surface of Eucalypt leaves.



Male



Female

Grass Profiles

Summer rains are known as grass producing rains and they have done us proud this past summer. Here are two common examples of native grasses.

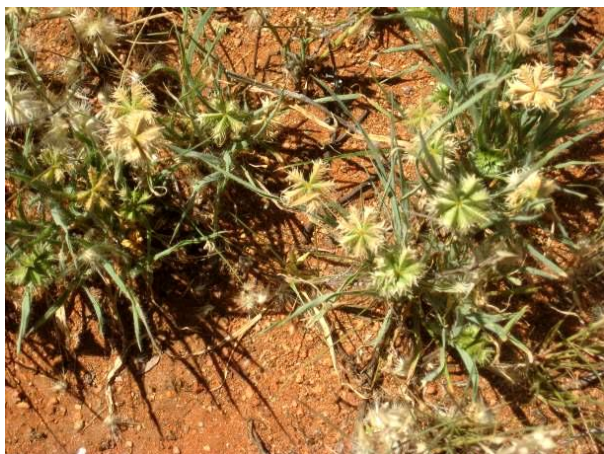
Button Grass

Alternative Names: Button grass, Coast button grass, Eight-day grass, Finger grass, Small Crowsfoot.

Family: Poaceae

Species: *Dactyloctenium radulans*

Origin: Native to Australia



When you gaze across the bizarrely green transformed desert landscapes, never fear – it's not *all* Buffel!

Button Grass is everywhere at the moment! It is an opportunist and has taken advantage of the recent rain to germinate prolifically. This soft and sprawling grass will grow to 30cm high, with green leaves that are 2-10cm long. It prefers to grow in gentle depression in low-lying areas, and can grow in a range of soils (though commonly found on calcareous or alluvial soils). It can be found often in disturbed or trampled areas, and is very recognisable when it seeds. The seed heads are finger-like branches of 3-10 spikes, and they grow in a windmill shaped arrangement on the top of a stem. It quickly produces abundant seed – the recent germination is proof of this! – as it is generally a short-lived annual and not frost tolerant. In gravelly foot slopes at the edge of the hills or along creek lines watch for the similar but slightly taller species, *Oxychloris scariosa*. The amount of Button Grass that is around at the moment is acting as great ground litter, and it will dry off quickly. Button Grass can be found throughout Australia. It can be of grazing value, though if cattle consume large amounts it can result in cyanide or nitrate poisoning!

Woolly Oat Grass

Alternative Names: Leafy Nine Awn.



Family: Poaceae

Species: *Enneapogon polyphyllus*

Origin: Native to Australia

This grass has been popping up everywhere. The large seed bank has been in waiting for a rain event like this one. Don't mistake those young furry seed heads for Buffel when you're out weeding!

With some familiarity it is easily distinguished from Buffel. It is a much shorter grass, growing 10 – 30 cm tall. It is an upright grass, with numerous stems. The leaves are covered in soft fine hairs, and the seed heads are compact and narrow. Florets are usually white, (but sometimes purple) and smooth with a tuft of hair at the base (hence the 'Woolly'-ness). Oat grasses are small widespread annual or biennial grasses. They respond to rain in any season, enabling them to grow year-round with adequate rain. It is an annual or short-lived perennial tussock grass, and can be a pioneer on disturbed areas. It can persist without rain, making it a carry-over species (providing food for livestock in drier months). It is an upland grass, growing on shallow gravelly, sandy or loamy soils, or on red earths. Another similar species, *E. Cylindricus*, can also be found on limestone soils. Woolly Oat Grass is highly palatable and nutritious for livestock .



Some Great References for Grasses:

Allan, C., Wilson D., (2006). *Central Australian Grass Guide*, Northern Territory Government of Australia.

Native Grass group <http://dev.nativegrassgroup.asn.au>

Cotton catchment Communities

CRC <http://www.cottoncrc.org.au/content/Industry/Publications/Weeds/WeedIdentificationTools/Weedsbycommonnames/Buttongrass.aspx>

If you get stuck, send us a photo of the general plant (with a ruler or pen for scale) and the seed heads and we'll help you out.

Pest Profile: Big-Headed Ants



Photo: Ilse Pickerd

Alternative Names: Coastal Brown Ant

Species: *Pheidole megacephala*

Origin: South Africa

Status: Big-Headed Ants are an invasive ant species in Alice Springs, and their activity may be on the increase after the recent rainfall. If you have a Big-Headed Ant infestation and would like more information on eradication techniques, please contact us.

Natural History:

Big-Headed Ants like humidity, but will not tolerate heavy rainfall or waterlogged soils. When it rains ants will come indoors or nest up in trees. The Big-Headed Ant has four castes



LACM ENT 142295, Costa Rica. Image by J. Longino Sen'03

or body forms. The queen form is the egg-layer, and there may be many queens in a nest. Grub-like larvae emerge from the eggs and are fed by the workers (the queen larvae are fed a special diet to ensure development). Once fully grown, larvae metamorphose, emerging as adults. Unfertilised eggs produce males and fertilised eggs produce females. Males are the second largest form to the queen and are elongated in shape. But the most numerous forms are the 'workers'. Workers are sterile females and they care for the young, collect food, and build and defend the nest. There are two types of workers; the most numerous type has a small head, the less numerous type has a large head (hence the name Big-Headed Ant). Large headed forms defend the colony and are sometimes known as the 'soldier caste'. Queens and males are rarely seen



Big-Headed Ant foraging trail. Note the two types of workers; one in ten have larger heads (hence the name 'Big-headed').

Photo courtesy Rod Cramer.

outside nest unless walking to a new nest site, not far from the original site.



Impacts: The Big-Headed Ant is spread mainly by human activity, for example transported in infested pot plants. Originally from South Africa, the Big-Headed Ant has spread to many tropical and temperate environments world-wide. A threat to biodiversity, the invasive ant dominates habitat, eliminating all native ant species from the area, as well as other insect species, spiders and centipedes, and changes vegetation. Big-Headed Ants impact on the ecological services that native ants supply such as soil aeration and seed dispersal. They are also a domestic nuisance, invading kitchens and bathrooms to feed on food scraps and fine layers of grease. Big-Headed Ant trails can cause cracks in brickwork and tiles, and once the ant is inside a house it can nest in light switches, computers and household appliances. Outside, the ant will nest at the base of trees and shrubs, disturbing the root system which can result in the plant's death.

Eradication: Amdro® is the most effective ant bait against Big-Headed Ants and contains the slow-acting insecticide hydramethylnon. The ants carry the bait into the nest to feed the brood, which results in exterminating a large proportion of the colony. However, several treatments may be needed to eradicate the entire nest, with aim of killing the queen ants. Hydramethylnon breaks down in sunlight and is best applied in the afternoon or twilight. It is safe to use in gardens and around buildings, but must be used in accordance with the instructions on the manual.



Photo left: Big-headed ants are one of several invasive ant species in Hawaii (Hawaii has no native ants). They eat native plant seeds and kill native insects (for example Mulga seeds are stored in seedbanks of native ants). This photograph demonstrates how

Big-Headed Ants can swarm over seabird chicks. They will attack chicks, eggs and webbing of bird's feet. Photo credit: C. Vanderlip.

References: G. Young. 2000 , the coastal Brown or Big-headed Ant, NTgovt

Letters to the Editor

Ilse,

With the burst of activity following the rain and the imminent arrival of Autumn and Winter, the Lizards are active.

Now is a good time to check that there are **no inadvertent "traps"** for these very curious creatures in your garden. Make sure that all your empty plant pots, buckets, plastic bins, even pieces of steel or plastic pipe, are all stored on their sides so that the Lizards cannot get trapped inside. Their clever and sharp little claws cannot get purchase on plastics or metal and a smooth vertical wall of about 200mm or more can easily trap the creatures so that they die of dehydration and starvation.

All the "big" containers, such as rubbish and re-cycling bins, can save a Lizard if they have a strip of shade cloth fixed at the top and draped down inside the bin.

Happy observing of Wildlife,

Dave Leonard

P.S. The Channel Billed Cuckoo flew over yesterday morning.

This creature was dropped in to the Land for Wildlife office for identification. It is actually the *moult* of a freshwater invertebrate belonging to the Belostomatidae family.



Photo courtesy Holger Voyt

Order: Hemiptera
Suborder: Heteroptera
Superfamily: Nepoidea
Family: Belostomatidae
Species: Lethocerus

Not to be mistaken for a Water Scorpion - which is the common name given to the Nepidae family because of their raptorial forelegs and the presence of a long slender respiratory siphon at the posterior end of the abdomen, simulating a tail - the Belostomatidae, who do not have such a long siphon, are commonly called Giant Water Bugs. In *A Field Guide to Insects in Australia* by Paul Zborowski & Ross Storey this creature is given the

common name of Fishkiller Bug! A popular food in Thailand, it is the largest bug in the Hemiptera order, occurring worldwide in freshwater streams and waterholes. The moult (photographed above) measured



7cm long, so the Giant Water Bug that emerged is now *larger!* This waterbug is a Lethocerus species, which are known to exceed 12cm. Fierce predators, the Belostomatids stalk, capture and feed on aquatic crustaceans, fish and amphibians. They hunt by using an ambush or sit-and-wait approach, lying motionless at the bottom of the water, attached to various objects, until prey comes near enough to strike. They inject a powerful digestive saliva into their prey to enable liquefied remains to be sucked out. Their bite is considered to be painful; the longer the bug is allowed to inject its saliva, the worse the resulting bite.

Adults cannot breathe under water, and must surface periodically to stick their tails into the air which is siphoned with two short flat retractable respiratory filaments (as opposed to one long one in Water Scorpions). Adults have wings allowing them to migrate if water dries up or the wet season occurs, and will fly at night like many aquatic insects. They may be attracted to lights during the breeding season.

Interestingly, care of eggs is paternal, and in Lethocerinae sub-families eggs are laid on the male's wings and he will carry them around on his back to keep them properly oxygenated. The male cannot mate during this period and so invests considerable energy and time in reproduction, whereas the female takes the role of actively finding mates.

There are all sorts of water bugs cruising in Alice Springs water holes. You may notice some in any buckets of water you have in your garden. Water bugs can be used as indicators of freshwater stream or water body health, as a method of biological monitoring. This method can provide a more comprehensive assessment of stream health than physio-chemical measurements alone as water bugs react to all different types of impact. A range of water bugs live in a healthy water body, and presence/absence of species and level of species richness will indicate if a water body is in near natural condition or impacted. For more information on water bugs visit some of the websites below:

Field Guide to Freshwater Invertebrates:

<http://www.seanet.com/~leska/Online/Guide.html>

Invertebrates in Arid NT Wetlands:

<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/wildlife/nature/pdf/aridwetlands/invertebrates.pdf>

Australian River Assessment System (NRETAS):

<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/water/aquatic/ausrivas/index.html>

Water Bugs & Water Scorpions, QLD Museum Learning:

http://www.qm.qld.gov.au/~media/Documents/QMSB/Inquiry%20Centre/Fact%20Sheets/water_bugs_20080709.pdf

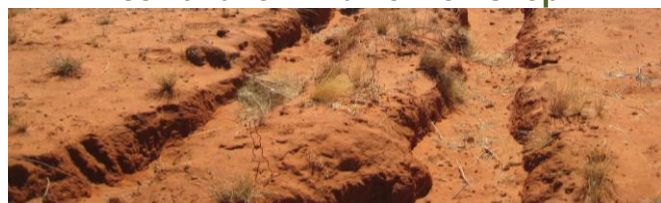
The grasshoppers are finally abating and your gardens are getting a break from the munching, and hopefully will get some more rain! Young Wildlifer Elkin disturbs the masses from the Buffel grass along the Todd River last



Photo: Oliver Eclipse

Workshops & Seminars

Free Land for Wildlife Workshop



SOIL EROSION & CONSERVATION

Come and learn how to identify, rehabilitate, and prevent soil erosion with Soil Conservation

Officer Col Stanton.

Saturday 19th June

9:30am – 12

RSVP: Ilse on 8955 5222,

lfw@lowecol.com.au

The workshop will look at two sites. Meet at the cul de sac at the end of Lilliecrapp Rd., Ilparpa.

Rangelands Biology & Ecology Seminars

SPEAKERS and PARTICIPANTS NEEDED.

Volunteer speakers, requests or cancellation of email notification: contact Bill Low, Coordinator, P.O.Box 3130, Alice Springs; Phone/Fax 89 555 222, Fax 89 555 722; Email: LowEcol@LowEcol.com.au

Organisational and distributional assistance from CSIRO, NRETAS, DResources, CAT, CLC, CDU.

Seminar notices are available on:
<http://www.cse.csiro.au/news/alicespringsseminars.pdf>

Rangeland Biology and Ecology Seminars (broadened from the former Rangelands Coordinating Committee) have been useful in facilitating communication between environmental researchers, technicians, managers, students and the interested public in Alice Springs since 1974. The seminars provide an opportunity for the diverse Government, Institutional, Council, Company and private technical community and interested public to discuss current research and projects, impacts on or opportunities in arid Australia. Presenters may provide information on research and management of biological, landscape, cultural and physical aspects of central Australia or pertinent topics from around the World. The seminars also provide a training arena to practice talks for conferences or to float ideas or to help develop a project. Sometimes they present technical travelogues of distant lands. Appropriate professional society or interest group notices can also be included. The venue is the one most appropriate for the speaker and audience. For consistency the venue has usually been the CSIRO Conference Room, but with CSIRO's move to their new location at the Desert Knowledge Centre, the CDU venue is currently a good central location. Come along for a natter, a catch up or to meet new people and new ideas.

Announcements

Making Windows Safe for Birds Competition

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

This is a competition for the best 'Bird-proofing of Windows' idea.

Windows are a major contributor to bird deaths globally. Birds see only the tree reflected in a window, or the plant behind the window, not the glass itself. To stop these collisions we need to make glass *visible* to birds.

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

Some websites for inspiration:

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

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

<http://www.buildinggreen.com/auth/article.cfm/2005/8/1/Design-for-the-Birds-Protecting-Birds-from-the-Hazards-of-Glass/?&accessCode=%20odynj2>
<http://www.duncraft.com/Window-Strike-Solutions-C227.aspx>

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

Volunteers Needed!

Free entry to the Alice Springs Show will be awarded to anyone willing to help us for a couple of hours at this year's Land for Wildlife/Garden for Wildlife stall at the Show! Our stall is shared with the Australian Plants Society in their gorgeous display garden, conveniently located next to the Alice Springs Pistol Club's Donut stand! The event is always lots of fun, and great chance to share garden ideas, learn more about our local plants and show off our recent award winnings! We'd love to see you there. Contact Ilse/Bill on 8955 5222/lfw@lowecol.com.au.

Websites Worth a Look

Flooding Photos:

Impressive photos of flooding from QLD flowing into SA; Cooper Creek into Strzelecki Creek, and flooding around Innamincka, Nappa Merrie and Moomba areas courtesy Lyndhurst Hotel:

<http://www.lyndhursthotel.com.au/frameset.html>

Bringing Back Birds to the 'burbs:

A fantastic article on encouraging birds to your yard by Sustainable Gardening Australia, author Helen Tuton. There are many handy tips in this



article about what to do and what not to do to attract birds to your backyard, and it presents a great understanding of a bird's place in the ecosystem and how important it is to get the balance of biodiversity right. With regard to plant species mentioned in the article; ignore the list and ask us

or your local nursery about local arid zone plants, as this article is targeted at backyards in the south east of the country. Remember local provenance is always best! With regards to the sorts of birds you can attract to your garden Olive pink Botanic gardens will soon display on their website information relating to birds and their food plants.

<http://www.sgaonline.org.au/?p=648>

Olive Pink Botanic Gardens

Take a look at this website for information on Bush Food, the garden's History, and events. Also view and comment on the OPBG's Master Plan.

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

Don't forget to check out the LfW & GfW website at www.lowecol.com.au, you can download membership application forms, newsletters, vegetation type species lists, and find out about upcoming workshops!

Coming Soon: The Alice Springs Landcare Inc. Website!



Calendar

Sat 19 June: Land for Wildlife EROSION & SOIL CONSERVATION Workshop, 9:30am – 12noon. FREE! Meet at the cul der sac at the end of Lillecrapp Rd. RSVP Ilse: 8955 5222 or lfw@lowecol.com.au

Sat 26 June: Greywater Reuse Workshop 2pm - 5pm. COOLmob present a hands on look at Greywater options for Alice Springs

Fri 2 – Sat 3 July: Alice Springs Show. Volunteers needed to assist manning the Land for Wildlife/Garden for Wildlife stall. Show entry paid in exchange for a couple of hours of stall minding fun! Contact Ilse/Bill on 8955 5222/lfw@lowecol.com.au

Tuesday 6 July: Nappy Options and the Environment Workshop for parents interested in reducing the environmental impact of nappies and other baby products – what are the options? 6.30 pm – 8.00pm. RSVP to dka.coolmob@coolmob.org

Sun 11 July: Field Naturalists day walk on the southern side of Mt Gillen Range from Heavitree Gap. Contact Connie Spencer on 8952 4694 for further information.

Wed 14 July: Field Naturalists meeting. Speaker Ashley Sparrow presents “Landscape ecology in Antarctic dry valleys” 7.00pm at the Higher Education Building, CDU.

Sat 17 July: Field Naturalists Bird watching trip with Mark Carter to the vicinity of Kunoth Bore on the Tanami Road. Meet at 6.40 am sharp, at the end of Sargent Street on the North Stuart Highway. Contact Barb Gifedder 89 555452 for more information.

Sat 11 September: DesertSmart EcoFair at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens.



Take care,
Ilse & Bill
Land for Wildlife Coordinators



Processionary caterpillars at the doorstep!

This newsletter has been produced by
Ilse Pickerd and Bill Low, LfW coordinators, W.A. Low
Ecological Services,
Contact Ilse on 89555222 or lfw@lowecol.com.au