



Newsletter for the Land for Wildlife Scheme in Alice Springs Municipality September 2009

Welcome to our September 2009 Land for Wildlife newsletter!

It is with great pleasure that I announce the success of the Garden for Wildlife program in winning the Urban Landcare Group Award at the 2009 NT Landcare Award! Land for Wildlife was also a finalist for the Landcare Community Group Award, along with the Barkly Landcare & Conservation Association who won the award for all their great work in weed control in the Barklys. The Urban Landcare Award has been dedicated to all landholders that have been inspired to become a member of the program, as without the voluntary participation of landholders this conservation initiative would not work. So thankyou everyone, and well done! It is such a great initiative and every little bit of habitat provided goes a long way in terms of wildlife corridors and the survival of our unique Central Australian ecosystems. The Garden for Wildlife program has now registered more than 70 500 square metres as recognised conservation protected land, and 10 481 hectares of land is protected for conservation by rural properties subscribed to the Land for Wildlife program! Land for Wildlife now has a total of 133 properties. Well done everyone!

Happy reading!

Ilse Pickerd and Bill Low
Land for Wildlife
Coordinators



Contents:

- 2 Land for Wildlife Update, Workshops, Article: Making a Spotted Turtle-Dove Funnel Trap
- 3
- 4
- 5 Article: Butterfly Gardens
- 6 Websites with a look, Property Profiles
- 7 Letters to the Editor, Calendar of events
- 8 Announcements

Land for Wildlife Update

I am pleased to announce that LfW/GfW has been awarded funding of \$10 00 by the Environment Grants Program to assist with coordination of the programs.

Annual Biodiversity Surveys will be starting again soon. This year Botanist Boyd Wright will partake in surveys in the Ilparpa Rural region. He will be surveying seedbanks across properties in various stages of Buffel grass control to see how the native seedbank is affected, and will teach us techniques for seedbank surveying and seed identification. Additional Biodiversity Surveys will also be conducted across properties in the Airport/Winery Area. Some of you may have been contacted to see if you would like your property to be surveyed, there will be more information available about the surveys and timetables soon!

Garden for Wildlife has a display in collaboration with Olive Pink Botanic Garden on Plants in Flower from Vegetation Community 17 (see the map to determine whether your house has Veg. Com.17), in the gazebo at OPBG.

LfW/GfW shared a stall with the Australian Plants Society at this year's Alice Springs Show. Punters could browse Vegetation Type maps provided by the program to find their house and peruse the beautiful display of native plants put on by the APS and buy from their plant sale. A great weekend!

Come and visit us at our stall at the Desert Smart EcoFair this weekend!

Workshops

Bare Earth to Biodiversity

The next Land for Wildlife Workshop/Garden for Wildlife Workshop will be a Property Profile of Dylan Ferguson's (of Tangentyere Nursery) garden on Raggat Street, Old Eastside.

Come and see how he transformed a bare earth block to a local native wildlife habitat in just 12 months using mainly the existing seed bank. Topics covered:

- Encouraging local native seedbanks
- Bush foods (for people and animals!)
- Working with a bare earth backyard
- Creating wildlife habitat, bird hollows
- Ecology & balancing garden purposes
- Couch grass control

It's free! But numbers are limited so please make a booking on 8955 5222.

Articles



Making a Spotted Turtle-dove Funnel Trap

On Saturday 20th of June Land for Wildlife hosted a workshop on how to build your own Spotted Turtle-dove trap at Trevor Shiel's rural block. Jon DeLaine from Parks and Wildlife gave a brilliant presentation about the behaviour and natural history of the feral birds and a trap-making demonstration. We then built our own Funnel Traps...

Materials:

- Chicken wire or weld mesh (arc mesh)
- Gutter guard
- Shade cloth

Jon recommends using 4 or 5cm weld mesh as the larger gauge will allow small native birds to fly in and out without getting trapped. When using large gauge it may be worth wrapping a strip of shade cloth or small mesh around the sides without entrances to prevent Turtle-doves from trying to poke through the bigger gauge. Jon mentioned several times

during the workshop that these birds are not very smart; if the entrance way is not made obvious

they will spend all day walking up and down one side trying to get at the bait. It's important to use wire because it is transparent, which will encourage birds to enter.



Tools:

- Wire- or bolt-cutters for cutting wire to size (be careful of sharp edges).
- Maspro clips (also known as ring clips, C-rings or hog-clips – a squarer variety). Very handy multi-purpose clips! Maspro clips are used to attach wire pieces together.
- If you are buying Maspro clips, purchase the special clamping pliers along with the clips which

makes it much easier to close the rings compared to fiddling with pliers. Jon has put polypipe on the handles of his set to avoid getting blisters.

Bait:

- Commercial seed, purchased from supermarkets or pet shops, can be used as bait. Larger seeds are preferred over smaller seed, as the small seed will attract too many native birds. Avoid sunflower seed as you may be overrun by galahs (it is a favourite with parrots and very fattening for them)!
- If Spotted Turtle-doves are coming into your yard to eat your pet or chook food, use that as bait.

Building a Funnel Trap:



The Parks and Wildlife Fact Sheet has details on how to make these traps. If you have any concerns about your homemade trap, contact Parks and Wildlife and they can come to inspect them.

Funnel traps could be made with chicken wire in a circle or with weld-mesh clipped together in a square. No framework is required for either, and they do not need floors built in. Jon recommends that all types of traps be made without a floor. By lifting up the trap it enables the quick and stress-free release of native birds that get caught, instead of having to hand grab them out of the trap. Tent pegs can be used to hold traps sturdy.

Jon suggests leaving a rough edge on the narrow end of you funnel to discourage doves from trying to exit.



Cut four pieces of wire for walls and a piece for the roof. Traps should be a minimum of 50cm x 60cm. If your trap is high you will need to consider putting in a perch (e.g. thread a stick through large gauge wire).

Cut an entrance hole at ground level in one wall. This is where the funnels attached.

The funnel needs to be made out of softer gutter guard and maspro clipped to the the entrance hole so that it runs along the ground. Ensure that funnels are at least 20cm long and are no taller than 8cm at the tall end. The small end should have an opening approximately the size of a can of baked beans. If your trap is large you should space 2-3 funnels around the trap. Funnels need to lead into the centre of the trap where the bait should be placed. In the roof or side of the trap cut another hole and cover it with shade cloth.

Cut an opening in the top so you can get the birds out. This can be covered with heavy shade cloth maspro clipped to the wire. Cut a small slit in the shade cloth; this is for you to reach into the trap and catch the bird. Place a square of wire over the shade cloth hole using solid wire or maspro clips to hinge it in the unlikely event a Turtle-dove will try to escape through the slit.



If you are going to set traps be prepared to check them regularly to prevent placing animals, native or feral, under stress. Make sure traps cannot be interfered with by dogs or cats. Jon suggests placing traps up high, for example on a table or on the roof. All native birds caught must be released as soon as possible. If you are continually catching natives, such as Crested Pigeons, try moving the trap to a different spot or discouraging the birds from feeding from the trap site. Jon suggests leaving Crested Pigeons in the trap for a short while or making a lot of noise to frighten them so they realise the trap is not an easy free feed. Be aware that birds can die of shock. Animal welfare is a priority.

You can try the 'free feed/free baiting' technique, where traps are left open with food in them for a few days which allows Turtle-doves to become comfortable with the feeding spot and gives them a false sense of security.

Trap Placement:

Placement of the trap should be out of full sun and safe from predators (cats and dogs, snakes should be considered in the warmer months). If your trap begins to

slow on catch numbers you can try moving the trap to a different place in your garden. When placing a trap, vegetation or mulch can be built up around the sides leaving the entrance side clear. This will direct Turtle-doves to the trap entrance.

Disposal of birds:

Not sure what to do with feral doves once they are caught? I found this delicious recipe on the internet from last years Bush Foods competition...

www.abc.net.au/local/recipes/2008/09/11/2361756.htm?site=alicesprings

If you're not keen on pigeon pie, I would strongly recommend that all feral doves are taken to the Desert Park where they are euthanised and used for food for raptors. Turn off the Park's main entry road off Larapinta Dve onto the Service Road and look for the holding aviary for feral doves. You will see a sign that says 'Workshop' with an arrow to the left. Follow that service road along until you come to the aviary on your left. Unlock the door and place Turtle-doves inside. Be sure not to let any other captives out. Birds can be delivered between the hours of 8.00am and 4.00pm. If you are unable to deliver your catch give us a call at Land for Wildlife and we may be able to deliver them for you. Turtle-doves delivered to the Desert Park are then euthanized humanely and fed out to captive animals. This is great behavioural enrichment, especially for birds of prey, as it is a realistic prey size with feathers and bones to work around, keeping captive animals teeth, beaks, and claws sharp and exercised. The Desert Park will not accept dead birds for animal feed as it is a quarantine risk. Dead birds when buried can make great mulch for the garden, but if you're not sure how to humanely kill a bird don't do it!

Trap Rotation:

It was suggested at the workshop that houses along a street or groups of friends could share traps and run a rotation system. Parks and Wildlife can loan traps over very extended periods, and as long as someone is willing to take responsibility for the trap, they are happy for traps to be shared around. If anyone is interested in participating in a trap circuit let us know.



We may be able to contact other members in your street or or area to see if they are interested also.

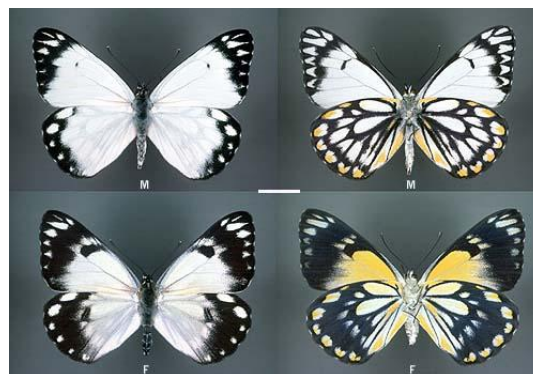
Contacts:

Ilse Pickerd
Land for Wildlife/Garden for
Wildlife Coordinator
8955 522
lfw@lowecol.com.au

Kym Schwartzkopff
Parks and Wildlife
Wildlife Officer
8951 8266
kym.schwartzkopff@nt.gov.au

Butterfly Gardens

It's warming up oh so suddenly and you may have already noticed a few more insects hop, crawl, flit, or buzz by that were not with us over the winter. In anticipation of the warmer weather, and to take advantage of the flowering plants and flourishing host plants I have noticed two butterflies very common to Alice Springs flutter about in greater numbers. The Caper White Butterfly, *Belenois java teutonia*, and the Chequered Swallowtail, *Papilio demoleus sthenelus*.



The Caper White Butterfly can occur in a pale or a dark colour form,. Both forms can occur together in the one population at the same time. Females are shown on the bottom row. (users.sa.chariot.net.au)

Caper White:

Caper Whites are visible around Alice most of the year, but you may find that after rain there is a big boost of these butterflies hovering around. If you have *Capparis spinosa*, Wild/Bush Passionfruit, in your garden Caper White butterflies will swarm over it, laying eggs under every leaf as it is the caterpillar's food plant. You will be able to watch the destruction of the leaves on this plant as caterpillars hatch and munch every leaf down to the stem! Never fear, the plant should regenerate once the caterpillars form chrysalises and hang from stems. You can watch butterflies emerge about a week later (two weeks if the weather is cooler). Upon emergence butterfly wings are very damp, delicate and crumpled and butterflies need to hang upside down, often holding onto their empty chrysalis shell, and pump blood into their wings. This inflates and strengthens the wings, and butterflies will rest there for most of the day

upside down until their wings are dry and ready to use in flight. By late afternoon they will fly off to find their first feed on your flowering plants and to find mates ready to start the cycle again.

Chequered Swallowtail:

Chequered Swallowtail, *Papilio demoleus sthenelus*. (www.pbase.com)



The Chequered Swallowtail is a beautiful species and a powerful flyer, flying 1 -2 metres above the ground. If disturbed before ready to fly it will suddenly open its wings,

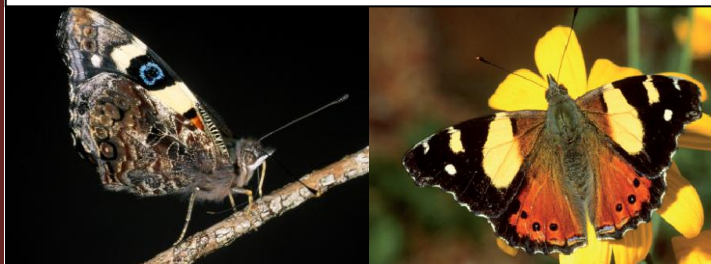
scaring predators with a flash from the two eyespots on its hindwings. You may notice this species hovering around your *Citrus* trees. Even though this butterfly's host plants are False Lucerne *Cullen* (*Psoralea*) spp., it will utilise *Citrus* as a host plant if *Cullen* is not abundant or there is competition for the resource. Last year over the summer I was taken out to Ilparpa to find a large patch of *Cullen patens* sighted the week before, but we searched high and low and couldn't find the plant, flowering at that time, anywhere. We eventually realised it had ALL been eaten to the ground by a recent swarm of grasshoppers!



Chequered Swallowtail (www.pbase.com)

Another butterfly to watch out for is the **Australian Admiral**, *Vanessa itea*, a close relative of the more commonly seen **Australian Painted Lady**, *Vanessa Kershawi*. The Australian Admiral will often accompany the Australian Painted Lady on its migrations.

Australian Admiral, *Vanessa itea* www.butterflygardening.net.au



The Australian Admiral's host plant is normally plants of the Urticaceae family, and in the Territory these include *Parietaria cardiostegia* (mallee smooth-nettle), *P. debilis*

(smooth nettle), *P. judaica* (wall pellitory) (introduced), *Urtica incisa* (scrub or native stinging nettle), and *U. urens* (stinging nettle) (introduced). *Parietaria cardiostegia* is listed as Near Threatened in the Northern Territory (*Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000*), as buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is invading its preferred habitat, and rabbit grazing may also contribute to its rarity. Interestingly in some areas of Australia the Admiral larvae prefer to feed on the introduced species of its host's Genus, which in cooler climates is the cause of great pain, the Stinging Nettle, *Urtica urens* (although it does make great tea)! However loss of host plant species will detrimentally affect butterfly populations and biodiversity. Growing host plants in your garden and allowing caterpillars to munch at parts of them will support butterfly populations and the ecosystem that depends on them, and if you have flowering plants (*Eremophilas*, *Sennas* and *Acacias* are looking beautiful at the moment) and a keen eye you may notice butterflies feeding with their long proboscis. A reminder that there is a great article 'Central Australian Butterflies and their food plants' by Stuart Traynor in your Garden for Wildlife resource packs listing butterflies of the region and their food plants!



Australian Painted Lady, *Vanessa kershawi*. (www.genehanson.com, upload.wikimedia.org)

Reference:

R. Grund, 1998, South Australian Butterflies, <http://users.sa.chariot.net.au/~rbg/datasheet.htm>.

Websites worth a look

Australian Butterfly Species Information:

<http://users.sa.chariot.net.au/~rbg/datasheet.htm>

Caterpillar Identification:

<http://www-staff.it.uts.edu.au/~don/larvae/larvae.html>

A website for Horse Owners: husbandry, intensive horsekeeping, paddock management, resources, workshops, newsletters. There is great information on caring for horses and the environment. See the 'Horse Keeping - Arid Areas' link. A document named 'HorseLandWater Management Guidelines' will appear. Check out pages 14, 18, and 19, and the section called 'paddock management' (page 24 onwards) for great information and best practice on native habitat for

plants and animals, preventing weeds from entering/leaving your property, pest animals and erosion: www.horseslandwater.com

Property Profiles

Landcare Achievements

To highlight some of the reasons we won the Urban Landcare Group Award, here is a fantastic example of a garden for wildlife!

Garden for Wildlife Property Profile: Peter & Blue of Tunga Court, Northside



Peter and Blue have created a garden that wonderfully demonstrates how you can improve wildlife habitat in the context of Urban Alice Springs, greatly increasing the local native species component while maintaining some of the long lived and useful introduced species until they can be superseded by local native species.

Peter explains:

"There are a few elements to our garden which make it a little interesting. We have heaps of flowering plants, such as *Melaleucas* and *Eucalyptus*, which attract many nectar feeding birds, such as small honeyeaters. We have a resident Grey Shrike Thrush which loves our dense citrus fruit trees.

Peter and Blue sweep all their leaf litter into this rocky area, creating great reptile habitat



We have a fenced off section where I keep all my building materials which is great for lizards, away from dogs, and has a couple of great trees in amongst it. There is lots of leaf litter and rocks providing skink and

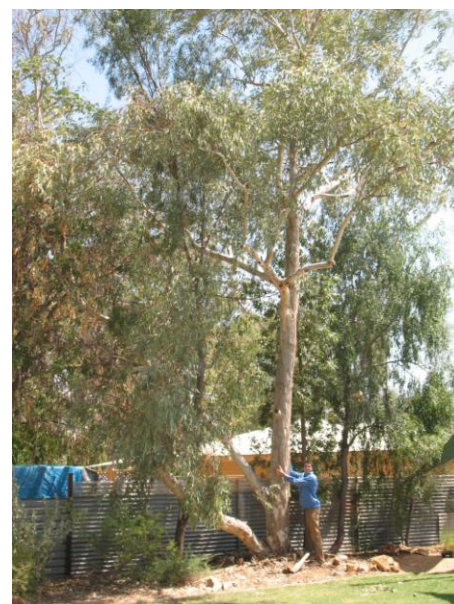


gecko habitat. We have seen legless lizards living in leaf litter amongst shrubs and dead wood in the front yard.

The backyard is shaded by heaps of River Red Gums, which are full of lerps. The lerps in turn attract all the lerp-eating birds (although they are mostly dominated by White Plumed Honeyeaters!). The Red Gums also provide Torresian Crows with nesting sites - which is where our Channel-billed Cuckoo's lay their eggs! We have planted our veggie garden in raised beds so the Red Gums don't take all the veggie garden's water.

We have some open spaces for our regular Grey-crowned Babbler visitors, and White Cedars (*Melia azedarach*) that attract the Port Lincoln Ringnecks.

We have created a wetland using drainage channels where water flows to after rain. *Stemodia viscosa* (Sticky Blue Rod), *Frankenia cordata* (Sea Heath), *Enterpogan acicularis* (Curly Windmill Grass), and *Cyperis spp.* grow well there.



Oh, and we unfortunately have a Big Headed Ant infestation which we are working hard to eradicate, using Amdro, and numbers have reduced drastically."

Congratulations to all you for contributing to Garden for Wildlife success.

If you have any garden stories, successes or ideas, share them with us! Let us know, you can email articles, stories, photographs, ideas, advice or queries to lfw@lowecol.com.au. We look forward to hearing from you!

Book in for our next workshop on Saturday September 26th to see what Dylan Ferguson of Tangentyere Nursery has created from bare earth in his garden on Raggat Street, Old Eastside!!! (See more details above under 'Workshop'.) Bookings 8955 5222.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Land for Wildlife,

I have noticed an increase in the number of rabbits in the Greatorex road area. I often see a rabbit at the intersection of Greatorex and Webb roads on my morning walk. This morning there were 3. They seem to come out of the clay pan and head towards the nursery. I have also observed a rabbit in my veggie garden the past couple of weeks who has been having a wonderful time eating my seedlings. Can something be done about this? Can I borrow a trap from somewhere to save my vegies?

If you have some info, I would be very grateful.

Hi,

Rabbits are moving around a bit looking for green feed. Trapping is always a bit problematical as it takes a while to condition the rabbits to the trap or bait.

If there a few rabbits around, it may be useful to put out some poisoned oats out for them (eg. Rabbait, something with an anticoagulant in it).

Bait can be obtained from Elders or Dalgaetty's.

If you want to try rabbit traps, let me know and we can loan you some.

The price for Pindone rabbit oats bait: 10kg \$154:00 and 2:5kg \$60:00, and anyone can walk in off the street and buy it over the counter. Neighbours could coordinate and share a joint supply of bait.

Cheers,
Bill Low

Calender of Events

September

Thursday 10: NT Landcare Forum, Darwin

Friday 11 – Sunday 20: Alice Desert Festival (program at <http://www.alicedesertfestival.com.au/program>)

Saturday 19: Sunday 20th: Bush Foods weekend (see Desert Festival Program)

Saturday 19: Desert Smart EcoFair @Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, 7am – 4pm

September 19 – 26: Red Centre Bird Week (see <http://www.territorydiscoveries.com/experiences/bird-watching> for link to program)

Sunday 20: Transition Towns and Community Garden Workshop 9-12pm Haaren House

Tuesday 22: World Car-Free Day
<http://www.worldcarfree.net/wcfd/>

Friday 25: Presentation by Adam Leavesley, Grant Allan, Bush Fires Council Alice Springs on Bush Fire management planning in central Australia, 3.30 at CSIRO, Conference Room

Wednesday 30: The Great Australian Marsupial Night Stalk @Alice Springs Telegraph Station Kiosk, 7 – 9pm (see flyer below for details),
Comments due on EIA Review
<http://www.epa.nt.gov.au/current/eia.html>

October

Friday 2: The Great Australian Marsupial Night Stalk @Simpsons Gap BBQ Area, 7 – 9pm (see flyer below for details)

Saturday 3 & 4: The Great Australian Marsupial Night Stalk @Ormiston Gorge Visitor Centre, 7 – 9pm (see flyer below for more details)

Saturday 10:
Drive to Native Gap for lunch – Field Naturalists Trip, Leader Connie Spencer.
The Great Australian Marsupial Night Stalk @Trephina Gorge Campground, 7 – 9pm (see flyer below for more details)

Wednesday 14:

Field Naturalist Presentation. Peter Collins (Ex Warden at Broome Bird Observatory) talking about 'Waders, Flyways and Flagging', Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, 7:30pm,
The Great Australian Marsupial Night Stalk @Watarrka (at picnic area near Gorge), 7 -9pm (see flyer below for more details)

Tuesday 17: Visit the 'Land for Wildlife' area at OLSH Sadadeen Campus with the Field Naturalists. – Trip Leader is Rosalie Breen.

Alice Springs Field Naturalist Society: Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except December and January) at 7:30 PM at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Visitors are welcome. Contact President Barbara Giffedder on 8955 5452 for more information and information on F.N. events.

Announcements

You may have already noticed, but ... **Rainbow Beeeaters are back!!** We heard their first distant familiar trills mid-August. They are flying down from the north to join us for the summer to feed on our bugs, and will be so happy if it rains again this season.

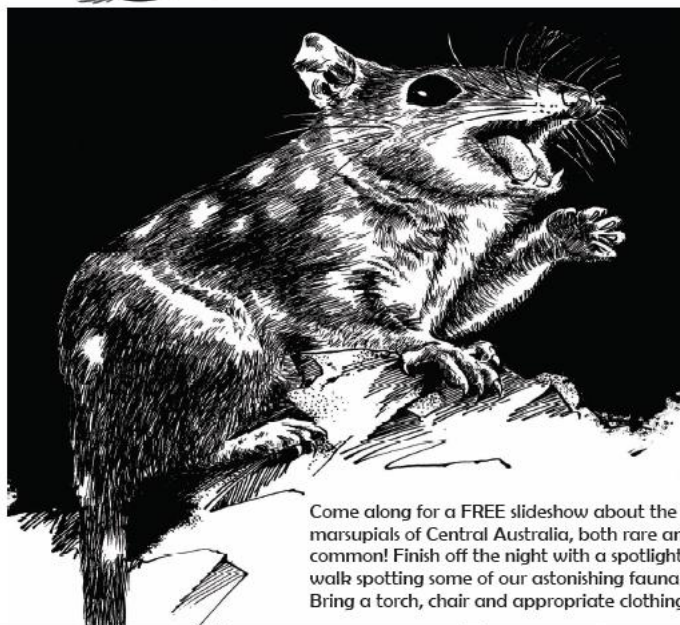
Rod Cramer of Ilparpa has reported that properties in Ilparpa rural areas are experiencing a massive germination of the invasive Mexican Poppy, which started before the recent rain. "Haven't seen it like this for almost ten years. The population in the Todd River has also gone ballistic. If you use river sand (legally or otherwise) for improvements on your block be aware that you could be importing Mexican Poppy seeds and you may need to be especially alert to pull out germinatlings.

Also, since the rain, Big Headed Ants have gone ballistic in town – we hadn't seen any for ages, and then since the recent rain . . .!"

So keep an eye out for those two invasive species, and get onto them before they become a massive problem for you!

See the announcement from Michael Barrit of Parks and Wildlife about a new free slide show and spotlighting session of Central Australian Marsupials, and below for an Alice Springs Landcare Inc. announcement and Land for Wildlife/Garden for Wildlife Workshop Flyer.

The Great Australian Marsupial Night Stalk



Come along for a FREE slideshow about the marsupials of Central Australia, both rare and common! Finish off the night with a spotlight walk spotting some of our astonishing fauna. Bring a torch, chair and appropriate clothing.

Alice Springs Telegraph Station Kiosk
7-9pm Wed 30th Sept 09

Ormiston Gorge Visitor Centre 7-9pm
Sat 3rd Oct 2009

Trephina Gorge Campground 7-9pm
Sat 10th Oct 2009

Simpsons Gap BBQ area (right down at the Gap)
7-9pm Fri 2nd Oct 09

Ormiston Gorge Visitor Centre 7-9pm
Sun 4th Oct 2009

Watarrka (at Picnic area near Gorge)
7-9pm Wed 14th Oct 2009



Bookings Essential: Call Michael Barritt at Parks and Wildlife on 89518247 or email at: michael.barritt@nt.gov.au



Northern Territory Government

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

"The Northern Territory Government through the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport is pleased to sponsor Land for Wildlife. This publication may not represent the views of the Northern Territory Government"

Alice Springs Landcare Inc. (ASL) is a community managed group formed to tackle weeds and other issues relating to native vegetation in Alice Springs.

Alice Springs Landcare took the attack to a prickly garden escapee in the Spencer Valley this winter. Known as Boxing Glove Cactus or *Cylindropuntia fulgida* this weed related to the Prickly Pear has begun to take hold in a few locations of the Valley.

Although not a notifiable species in the NT it has become naturalised in broad parts of Queensland and NSW where it is a declared noxious weed.

ASL also has been active on Northside, conducting a very successful tree planting for National Tree Day on 31st of July this year. Students from Brailling

Primary School and Batchelor College, as well as Landcare volunteers, planted, mulched and irrigated over 200 trees in Dixon Park.

Alice Springs Landcare needs your help. They have a strong and active committee, but with the AGM drawing closer and numerous environmental issues to address, ASL is seeking more members.

Membership costs \$10 and puts you in touch with the ongoing work of Alice Springs Landcare, as well as voting rights at the AGM.

Your \$10 will be used to purchase the tools and the herbicide for volunteers to put to good work, restoring native vegetation communities, protecting old trees from wildfires and bringing together the local community.



**Alice Springs
Landcare Inc**

Look for the Alice Springs Landcare Inc stall at the desert SMART ecofair at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens on the 19th September.

Further information contact: Tim Collins on 8952 2631



Workshop

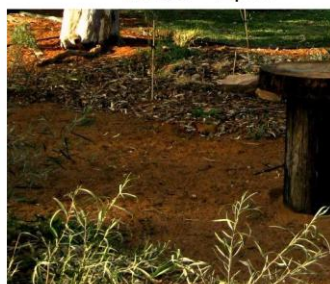


'Bare Earth to Biodiversity'

Property Profile:

Dylan & Jules of Ragat Street, Old Eastside

Saturday 26th September
12:30 – 2pm



- Encouraging local native seedbanks
- Bush foods (for people and animals!)
- Working with a bare earth backyard
- Creating wildlife habitat, bird hollows
- A discussion on the balance of aesthetics, space & ecology

Come and tour Dylan's (of Tangentyere Nursery) garden and discuss the progress he has made in 9 months from bare earth to a garden for wildlife!

Numbers Limited, Bookings essential: 08 8955 5222