

LAND FOR WILDLIFE



& Garden for Wildlife

Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife

Central Australia Newsletter

August 2016

From the Land for Wildlife Coordinator

July has been a huge month for Land for Wildlife / Garden for Wildlife! There has been a range of activities taking place around town: Workshops with Junior Rangers, desertSMART EcoFair, Ten Deserts Workshop and a host of other community events. I've also been making a big push to contact some of our early members to update details and welcome plenty of new members to the team.

I was fortunate to be able to join the ASFNC on a trip to Newhaven Sanctuary this month, where I spied the excellent critter below. It is likely to be a Bee Fly, under the Bombyliidae family, possibly the *Lordotus* genus. Whatever it is, we think it is excellent! The flowers are in full bloom at the moment and the wildlife is rich in all the lush greenery! The roadside at the base of hills consisted of four species of *Ptilotis* (Pussytails).

Click the [Blog](#)

symbol to be

directed to the

online post!

We're coming to the end of winter and heading into spring so be sure to get your new plantings ready—What are your goals for the coming season? Get in touch!



A Bee Fly at Newhaven Sanctuary, north-west of Alice Springs. [Blog](#)

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The Changing Seasons

» Winter to Spring

As August wraps up, Land for Wildlife members should be looking to have any wildflower seedlings in the ground ready for the new growth that spring brings. There has been some significantly frosty weather of late so seedlings should remain protected for another couple of weeks until the warmth sets in. In the wildlife arena, caterpillars will become more active and you may see some damage to plants. If this begins to annoy you, remember to admire their role in the ecosystem: caterpillars transform into butterflies and moths, which are important pollinators of native plants. Damage from hungry caterpillars is usually temporary and the emerging variety of moths/butterflies is a great reward for your patience. Wanting to attract native caterpillars and their fully formed butterflies to your garden? Check out this useful resources from the [Australian Plants Society Inc.](#)



Hawk Moth larvae (caterpillar, Sphingidae family) feeding on Smooth Spiderbush (*Clerodendrum floribundum*).



This Yeperenye caterpillar was spotted at Ellery Creek Big Hole in the West MacDonnell Ranges earlier in the year. It appears to be the larvae of a Hawk Moth (Sphingidae family), though which of the 65 Australian species it belongs to is unknown to us at the moment. It was found feeding on the leaves of Smooth Spiderbush (*Clerodendrum floribundum*) at the edge of the waterhole.

One species of Hawk Moth or Tar Vine Caterpillar in Arrernte is 'Yeperenye / Yipirinya' and is the focal piece of *Jukurrpa* (Dreaming) for *Mparntwe* (Alice Springs) Arrernte, along with 'Ntyarlike' (Elephant Grub) and 'Utnerrengatye' (Emu Bush Grub). [Listen to the Yipirinya Jukurrpa](#) or learn about other stories in [A Town Like Mparntwe](#). Our [May 2010](#) Newsletter also contains an article on caterpillars and moths.

The warmer weather will also bring out more reptiles, such as Central Bearded Dragons (*Pogona vitticeps*) and Sand Goannas (*Varanus gouldii*)... among others! Be sure to take care on the roads to prevent accidental flattening of reptiles when they are sunning themselves (I've noticed quite a few victims this week following warm mornings). This Central Bearded Dragon was found near the Land for Wildlife office a couple of weeks ago. Following the removal of a tick, it went on its way to a sunny area for some basking.

Enjoy the warmer weather and get out planting some natives! [Blog](#) ►



Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*) get more active when the weather warms up.

desertSMART EcoFair

Land for Wildlife had a huge weekend at the desertSMART [EcoFair](#) (organised by the [Arid Lands Environment Centre](#)), which is Central Australia's leading science and sustainability event. The event kicked off on Friday with the Eco-Science Schools Day at Olive Pink Botanic Garden ([OPBG](#)), who has been a registered and highly active Land for Wildlife property for nearly ten years.

[Costa Georgiadis](#) had the students all revved up for a weekend of learning about science and the environment, linking into [National Science Week](#). Various groups hosted workshops on the day, including Parks and Wildlife Commission NT, Shell Questacon Science Circus, Engineers Without Borders Australia, Alice Springs Town Council and Live & Learn.

Land for Wildlife was joined by four school groups on the day: Araluen Christian College classes seven and nine, Yipirinya class six and various home school students from around the region. The session involved a walk around OPBG to 12 positioned letters (spelling 'Biodiversity'), where each letter represented an aspect of flora and fauna. For example, the letter 'V' stood for variety, where students were asked to see how many species they could find in the vicinity. Upon completion, students rearranged the letters – what a smart bunch!

The weekend was full of EcoFair events and activities, but finished up on Sunday at the Alice Springs Desert Park with the Eco-Markets. Land for Wildlife was there to talk to market-goers about the programme and our current projects. Thanks to ALEC for organising another great event! [Blog](#) ►



Keep an Eye to the Sky!

» Nesting White-Plumed Honeyeaters

A bougainvillea in my yard has been home to some breeding White-plumed Honeyeaters (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*) over the last couple of weeks. The nest is a delicate hanging cup made of grasses and spider web, lined with miscellaneous fur. I only discovered them when they were a few days old and in a little over a week they left the nest, sitting about right with the 14 day nestling period.

The parents had kept things quiet over the incubation period (also 14 days) but as the chicks approached their fledging time they made an absolute racket (despite attempts by the parents to pipe them down). This attracted a lot of attention from a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*), but the parents defended the nest with vigour and the offending visitor got a few blows to the head before retreating to a safe distance.

The parents were kept busy with regular feeding intervals, searching high and low for new sources of food to satiate the young ones. The two chicks left the nest a day apart and stayed nearby in a Ghost Gum while they strengthened their wings. Now they are off and exploring their new world!

This week was an eventful one in the bird world, with plenty of activities taking place for the Red Centre Bird Festival.

What is happening in your yard at the moment? [Blog](#) ►



White-plumed Honeyeaters (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*) chicks in a nest within Bougainvillea. Chicks were ready to leave the nest within 2 weeks, much to the intrigue of a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*).



Andrea Byrom
Landcare Research
New Zealand

The role of anthropogenic stressors such as climate change and land use intensification in altering rodent population dynamics: observations from two continents and an island.

Diana Fisher
University of Queensland

Australian mammal decline on a large and small scale: the story of the bridled nailtail wallaby.

Fritz Geiser
University of New England

The function of mammalian torpor in the Australian arid zone.

Ken Johnson
Alice Springs

Development of Mammalogy in central Australia: what and why it happened.

Gregory Andrews
Australian Government

Ramping up Australia's fight against extinction by tackling Feral Cats



MON 26TH – WED 28TH SEPTEMBER 2016. CONVENTION CENTRE.

CAT SYMPOSIUM, THURS 29TH SEPTEMBER 2016. DOUBLETREE BY HILTON.

ALICE SPRINGS, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Closing date for abstracts Monday 15 August.

http://australianmammals.org.au/conferences/conference_2016



Ten Deserts Workshop attendees (Image Arid Lands Environment Centre).

Ten Deserts Workshop

Ten Deserts “works to build collaborative partnerships across state and territory borders to support the protection of the natural and cultural values of Australia’s outback”.

Land for Wildlife, among our many other roles within the community, are a part of the Ten Deserts working group. The Ten Deserts collaborative partners met in Alice Springs in August to workshop ways to protect the ten desert ecosystems. Topics included Buffel Grass control in the Great Victoria Desert, fire management and payment for ecosystem services.

The workshop included a visit to Simpsons Gap to view Buffel Grass control trials and a visit to Olive Pink Botanic Garden to see the great work that has been achieved by the Green Army team. *Learn more about [Ten Deserts](#).*



Buffel Grass Control

Primary Industries and Regions (Government of South Australia) has some handy fact sheets that deal with Buffel Grass, including Buffel Grass [Identification](#), [Control](#) and [Hygiene](#). They have had a huge amount of success with controlling Buffel Grass with *Flupropanate*. Stay posted for an upcoming newsletter article!

Ten Deserts Workshop attendees paid a visit to the Buffel Grass control site at Simpsons Gap, with information presented by Christine Schlesinger (CDU) from her long term research into the impact of Buffel on biodiversity. The treated sites have a huge variety of native grasses and forbs (*Bottom Left*) and the control line is a stark contrast (*Bottom Right*).



LfW on YouTube

» *Rufous Whistler*

A Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) was snapped by the Land for Wildlife coordinator at [Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary](#), while on a trip with the [Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club](#).

Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary is one of Australia's largest non-government protected areas, covering 262,000 hectares. Newhaven is renowned as a key arid zone bird watching destination. Supporting 170 species of birds, the property was originally purchased by Birdlife Australia before being transferred to the Australian Wildlife Conservancy in 2006.

Considered as one of Australia's fanciest songsters, the Rufous Whistler has a variety of calls which consist of a series of ringing notes. Described by Birdlife "The song is characterised by repeated whip-cracks interspersed with a variety of whistles and trills given at various volumes, rhythms and tempos". Two types of call from the male can be seen in the [video](#).

Are you interested in taking part in Newhaven's annual bird survey from 11-25 March 2017? Get in touch with the Newhaven Bird Survey Coordinator (0437549301; puffin_54@hotmail.com) to express interest. [Blog](#)►



Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) was snapped by the Land for Wildlife coordinator at Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary.

[View the Rufous Whistler Video on YouTube](#)



12th-16th and 19th-23rd September 2016

AHCPM502A

Collect and Classify Plants

(From AHC51110 Diploma of Conservation and Land Management)

The unit will cover;

- The process of collecting, pressing, preserving, mounting and labelling plant specimens.
- Field spotting characteristics for plants in the major plant families.
- Identifying plants using taxonomic keys.
- Field trips and talks with local botanists and plant experts.



The Collect and

Classify Plants

course runs from the

12-16 and 19-23 September 2016, 8:30am-4:00pm

Where: Building 15, CDU Alice Springs Campus, Grevillea Dr

Contact Kath Watson

(kath.watson@cdu.edu.au, 08 8959 5268) for more information.



Ntaria Junior Rangers

» Camp at Palm Valley

Land for Wildlife was invited out to the Ntaria Junior Rangers Camp with the Tjuwanpa Women Rangers last week. The Tjuwanpa Women Rangers care for country, managing fire, feral animals and weeds, at the Finke Gorge National Park. Their aim is to have "Akarkutja Warnka Mabaka Kaltjithika", which means "older women and younger women all learning together" ([ABC](#)). Part of this aim is to work with the Ntaria Junior Rangers and encourage other groups to get involved in teaching the younger generation about the importance of managing country appropriately.

The Ntaria Junior Rangers camped at Palm Valley and the team from [ABC Back Roads](#) were there to document their learning journey. Land for Wildlife spoke to the group about the changing world, as part of their current curriculum – covering topics such as extreme weather and human-induced changes to the environment.

We were also lucky to have been involved with a story-telling session by a Ntaria 'Tjilpi' the previous night, given in both Arrernte and English. [Blog](#) ►



Clockwise from Top-Left: Ntaria Junior Rangers and Tjuwanpa Women Rangers were the focus of filming by ABC Back Roads at Palm Valley; Tjuwanpa Women Rangers Coordinator, Gerard Lessels, assisted the Junior Rangers to learn bird names in English and Arrernte; Land for Wildlife teach the Junior Rangers about the changing world, with students coming up with excellent answers to some questions posed; Palm Valley made for a beautiful learning environment (Bottom Left Image Tjuwanpa Women Rangers).

Pool Conversion: Creating a Freshwater Ecosystem

By Jen Kreusser

There are many people in Alice Springs who are considering turning their once-loved swimming pool into an oasis of a different variety, or perhaps installing an old child sand pit or pool, in the hope of creating a self-sustaining water-feature and extending the attraction to a diverse range of feathered visitors. Smaller features can be created by using old bathtubs or similar, which I have seen to be effective. The question is: How to do this in an arid, urban backyard?

Call out to our readers: We would like to hear from LfW members that have done this, or at least experimented with the concept—get in touch!

In the first instance, it largely depends on what your ambitions are – and the space and resources you have available. In order for the water to be attractive for birds and other animals to visit, access will need to be created. Creating shallow areas for waterbirds to stand and placement of low branches (old or living) near the water's edge will encourage birds to come and drink.

Pros: Once established, it is likely to be visually aesthetic – creating a unique habitat for residents to enjoy and observe. It is also an opportunity to grow a variety of water plants (which will attract a greater diversity of insects, birds, frogs and reptiles).

Cons: Available fresh water is likely to attract predators, especially in hot dry summers (such as unwanted cats and snakes but also raptors seeking an easy meal). Evaporation rates during summer are significant (similar to a regular swimming pool) and regular additions of water would be required (tank water is best).

It may take some time to establish and convert the pool into a safe and healthy water supply. Like many water ecosystems, it's about balance! Keeping onto the balance of microorganisms (algae, bacteria) will be important as time goes on and you may wish to consider purchasing a pH testing kit to help. We are not experts on creating freshwater systems, though we would really love to hear from our members that have created these and we can share more in our next newsletter.

Of course, if you are a lover of the arid zone, you may wish to consider filling in the swimming pool space for creating a new arid (dry) landscape feature such as a sand dune or rocky garden. Remember, when considering which plants to include in the space it's worth checking out Native Plants for Central Australian Gardens (Forth & Vinter, 2007). [Blog](#) ►



A White-headed Stilt (*Himantopus leucocephalus*) at the sewerage ponds—formerly Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*).

Interested in watching waterbirds?

You can access the Alice Springs PowerWater Ilparpa ponds and waste Stabilisation ponds.

An online safety induction and indemnity form needs to be completed, as well as a guided induction with Tourism Central Australia.

Access is via a locked gate, with fully inducted birdwatchers needing to check in with Security prior to access.

For more information, read PowerWater's [Birdwatching in the Alice Springs Waste Stabilisation Ponds](#) factsheet.

New Garden for Wildlife Members

» Paddy Van der Geest Hester

Paddy and his brothers have been doing an excellent job at maintaining biodiversity in their yard! They regularly have a variety of reptiles visiting their yard and protect their habitats to encourage visits.



Paddy (Right) and his brothers, Jack (Rear) and Thomas (Front), receiving their new Garden for Wildlife sign.

» Bonnie Mitchell

Bonnie has an excellent array of native plants and is planning on establishing some native climbing plants.

» Gill and Dennis O'Connor

Gill and Dennis have a great array of native plants in their front yard, which have largely self-seeded, including Variable Daisy (*Brachycome ciliaris*), Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa* var. *tomentosa*) and Climbing Saltbush (*Einadia nutans* subsp. *eremaea*). Their Sturt Desert-Pea on the front verge is testament to what a bit of patience and the right conditions can foster. They also have an excellent vegetable garden and some chickens to help minimise their ecological



Sturt's Desert Pea (Image Gill O'Connor).

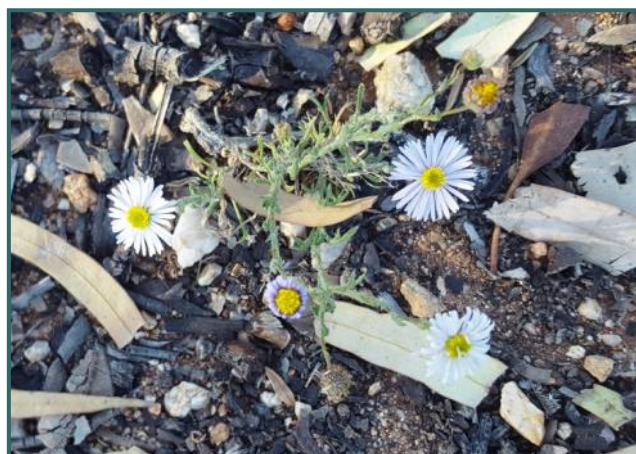
footprint and food travel distance (plus the benefit of fresh produce!).



The O'Connor vegetable garden! Recycle heaven (Image Gill O'Connor).

» Melinda Brown

Melinda Brown has an excellent garden full of Cassia (*Senna artemisioides* ssp.), Variable Daisy and Salty Heath (*Frankenia cordata*).



Variable Daisy (*Brachycome ciliaris*) in Melinda's lovely garden.



Salty Heath (*Frankenia cordata*) has beautiful purple flowers and small leaves, commonly found around inland salt lakes.

New Garden for Wildlife Members

» Lenie Smit

Lenie has a difficult hillside property with scree to contend with, but she is doing a great job with her native plants, that are supporting habitat for invertebrates and roaming zebra finches.

» Mairead Hetherington

Mairead has an impressive gum tree in her front yard and a few Australian natives. She's on the battle for couch grass and looking for tips.

» Brian Eather

Brian, our newest member, has a lush garden with plenty of birds and reptiles calling it home. He limits his gardening to bare maintenance, so that the bushes can grow lush and provide nesting sites for birds. He has several large logs with peeling bark that attracts several reptiles species.



Lenie's garden has some lovely flowering Cassia (Above), two species of Mistletoe, and is home to this fun caterpillar at the moment (Below).



New Land for Wildlife Members

» Kay and Barry Lewis

Kay and Barry joined the Land for Wildlife team with their property at Connellan, which they have owned and restored for 35 years. The Lewis' have planted extensively during their ownership to restore the property starting when getting anything to grow was a challenge and take pride in knowing there is a Brown Goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) residing and nesting in a nearby Lebbeck tree (*Albizia lebbeck*). Their property is home to a variety of native plants, including three species of Mistletoe, Native Petunia (*Dipteracanthus australasicus* subsp. *australasicus*) and Long Pussytails (*Ptilotus polystachyus* var. *polystachyus*). Welcome to the team, Kay and Barry!



New Land for Wildlife member Kay Lewis, on her property, with the lovely Sturt's Desert Pea (*Swainsona formosa*).

Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness around Alice Springs

Land for Wildlife is seeking cat owners from the rural areas to take part in the next Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness programme. The study involves tracking domestic cats with a GPS, monitoring their activities with kitty-cams and scat analysis to see what they are eating when out and about.

If you: 1. Live in the rural areas of Alice Springs (Ross, Connellan, Ilparpa/White Gums), 2. Have a domestic cat and 3. Are interested in taking part in the upcoming project to determine where cats wander?

We want to hear from you - please get in touch! [Blog](#) ►

This project is supported by Territory Natural Resource Management, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

Roaming cats in study spotlight

Dina Indrasafitri

DOMESTIC cat owners, particularly in Alice Springs' rural areas, are invited to participate in a cat surveillance project, which will involve attaching a camera to wandering felines.

Land For Wildlife Central Australia will run this project, which is similar to the one in 2015-2016, when cats were fitted with a harness carrying a GPS tracker, to engage domestic cat owners about responsible pet ownership.

Land For Wildlife (LWF) co-ordinator Caragh Heenan said the previous surveillance project, which involved about 17 cats, revealed felines roamed further than their owners thought.

One cat was discovered to have walked more than 2km in one night.

"Hopefully the video cameras will either pick up on what the cats are doing or not doing," Ms Heenan said.

LWF is looking for about 12 cats – six from the town area and another six from rural Alice Springs, for the project.

For more information, contact 8955 5222 or lfw@lowecol.com.au



Caragh Heenan from Land for Wildlife with a cat wearing a GPS tracking harness.



LOCAL PEOPLE, LOCAL PROJECTS

Green Army Taking Applications For Team Members

Conservation Volunteers Australia are seeking team members for the Olive Pink Botanic Garden Rejuvenation and Species Protection Project 2: *A continuation of Green Army Round 2 and 3 projects, this project will conserve and protect the native flora and fauna of the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, including listed rare species. Activities include weeding, especially of Buffel grass, rejuvenation of five garden beds including irrigation works, installation of rejuvenated garden beds, planting 200 new plants, seed collection, and installation of a water treatment system for acid soil loving plants.*

The project is anticipated to start on 31st October 2016, open to ages 17-24. Register online at CVA Green Army. Contact Candice Appleby for more info (B0340019401G@cva.org.au, 0475 973 892).

Land for Wildlife hit the Centralian Advocate in August in an attempt to rally cat owners for the upcoming Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness Project.

Upcoming Events

» *ASTC Night Markets: 15 September*

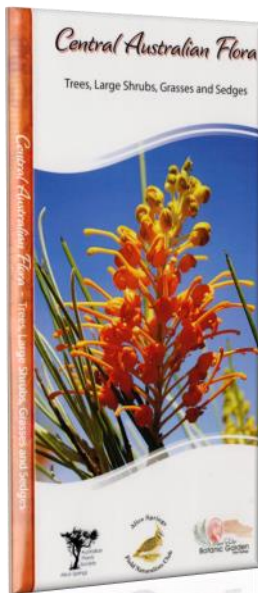
Land for Wildlife will be hosting a stall at the first of this year's Alice Springs Town Council Night Markets. Pop by the stall to sign up or grab any additional information you may require.

» *Australian Mammal Society Conference: 25-29 September*

The last round of Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness information will be presented by Jen Kreusser at the Australian Mammal Society Conference at the Cat Research Symposium on the 29th of September. Registrations are still open.

» *National Wattle Day (1 September), National Threatened Species Day (7 September), National Bilby Day (11 September), National Landcare Week (5-11 September).*

» *September is also Biodiversity Month! What actions are you taking to preserve biodiversity?*



New Central Australian Flora Brochure

By Barbara Gilfedder

The first step in getting to know a plant is to give it a name. After that, your interest is the limit.

The new Central Australian Flora brochure, 'Trees, Large Shrubs, Grasses and Sedges' was launched on Sunday 7 August at Olive Pink Botanic Garden by Peter Latz. It was put together using photographs by Jenny Purdie, Barb Gilfedder and Rebecca Duncum, who are all members of the Australian Plant Society Alice Springs and the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club.

It is a companion copy to Central Australian Flora - Forbs and small shrubs that was published last year. This first brochure has proved very popular with locals and tourists and has received very good reviews, commenting on its multitude of excellent, clear photographs and its convenient size.

Each brochure features 121 beautiful photographs, which will give you a start on identifying most of our more common native plants. Each photograph is labelled with a common name, a scientific name and a very brief description including the average size of each species.

The format is a concertina style on laminated card which fits easily into a backpack or glovebox. These brochures are designed to help with the initial identification of native plants, with further information being researched in books and/or on the web.

Both brochures are available from local retailers including Lone Dingo, Red Kangaroo Books, Alice Springs Desert Park shop and the Bean Tree Café at Olive Pink Botanic Garden, as well as the Plant Society and Field Naturalists.

Identifying the flowers and fruit you see when out bush can really add to your enjoyment and understanding of the bush.

~ *Barbara Gilfedder*



Launch of Central Australian Flora brochure, Trees, Large Shrubs, Grasses and Sedges.

L to R: Barbara Gilfedder, Peter Latz, Rebecca Duncum and Peter Fanning.

Further Reading

Click the link symbol to be redirected to the article



Article • Martu people preserve bilby population with traditional knowledge



Article • Newhaven: restoring the lost mammals of central Australia



Article • Death by dingo: outsourcing pest control raises uncomfortable questions



Article • Study identifies key species which act as warning signs of ecosystem collapse



Article • Birds sing to their eggs, and this song might help their babies survive climate change



Article • The tasty spider



Article • Why don't you ever see baby pigeons?

Do you have any stories or images to share?

Get in touch! We are always looking for members to share their experiences via our social media and newsletter. Email us with your suggestions of articles or topics that you wish to hear more about.

Cheers,

Caragh and Bill

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