

LAND FOR WILDLIFE



& Garden for Wildlife

Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife

Central Australia Newsletter

December 2017

From the Land for Wildlife Coordinator

As most people are wrapping up for Christmas and the new year, we are catching up on some much-needed office time in this warm weather and finalising those Land for Wildlife reports that our new members have been waiting for. Welcome to the new members!

With the bulk of the assessments wrapping up, we will also have more time to look into preparing some articles of interest. Is there anything that you want to learn more about in the weird and wonderful world of flora and fauna? Let us know! Email in your suggestions and we can do the research for you. No question or topic is out of bounds...

We are also getting in an early notification that the Land for Wildlife office will be going quiet from the beginning of February through to mid-March as we take some much-needed time out. Off to South America we go! If you have any urgent enquiries during that time, you can still email them through and we may be able to respond sporadically. Feel free to contact us through January to tie up any loose ends you may have before it's hands off deck for us.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year! Enjoy time spent with family, wherever you may be, or time away from work if you are lucky to get it. Have a great festive season and all the best for the year to come—I hope that it is full of beauty and wonder and all things wild!

***“If we save our
wild places, we
will ultimately
save ourselves.”***

~ Steve Irwin



A Mulga Parrot (*Psephotus varius*) juvenile is provided with much needed nourishment by an adult.

In This Issue

From the Land for Wildlife

Coordinator • 1

Super Fun Happy Snaps • 2

Mistletoe in Central Australia •
3-4

Welcome to New Land for
Wildlife Members • 5-7

Revisiting Existing Land for
Wildlife Members • 7

Welcome to Garden for
Wildlife Members • 7-8

FrogID App • 9

An Unlikely Visitor • 9

Further Reading • 10

Super Fun Happy Snaps

Here at Land for Wildlife, we are lucky to be able to spend time out searching for wildlife on new member properties, but sometimes flora and fauna just come at us opportunistically. We are active on social media (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) sharing our stories and fun articles as they come along. Images are largely shared on Instagram, which has gained 140 followers since it started up last year. You can follow us on social media to keep up to date with the latest wildlife photos. Here's a taster of some of the images we have shared this month!



Follow Land for Wildlife
on Facebook



Follow Tawny Frogmouth
on Instagram: @LFW_Alice



Follow to Land for Wildlife
on Twitter: @LFW_Alice



Subscribe to
Land for Wildlife



In the red centre, rain means grasses can flourish... and it's not all about the Buffel! We are back out on the grass collection mission to develop our grass guide. Does anyone want to guess what this common native grass is?



Little tendrils finding their way upwards on this human construction. This metal tree trunk without bark. Using it to find light. To find space. To achieve its goals. To strive to be the best Silky Glycine plant that it can be. Living the tiny dream!

Top Right:
"And see the peaceful trees extend their myriad leaves in leisured dance— they bear the weight of sky and cloud upon the fountain of their veins."
- Kathleen Raine, Envoi



A tiny home among the hills a case moth has made.



Getting up close and personal with a Fork-leaved Corkwood (*Hakea divaricata*) inflorescence. Ants are an important part of the system, acting as pollinators of many central Australian plants.

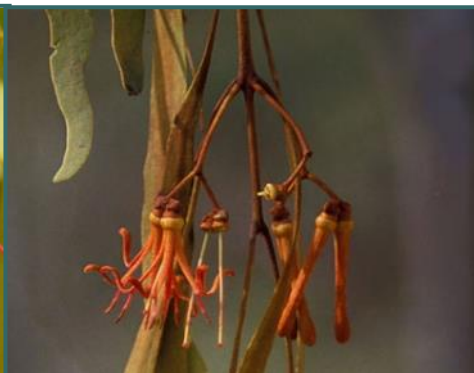
Mistletoe in Central Australia

Tis the season for some mistletoe! You may have seen this parasite 'hanging around' in central Australia, especially since the warmer weather and rain has come upon us. Mistletoe brings with it a custom for some – if you're standing under mistletoe, you may be proposed to for a kiss. This old custom comes about as it has been considered a plant that increases life and fertility, due to its ability to stay green when other plants die off in European winters, though historians also believe that the connection relates to Norse mythology.

In central Australia, the plant can get a bad rap due to its parasitic nature. Mistletoes are partly parasitic – producing its own energy through photosynthesis but obtaining nutrients and water from the host plant. In central Australia, there are roughly 10 species of Mistletoe, belonging to two genera – *Amyema* and *Lysiana*. They have co-evolved with the native flora on which they establish, with hosts including *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia* among others.

Mistletoe plays an important ecological function, and is sometimes considered to be important to the health of an ecosystem, providing food and shelter for wildlife. The flowers produce nectar that is consumed by birds and invertebrates. In addition, all species produce small sticky fruits that are eaten by the Mistletoe Bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*) and the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*). As consumer of the fruit, the Mistletoe Bird is dependent on this plant for its survival but in turn acts as a seed disperser for the plant, excreting the sticky seed that then sticks to the cloacal plumage. In frustration, the bird wipes its back end onto a branch and the sticky seed dislodges and sticks to the bark. Upon excretion, the Mistletoe must germinate rapidly in order to survive. Enzymes in the seed help to break down the bark in order for a tap root to enter the host tree's cambium layer. An haustorium is eventually formed, enabling the Mistletoe to draw nutrients and water from the host, which is then supplemented by sugars obtained through photosynthesis.

Mistletoe uses the host tree to source water and nutrients, and this can in turn kill off the portion of the limb past the site of Mistletoe attachment, in turn opening up a section of the canopy for the Mistletoe to access sunlight. As a result, some landholders may take the view that Mistletoe is a threat to trees and may attempt to remove the clumps or affected branches. Mistletoe is very rarely responsible for the direct decline in tree health, but rather acts as an indicator of already poor health or an unbalanced ecosystem. Healthy trees are often able to cope readily with a small infestation, while trees that are heavily infested with Mistletoe are often already old, stressed or otherwise compromised. Stressors include poor soil nutrient levels, soil compaction, salinity, vegetation clearance and tree isolation, altered water

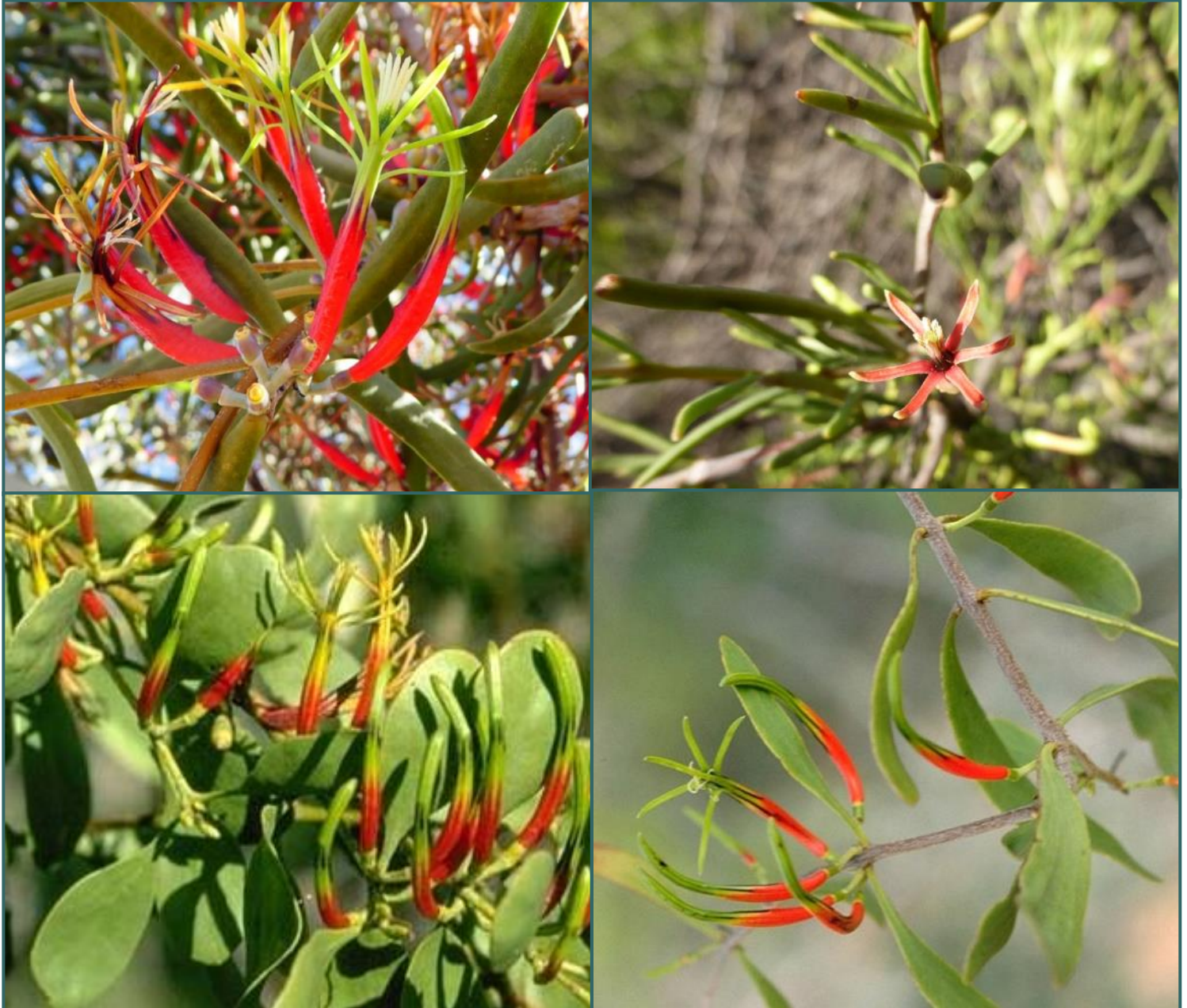


Mistletoe in the *Amyema* genus. Top-Bottom: Pale-leaf Mistletoe (*Amyema maidenii* subsp. *Maidenii*), Ironwood Mistletoe (*Amyema hillianae*, Image NT Flora), Wire-leaf Mistletoe (*Amyema preissii*, Image Seeds of South Australia), no common name (*Amyema gibberula* var. *gibberula*, Image North Queensland Plants). Left-Right: Box Mistletoe (*Amyema miquellii*, Image SA Seed Conservation Centre), Twin-fork Mistletoe (*Amyema bifurcata* var. *bifurcata*, Image ANBG).

(Continued from page 3)

supply, fungal attack and insect predation. If Mistletoe removal is needed, this can be done by removing the limb that contains the parasite.

Cutting off tree limbs in this case can be more damaging than leaving the Mistletoe in place, especially true considering the rapid reinfection that can take place. In many cases, it's best to leave the Mistletoe to perform a valuable function in the ecosystem. Focusing attention on improving tree health may be a better use of energy. Regeneration and protection of remnant vegetation will prevent isolated trees from becoming infested, and retaining an understorey and groundcover to provide habitat for invertebrates and non-recruiting birds that will feed on the leaves and fruits of Mistletoe will help to keep a balanced system. [Fact Sheet](#) ►



Mistletoe in the *Lysiana* genus. *Clockwise from Top Left:* Harlequin Mistletoe (*Lysiana exocarpi* subsp. *exocarpi*), Mulga Mistletoe (*Lysiana murrayi*, Image Seeds of South Australia), Northern Mistletoe (*Lysiana subfalcata*, Image ANBG), Flat-leaved Mistletoe (*Lysiana spathulata*, Image ANBG).

Conservation for Kids

Are you looking to get your kids involved with conservation of the environment? Check out our new fact sheet. The layout is simple at this stage but we hope to jazz it up a little in the new year. [Fact Sheet](#) ►

Welcome to New Land for Wildlife Members

Land for Wildlife has a long waiting list of potential members, who are all keen and eager to be a part of the program. While it is sometimes difficult to find the time to get through the list of interested members among our other projects, quite a few made the grade this past half-year.

St Philips College

St Philips College joined the Land for Wildlife team recently, with students taking an interest in looking after the environment by protecting habitat. The school runs a range of excellent activities, with students taking part in Cactus removal on the hillside, and recent attention also being paid to the impact of Buffel Grass. The school hosts several bee hives and the larger trees are numbered and monitored for their health. An impressive River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* var. *obtusa*) sits within the northern corner as a reminder of old flood levels of the nearby river.

Land for Wildlife hope to work with the school in the coming year to do biodiversity surveys and feral animal management with interested students.



Above: A large River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis* var. *obtusa*) on the St Philips College grounds. Below: The hillside is frequented by Black-footed Rock Wallabies (*Petrogale lateralis*).

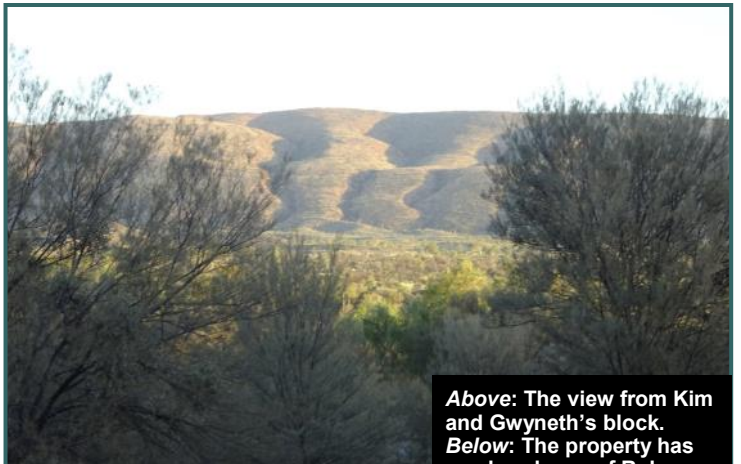


Above: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A Grasshopper feeds on an *Abutilon* flower at Kim and Gwyneth's property. Below: A Zebra Finch (*Taeniopygia guttata*) takes some time out from the chaos.



Kim Anderson and Gwyneth White

Kim and Gwyneth have an expansive property in Ilparpa, which is home to a rowdy group of Zebra Finches (*Taeniopygia guttata*). The property has a range of native grasses and forbs, with Cassia (*Senna* sp.) dominating the mid-storey and Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) dominating the upper storey.



Above: The view from Kim and Gwyneth's block. Below: The property has an abundance of Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa* var. *tomentosa*).





Above: A Barking Spider (*Selenocosmia stirlingi*) burrow. **Below:** The seed material from a Bush Banana (*Marsdenia australis*).



Centre for Appropriate Technology

The Centre for Appropriate Technology (or CAT for short), sits on a large block adjacent to the Desert Knowledge Precinct (also a LFW member), and was purchased from CSIRO in 2009. It is used for commercial enterprise. It is home to an impressive collection of Fork-leaved Corkwood (*Hakea divaricata*) and diverse bird life to match.

A mature Fork-leaved Corkwood (*Hakea divaricata*) on the CAT property.



Stacy Hughes and Lorna Walsh

Stacy and Lorna are residing on an existing LFW block and we were excited to be able to make contact with the new owners. The owner, Lorna, is fortunate to take on a largely Buffel Grass free block. The original owners were keen Buffel busters and worked hard to remove the introduced grass. Stacy, a resident on the block, is also chipping away at some of the Buffel Grass that has reinvaded and they are eager to learn about the native plants that have regenerated over time.

The property has a resident Splendid Fairy-wren (*Malurus splendens*) family, who were noisily foraging at sunset during the assessment. There are also some large reptiles on the property, likely Central Bearded Dragons (*Pogona vitticeps*), as evidenced by some large faeces observed on the property.



Top: Splendid Fairy-wren (*Malurus splendens*) family. **Bottom:** A large faecal deposit belonging to a reptile, likely a Central Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*).

Antony Whiting and Margy Gaynor

Antony has been residing on his Connellan block for a short period of time but has hit the ground running—revegetating the block and keeping an eye out for wildlife. At the time of the assessment, there was plenty of invertebrate life on the block, including the sap-sucking Lygaeid bugs and Cicadas (see images over the page).

The property is home to a range of native grasses, and Antony is keen to remove the Buffel Grass to allow for natural regeneration of native grasses and forbs. Several reptiles call the area home, with multiple burrows across the



Left: A Cicada has shed a layer at the Whiting and Gaynor property. Right: Lygaeid bugs congregating on Colony Wattle (*Acacia murrayana*).

block. Bird diversity is high, with up to nine species being observed during the one-hour property visit.

Revisiting Existing Land for Wildlife Members

Land for Wildlife offers reassessments for long-lasting existing members. Reassessments give members a chance to see how their property is improving, address any remaining land management issues, reconnect with members regarding their goals and also provide them with an up to date plant list for their property.

If you have been a member for more than 10 years, it might be worth your while having a reassessment. Email the Land for Wildlife team at lfw@lowecol.com.au to arrange a property visit and fresh report.

Claire Meney

Claire has been a Land for Wildlife member for nearly 15 years and resides on one of the few urban LFW properties in the system. The close proximity to crown land and the free

movement of Euros (*Macropus robustus*) onto her property, among other wildlife, makes the property a worthwhile inclusion to the program. Claire has been working hard to remove the invasive weeds and the diversity of flowering plants makes it all worth her while.

Bruce and Meg Simmons

Bruce and Meg signed up with Land for Wildlife in 2004 and they have been Buffel busting and Rabbit-proofing their property since. Their property was profiled in the [August 2017](#) LFW newsletter.



Dense Cassia (*Senna artemisioides nothosubsp. sturtii*) on the Simmons' property.



Above: A Wild Tomato (*Solanum quadriloculatum*) in flower at Claire's LFW property. Below Left: An Orange Spade Flower (*Hybanthus aurantiacus*) and Below Right: Variable Daisy (*Brachycome ciliaris* complex).



Welcome to Garden for Wildlife Members

The last six months has also been busy in the Garden for Wildlife space, with a host of new members joining the program!

Joanne Beresford and PD Wijesurendra

Joanne and PD have recently moved back to Alice Springs and are looking to plant out their garden with more natives. The Garden for Wildlife team visited their block to provide some information and advice, as well as identify a few existing species for them.

Alex and Rowan Barwick

Alex and Rowan have a lovely Eastside property and were keen to sign up with the GFW program and access the many resources we have available.

William Newman

Bill has been vegetating his block for several years now and was eager to receive a native plant list for his block, along with some recommendations on other plants that would suit his revegetation project.

Marg and Ken Johnson

Marg and Ken are well-known in the local landcare community as they have been removing Buffel Grass and restoring native veg along the Todd River for many years. Their efforts have resulted in an amazing array of native forbs and flowering shrubs to regenerate. Their own yard is no different! It is home to a gorgeous array of native plants and the birdlife that visits is just as diverse!

Nikki Bennett

Nikki has a great small patch at her unit in the Gap that she is keen to plant out with local natives to attract birds and invertebrates. You don't need a lot of space to make a difference!

Yash Srivastava

Yash has been caring for his Eastside garden and is hoping to make his way out onto the verge to increase the amount of habitat available to local wildlife. Our work experience student came along to assist with the property visit and was able to learn the ropes on the go!

Mark and Sarah Brittle

Mark and Sarah's property is teeming with native forbs and grasses, despite some high salinity issues that were reported. They are keen to further revegetate the block with local natives but were looking for some advice.

It's important to choose the right plants and know your soil before you get going. An understanding of land units and vegetation types can assist with a direction. Finding the source of those plants is the next step. Can't find what you're looking for? Consider propagating from plants already thriving on your block. Head to the [LFW website](#) for plenty of native propagation resources.

Peter Kay

Peter has been with the Garden for Wildlife program for some time but was interested in seeking a new information pack when he moved property. His new block is being stripped back, ready for a new layout and garden plan and so our team delivered him a new veg list to suit.

Not all gardens are the same. If you are moving house, let us know and we can tailor a new member pack to your needs, including vegetation lists specific to your new property.

Heather and Mark Wilson

Heather and Mark have lived in their Eastside home for many years and have been doing a great job. They recently took



Two Yellow-throated Miners (*Manorina flavigula*) visit Heather and Mark's bird bath.

part in the Bird Bath Biodiversity Survey and show off their Garden for Wildlife sign proudly.

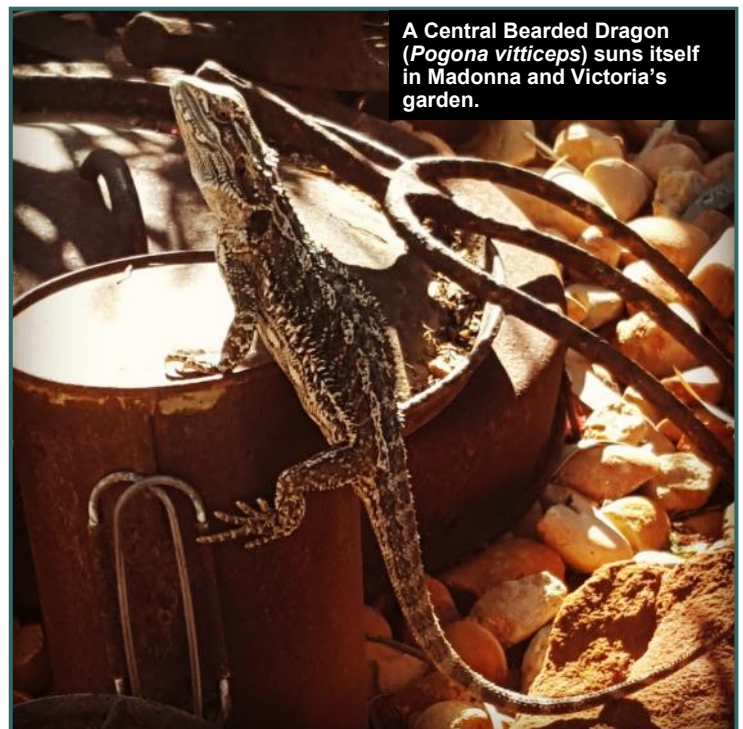
Madonna Tomes and Victoria Leontios

Madonna and Victoria have a small garden space in Desert Springs, but that doesn't stop them from providing habitat for wildlife! Their recent involvement with the Bird Bath Biodiversity survey shows that they have a variety of birds that call their yard home. They also have a resident Central Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*) that regularly suns itself in full view.

The Low Ecological Services Team

Jess Cuneo, Emma Smith and Claire Treilibs of our host consulting company, Low Ecological Services, all joined the Garden for Wildlife program recently as well. Welcome to the team, team!

Do you receive this newsletter but haven't become a member yet? You can join at any time! Email the Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife team at lfw@lowecol.com.au to arrange membership and receive your resource package.



A Central Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*) suns itself in Madonna and Victoria's garden.

FrogID App

In last month's newsletter, we slipped in a link for a new FrogID App that you can install on your smart phone or tablet. With recent rains, some frogs have been out and about so it's time to get listening!

The App has been developed by the Australian Museum as a citizen science project—enabling community members to identify frogs and also record their calls to be submitted to the database. You can browse information about Australian frogs in the learn pages either on the App or online.

It's a great resource worth checking out! [Web Link](#) ▶

(or click the relevant icons to download the app directly)



“Croaks, whistles, bleats and barks - every frog species makes a different sound! ...you can discover which frogs live around you and help us count Australia's frogs!”

~ Australian Museum via FrogID

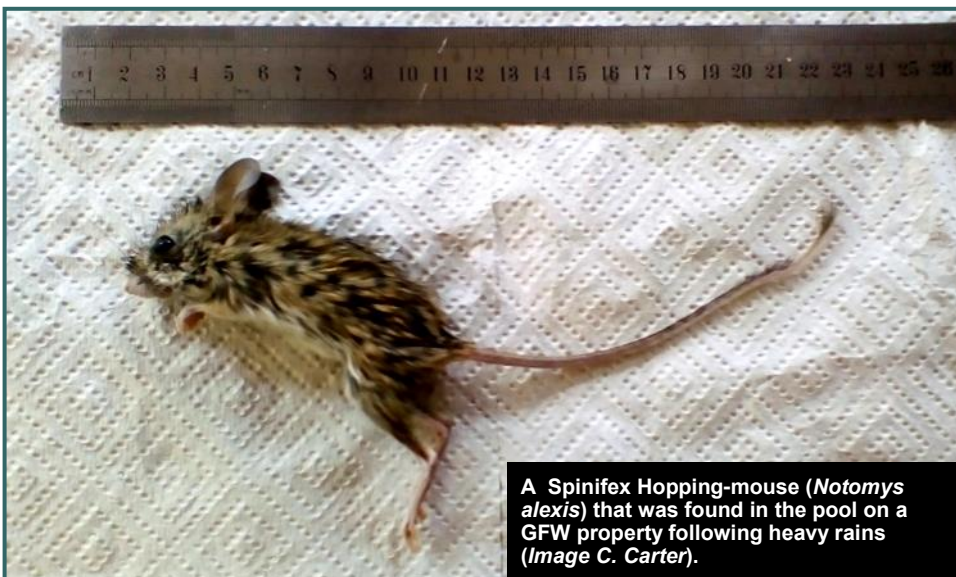


A Red Tree Frog (*Litoria rubella*) taking shelter in a PowerWater tank outlet box.

An Unlikely Visitor

A Garden for Wildlife member, Charlie, has found an unlikely visitor in his Eastside pool recently. The image below, shows a Spinifex Hopping-mouse (*Notomys alexis*) that met an untimely fate following heavy rains in late November. According to Charlie, they recorded 17 mm in 15 minutes on their block. It is suspected that the rains may have flooded the Hopping-mouse's home and washed it into the pool with the floods across the property.

It's certainly unusual to find one in the middle of town, but a great finding none the less! Charlie has a lush block with many native plants, which is home to lots of wildlife, including a Black-tailed Monitor (*Varanus tristis*). This recent finding, along with the data of Fat-tailed Dunnarts (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata*) in Braintree and Desert Springs recently, highlights the diversity of wildlife in town!



A Spinifex Hopping-mouse (*Notomys alexis*) that was found in the pool on a GFW property following heavy rains (Image C. Carter).



A Black-tailed Monitor (*Varanus tristis*) climbing the walls of a GFW property in Eastside (Image C. Carter).

A short video on a couple of (sadly unsuccessful) nesting attempts by a White-plumed Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*) in Eastside. Click the YouTube icon to be redirected.



Further Reading

Click the link symbol to be redirected to the article



Article • Desert frogs come alive in Red Centre's outback following a week of heavy rains



Article • Birdbath, food or water? How to attract your favourite birds to your garden



Article • 'Extinct' marsupial rediscovered in parts of Australia



Article • Unlocking the secrets of the green-and-gold



Link • Nominating a species, ecological community or key threatening process under the EPBC Act

Cheers,

Caragh, Candice and Bill

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.

All images and articles by C. Heenan, unless specified otherwise.
Copyright © 2017 Low Ecological Services P/L, All rights reserved.

Stay Connected

Follow us on social media and tag us in your wildlife posts!



Visit our website to read the blogs, access newsletters or print fact sheets



Follow Land for Wildlife on Facebook



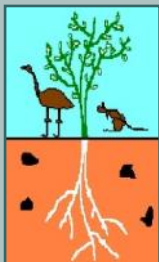
Follow Tawny Frogmouth on Instagram:
@Lfw_Alice



Subscribe to Land for Wildlife on Twitter:
@Lfw_Alice



Subscribe to Land for Wildlife on YouTube



Northern Territory
Government



Territory
Natural Resource
Management



Contact Us

Land for Wildlife & Garden
for Wildlife Central Australia
Low Ecological Services
P.O. Box 3130
Alice Springs NT 0871
(+61) 8 89 555 222
lfw@lowecol.com.au
wildlife.lowecol.com.au

Land for Wildlife & Garden for Wildlife Central Australia newsletter is published by Land for Wildlife, hosted by Low Ecological Services P/L, through funding from the Northern Territory Government.

Opinions expressed by contributors to the Land for Wildlife & Garden for Wildlife Central Australia newsletter are not necessarily those of the Land for Wildlife program nor any of the supporting agencies.