

LAND FOR WILDLIFE



& Garden for Wildlife

Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife
Central Australia Newsletter

June 2016

From the Land for Wildlife Coordinator

What a wild month of weather! We hope that this newsletter finds you all well and that your homes, businesses and gardens weren't heavily affected.

The winter rains have been welcoming for many of the native plants, with small forbs and grasses sprouting up (unfortunately, the Buffel Grass is right there alongside it!). Winter rains mean that it should be a colourful spring in Central Australia, as many of the natives will go into bloom as a result of the extra watering.

There have been several reports around town of burrowing frogs coming to the surface. In addition, an image of a Centralian Tree Frog (*Litoria gilleni*) was sent in by an Alice Springs resident earlier in the month.

The Red-tailed Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*) have been making a noisy ruckus around the rural areas, playing in the wind and eating *Tribulus* sp. seeds. It's a delight to see so many in the area!

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A Centralian Tree Frog (*Litoria gilleni*) takes some time out (Image L. Murphy).

Keep an Eye to the Sky!

» *Galahs in Ciccone*

Ciccone seems to be the place to be for Galahs (*Eolophus roseicapillus*) this month! Huge numbers were seen resting on power lines a few weeks ago. Galahs exhibit flocking behaviour and congregate at communal roost sites, frequently establishing near regular watering points and food sources; and with populations increasing markedly following successful young rearing.

Galahs are occasionally pests, causing damage to infrastructure (electricity cables *etc.*), grasses and crops; primarily due to their habit of chewing for bill maintenance and habitually digging for juicy roots for moisture. There is a risk that they compete with other native species across the landscape for food resources or nest hollows. Large populations of Galahs are seen as a symptom of general ecological disturbance – exploding in numbers as a consequence of human alteration of the land (such as the construction of artificial environments like cereal crops in cropping country and additional watering points) or good breeding season with high survival rates in young in the arid lands.

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Galahs (*Eolophus roseicapillus*) flocking on power lines in Ciccone in early June.



Keep an Eye to the Sky!

» *Channel-billed Cuckoo*

The Channel-billed Cuckoo (*Scythrops novaehollandiae*) is the largest parasitic cuckoo in the world. Unlike many other cuckoos, the chicks do not evict the host's young from the nest, but rather grow faster and demand all the food.

It lays its eggs in the nests of the Australian Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) and members of the crow family (Corvidae).

While they normally spend time in Alice Springs between August and March each year, this hungry individual was found begging a crow for food in early May around Northside Alice Springs. [Blog►](#)



Channel-billed Cuckoo (*Scythrops novaehollandiae*) pretending to be a baby crow... and succeeding!

(Continued from page 2)

Natural habitats can be restored to increase the presence of mature hollow-bearing trees and minimise effects of high population numbers – but it takes time. Get outside on some of these lovely sunny mornings and get planting some native endemic trees and shrubs! Check out our [Vegetation Maps](#) webpage to work out which trees are right for you. It's also wise to keep in mind that uncovered seed (chook food and pet bird seed) will encourage Galahs and this can be prevented by limiting access of such food supply to wild vertebrates.

Because Galahs are so common in urban environments, we often overlook their ecological significance. Galahs have an important role in the ecosystem as they act as native seed dispersers, tree pruners (they're excellent at reducing the numbers of seed pods on Acacias to a level the tree can effectively support), nutrient recyclers, and cultural services (such as birdwatching!). Birds have strong ecological roles and so the environment benefits from the many actions of birds going about their day. So next time you are out and about, enjoy the colour and presence of these fun bird clowns hanging from the power lines around town! [Blog►](#)



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2017 Newhaven Sanctuary Bird Survey

A reminder that expressions of interest have opened up for the 2017 Newhaven bird survey team. The dates for the survey next year are 11 March to 25 March. Supporting 170 species of birds, the property was originally purchased by Birdlife Australia before being transferred to AWC in 2006.

For further information, please contact Judith Hoyle, Newhaven Bird Survey Coordinator, on 0437549301 or via email at puffin_54@hotmail.com

Ntaria Junior Rangers

Land for Wildlife coordinator, Caragh, made the trip to Ntaria / Hermannsburg to help with the Junior Ranger program. With the assistance of the Tjuwanpa Women's Rangers and Gerard Lessels, LfW helped the Ntaria Junior Rangers understand birds' nests. The Junior Rangers learned about bird nest design, material use, nest shape and the consequences of nest site selection choices. Some local examples of birds' nests were used to explain the multiple functions of a nest. They also heard about the Cuckoo – a bird that doesn't build its own nest at all, but rather places sneaky eggs in the nest of other birds. The Junior Rangers suggested some animals other than birds that make nests, such as ants. To get creative, the Junior Rangers enthusiastically built their own nests, using materials in the nearby area, to explore the role of different materials in nest design and function. What a clever and inventive group of young minds!

The Junior Rangers also had their term camp this month at Simpson's Gap. Land for Wildlife ran a workshop with the group, discussing threatened species classifications, processes behind listing and ways to protect threatened species (whether through action plans, laws or everyday actions by individuals). [Blog►](#)

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Ntaria Junior Rangers made their own nests to show how materials and nest placement influence nest design. *Clockwise from left:* Nest in a sand bed protected by rocks, in a tree form with grass cushioning, grass nest on the ground, cup-shaped grass nests, diverts in the sand padded with soft grasses, two nests on show. *Right:* Gerard Lessels and the Tjuwanpa Women's Rangers helping the Junior Rangers learn about nests.





Ntaria Junior Rangers and Tjuwanpa Women's Rangers are lead by Gerard Lessels on their camp at Simpson's Gap.

(Continued from page 4)

» Alice Springs Junior Rangers

In other Junior Ranger news, Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory are seeking interest for their Junior Ranger program in Alice Springs. This year they will be investigating the Central Australian bush, practicing their Mad Scientist skills, learning all about plants and animals, finding out what makes them tick as they interact with nature. They will also be bushwalking, map reading, tracking, camping, spotlighting and generally having an excellent time! If you know anyone aged 9-12, get their parents to contact Susie Armes (susie.armes@nt.gov.au) as soon as possible to secure a position.

New Garden for Wildlife Member

» The Land for Wildlife Coordinator

When moving to Alice Springs and becoming the Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife Coordinator, it seemed a logical step that I would want to be a part of the program as well.

I am lucky to live in such a beautiful area, with a front yard full of native plants, though there are a few ornamentals there as well. I certainly sympathise with those that desire to have local native plants around them but are restricted in their gardening to abiding by rules of rental agreements (hence not ripping up all of the ornamentals). Thankfully, the majority of the front yard is made up of natives, with an excellent dripper system to support it. The garden was looking a little sad following the previous tenants but since moving in a few months ago, we've worked hard to restore the garden to it's rightful glory (much to the delight of the owners).

I've popped a nice bird bath in the lower portion of the front garden to give the birds a water source and have seen lots of the expected birds: Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*), Australian Ringnecks (*Barnardius zonarius*), Galahs (*Eolophus roseicapillus*) and White-plumed Honeyeaters (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*). The yard is also visited by a Western Bowerbird (*Ptilonorhynchus guttatus*), briefly a Channel-billed Cuckoo (*Scythrops novaehollandiae*) and one sighting of a Red-backed Kingfisher (*Todiramphus pyrrhopygius*).



Garden for Wildlife Member Update

» Dave Atkins

Dave and his family have been working hard to plant natives in their yard and implement ways to support their local wildlife, by using hollowed logs as nest boxes throughout their backyard.



GfW property thriving (L to R): Hollowed logs used as nesting boxes for birds, a young Cole's Wattle (*Acacia coleii*) and a Spearwood (*Pandorea pandorana*).

» Rosalie Schultz

Garden for Wildlife visited Rosalie's property where she has had great success allowing natives to re-seed on their own – predominantly the small shrub *Enchylaena tomentosa*, that many of our members will be familiar with.

Enchylaena tomentosa belongs to the Chenopodiaceae family and has several common names, including Ruby Saltbush and Barrier Saltbush. The scientific nomenclature comes from the Latin words *egchlos* (fleshy or succulent), *chlaena* (cloak, referring to the ripe fruiting perianth) and *tomentosa* (covered with dense, short, curled hairs). Despite there being only one species in the genus, the fruits come in a range of colours from red, pink, orange, yellow, and white. The species is a great coloniser of bare ground rapidly but also does extremely well as an understory plant.

Of interest to Garden for Wildlife though is that the fleshy fruits are an important food source for birds and other animals. This also means they can self-seed easily in locations where birds perch regularly. To get more hands on with growing this plant, the species is propagated successfully from cuttings or direct seeding. Seed should be cleaned by removing the succulent tissue of the fruit prior to sowing; however, no dormancy or other treatment is required. A well-drained medium, kept moist, is desirable for cuttings. *Enchylaena tomentosa* has a wide climatic, soil and topographic tolerance; but full sunlight encourages the best growth. Rank branches with dead leaves, can be pruned heavily.



Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*) is an easy to grow native plant that the birds go mad for!

Indigenous Knowledge Aids Science

Click the link symbol to be redirected to the article



Article • Burning for biodiversity – The benefits of Indigenous fire management



Article • Five ways Indigenous science is helping us understand the world around us



Article • Research findings back up Aboriginal legend on origin of Central Australian palm trees

Member Photos

» *Black-faced Woodswallows*

Chris Connellan has been actively trapping for feral cats on rural property Mt Zeil, and his efforts are being rewarded by some great avian species taking up residence. Mt Zeil is a sub-lease of Narwietooma Station, where there have been Flock Bronzewing (*Phaps histrionica*) recorded, as well as Southern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*). Chris has sent us some photos of Black-faced Woodswallows (*Artamus cinereus*) perching on a limb.



Black-faced Woodswallows (*Artamus cinereus*) seen perching on rural property, Mt Zeil (Image C. Connellan).

New Land for Wildlife Members

Welcome to the new Land for Wildlife members, Meredith and John Joseland! They have been revegetating their property in Ross since acquiring it in the early 1980's. They have some great examples of Fork-leaved Corkwoods (*Hakea divaricata*) and their property is home to a great variety of wildlife!

During our visit to their property, we saw a Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) pair carolling from the top of a tree, a Central Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*) taking refuge in a large ornamental cactus to the south of the property, many Zebra Finches (*Taeniopygia guttata*) bouncing about in a Dead Finish (*Acacia tetragonophylla*) and signs of other wildlife such as goanna scats.



New LfW member Meredith Joseland (above) has a thriving property, home to (below, L to R) Rufous Whistlers (*Pachycephala rufiventris*), a Central Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*) and Zebra Finches (*Taeniopygia guttata*).



Green Army: Feral Animal Trapping Workshop

Land for Wildlife were invited to run a workshop this month for the new Green Army team at Olive Pink Botanic Garden (OPBG) in Alice Springs, to provide training and support for the six months of Feral Cat and Spotted Turtle-dove control in the Garden.

The Green Army team are hosted through OPBG (a historic, well-established and active member of the Land for Wildlife program) with their delivery partner Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). This is the third successful Green Army program hosted at OPBG, with ecological works focusing on garden bed rejuvenation, Buffel Grass removal and feral animal management to support Black-footed Rock Wallaby habitat conservation.

The current team is a crowd of nine eager participants! The Green Army team coordinator (Candice Appleby) assisted the Land for Wildlife coordinators (Jen Kreusser and Caragh Heenan) to train the Green Army in successful trap-setting methods for Feral Cats and Spotted Turtle-doves, as well as explain the ethical responsibilities for trappers. The workshop included bird identification and call monitoring, as well as a scat, track and trace survey of the Botanic Garden area.

The Green Army were enthusiastic to get started on trapping and the Land for Wildlife team had a great time working with them to assist development of their feral animal management skills! [Blog►](#)

» *Trapping Success!*

The team have been trialling a few trap locations within OPBG, with unexpected results.

They have had four occurrences of by-catch of Black-footed Rock Wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*), who were looking for a free feed of sardines. The wallabies highlight the need for feral cat trapping as a method of protecting our native fauna.

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OPBG's Green Army Team:

L to R, Rear: Lachlan, Kevin, Candice (Supervisor), Cade, Jen (LFW), Evangelene. **Front:** Lodoviko.



(Continued from page 8)

It also raises the question: What won't wallabies eat?! The wallabies were released and the Green Army team have since moved their traps to new locations.

The team have since had their first success with a cat capture. The cat was taken to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter to determine whether it is a roaming domestic cat or a feral cat.

Contact the Alice Springs Animal Shelter (Ph 08

OPBG's Green Army trapping is proving a success with a Cat (*Felis catus*) caught in a trap (left) and incidental by-catch of a Black-footed Rock Wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*) on four occasions (right).

8953 4430) if your tabby has gone missing. For more information on feral cats, view the [Feral Cat factsheet](#). To learn about managing your roaming domestic cat, download our brochure [Where Is Your Cat Now?](#) [Blog](#)►

Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness Program Continues

Land for Wildlife are pleased to announce that we have been successful in securing TNRM funding to support the Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness program in Alice Springs for another year. We will be seeking interested domestic cat owners to be a part of the monitoring program.

The program involves using GPS-equipped harnesses to track the movements of domestic cats in urban and rural Alice Springs. This next round also involves trialling some video cameras on their chest to see if we can see what they get up to when they're out and about. Part three of the program will involve analysing faecal samples for diet when they return.

If you are interested in being a part of the Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness program, please contact the LfW coordinator, Caragh, by emailing lfw@lowecol.com.au. [Blog](#)►



Land for Wildlife's Alice Springs co-ordinator Jen Kreusser with a taxidermied feral cat.

Cat project boosted by \$467,000 grant

THE Alice Springs feral cat monitoring project is one of 19 community organisations to receive further funding from the Territory Natural Resource Management group. The project, which aims to build responsible domestic cat ownership and combat the impact of feral cat, will share in \$467,000 from the not-for-profit organisation.

Other Central Australian winners were:

- * Low Ecological Services
- * Land for Wildlife
- * Alice Springs Town Council – cat prevention
- * Indigenous Land Corporation Banka Banka West – managing bilby and ecological assets
- * CSIRO – Developing cost-effective predator control

to protect threatened species

- * Centralian Land Management
- * Australian Agricultural Company Ltd
- * Central Land Council, A Co-ordinated Bushfire Management Strategy for the Tennant Barkly Landcare & Conservation Association
- * Barkly Grazing Land Management 2016-2017

- * Domestic Cat monitoring and awareness in Alice Springs vertebrates in the arid NT
- * Soil: Sustaining our industry and livelihoods project.

The program aims to protect threatened species and support sustainable practices. It is backed through the Australian Government's National Landcare program.

Jen Kreusser (LfW Coordinator) features in an article in the Centralian Advocate regarding the TNRM funding for 19 local projects.

Hailstorm Hits Alice Springs: Post-damage Gardening Tips

Alice Springs residents were shocked on Friday 17th June 2016, when a large hail storm hit the town. The storm raised a lot of excitement, but the damage to infrastructure was very clear. As far as our gardens go, hail stones damaged plants by sheer force of their fall, or through accumulation of weight to limbs. Hailstones caused leaves to become shredded or pock-marked or removed. Hail damaged vegetables and decimated harvests; and the large rainfall events caused citrus to expand to bursting point. For trees, their stems split or broke, especially when hail storms combined with strong winds and lightning (as we saw last week). In addition to visually obvious damage, plants affected by hail are more susceptible to disease, pests and rot.

The severity to which our gardens are affected by hail depends on the type of plants, as well as the force and size of the hailstones; though seedlings and plants with fresh shoots are the most affected by hail. Thankfully, the hailstorm arrived in the middle of June, when plant growth rates are slow and repair is achievable, domestic winter gardens notwithstanding. Garden for Wildlife has some tips on how to care for hail-damaged plants:

- Trim off broken stems, branches and leaves. Pruning will help your plants to invest energy to regrowth, rather than damage repair. For trees, prune away the most affected branches and remove limbs that have severe gouges or tears.
- Remove damaged fruits to avoid pests.
- Apply fertiliser (liquid or compost tea) to the impacted plants, as this will provide the plants with the nutrition necessary to stimulate regrowth and bring on new foliage.
- Apply fungicide to prevent rot from entering plant wounds before they are able to seal.
- Keep an eye out for any early signs of pest or disease and treat accordingly.
- Place a layer of mulch around the base of the plants. Mulch will help protect the plants from any cold weather that follows and soil compaction from further storms, as well as help to retain water needed to regrow.

When hail storms or frost is forecast, take the following steps to help protect your plants from further damage:

- Place plastic sleeve tree guards, buckets, garbage cans or other items over plants or use a tarp over the vegetable garden like a tent: This creates a layer of still air and reduces wind chill.
- Relocate potted plants to protected areas (e.g. the verandah).
- Tie the leaves of tufted plants together to protect the growing point.
- Use a pressure sprayer to mist water over stone-fruit flowers and shoots just before sunset, as this freezes into a protective film of ice.

Don't forget that local native plants, specific to your area, will be hardier than other native or ornamental plants (they've adapted to local growing conditions). By choosing the right plants for your block (check out the Vegetation Maps on our website), you can create a self-sustaining garden that will naturally fight back with minimal effort from you. [Blog](#) ►



Hail in the Todd River.

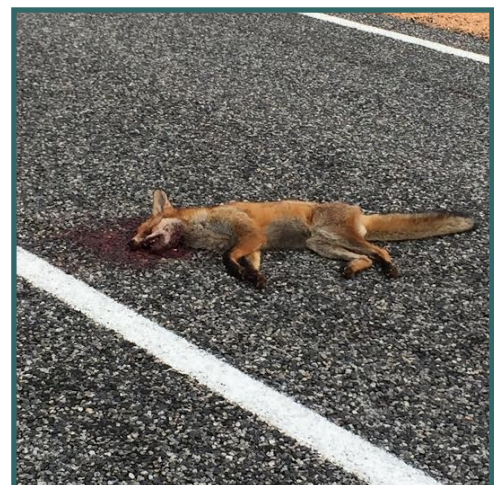
Foxes in Central Australia

The European Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) was introduced to Australia for recreational hunting in 1855 and has since spread across ~76% of the continent. Foxes survive best in winter rainfall latitudes and do best in southern Australia up to the southern half of NT. However they are moving northwards and are found as far north as Tennant Creek and the Barkly region. An individual seen by Bill Low along Colonel Rose Drive in 1981 was in excellent condition, whereas one found in 1988 on the Barkley Hwy had scabbies and was emaciated. While foxes are known to be in central Australia, their numbers somewhat correlate with the presence of dingoes (foxes are less prevalent when dingoes are in abundance, possibly influencing where and when foxes can hunt).

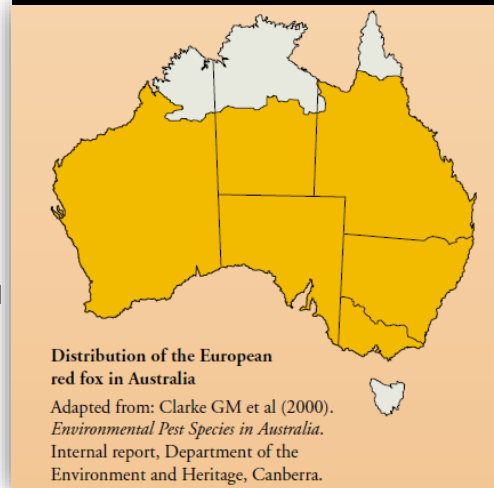
The fox scavenges and preys on anything that is available, particularly small mammals and reptiles, but occasionally insects and fruit when prey is scarce. The fox has contributed to the decline of ground-nesting birds, small mammals and reptiles. Predation by the European Red Fox is listed as a key threatening process under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*, and as such the Australian Government has implemented a Threat Abatement Plan that aims to reduce the impact of foxes. The plan includes fox control and management programs, education of land managers and dissemination of information regarding the impact of foxes in Australia.

Fox control has had mixed success around Australia. Locally, the Central Land Council and Parks and Wildlife NT was involved in the trial of specialised bait stations that deliver poison to foxes but limit access to poison for dingos. This technique had some success but further trials were postponed (2010). Other control methods include shooting, trapping, den fumigation and fencing.

Read more about foxes in the [European Red Fox](#) factsheet.



Feral European Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) found on the Tanami Highway, north-west of Alice Springs (Image D. Price).



Alice Springs Community Garden

Garden for Wildlife coordinator, Caragh, was pleased to get the opportunity to attend the Australian Plant Society's Walk and Talk earlier in the month at Frances Smith Memorial Park and Alice Springs Community Garden. The Alice Springs Community Garden is a registered Garden for Wildlife property and is supported by the Arid Lands Environment Centre, providing an excellent space for community workshops, sharing and education. Visit the [Alice Springs Community Garden](#) website for more information.



Australian Plant Society's, Connie Spencer (left), shows APS members around the Community Gardens.

Rangelands Seminars

June 26th at 2pm at the Hartley St School the National Trust will host Pat Ansell who will present a video extract from the Rachel Perkins' "The First Australians" a history of Aboriginals in 1878 to 1897 with a discussion to follow relating to promoting and aligning recognition of Aboriginal Heritage and European/Asian heritage in central Australia. (See poster attached). Tea served after the talk.

June 27th at 5.30 at CDU HE Lecture Theatre the two Drs Rosemary and Peter Grant from Princeton University will talk about "Rapid Evolution in natural systems" which is based on their lifelong works on Darwin's Finches on the Galapagos Islands.

Upcoming Events

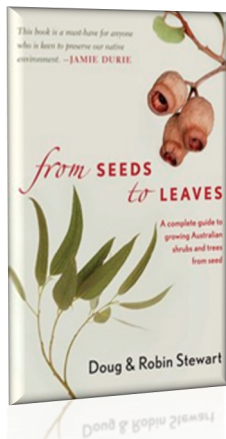
» Territory NRM Forum: 29 June

The Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness in Alice Springs project for 2015-2016 will be presented by Jen Kreusser at the TNRM Forum on Wednesday 29th of June. Register with TNRM if you wish to attend the forum and see what the local land care groups are working on.

» Alice Springs Show: 1-2 July

Land for Wildlife will be sharing the Australian Plant Society stall again this year. Come along to grab a great deal on local native plants! Not sure what to buy? Don't forget to check out the step-by-step guide on how to determine the vegetation types on your property at the Vegetation Maps webpage. We will be on hand to provide advice on vegetation types on the day and to spread the word about the Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness program in Alice Springs.

Reference Books



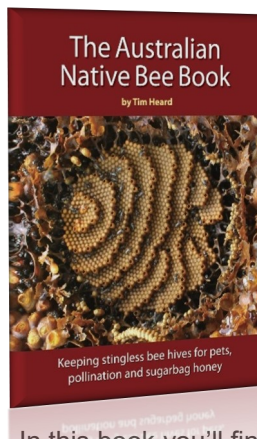
» *From Seeds to Leaves: A Complete Guide to Growing Australian Shrubs and Trees from Seeds* by Doug and Robin Stewart

From Seeds to Leaves is a comprehensive guide to planting Australian native trees and shrubs on a small or large scale.

It highlights the need to combat climate change in Australia by creating a network of vegetation corridors that will allow native plants and animals to migrate, adapt and survive in our rapidly changing world.

The book describes how to: collect your own fruits and nuts; extract, store and germinate the seeds in the right way and in the best season; use smoke to germinate seed normally difficult to grow; and plant out, water, mulch, protect, fertilise and prune your plants for best results.

As well, it includes sections on botanical names and identifying plants by flower and seed, and an ABC of information about Australian species. Procedures are set out in easy table form and there are lists of plants for a variety of special purposes. [Store ►](#)



» *The Australian Native Bee Book*

by Tim Heard

Keeping native stingless bees is a hot topic in Australia for commercial, environmental and recreational reasons.

You can do something about the decline of pollinators by conserving native bees.

In this book you'll find the complete guide to native stingless bees, written by an expert who has spent his lifetime intimately engaged with these unique creatures. Whether you keep a hive or two in your suburban garden, or want to use multiple hives on a commercial farm, this friendly guide has you covered.

Stay tuned for upcoming newsletters, where an article will be featured about creating a native bee hotel in your backyard!

To grab a copy of these books or to see what other relevant books are available, contact [Red Kangaroo Books](#) in Todd Mall or visit their web store.

Further Reading

Click the link symbol to be redirected to the article



Article • Do we underestimate the power of plants and trees?



Article • Revealed: first mammal species wiped out by human-induced climate change



Article • Great Barrier Reef bleaching is just one symptom of ecosystem collapse across Australia



Article • Bee disease chalkbrood takes hold in Alice Springs



Article • Apprentice beekeeper stumbles on solution to disease wreaking havoc in Alice Springs



Article • Bilby protection festival in Australia's most remote community a success: ranger says



Article • Communities winning the war against wild dogs

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, Jen and Bill

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