



**Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife
Central Australia Newsletter**

October / November 2016

From the Land for Wildlife Coordinator

Land for Wildlife has had a touch of down-time over the last couple of months while I took a holiday. Now that I'm back on board, I'm raring to go with a summer full of Land for Wildlife adventures!

October and November has been a busy time for many in the garden as spring faded away for another year. I've included some hints and tips in the newsletter this month to help you to protect your plants now that the weather is warming (see page 3). It's a great time to get your irrigation system working and check for any leaks or timer issues to ensure your plants survive the holiday season.

Many of our members are now gearing up for the festive season—be sure to have a merry one and stay hydrated as the warm weather approaches!

*Summer
temperatures
are on the rise,
so stay cool
folks!*

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Mulga parrots (*Psephotus varius*) resting in the shade of a Fork-leaved Corkwood (*Hakea divaricata*) at the LFW office (Image on left C. Appleby).

Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife: Best Urban NRM Group

Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife has been successful at the Northern Territory Natural Resource Management Awards, hosted by TNRM, for the second year in a row – taking out the top spot for Best Urban NRM Group. Thanks to all of our hard-working Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife members for your efforts conserving wildlife habitat in central Australia! This award goes to show that your cumulative efforts are being recognised throughout the state as worthwhile contributions to natural resource management. The program relies on funding from the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT, Alice Springs Town Council and the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme (supported by Territory Natural Resource Management) – thanks for all the support and making the work we do possible.

Land for Wildlife was up against two very worthy groups in the finals, which included Friends of the Desert Park and Ludmilla Creek Landcare Group. Other local winners include Curtin Springs for the Agricultural NRM award and Josephine Grant from the Central Land Council as Indigenous NRM Champion for her work as a regional support officer. Congratulations to all the winners and well done on all the hard work in the natural resource management space! [Blog](#) ▶



Land for Wildlife coordinator, Caragh Heenan, with the sparkling new trophy for Best Urban NRM Group award at the NT NRM Awards 2016.



TNRM Award finalists at the Convention Centre, Darwin (Image Territory Natural Resource Management).

Hot Tips for Hot Plants

As summer is creeping up on us quickly and the last of the spring days are proving to be warm ones, your plants will need a little extra attention to get them through the fiery afternoons. Here are some hot tips to protect your plants through the summer months.

» *Keep the plants moist*

Give the plants a deep watering before the sun comes up. This will enable the plants to take up moisture and be more resistant to the heat of the day. A top-up of water when the sun goes down doesn't go astray if the plants have suffered and are beginning to droop. Dripper irrigation systems can be put on a timer that waters automatically and delivers water straight to the



ground where it is needed. Prevent watering during the hottest parts of the day to avoid scalding the leaves, or opt for afternoon fine mist sprays for the soft-leaved plants.

» *Mulch the ground*

It is a good idea to protect the soil with a layer of mulch, which will reduce evaporation from the soil surface and reduce the temperature of the topsoil, in turn preventing desiccation.

Companion planting (locating smaller plants within the cover of taller neighbours) can have a similar effect, just be sure to avoid overcrowding.



» *Provide shade*

Protection such as white shade cloth with a minimum of 50 % shading can be the extra help a plant needs on a hot day. If you can't spring for such extravagance, old

curtains or sheets can do the trick. The shade cloth can be mounted over stakes, walls or fences (or any other structure you can find from the Alice Springs Rediscovery Centre – get creative!). Keep in mind that this time of year also brings strong winds and dust storms,



so make sure you fasten the items securely to prevent disaster. The side of raised beds can be protected from the direct sun by planting some hardy local natives around the edge that have dense foliage and a height to suit the purpose (or prune them appropriately so they grow in the desired fashion), such as various *Eremophila* species. To give potted plants some extra shade, consider moving them under a verandah, or even inside for periods of time.

» *Increase Wind Protection*

The summer afternoons can increase the chance of strong thermals forming and therefore wind gusts, which can dry out the garden beds. Consider installing some hedge protection or fencing that will provide wind protection, avoiding metal sheet fences that will radiate heat onto the nearest plants.



» *Choose the right plants*

Get a head start and plant local native species, which are accustomed to growing in the harsh central Australian conditions. This will mean your efforts to protect them can be minimal and they will provide habitat that is suited to the local wildlife. It's also wise to think ahead and group the plants according to water needs, so that plants with high water requirements are grouped together and irrigated more often.

[Blog](#) ►

Choosing Local Native Plants for Your Garden is as Easy as 1-2-3

For a step-by-step guide on how to determine the vegetation types on your property, visit the [Vegetation Maps](#) webpage. *Locate your house on the maps provided, Identify your vegetation type, Select the appropriate vegetation species list. And you're off and planting!*

You can also learn your land unit from the appropriate regional map to understand the soil characteristics.

Reptile Spotting

Sand Goannas (*Varanus gouldii*), also known as Gould's Monitor and named after the prominent British naturalist, are usually quite sleek looking... Not this guy! This individual was seen sunning itself at the Land for Wildlife office this month! What an excellent creature! [Blog](#)►

Brian Eather, who has a lush Garden for Wildlife property in Braitling, sent in a photo of a couple of skinks in his garden earlier in the month. They have been identified as Rock Ctenotus (*Ctenotus saxatilis*), also known as Stony-Soil Skinks, and look quite at home in the leaf litter.



Sand Goannas (*Varanus gouldii*) at the Land for Wildlife office this month (Above, Image C. Heenan) and Rock Ctenotus Skinks (*Ctenotus saxatilis*) at Brian Eather's Garden for Wildlife property in Braitling (Below, Image B. Eather).



Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs
A pictorial field guide to reptiles and frogs of the Alice Springs district, Northern Territory.



Nic Gambold & Deborah Metters

Revised Edition 2006

A report funded by the Alice Springs Land for Wildlife program with support from the Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust and the Alice Springs Town Council.



Want to Identify the Reptiles on Your Property?

Land for Wildlife has released the second edition of Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs by Nic Gambold and Deborah Metters.

See page 10 for more information!

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Northern Territory Young Achiever Awards



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Cat Monitoring and Awareness Round 2

Land for Wildlife is still looking for volunteer cat owners for the Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness program in Alice Springs. We have a couple of remaining spaces for urban cats and are also looking for domestic cat owners in the rural areas of Ilparpa, White Gums, Connellan and Ross (plenty of spaces available). Please get in touch if you live in any of these areas, own a cat and are interested in taking part in the program to see where cats wander and what they see.

Land for Wildlife is conducting trials this week with the GPS-trackers and video surveillance camera. The first cat to trial the camera is six-year-old TeeGee. TeeGee was adopted by his owners' pet duck and has since become a part of the family. You can see the fun pair on YouTube: [Scarfy and Friend](#). TeeGee has been sporting the camera this week and we are looking forward to seeing his adventures. The camera will be shared with another cat and family next week.

We will be looking at running another round of monitoring in February so please let us know if you can be involved. [Blog](#)►

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



TeeGee sporting a GPS-tracker and Eyenimal video surveillance camera to determine his movements when away from home (Image S. Barnes).

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Batchelor Institute Cat Trapping Workshop

Land for Wildlife assisted the Batchelor Institute last week with a feral cat (*Felis catus*) trapping workshop, including the use of “pongo” and baits as lures, cat trap use, camera trapping and ethical considerations. The group were successful in catching one cat in their two evenings of trapping effort and managed to capture a couple of inquisitive crows on the camera traps. Good work crew! [Blog►](#)



Parks and Wildlife NT Lorikeet Survey

By John Tyne

On September 28th, eight volunteers assisted Parks and Wildlife John Tyne to monitor invasive escapee Rainbow Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) in Alice Springs. *John reports:* Volunteers came from a number of organisations including Birdlife Central Australia, Alice Springs Field Naturalist Club and Land for Wildlife. Thirty nine locations were surveyed for rainbow lorikeets, with volunteers recording the times, location and number of birds seen and heard at each survey point. Despite the damp conditions many birds were out and about. After reviewing the data, I would conservatively estimate that there are at least 17 individual birds. The main population of birds appears to be focused in the Gillen area near the local primary school, which then probably disperses throughout Alice Springs during the day to feed. What is especially concerning is that two nesting hollows in the Todd River and a third in town are currently being used which may indicate an imminent increase in bird numbers.

I would like to thank everyone very much for their help with this survey, and please keep the sightings coming in! They can be submitted to the [NT Wildwatch website](#), [E-bird](#) or submitted directly to John Tyne (John.Tyne@nt.gov.au). [Blog►](#)



White Ribbon Day at Ntaria

Ntaria held a march for White Ribbon Day in November, to raise awareness about domestic violence and stop violence against women—engaging men to achieve the social change that is necessary. The march was attended by the Tjuwanpa Women Rangers and Ntaria Junior Rangers and so Land for Wildlife, among others, was there to support them. [Blog](#) ►



Ntaria (Hermannsburg) White Ribbon march, November 2016. Left: Tjuwanpa Women Rangers (Top) and local police (Bottom). Right: Ntaria School students march and say 'No More' to domestic violence.



Masked Lapwing (*Vanellus miles*) chick at the Alice Springs sewage treatment ponds, one of several being guarded diligently by the parents.

Bird Breeding Bonanza

Many avian species are breeding in town at the moment, with young chicks and fledglings making their way out into the world. Several Masked Lapwing (*Vanellus miles*) chicks (see page 7) and Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*) cygnets have been seen at the Alice Springs sewage treatment ponds over the last couple of months.

In my own yard, I have had a pair of young Magpie-larks (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) that recently fledged from their sturdy mud nest and the family of four have been busy catching tasty insects in the lawn ever since. There is also a Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) diligently sitting on a nest with its chicks and other young nearby – who look rather gangly and awkward but delightful none the less! The White-plumed Honeyeaters (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*) reported in the August newsletter are still hanging around and are just as vocal as their parents, though no doubt they will eventually go off to find their own territory. [Blog](#) ►

*What animals
are breeding in
your area? Send
your photos in
to share with
the members!*



L to R: Magpie-larks (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) getting ready to fledge from the nest last month, now free-roaming and learning to feed on their own, Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) parent on a nest with two chicks, and a fledgling sits nearby for safety.

The Last of Spring

As the weather warms up, we are seeing the last of the flowers blooming (for now). Summer rains will bring on another flowering spurt. LFW and GFW properties have been alive with colour! The striking purple of *Swainsona phacoides* has been standing out on the roadside (Centre). Clockwise from Top Right: A few white blooms such as Striped Mint-Bush (*Prostanthera striatiflora*) and White Paper Daisy (*Rhodanthe floribunda*) are in stark contrast against the red dirt, Native Tomato of various species (*Solanum* sp.) and Storksbill (*Erodium* sp.) have been somewhat common. The yellow inflorescences of *Sida* sp., Yellow Billybuttons (*Calocephalus platycephalus*), Sand Sunray (*Rhodanthe tietkensisii*), Annual Yellow Top (*Othonna gregorii*) and Golden Everlasting (*Xerochrysum bracteatum*) have been a ray of spring sunshine!





Bird Survey at the Sewerage Ponds

Birdlife Central Australia and the Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club are coordinating a bird survey at the Alice Springs sewerage ponds on Sunday 4th December 2016. To be involved, you need to have completed a PowerWater online induction course before access can be granted. For more information, contact Barb Gilfedder (bjfedders@gmail.com).

OPBG Green Army Graduation

Land for Wildlife was involved in helping the April to Sept Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) Green Army team at Olive Pink Botanic Garden (OPBG), a historic, well-established and active member of the Land for Wildlife program. The Green Army program focused on ecological works such as garden bed rejuvenation, Buffel Grass removal and feral animal management to support Black-footed Rock Wallaby habitat conservation. This was their last week in the program and Land for Wildlife was happy to see how far the team have come!

Land for Wildlife provided training and support for the six months of Feral Cat and Spotted Turtle-dove trapping (see blogs on the [workshop](#) and trapping [successes](#)). During their 20-week trapping program, they captured a total of six Cats (*Felis catus*) and 15 Spotted Turtle-doves (*Streptopelia chinensis*). They also accidentally caught 3 Black-footed Rock Wallabies (*Petrogale lateralis*) in the cat trap... or one particular individual that had a taste for sardines (see the blogs for [wallabies](#) and [doves](#) caught in the cat trap).

Well done Green Army - great work on the feral animal trapping and Buffel-bashing. Good luck and all the best on your next adventure! [Blog](#)►

Green Army Trapping Workshop

Land for Wildlife assisted the October to March Green Army team at Olive Pink Botanic Garden with a trapping workshop this month. The new team leader, Minh Nguyen, will be taking the Conservation Volunteers supported group through a feral animal trapping program this round to help relieve the pressure on local native wildlife. Team members learned how to ethically trap feral cats (*Felis catus*) and Spotted Turtle-doves (*Streptopelia chinensis*). We will keep you posted on their progress. Thanks for having us along, team! [Blog](#)►



The next round of Conservation Volunteers Australia's Green Army participants ready to spruce up Olive Pink Botanic Garden, with their new team leader, Minh Nguyen (Image D. McDougall).

Alice Springs' Significant Tree Register to Get a Facelift



Olive Pink Botanic Garden and CVA's previous Green Army team leader, Candice Appleby, has taken up a position here at Low Ecological Services. Part of Candice's new role is to get some renewed interest and activity in the Significant Trees Register of the Alice Springs region.

Stay posted for more information on the progress regarding the register and how you can help to register trees that you think qualify. Watch this space!

Upcoming Events

» *Christmas Carnival: Friday 2 December*

Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife will be hosting a stall at the Christmas Carnival to take details for anyone wanting to sign up with the program. We will also be selling books and available for a chat about the Domestic Cat Monitoring and Awareness program.

Land for Wildlife wishes everyone a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

Reference Books



Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs *Revised Edition 2016

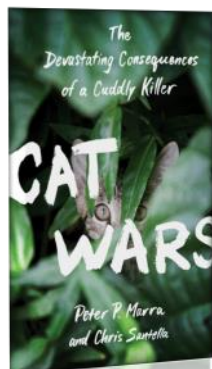
A Pictorial Guide to Reptiles and Frogs of the Alice Springs District, Northern Territory
by Nic Gambold and Deborah Metters

A report funded by the Alice Springs Land for Wildlife program with support from the Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust and the Alice Springs Town Council.

This booklet aims to assist landholders and interested individuals in the basic identification of reptiles and frogs that may occur in and around Alice Springs. Every reptile and frog known to occur within a 50 kilometres radius of Alice Springs has been included, based on confirmed records from the Parks and Wildlife NT Fauna Atlas for the Alice Springs municipality and

personal observations by Nic Gambold, Ray Lloyd, Greg Fyfe, Peter Comber, Steve McAlpin, and Mike Gillam. Habitat and dietary preferences are discussed to assist landholders in identifying and protecting micro-habitats that may occur on private properties.

Copies are available from Land for Wildlife for \$15—contact the office (lfw@lowecol.com.au) or pop in to our stall at any of the upcoming advertised community events. To be released in stores soon.



Cat Wars—The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer

by Peter P. Marra and Chris Santella

In 1894, a lighthouse keeper named David Lyall arrived on Stephens Island off New Zealand with a cat named Tibbles. In just over a year, the Stephens Island Wren, a rare bird endemic to the island, was rendered extinct. Mounting scientific evidence confirms what many conservationists have suspected for some time—that in the United States alone, free-ranging cats are killing birds and other animals by the billions. Equally alarming are the little-known but potentially devastating public health consequences of rabies and parasitic *Toxoplasma* passing from cats to humans at rising rates. *Cat Wars* tells the story of the threats free-ranging cats pose to biodiversity and public health throughout the world, and

sheds new light on the controversies surrounding the management of the explosion of these cat populations.

This compelling book traces the historical and cultural ties between humans and cats from early domestication to the current boom in pet ownership, along the way accessibly explaining the science of extinction, population modelling, and feline diseases. It charts the developments that have led to our present impasse—from Stan Temple's breakthrough studies on cat predation in Wisconsin to cat-eradication programs underway in Australia today. It describes how a small but vocal minority of cat advocates has campaigned successfully for no action in much the same way that special interest groups have stymied attempts to curtail smoking and climate change.

Cat Wars paints a revealing picture of a complex global problem—and proposes solutions that foresee a time when wildlife and humans are no longer vulnerable to the impacts of free-ranging cats.

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

Further Reading

Click the link symbol to be redirected to the article



Article • Kangaroo Island cats' days are numbered



Article • \$100,000 funding for Arid Lands Environment Centre



Article • Colourful ancient gecko discovered in Australian desert



Article • Alice Springs high school students take on coral cactus weed as part of community service subject



Article • The secret world of bird baths



Video Tutorial • Greening Australia: Kokedama



Images • The comedy wildlife photography awards winners 2016



Comedy Article • The hidden dangers of botany

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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Contact Us

Land for Wildlife, GFW
Low Ecological Services
P.O. Box 3130
Alice Springs NT 0871
(+61) 8 89 555 222
lfw@lowecol.com.au
Visit us on the web at:
[http://
wildlife.lowecol.com.au/](http://wildlife.lowecol.com.au/)

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