



G'day LFWers and GFWers,

Welcome to your November newsletter folks, and something of a milestone; the last newsletter of its kind. Our host, Low Ecological Services, has recently rebuilt their website, which means that LFW/GFW now also has a beautiful new website. Our website, including a redesigned blog, can be viewed at <http://wildlife.lowecol.com.au/>. We'd love to hear what you think of the slick new look which has been produced by Skink Design in Alice Springs (<http://skinkdesign.com>).

Part of the change to the new website, will be the conversion of the newsletter from its current format, to an email newsletter. This has a number of advantages, but mainly will render it

easier to send out and to store on the website as a searchable archive. So never fear, you don't have to do anything. Your newsletter will arrive as it always has, except now the email itself will be the newsletter, rather than having a PDF attachment.

Some truly massive flocks of Budgies have been reported around The Centre, and high numbers of reptilian wildlife are also being seen on properties around town.

Photographers have been attracted from around the country and around the world to film flocks of Budgerigar numbering up to 60,000 in recent weeks.

Pheasant Coucals are still being reported in Central Australia (well south of their usual range to the north of Elliot), and another interesting species to keep an eye

out for is the Fork-tailed Swift - http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=678.

There have been a couple of reports of this fast-flying species recently after a couple of years of lean pickings, and these sightings are probably related to the stormy weather that has been seen across parts of The Centre. These birds remain airborne for the majority of their lives, eating, drinking, sleeping and even copulating in flight and only resting to build a nest and raise young.

At this time of year they are occasionally seen in Central Australia as flocks “surf” the air currents that precede storm systems as they move across the continent, hunting insect prey as they go.

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LAND FOR WILDLIFE

This month will see Matt jetting off to Darwin to represent Alice Springs Land for Wildlife at the annual TNRM conference. Matt will be presenting a summary of the rabbit control project that is soon to wrap up in Alice Springs.

The project has seen control measures and remote cameras monitoring populations on 6 Land for Wildlife properties around Alice Springs.

WINNING! - Some early Christmas tidings arrived at the Land for Wildlife offices in the form of a package from Canon Australia – the camera people.



Land for Wildlife was chosen as the NT winner for the annual Canon Environmental Grants. This has netted us this pile of Canon products which will go towards recording our projects and producing high quality images for all of our reports. Thanks Canon!



GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE NEWS

It will be exciting times for Alice Springs gardeners with many flowering species responding to the scattered rains of recent weeks. Of course, when you water the flowers, you also water the weeds, so it is a good time for some weed control while the ground is still soft and the weeds have yet to set seed.

The perfect companion to these efforts would be the Alice Springs Bush Regeneration Handbook, hot off the press this month, from local author Andy Vinter. Read more details about this book and the official launch in the articles below.

ARTICLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The first contribution this month comes from local plant regeneration guru, Andy Vinter. Andy's newly published Bush Regeneration Handbook will be launched on the 5th of December in the Andy McNeill Room, Alice Springs Town Council at 3.30pm.

MY FAVOURITE TREE (...AT THE MOMENT).



Figure 1 Galahs feeding on *Acacia coleii*.

By Andy Vinter

Acacias are a well-known and very successful group of plants in Australia, and are great to plant in the home garden. I'm a big fan of *Acacia coleii* because it is fast growing, frost hardy, and has large attractive leaves and flowers prolifically.

I have one planted on the western side of the vegie garden in a sand patch where the kids play. I wanted to establish some shade quickly and it seemed the best choice. After about 6 years it's 4-5 metres high, and is great for young kids to climb up.

Its position means it's not on the irrigation line that waters the other native plants, and after hand watering in the first season it's able to source water independently from the vegie garden nearby (I guess). I like to think it's also benefitting the garden by fixing nitrogen into the soil, a well-known feature of *Acacia* plants. The flowers also attract bees for pollination.

After flowering in winter it produces abundant curly seed pods. When green, the seeds are soft and a favourite food of parrots, namely Australian Ringnecks and Galahs. This year is probably its third serious season of seeding and this tree is now well-known to these visitors who come early to check on the development of the seed. They come and feed in pairs, sometimes multiple pairs, quietly and clumsily extracting the seeds from the pods. I notice that these parrots will not feed together, and when the Galahs arrive the Ringnecks leave. A few years ago I planted another one so now they can have one each.



Figure 2 The Ringnecks love the seed too.

The only downside of this plant is that after a while (7 years) they can get too woody and lose their shady canopy. When this happens it's time to cut it down and start again. Hopefully by this time someone else will have planted one so the parrots have something to eat next October. They also like the seeds of *Acacia murrayana* (Colony Wattle), which is also an excellent plant for the garden.

Andy Vinter

October 2012.

Monitoring for conservation

After some of our recent experiences using remote camera traps on LFW properties as part of our rabbit control project, we thought we might take a look at the good use this technology is being put to on LFW blocks elsewhere. This is a guest contribution from a Land for Wildlife member in Guanaba - QLD.

I have been surprised with some of the sightings and data I have collected on the fauna camera to date, and I am excited about the unknown of what I might discover. I am finding a lot more activity occurring in the daylight hours than anticipated. I expected more activity to occur during the night, but as the saying goes: hunger never sleeps.



Figure 3 Possible Brush-tailed Phascogale *Phascogale tapoatafa*. I need to do further monitoring for confirmation. This species has not been sighted in the area for many years.

When I first started using the cameras I thought that I would put the camera along a track for a month or so and hoped that I would get a variety of animals, but as time has gone past this technique has been a great way to capture wild dogs, foxes, deer, cats, possums, bandicoots, wallaby's and brush turkeys and not much else. Of course there was the occasional bird and

reptile and it got me thinking that I need to diversify my monitoring techniques.



Figure 4 White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*, taking road kill.

I have experimented with using road kill, bird seed, peanut paste/honey and oats balls (my mum really likes these), fruit (banana's seem to be the most luring), chicken necks, setting the camera up near the last remaining water in a creek, as well as putting camera up near a trapping site.



Figure 5 A Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*, attracted to a baited clearing.

At the moment I am searching for button-quail at my property. I know they are there as I see the platelets on the ground and get an occasion glimpse of one, but I am not able to get a positive

identification, so with a bit of luck and patience I should know soon which species it is with the help of a fauna camera. I believe that monitoring is such an important part of conservation. It indicates that what you are doing on the ground is having a positive effect for species protection or on the flip side if land management activities need to be altered.

Catherine Madden

Land for Wildlife member – Guanaba, Queensland.

COMMUNITY NOTICES

The Alice Springs Bush Regeneration Handbook Launch.

3.30pm Wednesday, 5th of December.

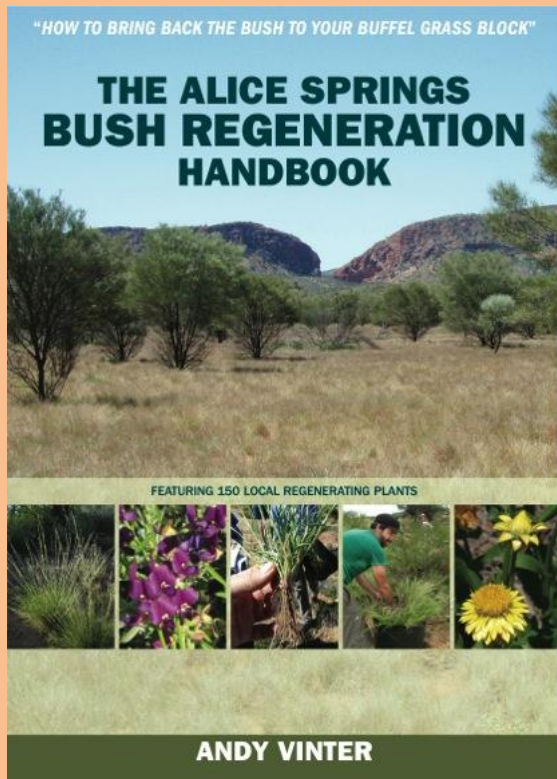
Andy McNeill Room, Alice Springs Town Council.

Come and join Mayor Damien Ryan and the Alice Springs community to congratulate Andy Vinter on the publication of his exciting new book. All welcome.

Alice Springs Field Naturalists Quarterly Shorebird Count

7am, on Sunday 2nd of December at the Alice Springs Sewage Ponds. Counters and scribes always needed.

ON THE BOOKSHELF



THE ALICE SPRINGS BUSH REGENERATION HANDBOOK

By Andy Vinter

This book will be a useful addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in bush regeneration in The Centre. Andy has written this handbook to help gardeners develop a weed control plan for their block and to identify the native plants that regenerate following weed removal and rain.

Part “how-to” for buffel-bashers and part field guide to local native plants, you can get your copy signed by Andy when the book is launched by Mayor Damien Ryan at the Alice Springs Council Chambers in the Andy McNeill Room at 3.30pm on Wednesday the 5th of December.

WEBWATCH

[HTTP://THEAGE.DOMAIN.COM.AU/NEIGHBOURHOODS/NUMBERS-DONT-LIE-20121026-2891S.HTML](http://theage.domain.com.au/neighbourhoods/numbers-dont-lie-20121026-2891s.html)

Wildlife coming back to suburban areas.

<http://theconversation.edu.au/bird-conservation-trapped-by-scientific-certainty-9835>

This is a timely article about the politics of shorebird decline along the East Asian/Australasian Flyway. The Alice Springs Field Naturalists will be holding their quarterly shorebird count at the Alice Springs Sewage Ponds on Sunday 2nd December at 7am – a great opportunity to view some of our amazing shorebird species with local experts.

<http://theconversation.edu.au/saving-australian-endangered-species-a-policy-gap-and-political-opportunity-10914>

Why is Australia lagging behind the rest of the world in funding the protection of endangered species?

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2000/06/01/2688596.htm>

After a few reports of these secretive creatures around Sadadeen this month, we stumbled upon this video from further south. Ever seen an echidna love train around Alice Springs?

...and of course the most important addition to the world wide web, the revamped Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife website and blog;
<http://wildlife.lowecol.com.au/>

Those magnificent, lean, green, flocking machines – Budgerigars! Budgies in the news featuring photography from Alice Springs locals.

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/photos/2012/11/21/3637981.htm>

More spectacular Budgerigar images from Alice Springs' own archaeologist Tim Hill.

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/vast-budgie-flocks-in-alice-springs.htm>

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Thanks for all the emails and photographs this month everyone. Please keep them coming for the next edition.

Cheers,

Jesse, Chris, Matt and Bill

