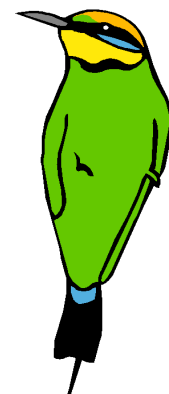


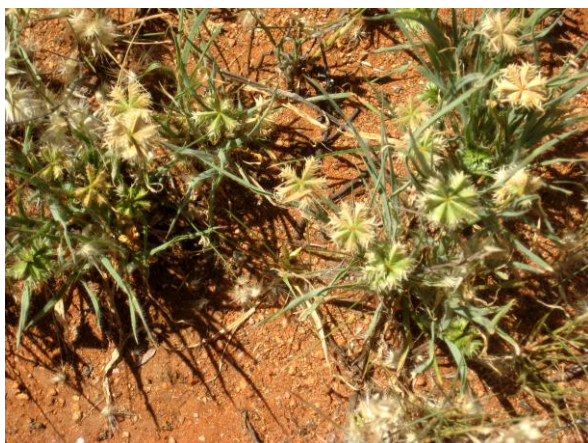
GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

Grass Profiles

Summer rains are known as grass producing rains and they have done us proud this past summer. Here are two common examples of native grasses.



Button Grass



Alternative Names: Button grass, Coast button grass, Eight-day grass, Finger grass, Small Crowsfoot.

Family: Poaceae

Species: *Dactyloctenium radulans*

Origin: Native to Australia

When you gaze across the bizarrely green transformed desert landscapes, never fear – it's not *all* Buffel!

Button Grass is everywhere at the moment! It is an opportunist and has taken advantage of the recent rain to germinate prolifically. This soft and sprawling grass will grow to 30cm high, with green leaves that are 2-10cm long. It prefers to grow in gentle depression in low-lying areas, and can grow in a range of soils (though commonly found on calcareous or alluvial soils). It can be found often in disturbed or trampled areas, and is very recognisable when it seeds. The seed heads are finger-like branches of 3-10 spikes, and they grow in a windmill shaped arrangement on the top of a stem. It quickly produces abundant seed – the recent germination is proof of this! – as it is generally a short-lived annual and not frost tolerant. In gravelly foot slopes at the edge of the hills or along creek lines watch for the similar but slightly taller species, *Oxychloris scariosa*. The amount of Button Grass that is around at the moment is acting as great ground litter, and it will dry off quickly. Button Grass can be found throughout Australia. It can be of grazing value, though if cattle consume large amounts it can result in cyanide or nitrate poisoning!

Woolly Oat Grass



Alternative Names: Leafy Nine Awn.

Family: Poaceae

Species: *Enneapogon polyphyllus*

Origin: Native to Australia

This grass has been popping up everywhere. The large seed bank has been in waiting for a rain event like this one. Don't mistake those young furry seed heads for Buffel when you're out weeding!

With some familiarity it is easily distinguished from Buffel. It is a much shorter grass, growing 10 – 30 cm tall. It is an upright grass, with numerous stems. The leaves are covered in soft fine hairs, and the seed heads are compact and narrow. Florets are usually white, (but sometimes purple) and smooth with a tuft of hair at the base (hence the

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'Woolly'-ness). Oat grasses are small widespread annual or biennial grasses. They respond to rain in any season, enabling them to grow year-round with adequate rain. It is an annual or short-lived perennial tussock grass, and can be a pioneer on disturbed areas. It can persist without rain, making it a carry-over species (providing food for livestock in drier months). It is an upland grass, growing on shallow gravelly, sandy or loamy soils, or on red earths. Another similar species, *E. Cylindricus*, can also be found on limestone soils. Woolly Oat Grass is highly palatable and nutritious for livestock .



Some Great References for grasses:

Allan, C., Wilson D., (2006). *Central Australian Grass Guide*, Northern Territory Government of Australia.

Native Grass group <http://dev.nativegrassgroup.asn.au>

Cotton catchment Communities

CRC <http://www.cottoncrc.org.au/content/Industry/Publications/Weeds/WeedIdentificationTools/Weedsbycommonnames/Buttongrass.aspx>

If you get stuck, send us a photo of the general plant (with a ruler or pen for scale) and the seed heads and we'll help you out.

Garden for Wildlife/Land for Wildlife News

Garden for Wildlife is a Finalist for the **2010 National Landcare Awards**, and will represent Urban Landcare in the Northern Territory at the Ceremony in June. Fingers crossed! For anyone interested in Landcare or attending the Awards Ceremony, see the Announcement from Landcare Australia at the end of the newsletter.

Your coordinator (me!) will be **away in May** on a camel trek through the Simpson Desert. Bill Low and Holly Sitters or any of the friendly staff at LowEcol will be happy to answer any queries in my absence. Please contact them on lfw@lowecol.com.au or 8955 5222. Happy wildlife watching until my return on the 31st of May!

An upcoming Land for Wildlife **Workshop** will be focusing on **Soil Erosion**. Soil Conservation Officer Col Stanton provides the real dirt on how to control erosion on your sloping or hillside block! Other case studies will also be presented. If you have minor or major erosion on your property come and learn how to identify, rehabilitate and prevent erosion. The workshop will be held one weekend in June, but dates are still to be confirmed. Stay tuned for more information!

Botanist Boyd Wright who conducted **Seedbank Surveys** on Land for Wildlife properties in November last year to look at the effects of the presence and removal of Buffel grass on native seedbanks contacted us recently with an update. Thankyou to all those volunteers that helped him out. Below is his email:

Hi Ilse

Re: the Buffel project, no way am I anywhere near the analysis phase. Still have to get in and find the seeds from all the dirt I collected. That's gonna take months. I also want to put soil from each of the sites in germination trays and put them in the desert park nursery, if they have space. It's very difficult to pick up daisy seeds using the flotation seed extraction method, so I want to try to germinate too. Plus, I'm thinking of doing another round of sampling on the sites now that we've

have some rain. It will be nice to have a pre- and post- rain comparison of the veg and seed bank. Ill keep you posted on how it's all going. If any one wishes to participate in seed work please let me know. Ok mate, hope you've had a good past few months, how was the light in Broome?

Cheers

Boyd

Ed - Would anyone like to help Boyd out with some seed work? Please express your interest to us at Land for Wildlife (lfw@lowecol.com.au) and we will keep you informed as to when and where he needs vollys!

Wildlife Watch

Snout-nosed Moth caterpillar: around 10cm long! The head is to the left of both pictures, the picture on the right demonstrates the two spikes behind the head, and the two blue collar stripes evident during movement.



We have recently had a stunning caterpillar, found cruising the concrete outside the old Commonwealth Bank near the ancient River Red Gum on Parsons St, identified by Dr Michael Braby, Curator of Entomology at the Museum and Art Gallery (Darwin) NT who was recommended to us by the Desert Park as a specialist in Butterfly identification. We had never seen its likes in town before and thought we were onto something special, but in moth form it is not so uncommon to us. Probably because the larvae is so well camouflaged and spends most of its time high up in trees underneath the bark, it is rarely seen. Luckily the larvae pupated the next day, its cocoon furry and white, and emerged in moth form a couple of weeks later. Below is the correspondence.



Dear Ilse

Thanks for your pics of the caterpillar. The larva is a snout moth, *Entometa* (*Lasiocampidae*). They usually feed on eucalypt leaves. The only species I am aware of that has been recorded from the NT is the Boxtree Moth *Entometa guttularis*.

Kind regards
Michael



Patrick Honan, Invertebrate Specialist at Melbourne Zoo adds:

*These caterpillars have a fringe of hair down each side of the body that blurs their outline and leaves no shadow when sitting on a branch, making them hard to spot for birds. In fact we have an almost identical version in Melbourne called *Entometa fervens* (the Gum Snout Moth) that feeds on gum leaves, and occurs along the east coast and in South Australia. They're called Snout Moths as the adults have a long projection in front of the head, but you'll rarely if ever see one of these. I hope this helps and that it's not too late.*

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Interestingly we have had four Snout Nosed Moths turn up at the office! Below are some photographs and you can tell a male from female moth by the length of its antennae (male's antennae are much longer). And the caterpillar that pupated emerged and immediately laid about 50 eggs each a mm in diameter and stuck to the surface of whatever was handy, but in the wild would have been on the under surface of Eucalypt leaves.



Announcements

The Olive Pink Botanic Gardens' 2010–2030 Draft **Master Plan** is open to the community for comment. Please share your opinions and ideas by visiting the website (www.opbg.com.au) to view the Draft and comment.

Nominations for The Power and Water Corporation **Melaleuca Awards** for Environmental Excellence 2010 close soon! Visit the website to find out more: www.powerwater.com.au/environment/melaleuca_awards/. The Awards recognise and reward Territorians doing the right thing by the environment.

Rainwater Tank Rebate NT

The Territory Government is encouraging households to become water conscious with the introduction of the Territory-wide Rainwater Tank Rebate. All Territorians now have an incentive to purchase and connect a rainwater tank to their homes and help take the strain off the Territory's natural water resources. The rebate will reduce up front costs for the purchase and installation of the rainwater tank and associated guttering, which can save the average household water and money. Community groups and not-for-profit organisations are also eligible to apply for the rebate after purchasing and installing a rainwater tank to their dwellings. Utilising a rainwater tank is good for the environment and encourages households to take responsibility for their own non essential use of water. For more information visit <http://www.greeningnt.nt.gov.au>.

Websites worth a look

Flooding Photos:

Impressive photos of flooding from QLD flowing into SA; Cooper Creek into Strzelecki Creek, and flooding around Innamincka, Nappa Merrie and Moomba areas courtesy Lyndhurst Hotel: <http://www.lyndhursthotel.com.au/frameset.html>

Bringing Back Birds to the 'burbs:

A fantastic article on encouraging birds to your yard by Sustainable Gardening Australia, author Helen Tuton. There are many handy tips in this article about what to do and what not to do to attract birds to your backyard, and it presents a great understanding of a bird's place in the ecosystem and how important it is to get the



balance of biodiversity right. With regard to plant species mentioned in the article; ignore the list and ask us or your local nursery about local arid zone plants, as this article is targeted at backyards in the south east of the country. Remember local provenance is always best! With regards to the sorts of birds you can attract to your garden Olive pink Botanic gardens will soon display on their website information relating to birds and their food plants.

<http://www.sgaonline.org.au/?p=648>

Olive Pink Botanic Gardens

Take a look at this website for information on Bush Food, the garden's History, and events. Also view and comment on the OPBG's Master Plan.

<http://www.opbg.com.au/>

Letters to the Editor

Ilse,

With the burst of activity following the rain and the imminent arrival of Autumn and Winter, the Lizards are active.

Now is a good time to check that there are **no inadvertent "traps"** for these very curious creatures in your garden. Make sure that all your empty plant pots, buckets, plastic bins, even pieces of steel or plastic pipe, are all stored on their sides so that the Lizards cannot get trapped inside. Their clever and sharp little claws cannot get purchase on plastics or metal and a smooth vertical wall of about 200mm or more can easily trap the creatures so that they die of dehydration and starvation.

All the "big" containers, such as rubbish and re-cycling bins, can save a Lizard if they have a strip of shade cloth fixed at the top and draped down inside the bin.

Happy observing of Wildlife,

Dave Leonard

P.S. The Channel Billed Cuckoo flew over yesterday morning.

In response to a Larapinta Garden for Wildlife member reporting 11 **Spotted Turtle-Doves trapped** in one week:

Hey Mark,

Well done. The data is useful to get in as soon as available so our running table is realistic.

Hopefully the fall off in numbers (by the end of the week) is a reflection of the efforts various people are putting in. It would be encouraging to think so.

Do you still hear many in the neighbourhood? I wonder if that might be a useful additional assessment tool that would expand peoples knowledge and skills and keep people interested and give us useful data?

Enjoy the long weekend.

Cheers,Bill

Hi Bill

I've always had a group of 10 or so pigeons sitting in a gum eyeing off the chicken food - there is only one there now but mainly Peaceful doves and Crested pigeons.

So I am happy with the result.

Thanks for the workshop

Mark

Thanks Mark,

Well done and now we just need to get a few more neighbors doing the same thing. Hope you

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*enjoyed the rain last night and had a good Easter break.
Cheers,Bill*

Seminars

RANGELAND BIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY SEMINARS

**April 30th Friday, 3.30 at Charles Darwin University
Lecture Theatre HE, Alice Springs**

**Veronica Perurre Dobson, Fiona Walsh, Josie Douglas
CSIRO Alice Springs**

Anpernrrentye (Relationships between people, plants, laws and all things): Arrernte values in landscapes and iconic bush food species.

Summary: - This seminar will be of interest to people involved in traditional ecological knowledge transmission, bush foods and native plants both commercial and customary uses, natural resource management, art about plants and others too. This seminar in Alice Springs precedes our travel to the International Congress of Ethnobiology on Vancouver Island, Canada to present a 2 hour session on 14th May. The abstract following and presentation will be similar to that planned for the Congress. In preparation for it, we are keen for feedback after the seminar about the style as well as content being presented.

Directions: Take the second entrance along Grevillia drive next to the childcare centre (not the main Centralian college entrance), and go past the Greening Australia/CDU nursery. The HE building is straight ahead on the left next to the grape vines and in front of the oval. There is parking in front of the building. The lecture theatre is on the ground floor just inside the doors to the right.

**June 7th Monday, 12.15 at NRETAS Conference Room,
2nd floor, Alice Springs Plaza**

Dr John Neldner,

Assessing and Mapping Vegetation Condition in Queensland's Mulgalands.

Summary: - There are a number of site-based assessment tools to measure condition of vegetation. Important indicators to measure condition include regeneration capacity, diversity of plant species, cover and complexity of various layers of vegetation, habitat features important for wildlife, and weed abundance. Queensland uses BioCondition as tool to compare the values of the assessment site with benchmarks to assign a condition score. The challenge is to spatially extend these sparse site based assessments. Can remote sensing be used to map all or some of the attributes used in BioCondition? This seminar will report on a project to attempt to map condition in the Queensland mulgalands using Landsat, LIDAR and ALOS radar imagery.

The Delbessie Agreement aims to secure long-term environmental, social and economic sustainability of rural leasehold land, primary industries and rural communities. It uses an incentive approach for good management. The site based assessment of land condition used for the Delbessie Agreement will be also explained. This talk will also be of interest to the spatial mapping group in Alice Springs.

SPEAKERS and PARTICIPANTS NEEDED.

Volunteer speakers, requests or cancellation of email notification: contact Bill Low, Coordinator, P.O.Box 3130, Alice Springs; Phone/Fax 89 555 222, Fax 89 555 722; Email: LowEcol@LowEcol.com.au
Organisational and distributional assistance from CSIRO, NRETAS, DResources, CAT, CLC, CDU.

Seminar notices are available on: <http://www.cse.csiro.au/news/alicespringsseminars.pdf>

Rangeland Biology and Ecology Seminars (broadened from the former Rangelands Coordinating Committee) have been useful in facilitating communication between environmental researchers, technicians, managers, students and the interested public in Alice Springs since 1974. The seminars provide an opportunity for the diverse Government, Institutional, Council, Company and private technical community and interested public to discuss current research and projects, impacts on or opportunities in arid Australia. Presenters may provide information on research and management of biological, landscape, cultural and physical aspects of central Australia or pertinent topics from around the World. The seminars also provide a training arena to practice talks for conferences or to float ideas or to help develop a project. Sometimes they present technical travelogues of distant lands. Appropriate professional society or interest group notices can also be included. The venue is the one most appropriate for the speaker and audience. For consistency the venue has usually been the CSIRO Conference Room, but with CSIRO's move to their new location at the Desert Knowledge Centre, the CDU venue is currently a good central location. Come along for a natter, a catch up or to meet new people and new ideas.

Calendar of Events

Friday April 30- Rangelands Seminar: Guest Speakers Veronica Perurre Dobson, Fiona Walsh, Josie Douglas, CSIRO Alice Springs on '*Anpernrrentye (Relationships between people, plants, laws and all things): Arrernte values in landscapes and iconic bush food species*'.

Wednesday May 12 – 'Landscape Ecology in Antarctic Dry Valleys'. A talk by Ashley Sparrow of CSIRO. Field naturalists Club, Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, 7:30pm.

Tuesday May 11 - People, Forests and Climate – Experience from PNG – Live and Learn

Monday May 17 - Wild NT Film Competition closes

Sunday June 6 - Ken Johnson will talk about HH Finlayson, naturalist and SA mammal curator from middle of last century, at Hartley St School at 2.30 followed by afternoon tea with National Trust.

Monday June 7 – Rangelands Seminar: Guest Speaker John Neldner on '*Assessing and Mapping vegetation condition in Queensland's Mulglands*'.

Take care
Ilse & Bill



Garden for Wildlife Coordinators

Don't forget to check out the LfW & GfW website at www.lowecol.com.au, you can download membership application forms, newsletters, vegetation type species lists, and find out about upcoming workshops!

[Low Ecological Services P/L](mailto:LowEcologicalServices@lowecol.com.au)

P.O. Box 3130, Alice Springs, N.T. 0871, Australia
ph (08) 89 555 222, Fax 08-89 555 722

Email: LFW@lowecol.com.au

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If you're going to be in Canberra on June 24th, come and support our Garden for Wildlife quest for National winner for the Urban Landcare awards.



For the first time ever, Landcare Australia will be making a *limited* number of tickets to the National Landcare Awards available for purchase to the Landcare community and the general public.

The ceremony will be held in the Great Hall at Parliament House, Canberra, on Thursday June 24th.

The National Landcare Awards span the breadth and diversity of Landcare work, from the city to the bush, the ocean to the centre, from big landscape scale projects that cross state and territory borders, to small community projects involving local people.

The finalists from each of the eight states and territories are a testament to Landcarers of every age, gender and culture around Australia that are making a significant contribution to the environment and natural resource management.

Tickets will be on sale from Thursday April 15th and close Tuesday June 1st.

Tickets are \$50 per person (tables of 10 people) for pre-dinner drinks in the Marble Foyer and the Gala Awards Dinner in the Great Hall of Parliament House.

To order your tickets please speak to Noemi Simaki at Landcare Australia Ltd on 02 9412 1060 or email awards@landcareaustralia.com.au with your contact details, including address, phone number and number of tickets you would like to purchase.

Tickets can be purchased with a credit card or by cheque to Landcare Australia Ltd. Tickets will be posted to you on Friday 4th June.

***Note: Tickets will be sold on a first-come-first-serve basis. If paying by cheque, we will reserve your tickets for five business days (from when we confirm their availability) to allow for postage. Due to the limited supply and high demand, we are unable to reserve tickets for extended periods without payment.**