

Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife Central Australia Newsletter

March 2017

From the Land for Wildlife Coordinator

The heat is dying down and so it's a great time to get ready for planting some new natives in your garden. You can also consider reducing the watering frequency on the irrigation timer for established gardens.

There are also plenty of Itchy Grub or Processionary Caterpillar (*Ochrogaster lunifer*) nests about so take care and avoid touching the fine hairs. Note they they play an important role in the ecosystem so there's no need to harm or remove the nests—let them go about their day and they won't bother you.

Don't forget to make the most of the beautiful change in weather by going for a stroll around your nearest reserve—identify some of the local native plants and take note of the species that are flourishing. Honing your skills at observation of the natural world is a good way to keep you on your toes!

Found a snake? Call the Alice Springs Reptile Centre call-out on 0407 983 276 and they will confirm the identify of the reptile and remove it for you.



Burrow of a female Barking Spider (Selenocosmia stirlingi) protected by a tough barrier of silk, found on a Land for Wildlife member property. These are Australia's Tarantulas, belonging to the family Theraphosidae. They rub rows of spines on their palaps against spines on their lower jaw to create the barking noise, used to deter predators.

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World Wildlife Day Nature Journal Competition

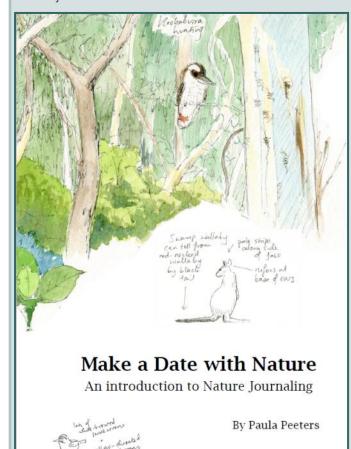
The 3rd of March marked World Wildlife Day, which was proclaimed by the United Nations in 2013 as a day for the celebration of the world's wild animals and plants. The theme for 2017 is "Listen to the Young Voices", as there is a need to encourage young people, as the future decision makers of the world, to protect wildlife. Land for Wildlife encourages youth of central Australia to become aware and engaged about the major threats to wildlife, which includes habitat change at our local level, among other threats.



To celebrate, we're asking the younger generation of Alice Springs to get outside and observe some wildlife in your local space and get to know it a little.

Take your pick of wildlife subject. It could be anything from the tiniest of invertebrates (Caterpillars, Beetles, Butterflies), to reptiles (Lizards or Snakes – keeping your distance), birds (endless species!), and mammals (Roos, Euros and Wallabies).

Download Paula Peeters' resource 'Make a Date With Nature: an Introduction to Nature Journaling' from our website. Paula Peeters also has a website Paperbark Writer, on which you can find a host of fun activities where Australian nature meets science and art. This will give you some tips and hints about how to create a nature journal.



Record your observations and make an A4 one-page journal. This can include your observations, images of what you see, drawings, anything that inspires you about the subject.

Send your entries through to us at Land for Wildlife: You can email scanned copies to lfw@lowecol.com.au or send the original to PO Box 3130 Alice Springs NT 0870.

This competition is open to Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife members, but also the wider community so feel free to share this with your networks. If you are not a member and are submitting an entry, please provide contact details so that we can chase you down if you win. We have extended the competition closing date to the 20th April 2017. Note that there is no actual age limit to entries - if you are young, or just young at heart, you are welcome to enter the competition!

The best nature journal will win a copy of our newly released, 'Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs' by Nic Gambold and Deborah Metters.

Want to know more about World Wildlife Day? Check out the World Wildlife Day website for more information. Blog▶



Heavitree Gap in 1917 (Image Price Powell Collection).

Register of Significant Trees

By Candice Appleby

There has been a lot of buzz in the community these past few weeks regarding trees of significance around town. This has been spurred on mainly by the old *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (Red River Gum) on the corner of Parsons Street and the Todd Mall, which has decided to indulge in a spot of, shall we say 'self-pruning'? It is widely known that this tree has been listed with AAPA (Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority) since the 1980's, however during this time it was also listed on the Central Australian Register of Significant Trees in 4 of the 11 categories of significance (age, historical, cultural, and location). This tree is one of 31 trees currently listed on the Central Australian Register of Significant Trees, and of 220 listed Territory wide.

The NT Register of Significant Trees was conceived in 1982 to coincide with the Australian Year of the Tree. The aim of the register is to create awareness around protecting trees, which are a significant part of the heritage of the Northern Territory. The register was initiated by the National Trust, who worked with Greening Australia NT to manage and develop the register. Registers were developed for central Australia, Darwin and Katherine. In recent years, Land for Wildlife Central Australia has taken on the responsibility of managing the register. Over the past 35 years the register has received various levels of public interest and publicity. Despite a few pushes to get traction, little is known in local community about the register, which is something we would like to change!

Since starting with Land for Wildlife Central Australia late last year, I have decided to focus some energy on updating the register and making it more widely accessible, initially concentrating on the central Australian register. My first job was to dust off the 2 old ring-bound folders of register documents and begin going through and physically locating each tree on the list - a much bigger job than first expected! I aim to map all of the registered trees on an interactive map, creating a virtual tour experience that will be accessible through the Land for Wildlife website. Once this is complete, I hope for this data to be included in the National Trust 'Trust Trees' database web site, a comprehensive list of over 2,500 Significant Tree listings nationwide.

While I'm busy at work updating the old listings and preparing for them to go digital, if there are any trees of significance around town (or even in remote areas) that you think should be on the list, and recognised for their significance, let us know. Feel free to visit the <u>Land for Wildlife</u> website and its <u>Significant Trees Register</u> page, download a nomination form and criteria of significance, and email or post the completed form to us. The updated register list will be available for download from the website shortly, alongside individual listing fact sheets. I have included a couple of sample factsheets with this newsletter to give you all a sneak peek as to what's in store (see pages following).

~ Candice Appleby

Phoenix dactylifera — Date Palm

Scientific Name:

Phoenix dactylifera

Common Name:

Date Palm

Register Number: 1

Location of Tree:

Corner of Wills Terrace and Bath Street, Alice Springs NT

GPS: -23.69685, 133.88302

Date Planted:

1913

Categories of Significance:

Cultural

Nominated by:

National Trust of Australia

Year Listed:

1982



This Palm is one of the oldest in the town area, planted in 1913. It was initially positioned in front of a two room slab cottage affectionately known as 'Myrtle Villa'.

The cottage was the home of the first resident sister appointed to Alice Springs, Jean Finlayson.

In the years following, the cottage made way for a Mobil Service Station, which has since been demolished, leaving only the Palm as a reminder of the history of this site.







2017 - Vacant Block







Acacia peuce — Waddy Wood

Scientific Name:

Acacia peuce

Common Name:

Waddy Wood

Register Number: 24

Location of Tree:

Alice Springs Town Council Chamber Lawns. Todd St, Alice Springs NT

GPS: -23.70162, 133.88224

Date Planted:

1981

Planted By:

John Blakeman MBE and Mayor George Smith

Categories of Significance:

Cultural Rare

Nominated by:

National Trust of Australia

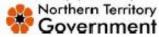
Year Listed:

1996





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This Acacia is one of the rarest and most striking trees of the Australian arid zone. It is found in only three localities, near Boulia and Birdsville in Queensland and at the Mac Clarke Conservation Reserve north of Old Andado Homestead.

This tree was grown by members of

the Society For Growing Australian Plants Alice Springs from seed collected on Andado Station and was presented to the Alice Springs Town Council to mark World Environment Day, 5th June 1981. The tree was presented to Mayor George Smith by John Blakeman MBE.

Biodiversity Matters: Buffel Busters Tour

Land for Wildlife assisted Arid Lands Environment Centre to run a Biodiversity Matters: Buffel Busters Tour on the 18th of February 2017. You can read more about the event at our Blog.

Land for Wildlife were there to assist member properties to showcase the natural values of their properties, identifying plants for those on tour and we had a camera to capture the day. It was quite a windy day, according to the camera, so we have learnt that a microphone is sometimes a necessary tool (we must never stop learning!). Apologies for the windy moments towards the start, but it's worth persisting. I've included some subtitles in places to help you out. It includes some presentations by the Buffel Busters on the day, photographs of the event and some of the wildlife spotted at the Buffel-free sites.



Still want to learn more about Buffel Grass? Head to our <u>Resources</u> web page for links to a range of handy fact sheets.

Thanks to the supporters: Arid Lands Environment Centre, Territory Natural Resource Management, Desert Knowledge Australia, Alice Springs Landcare Inc and Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Thanks to everyone that came along to the event and especially to all of the Buffel Busters that shared their experience, knowledge and wisdom (Peter Latz, Bruce Simmons, Debbie Page, Jude Prichard from Alice Springs Landcare Inc, and Doug McDougall from Olive Pink Botanic Garden).

View the Buffel Busters Tour Video



Buffel Busters took a walk through some properties and spaces whose landholders have removed Buffel Grass.

A Selection of Grasses from Central Australia

For those that attended the Biodiversity Matters: Buffel Busters Tour of Alice Springs, you may be familiar with the booklet that we have been developing—A Selection of Grasses from Central Australia (yet to be formally titled). The information used was sourced from an excellent online resource called AusGrass2, in combination with 30 grass samples collected from Land for Wildlife member properties.

We have been able to seek permission from the Queensland Herbarium, who now manages the site, to use the information to develop a regional grass guide for central Australia. This will help our member properties to identify the invasive grasses and distinguish them from the local native grasses.

To help us along with producing a complete booklet, we are still seeking samples from the following native and exotic species (For the plant experts among you, let us know if you know where to find any of them):



Blowngrass

Grey-beard Grass, Long Grey-beard Grass

Cane Grass Three-awn, Two-gland Three-awn Needle-leaved Three-awn Bunched Kerosene Grass, Mulga Grass Jericho Three-awn Feathertop Wiregrass Rock Three-awn Flat-awned Three-awn Brush Three-awn, Brush Wiregrass Weeping Mitchell Grass Barley Mitchell Grass

Rough Speargrass
Wild Oat
Desert Bluegrass
Birdwood Grass
Comb Chloris
Feathertop Rhodes Grass, Furry Grass, Feather Finger-grass
Feathertop Rhodes Grass, Furry Grass, Feather Finger-grass
Golden Beard Grass, Ribbon Grass, Weeping Grass, Spear Grass
Northern Barley Grass
Silkyheads, Lemon-scented Grass
Sheda Grass
Dwarf Bluegrass
Silky Umbrella Grass, Spider Grass
Umbrella Grass, Finger Panic Grass
Comb Finger Grass

Japanese Millet Conetop Nine-awn, Clelands Nine-awn Jointed Nine-awn, Limestone Oat-grass, Jointed Bottlewasher

Rock Nine-awn Curly Windmill Grass, Umbrella Grass, Spider grass

Swamp Canegrass

Agrostis avenacea Amphipogon caricinus Aristida arida Aristida biglandulosa

Aristida capillifolia Aristida contorta

Aristida jerichoensis var. subspinulifera Aristida latifolia

Aristida latzii Aristida nitidula Aristida obscura Astrebla elymoides Astrebla pectinata

Austrostipa centralis Austrostipa feresetacea

Austrostipa scabra subsp. scabra

Avena fatua

Bothriochloa ewartiana

Cenchrus setiger Chloris pectinata Chloris virgata

Chloris virgata Chrysopogon fallax

Critesion murinum subsp. glaucum

Cymbopogon obtectus Dichanthium annulatum

Dichanthium sericeum subsp. humilius

Digitaria ammophila Digitaria coenicola Digitaria ctenantha

Echinochloa crus-galli Echinochloa esculenta

Enneapogon clelandii

Enneapogon cylindricus Enneapogon eremophilus

Enneapogon eremopnii Enneapogon oblongus

Enteropogon acicularis Eragrostis A51007 Limestone

Eragrostis australasica

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A Selection of Grasses from Central Australia

Some missing samples (continued)...

Neat Lovegrass, Clustered Lovegrass Fairy Grass, Cumings Lovegrass Mallee Lovegrass Clustered Lovegrass, Close-headed Lovegrass Small-flowered Lovegrass Purple Lovegrass Drooping Lovegrass

Weeping Lovegrass Small Lovegrass Neverfail, Narrow-leaf Neverfail Knottybutt Neverfail Three-awn Wanderrie Woollybutt Wanderrie Pretty Wanderrie Eight Day Grass, Common Fringe-rush

Bunch Speargrass, Black Speargrass Rough-stemmed Flinders Grass Bull Flinders Grass Small Flinders Grass Red Flinders Grass Umbrella Canegrass Small-flowered Beetle Grass Brown Beetle Grass Beetle Grass

Natal Red Top, Red Natal Grass

Winged Chloris
Giant Panic
Hairy Panic
Pepper Grass
Bristle-brush Grass
Clements Paspalidium
Knottybutt Paspalidium, Slender Panic
Warrego Summer Grass
Bunch Paspalidium
Kikuyu

Comet Grass Annual Beardgrass Katoora Australian Dropseed

Tall Oat Grass, Oat Kangaroo Grass, Native Oat Grass, Swamp Kangaroo Grass Window Mulga Grass, Mulga Mitchell Grass, Mulga Grass Spurred Arrowgrass
Hard Spinifex, Lobed Spinifex
Hard Spinifex, Lobed Spinifex
Buck Spinifex, Bull Spinifex, Giant Grey Spinifex
Five-minute Grass, Rye Beetle Grass
Hairy Armgrass, Hairy Summer Grass, Green Summer Grass
Large Armgrass, Large Summer Grass
Sandhill Canegrass

Eragrostis basedowii
Eragrostis cumingii
Eragrostis dielsii
Eragrostis elongata
Eragrostis kennedyae
Eragrostis lacunaria
Eragrostis leptocarpa
Eragrostis olida
Eragrostis parviflora
Eragrostis pergracilis
Eragrostis setifolia
Eragrostis xerophila
Eriachne aristidea
Eriachne helmsii

Eriachne pulchella subsp. pulchella

Fimbristylis dichotoma
Fimbristylis microcarya
Heteropogon contortus
Iseilema dolichotrichum
Iseilema macratherum
Iseilema vaginiflorum
Leptochloa digitata

Leptochloa fusca subsp. fusca Leptochloa fusca subsp. muelleri Leptochloa fusca subsp. uninervia

Melinis repens
Oxychloris scariosa
Panicum antidotale
Panicum effusum
Panicum laevinode
Paractaenum refractum
Paspalidium clementii
Paspalidium jubiflorum
Paspalidium rarum
Pennisetum clandestinum

Pennisetum pedicellatum subsp. unispiculum

Perotis rara
Polypogon monspeliensis
Sporobolus actinocladus
Sporobolus australasicus
Sporobolus blakei
Sporobolus scabridus
Themeda avenacea
Thyridolepis mitchelliana
Triglochin calcitrapum
Triodia basedowii
Triodia brizoides
Triodia longiceps

Tripogon Ioliiformis Urochloa piligera Urochloa praetervisa Zygochloa paradoxa





Book Launch: Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs

Land for Wildlife launched the second edition of Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs by Nic Gambold and Deborah Metters at the Alice Springs Reptile Centre this month. The launch was attended by 20 keen Land for Wildlife and Garden for Wildlife members, who were treated to a presentation by Rex Neindorf on the biology and habits of legless lizards (Family Pygopodidae).

Rex explained how members can identify the differences between some of the common legless lizards and small venomous snakes. He showed an example of an Excitable Delma or Excitable Snake Lizard (*Delma tincta*), which can often be confused with a baby brown snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*). The two reptiles have a similar colour, both lay eggs and both slither along the ground. However, there are some clear differences, which were explained in detail and shown to those attending the event.

When the Excitable Delma was released onto the ground, the reason for its name became obvious. The legless lizard launched its body around on the ground with a huge amount of excitement. This was a great way to distinguish the difference between this particular legless lizard and snake. Rule 1: Snakes don't jump. They do



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Left: Rex Neindorf of Alice Springs Reptile Centre explains to the book launch attendees how to tell the difference between legless lizards and small snakes. Right: Rex demonstrates identification with an Excitable Delma (Delma tincta) to Land for Wildlife member, Jane.

(Continued from page 9)

slither along the ground and they can launch their head and front third of their body, but they are not jumpers. Excitable Delmas are able to jump several centimetres off the ground, using their whole body.

Legless lizards have ears and some have eyelids and snakes do not have either. This is an easy way to tell the difference between the two types of reptiles, if you can get close enough without putting yourself or others in

LEGLESS

LIZATED

LOOK FOR

RELEASE RATINA,

TAIL

A RESIDUAL LEG.

NONLYEN OF THE LOOK FOR INDEVENTRAL

SCALES

LOOK FOR INDEVENTRAL SCALES

PREHEMBILE TAIL

NO LOREAL

danger. Snakes can't blink, instead they have a thin transparent scale that covers the eye, which are known as spectacles and are replaced when the snake sheds its skin. Snakes don't have visible ear openings, but rather their inner ear is connected directly to the jawbone, which senses vibrations. Many legless lizards have small ear openings behind the jaw. Legless lizards may have lost their legs as large extensions over evolutionary time, however they do possess small residual nodules to the rear where the hind legs would have been. Keep an eye on the tongue of the reptile when it licks the air. Snakes have a very distinctly forked tongue, which is quite long and slim, whereas legless lizards have a fatter tongue that lacks a defined fork.

Legless lizards have the ability to drop their tail as a life-saving protection mechanism from predators, known as caudal autotomy. Many land owners are tricked this way when they are frightened, thinking they have found a snake and take to the individual with a shovel, only to find the animal does not die (quite the opposite for a snake, but we do not recommend testing this theory as we are pro-life for all reptiles!). Many legless lizards have a very small body and a large tail and hence are not killed when

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sliced in half. The tail will then regenerate given enough time and cause no discomfort to the individual. The regenerating tail has a slight colour difference in comparison to the rest of the body and so a shearing point can be found on some legless lizards that have undergone regeneration. Snakes do not regenerate a tail and therefore similar patternation can be found down the length of the body.

Some other distinguishing characteristics are less easy to identify in a hurry. For example, if you can get the reptile to roll over (good luck), you can check the ventral pattern of the scales. In venomous snakes, the ventral scales are wide, extending along the width of the belly and continue in such a way down the length of the body. In legless lizards, the scales on the underbelly are much like those on the rest of the body. Snakes are able to use their belly and side scales to move in an S-shape along the ground, whereas legless lizards can only use their sides. This means that if a legless lizard moves onto a completely smooth surface, it will lose its ability to move (important to note if you see one on the road – take care and drive around it if possible). If you happen to keep an eye on it long enough to find it feeding, legless lizards are not able to unlock their jaws to swallow large prey so they will generally go for smaller food items than snakes will.

Differences between venomous and non-venomous snakes include the size of the body scales (large in venomous snakes and small in non-venomous snakes), patterning of the body (non-intricate in venomous snakes and intricate in non-venomous snakes), tail movement (non-prehensile tail in venomous snakes, prehensile in non-venomous snakes) and loreal scales (no loreal scales in venomous snakes, loreal scales in non-venomous snakes).

Rex also explained about the snake catching service provided by the Alice Springs Reptile Centre. He noted that they have caught fewer snakes than usual this year since there has been a lot of rain so the snakes can't be seen amongst the grass as easily, though the catch levels were still higher than we expected.

If you notice a venomous snake on your property, you can call the Alice Springs Reptile Centre call-out number

on 0407 983 276. Keep an eye on the snake and they will attend to collect it as soon as possible. Snakes are then released at several sites around Alice Springs in the rural area, depending on the required habitat of the caught individual.

The Alice Springs Reptile Centre is selling snake bandages that have indicator boxes to determine the correct application of tension to prevent the venom spreading. If you are updating your first aid kit, you may wish to visit Rex and his team to discuss suitable bandage options.

Thanks go to Rex Neindorf for launching the Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs booklet and providing such an informative presentation!

The Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs booklet can be purchased from Land for Wildlife Central Australia for \$15 at any of our upcoming stalls at local events. You can also grab copies from Arid Lands Environment Centre and Red Kangaroo Books.

Clean Up Australia Day

The 5th of March was Clean Up Australia Day and Land for Wildlife were out in the Todd River doing our bit to help out the Alice Springs Town Council with their hosted event. The morning was a huge success!



Upcoming Events

- » World Heritage Day: 18th April
- » Earth Day: 20th April

Earth Day 2017 is campaigning for environmental and climate literacy, empowering everyone with the knowledge to inspire action in defence of environmental protection. For more information, head to http://www.earthday.org/

» Telegraph Station Open Day: 23rd April

Land for Wildlife will be hosting a stall at the Telegraph Station Open Day, celebrating World Heritage Day and all that Alice Springs has to offer in terms of natural and cultural heritage.





Bird Spotting: Spiny -cheeked Honeyeater

The Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (Acanthagenys rufogularis) has been a common visitor to watering points over the last few weeks and certainly giving the bossy Yellow-throated Miners (Manorina flavigula) a run for their money.

They are common birds throughout the Alice Springs region, but are often only seen in town when there has been no recent rainfall and natural watering points are dry. They have a mottled brown pattern and pink beak edge, as well as a distinctive call that is highly reminiscent of central Australia.

Further Reading

Click the link symbol to be redirected to the article



Article • Night parrot sighting in Western Australia shocks birdwatching world



Article • Huge wildlife poaching network discovered in NT



Article • South Australia holds worst extinction rate as native birds fall off perch



Article • Tracking Fang the feral cat reveals killing spree covering 300km



Article • Unique method of killing feral cats among research projects UniSA wants to fund through crowdsourcing



Video • Buffel Grass Impacts on APY Communities - Short Film



Video • The Buffel Rap



Video • Skilled Indigenous Rangers – Cat tracking and managing feral cats

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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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.

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