

LAND FOR WILDLIFE NEWS



Newsletter of the Land for Wildlife Scheme in Alice Springs Municipality, NT

Vol.1 No.6 February 2004

Land for Wildlife Update

Update

Thanks to input from all Land for Wildlife members, the "Australian Government Envirofund" grant application for 'Biodiversity Conservation on Private Lands' through the Land for Wildlife program for 2004 has been successful. The Land for Wildlife program will be supported for an additional 12 months. The Alice Springs Town Council ASTC continues to provide support in kind and remains the signatory body with the Victorian government. Low Ecological Services would like to thank all LfW members for their support and achievements throughout 2003. The program continues to grow within the Alice Springs community and is considered a valuable program in helping to conserve our unique environment on private lands.

As the Northern Territory Government embarks on a major project to develop a new parks and conservation masterplan for the Northern Territory, conservation on private lands is becoming recognised as highly significant. Kay Bailey, principal planner of the parks and conservation masterplan for the Alice Springs/Tennant Creek area, invites all Land for Wildlife members to participate in the planning process of the masterplan development. An 'Environmental Focus Meeting' will be held at 7.30 on the **19th of February** at the Diplomat where ideas on how conservation of biodiversity can be achieved in lands outside parks will be welcomed. (See enclosed notice.)

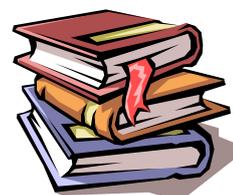
Cat traps

Thank you for those who returned their cat traps to the ASTC. All cat traps must be returned to be made available for public use. If you still have a trap that needs returning please contact LfW on 895 55222 and further arrangements can be made. The traps are still available if you apply to the Town Council.

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Books Worth a Look



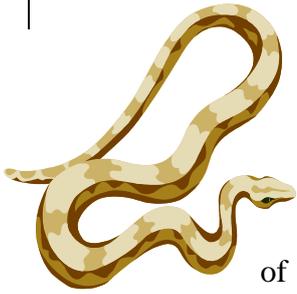
Conservation and the Maintenance of Biodiversity. (J.C.Z Woinarski & A. Fisher, 2003). Rangelands Journal. 25(2), 2003, pp 157-171.

This scientific journal discusses the continual substantial loss of biodiversity in the Australian Rangelands and urges that rangeland users be more aware of and concerned about this problem.

Northern Territory Parks and Conservation Masterplan website.

For further information regarding the NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan and the planning process, or to have your say by providing your views on the future management of the Territory's Parks System, visit the website at <http://www.parksmasterplan.nt.gov.au>

Watch Out For



Snakes this Summer

During these warmer days you should be more likely to encounter some of the cold blooded wildlife that often slips away unnoticed. On those occasions, however, where they are noticed some might wonder what they should do.

The Alice Springs Reptile Centre has the contract to remove snakes from people's houses in Alice Springs and relocate them elsewhere. They remove approx. 350 to 500 reptiles per year including snakes and lizards. Most snakes that are removed are Western Brown snakes, a highly venomous, but very shy snake. The most common snakes in the Alice Springs area are the Western Brown Snake and Mulga Snake, both highly venomous, the Yellow-faced Whip Snake a mildly venomous snake and the Stimsons Python and Carpet Python both non- venomous.

Here are a few tips given by the Rex Neindorf, the Proprietor at the Alice Springs Reptile Centre.....

If you do have a snake in your yard it is best that you don't try and touch them, snakes are fine if they are left alone, but if they are disturbed they can get very upset. We suggest that if a snake is spotted you ring the

snake phone straight away on 0407 983276, (the snake phone is manned 24/7, either Justin or Rex are on call). Try and keep an eye on the snake at all times, they can disappear very quickly. All you have to do is keep about ten metres away from the snake and just watch where it goes. When we arrive we can then catch and remove it.

To help keep snakes away it is best to keep the yard clean and tidy. Keep the grass mowed, if you have bits of old tin sheeting lying around on the ground put besa bricks under them to lift the sheets off the ground otherwise they make good hiding spots for mice and snakes.

If you have a bird aviary try to get it paved or cemented so as to keep mice away, also clean away all the extra seed. Most snake calls we attend the house has a bird aviary or a pool, snakes, when its hot, love swimming just like us, so just look in the pool before you dive in! Also be careful when checking the skimmer box as well.

A few general things on snakes. If a snake is very close to you stand very still till it moves away, they have poor eyesight and get frightened by any sudden movements. If the snake is more than a metre away simply walk quietly backwards from it. Wearing jeans and shoes when walking in long grass can help prevent snakebite as their fangs are

very small and would find it very hard to penetrate the material.

If a person is bitten, stay calm and as still as possible and never wash the venom off if there is any present. Apply a compression bandage (or stockings, shirt or even just use your bare hand) over the bite, wrap the bandage down to the fingers or toes then up the bitten limb as high as you can and seek medical help. On average in Australia 3000 people are bitten every year but only 300 people need antivenom treatment, which means only 10% of bites result in any venom given. That means that in most snakebite cases the snake is just biting you to tell you to go away, however if bitten you do not know this so always treat a bite as serious; apply first aid and go to hospital. In Australia about two people per year actually die from snakebite, more people die from bee stings! It is best to remember that when a snake bites it knows exactly how much venom it wants to use which means if you accidentally step on a snake you would expect little venom at all, however if you deliberately try to throw rocks or sticks at snakes or try to touch them or kill them they will defend themselves vigorously just as we would ourselves.

If you see a snake out bush on your travels leave it alone and it will leave you alone. If you have a curious one in your yard in Alice

Springs ring us and we will come and remove it for you'.

Yellow-Faced Whip Snake

(Demansia psammophis)

Description: This species is bi-coloured and has a uniform olive-grey to blue-grey body with a yellow-orange head and tail. Each scale has a dark edge to form an overall network pattern. A dark stripe, bordered with yellow, encircles the eye down to the mouth. This species is slender and can reach up to 0.8m.

Distribution: The Yellow-faced Whip snake occurs throughout most of continental Australia, except for the tropical north from the eastern Kimberleys to western Queensland.

Habitat: Within the arid interior, it occurs in plains, sand plains and creek lines with spinifex or tussock grasses.

Habit: A swift moving snake that feeds on small lizards and frogs. It is Venomous, however, only larger specimens are likely to be dangerous to humans.

A **photo** of the Yellow Faced Whip Snake is on p.57 of Reptiles and Frogs of Alice Springs, the LFW booklet by Nic Gambold and Debbie Metters.

Spotlight On

Land for Wildlife across Australia

Last December the Land for Wildlife National Steering Committee was successfully hooked up for a teleconference meeting to discuss the importance and future of the LfW program across Australia. The following is an update on the LfW program in other states.

Victoria: The LfW program has been affected by budget cuts, with a reduction in extension officers and therefore a reduction in applications able to be processed. There are 6000 properties in the scheme covering a total area of retained or restored land of 158,712ha. Their 3rd annual Open Property Scheme was held in September last year. Due to limited funding it was on a smaller scale than the year before. There were 10 properties open for visits across the State and approx 300 people attended.

A volunteer trial has been running in the Port Phillip region this past year which is likely to lead to a stronger emphasis on the use of volunteers in that area.

NSW: The conservation agencies of NPWS, EPA, Resources NSW and the Royal Botanic gardens have been amalgamated into the Dept of Environment and Conservation. The Education and Community Involvement Unit remains within the Parks service Division.

LfW continues as part of the Conservation Partners Program, run out of the Education and Community Involvement Unit. As such it benefits from being supported by a larger funded program that includes the statutory options under state legislation. Currently there are 243 registered landholders and 27,077 hectares of retained habitat.

An NSW Environmental Trust grant in collaboration with the NSW LGSA has been submitted, for LfW to be run by specific local governments in identified rural areas.

Queensland: State agency support is focussed on covenants on title. The environmental Protection Authority (EPA) will no longer support LfW. The EPA is aiming to transfer the program to Local Govt to provide regional delivery. There are 4 well-established schemes in SE Qld, these councils may form a regional group.

Western Australia: Western Australia LfW has permanent state funding with increased \$. Extension staff are now permanent employees. LfW won a state environment award for environmental change in 2003.

Tasmania: has signed the LfW arrangement but government commitment is small. Tasmanian Govt says that LfW is core to the Govt commitment to private land conservation, but there is decreased investment by DEH in NRM. Late last year

the Department decided to transfer a permanent officer into the Biodiversity Community Engagement Coordinator position (LFW Coordinator).

There are 420 registrations and 40,000 hectares under LfW.

Tasmania has a volunteer network with 26 volunteers. They are members of the wildlife carers group so have their own organisational infrastructure. There is a need to ensure quality control when working with people around the state.

Millions of Oriental Pratincoles amass near Broome

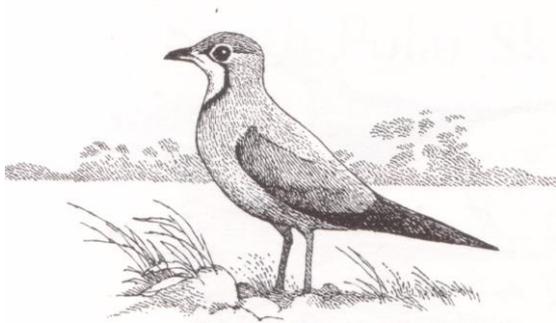


Image from *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, 1984.

A rough estimate of between 2.4 and 2.8 million oriental pratincoles, (*Glareola maldivarum*), a migratory wader was made a couple of weeks ago on 80 Mile Beach south of Broome. Previous estimates of the total Australian population of this bird were in the vicinity of 60,000, and so this event is somewhat extraordinary with birds densely packed along a kilometre width of beach for tens of kilometres long. Being grasshopper

eaters a few hundred thousand of these birds would go down a treat in the Alice region right now! Copies of *Shorebird Conservation in Australia* Wingspan insert are available from the Threatened Species Network office in the Old Hartley Street School, ph. 8952 1541.

Birds on Farms – habitat management to increase bird diversity

Some of the findings from Birds Australia's five-year study of birds on 330 farms in southern and eastern Australia include:

- ✦ For every 10% increase in tree cover, bird diversity increased by 7%. At the same time exotic birds decreased by 21%;
- ✦ Bird diversity is re-established about 15 years after the removal of stock from a heavily grazed site;
- ✦ Understorey birds were most diverse in farm sites that were never grazed;
- ✦ Bird diversity declined in patches of woodland smaller than 10 ha;
- ✦ Woodland-dependent birds were 21% more diverse in farm sites where trees had regenerated naturally compared with sites where trees had been replanted;

✍ For every 10 fallen trees present, the diversity of ground-foraging birds increased by 30% and bark-foraging birds by 70%;

A set of management guidelines was produced from the project and these contain useful tips for landholders in all regions, although the focus of the study was in more agricultural regions down south. An interactive site, "Remnants", is available on the Birds Australia website www.birdsaustralia.com.au/remnants/index.html and can be used to assess the general health of a property, and to plan for improved bird diversity.

Workshops & Events

20th February, Friday, 3.30 pm at CSIRO. Rangelands Biology and Ecology Seminars. Dr. Margaret Friedel will talk and show slides **Namibia – an Ecological Journey**.

21st February, Saturday. Alice Springs Field Naturalists. Night walk along Simpsons Gap bike track. Meet at 7:45pm at Flynn's Grave. Bring a torch. Contact Bob Read on 8952 1935.

22nd February, Sunday. Alice Springs Field Naturalists. Waterwatch at Wigley's Waterhole. Meet at 8:30am Sargent Street sign on the North Stuart Hwy. Bring hat, water & sunscreen. Contact Rosalie Breen on 8952 3409.

28th February, 9am to 12 midday, Greening Australia Plant Sale.

Enhance biodiversity and reduce water consumption by planting with local native species. To be held at the GA nursery in the grounds of Centralian College.

3rd March, Wednesday. Australian Plants Society, Annual General Meeting, followed by Guest Speaker Stuart Traynor. Meet 7:30pm in the visitor Centre of the Olive Pink Botanic Garden.

7th March, Sunday. Alice Springs Field Naturalists Walk in hills behind Zeil Street. Meet 6:30am at Araluen Christian School on Blain Street. Bring binoculars, hat, water & sunscreen. Contact Barb Gilfedder on 8955 5452.

10th March Wednesday, Alice Springs Field Naturalists monthly meeting with a guest speaker (to be confirmed). 7:30pm in the staffroom at OLSH College on Sadadeen Rd.

13th March, Saturday, Alice Springs Field Naturalists. Telegraph Station Walk. Meet 7:00am Gosse Street Playground. Bring binoculars, hat, water & sunscreen. Contact Rosalie Breen on 8952 3409.

20th March, Saturday, 9am to 12.30pm Native Plant Propagation Workshop Learn the secrets of propagating local native plant species at the Greening Australia Nursery. **GA** members free, non-members \$10, phone 8953 2882 to register.

7th April Wednesday, Australian Plants Society. Propagation by cuttings: demonstration/workshop. Meet 7:30pm in The Gazebo at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden.

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| This newsletter has been produced by <i>LfW</i> coordinators W.A. Low Ecological Services with the assistance of the Alice Springs Town Council and the Australian Commonwealth Government's Natural Heritage Trust. |
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