

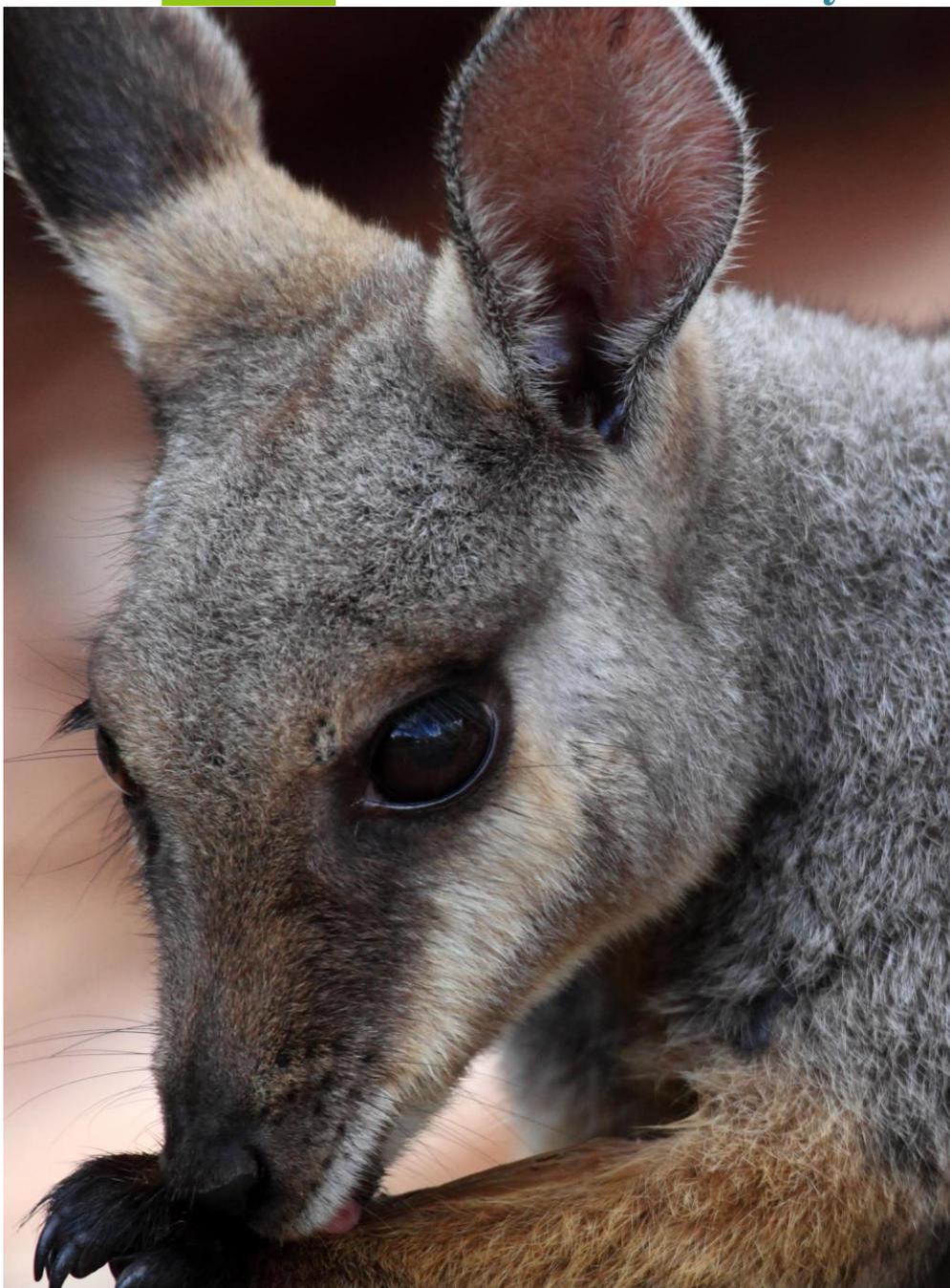


**NT
LANDCARE
AWARDS⁰⁹**
CATEGORY FINALIST

POWER AND WATER CORPORATION
**2010
Melaleuca
Awards
WINNER**

Land for Wildlife

Conservation is in your hands



NEWSLETTER



Alice Springs Municipality June 2011

Land for Wildlife Update

On our cover this month...

Black-footed Rock Wallaby, *Petrogale lateralis*, cooling off on a hot day by wetting down its forearms to better transfer heat from blood vessels close to the surface.

Information on the latest events and perhaps a word about the success and conduct of the dog trapping project?

Workshops

Articles

Land for Wildlife: A National Overview

The Land for Wildlife scheme celebrates 30 years of operation in Australia this year. The program began in Victoria back in 1981 and has since spread to Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia Tasmania, and, of course, the Northern Territory.

Nationally, there are roughly 11,530 properties registered with the scheme covering approximately 1.8 million hectares of privately owned land. Here in Alice Springs the program has been running since 2002 and we have about 300 members in the combined Land for Wildlife/Garden for Wildlife program which is a pretty healthy percentage of the national total when you consider our smaller population.

We've had a bumper season for new members here in Alice and the coordinators have been flat out keeping up with assessments for new registrations and the subsequent report writing. Both GfW and LfW have had several new properties registered in the first half of the year. We've even started to spread up the highway – we now include Tennant Creek Airport and Tennant Creek Pistol Club among our members. Closer to home we have registered Alice Springs Correctional Facility, Ross River Resort, and we are hoping to soon include the Yulara Resort, Glen Helen Resort, 16 Mile Outstation, and several interested pastoral properties.

So remember when you're travelling interstate to keep an eye out for the green diamond. You'll find like-minded land owners right across Australia who are similarly interested in the conservation of habitat and the protection of land for wildlife everywhere.

Conservation Covenants

This is an article which has been sent down to us from our colleagues at Land for Wildlife in the Top End. It appeared in their newsletter and we thought it might be worthwhile sending through to our members here in The Centre.



Each year, millions of hectares of land are irreversibly altered worldwide. Much of that land is privately-owned, which is why today, more than ever, we must take action as private landholders to protect Australia's unique natural areas.

Making sure that your land is formally protected can bring many benefits. You are helping conserve Australia's environment and heritage by placing a covenant over it and knowing that your efforts to protect and conserve your land cannot be undone in the future.

A covenant is legally defined as a binding promise written into a deed to land or real estate. All users of the land (including current and future owners) so covenanted are bound by its limitations, conditions or restrictions.

We all want to protect land for different reasons. Land may contain threatened plants or animals, or be one of the last remaining patches of intact bush in an area. As more and more people clear their bush blocks, we need properties that form part of an important wildlife corridor.

A conservation covenant is permanent and registered on the title to the land. It restricts or prohibits certain activities that could degrade the environmental value of the land.

Through Eco-Link conservation covenanting and land management support, the NT Government intends to work with private landowners to conserve valuable bushland. A conservation covenant needs to be approved in writing by, or is entered into under a program such as Eco-Link and approved in writing by, the Environment Minister.

The owner protects and, with help from the government, enhances the natural, cultural and/or scientific values of their land. The owner continues to own, use and live on the land while the natural values of the area are conserved.

Conservation covenants needn't be over the whole of the property area but any use of the land should be compatible with conserving its ecological values. A Conservation Management Plan will help identify and assess how to protect the area's conservation values and determine suitable management actions to protect these values. Any conservation agreement that includes such a Plan can then be formally recognised under Sections 74 and 74A of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, and registered as a covenant on your land under the NT *Land Titles Act*.

Under the *Land Titles Act* and the *Law of Property Act*, the intention of the original parties to the covenant should prevail. Changes to the terms of a conservation covenant will generally only be considered if they improve the land's conservation values or do not threaten these.

If your property is within the Territory Eco-link corridor you will gain partner status and the right to display the Territory Eco-link logo on your property.

Under Eco-Link terms, you would be partnering with the NT Government and may become entitled to services that help you develop and manage the covenant, including regular visits and management advice. Some management costs, such as fencing, may also be available.

By managing your land more sustainably under a conservation covenant and management plan, you may in fact increase land value. In all likelihood, there will be no economic effect since land use tends to stay the same. However, if estimated market value decreases by more than \$5,000 because of the covenant, you might be eligible for a tax deduction. To

take advantage of this you need a (paid) valuation from the Australian Valuation Office.

To find out if your land qualifies for Eco-Link partnering and what process you need to follow, contact the Director, Territory Eco-link. Ring 08 8951 8201 or e-mail territoryecolink.nretas@nt.gov.au

Diana Rickard

Information sourced from

- NT Eco-Link
<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks/ecolink/landowners.html>
- Environment Australia
<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/incentives/covenants-guidelines.html> and
- Australian Taxation Office
<http://www.ato.gov.au/content/downloads/AVO00253574taxtreatcc.pdf>

See also:

- EDO Tasmania's factsheet on Conservation Covenants
<http://www.edo.org.au/edotas/factsheets/biodiversity%20-%20conservation%20covenants.pdf>,
- EDO North Queensland Statutory Covenants factsheet <http://www.edo.org.au/edonq/>

Ferals and Vagrants; Feral Doves May Be the Least of Our Worries

Varied Lorikeets were seen in small numbers in late January in the lemon-scented gums around Brailling School on the northside of town. From a birdwatcher's point of view this was an exciting encounter.

The Varied Lorikeet is not an invasive species and is native to the northern half of the Northern Territory. Most likely this is a fleeting visit from a traditionally much more northern species – what birdwatchers call a *vagrant*. These little birds may have flown close to halfway across the continent. Considering the exceptional rain that we've had this last year it is perhaps not surprising that these birds have managed to spread a little bit further south following plentiful food and water. However, when finding a species this far from its traditional territory it is always wise to check for any local aviculturists who might be missing some birds.

While the birds could quite feasibly fly as far as Alice Springs, the aviary-escapee theory sometimes turns

out to be the answer in many cases. Long-billed Corellas have been seen around the Alice Springs Tip and the Sewage Treatment Ponds for many years and are known to have escaped from one aviary in town. Princess Parrots, the legendary rare nomadic birds from the western deserts are also one of the more commonly kept cage birds in Australia. Many birdwatchers around town have been excited over the years only to discover the rarity they've spotted has been lost from a pet collection.

The list goes on – a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo has been living among the Major Mitchell's Cockatoos around Honeymoon gap for several years. This bird is a considerable distance from its supposed distribution limits and is very likely another escapee. Not long ago I came across a small flock of Double-barred Finches in town which I had heard reported missing several months earlier.



This is all well and good for native species when they go wandering and provides a brief thrill for attentive birdwatchers, but not all aviary escapees are as welcome. Peach-faced

Lovebirds (*Agapornis roseicollis*) continue to be seen around town in small flocks and these are most certainly an exotic species lost from a local collection. When exotic species are released there is always the risk of these birds finding a suitable nesting site and reproducing. Rose-ringed Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) have been caught by PWSNT on at least one occasion in Alice Springs, and these are a real threat if they take hold.

Sitting at a street cafe in the Netherlands or in some parts of the United Kingdom it is quite common to see flocks of these birds flashing overhead. In Amsterdam alone the population is estimated at over 10,000 birds. Similarly, in Chicago and parts of Arizona in the United States, Peach-faced Lovebirds can be seen zipping around in sizeable flocks. These populations are all the result of aviary escapes of just a few birds here and there, congregating and founding viable wild populations. If this bird took hold in Alice it would do the same to our native parrot species as the feral Spotted Turtle-doves have done to our native doves. They outbreed and out-compete the locals for food and nesting space and slowly push them out of suburban areas.

Anyone who has visited suburban Melbourne lately, where feral bird control has been intermittent, will be aware of the prevalence of feral Indian Mynas. They are extremely aggressive feeders and are not fussy in their selection of nesting area. The list of avian pests in Melbourne and some of our other big cities is extensive. European Blackbirds, Tree Sparrows, House Sparrows, Greenfinches, Goldfinches, Starlings, Red-whiskered Bulbuls, etc, etc.



Just over the horizon in Tennant Creek there is a population of European House Sparrows just waiting for a chance to spread down into Alice Springs. Just over the border in South Australia there are feral Rock Doves, Barbary Doves and Common Starlings all ready to spread across a sodden desert at the first opportunity. In Alice Springs we have successfully eradicated the Barbary Dove. This and the Spotted Turtle-dove are the only avian pests which have thus far managed to become established here. This is a great achievement as the Barbary Dove is still feral in parts of Adelaide. There is no reason we can't have the same level of success and eradicate the Spotted Turtle-dove completely over the next few years – and once they're gone it is much easier to prevent further colonisations in the future.



This could be the position we find ourselves in now. If we can remove these flocks of Lovebirds from the wild before they establish themselves any further, then it is easier to remove aviary escapees as they occur. If the birds establish a wild breeding population then it is more difficult. The Peach-faced Lovebird is native to the arid south west of Africa around countries like Namibia. This region

has a similar climate to Alice Springs. We are fortunate with the Spotted Turtle-dove in that it is unlikely to spread beyond the outskirts of Alice Springs – it is not a natural desert dweller. The Lovebird however, might have no such difficulty. It is a very aggressive and territorial hollow-nesting species. It is not difficult to imagine the central ranges in their present lush condition becoming infested with these birds. Our hollow nesting parrots, cockatoos, night birds, and even some bat species may be bullied out of a home by this bird if a wild population were to establish itself here. Once they were established beyond the limits of Alice Springs they would be very difficult to eradicate.



If you see any introduced bird species around town or even further away from town, you can call the avian pest hotline on 1800 084 881.

You can also visit the website of Feral.org for more information on a variety of introduced species and the impact they have on our ecosystem.

Announcements

Perhaps something about an upcoming workshop or some events about town...

Websites Worth a Look

Recommended Books

Calendar of Events

All of July

- Anti Boredom Month (The Boring Institute)
- National Ice Cream Month (International Dairy Foods Association)

27/6/2011 – 3/7/2011

- NT Animal Awareness Week (NT Gov)

11/7/2011

- World Population Day (UN)

18/7/2011 – 24/7/2011

- Coral Reef Awareness Week

29/7/2011

- Schools Tree Day

31/7/2011

- National Tree Day



Take care,

Jesse, Chris & Bill
Land for Wildlife Coordinators

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