

ANPSA WILDLIFE & NATIVE PLANTS

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STUDY GROUP

Issue No. **65** WINTER - SPRING
2010

Dear Members,

The days and months are flying by so fast - moving through a range of seasons and seasonal changes.

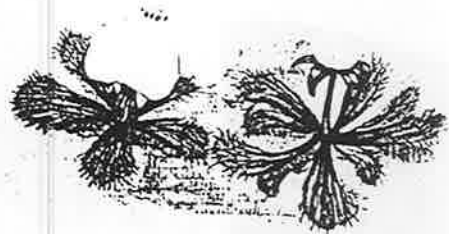
We've finally managed to get some rain down south, which has been welcomed by all, especially our very thirsty, drought suffering plants. With the break of Spring, and the extra rainfall it wasn't too long before the shrubs blossomed, and the birds returned for nesting, quickly transforming our bush and gardens into life. They are now filled with colour, fragrance, activity and song.

Of course, some of you would not be feeling the same, especially if you had to contend with flood, wind and storm damage. Home gardens really took a battering and many I fear will have to start their homes and gardens all over again. Many of our large Eucalypts suffering in the drought, finally succumbed in the wind and rain, causing much damage to adjacent buildings when they fell over.



A QUICK TOUR THROUGH SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S PASTORAL COUNTRY LANDSCAPE

Travelling some 150 kilometres NE of Adelaide we visit an area in the pastoral zone. It looks similar to our own mallee scrub and bush land, in the malleelands of SA. The land is gently undulating, with a dry bed watercourse transgressing the parched ground. Stepping out into the bushland we are soon breathing in that familiar smell of the natural bush, and what always amazes me is how peaceful and quiet it seems. It always offers a soothing atmosphere with the blending of the calls of the wild, birdsong and the rich wildlife of kangaroo and emus. The recent rains have transformed the ground in places, with a carpet of grasses and mosses and I note the familiar plants - *Eucalyptus oleosa* (Red mallee) and *Oleria pimeloides* (Showy Daisy).



SCENTED SUNDEW x 3/4

Leucosticta pumila (Scented Sundew)

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN PROPERTY OR GARDEN *from an original article by C. Jones, adapted by TFL, and appearing in ReLeaf, Spring 2010 No.116.*

Most people start with the best of intentions in establishing a garden or eco-friendly property. The enthusiasm for starting and establishing it all, can often cloud the judgement and have poor outcomes overall. So what approach should be taken?

Firstly, 'it is important to set goals and have a clear idea about your goals, what are the most important issues to deal with and how you can save time, labour and money while also achieving the best result for both your own property and local ecosystems.'

This means that you need to know the specific conditions of your land- 'understanding soils, climatic conditions and changes through the seasons, and the existing vegetation such as remnant natives, past plantings and weeds.'

A number of techniques can be used for re-establishing local species on your land or plot, 'including direct seeding, tubestock planting and methods to facilitate natural regeneration. The method you select needs to take into account the site conditions, the presence of existing remnant vegetation and the level of effort available. Sometimes working from older revegetation we need to consider some of the things you can do to improve its habitat value, increase the species diversity, and manage weeds.'



WATTLE DAY CENTENARY

1910 - 2010

The first national 'Wattle Day' was celebrated in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide on the 1st September 1910. Wattle was officially introduced to representations of the Commonwealth coat of arms in 1913. In 1992 the nationally agreed date of September 1st for Wattle Day was set.

The day was originally conceived as a day to demonstrate patriotism by wearing a sprig of wattle. It now has a wider significance as a day to celebrate our national environment, our flora, our rainforests and bushland, our coastal heathlands and desert dunes. The sprig of wattle should encourage us to preserve our fragile environment, so that future generations will experience the joy of seeing our bushland lift up each spring with golden bloom.

For more information on Wattle Day visit the Wattle day website <http://www.wattleday.asn.au/>

Text taken from <http://wattleday.com/>

AUSTRALIA POST WILDLIFE CARING RESCUE TO RELEASE STAMP RELEASE

From Stamp Bulletin Australia

No.306 Sept-Oct 2010

Australia Post is to be commended for focusing on our native wildlife and the important work that wildlife carers provide in rescue and rehabilitation of injured fauna. Australia Post is releasing a series of six stamps featuring the common wombat, Eastern grey kangaroo, koala, grey-headed flying fox, Southern boobook owl and a Ringtail

possum. As a former wildlife rescuer and sanctuary owner the care of injured and sick fauna- birds, mammals and reptiles- is not taken onboard lightly. It takes a lot of dedication and expense in their care, cleaning and feeding to a point of rehabilitation and eventual release back to the wild, preferably in the same area from which they were rescued. There is little recognition of such volunteers by government agencies. Wildlife rescuers and carers receive no financial assistance, and generally meet the costs of vet bills and special feeds and first aid supplies. So thankyou Australia Post for bringing this valuable role to the community's attention.

'Native animals and birds are injured and orphaned in great numbers by both natural and human-induced trauma, such as sickness, bushfires, oil spills, floods and road accidents. The principles and practice of wildlife caring revolves around the 3 R's'- rescue, rehabilitation and release'.



AUSTRALIAN KINGFISHERS

Following the success in 2009 of the Australian Songbirds stamps, a new thematic range of stamps will be released shortly featuring Australian Kingfishers. The stamps will feature the red-backed Kingfisher, the Sacred Kingfisher, the Blue winged Kookaburra and the Yellow-billed Kingfisher. Kingfishers comprise 95 species worldwide, with 10 occurring in Australia. Of these the Red-backed kingfisher and the Laughing Kookaburra

are endemic only to Australia. Kingfishers belong to the bird order Coraciiformes, taxonomically divided into three families- Alcedinidae (river kingfishers), Halcyonidae (tree Kingfishers) and Cerylidae (water kingfishers), the latter of which do not occur in Australia.'



CONSERVATION IN THE SOUTHERN FLINDERS RANGES

From 'The Green Australian'. Spring 2010

"The Southern Flinders Ranges in South Australia covers over one million hectares and stretches 200 kilometres from Port Pirie in the south to the edge of the majestic Wilpena Pound and Flinders Ranges National Park in the north. The wide diversity of habitat includes the marine waters and mangroves of the Upper Spencer Gulf, ephemeral creek systems, permanent waterholes, mallee communities, temperate woodlands, higher altitude forests, grasslands and arid ecosystems. These areas are critical to the protection of many nationally threatened plant and animal species including the endangered Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby.'

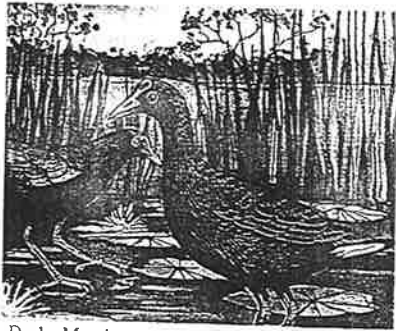
TIGER SNAKES

Tiger snakes belong to the family of Elapidae (front-fanged snakes) which are found only in Australia. These are generally categorised as the mainland or eastern tiger snake (*Notechis scutatus*) and the black tiger snake (*Notechis ater*). Most tiger snakes grow to a maximum 1.5m. Their dark cross-banded skins identify them as tiger-snakes. They are extremely venomous, and like most snakes their venom is highly neurotoxin.





Tiger snakes can be quite aggressive. They feed mainly on small rodents, frogs and birds. They often inhabit areas where Lignum bushes are present, particularly around lake and wetland edge areas. It is here they seek out the waterbird migratory species and their chicks, such as Shearwaters and mutton birds. These provide the snakes with the opportunity to build up their fat reserves for the rest of the year. The juvenile snakes are also known to eat each other in leaner times but this does not occur in the adult snakes. This practice highlights the supply and demand of natural selection - with a higher number of snakes born each year in comparison of other smaller reptiles such as skinks and lizards.



Dusky Moorhen

My Wife, the Gardener (anon.)

She dug the plot on Monday
The soil was rich and fine
She forgot to thaw out dinner...
So out we went to dine.
She planted roses Tuesday
(She says they are a must)
But then she forgot to dust...
On Wednesday it was daisies
They opened with the sun
All whites and pinks and yellows
(But the laundry wasn't done!)
The poppies came on Thursday
A bright and cheery red
I guess she really was engrossed...
She never made the bed!
It was dahlias on Friday
In colours she adores
It never bothered her at all
The crumbs upon the floors.
I hired a maid on Saturday
My week is now complete
My wife can garden all she wants
The house will still be neat!
It's nearly lunchtime Sunday
And I can't find the maid
Oh no! I can't believe it
She's out there with a spade!

BOOK REVIEWS

Field Guide to Australian Wildflowers by Denise Greig

From tiny annuals and terrestrial orchids to large perennials, shrubs and trees, Australian plants and their beautiful flowers come in a wide array of shapes and colours. This informative field guide describes more than 1000 of the most common species, each listed alphabetically within their family group. Details provided to aid plant identification include: height, leaves, flowers, fruits, habitat, distribution and flowering season. The comprehensive introduction contains information on how to identify wildflowers in the field; classification and terminology; and vegetation zones. Many botanical line drawings and colour photographs, all in softcover field guide format.

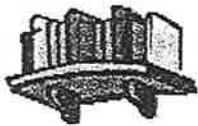
Densey Clyne's *Wildlife of Australia*
"Everyone who's travelled along country and



outback roads, even busy coastal highways, can recall with delight some brief encounter with wildlife. Camping holidays bring the exquisite pleasures of unfamiliar morning birdsong, evening encounters with waking nocturnal animals, and time to look more deeply into things. And for me there's as much pleasure - if not more - in following the seasonal activities of the wildlife in my suburban garden..

I hope this collection of essays about creatures large and small and mostly familiar will both inform and entertain you...the stories are not really mine; I have merely translated into words the plots and characters provided by nature." - Densey Clyne.

The book has excellent colour photographs and easy reading.



Reading the Rocks : Animals and Plants of Prehistoric Australia and New Zealand by Mary E. White, available at all good book stores or a public library near you.

This book talks about ancient natural environments of both Australia and New Zealand, from the first green cells that created an oxygenated atmosphere four billion years ago, to today, tracing the evolution of living things. Mary White discusses everything from continental drift to fossil Trilobites. There are excellent colour photographs, and the book is large format. Well worth an investigation if you are interested in evolution history.

Birdwatching in Australia and New Zealand by Ken Simpson and Zoe Wilson.

Written in simple, non-technical language this hand book is perfect for the beginner birdwatcher. It explains bird behaviour, how to look for birds, the best times for birdwatching,



how to make the best use of a field guide, tricks for quick identification and how to keep useful records. An excellent book with colour photographs, in a softcover edition ideal for taking on field trips.

Botanica's two volume set : Trees & Shrubs and Annuals & Perennials is

recommended as a small format softcover set for any library, each containing over a 1000 pages of information.

Comprehensive coverage of over 2000 plants plus information on soils, pruning and choosing a site can be found in *Trees & Shrubs*. Its companion volume *Annuals & Perennials* is the authoritative gardening guide providing a wealth of information on over 2000 plants for landscaping with flowers. This includes both Australian natives and introduced exotics.



BIRD ID FOR BEGINNERS

Little Red Birds

This issue we look at four little red fellows. I say "fellows" advisedly, as all four species have much duller females, but if you can see the male, they are fairly distinctive.

Scarlet Robin

The bright red bird you are most likely to see (unless you live in the Mallee, where it is replaced by the Red-Capped Robin). This is a conspicuous bird in open habitats and some suburban areas. It has a bright red breast, black back with white in the wings and tail, and a white patch on the forehead, which differentiates it from the Red-Capped Robin. The female is much duller. It has similar markings but is dull brown instead of the black bits, and has a pinkish wash on the chest instead of bright red.



Red-Capped Robin

The smallest and most brightly coloured of the red-breast robins. Also the most widespread, to be found in the drier areas of the state, especially the mulga and the mallee. It looks similar to the Scarlet Robin, but has a bright red cap instead of the smaller white forehead spot. The female is very dull, just a small brown bird with white in the wing, and a faint pink flush on the forehead in place of the right red cap. This bird tends to perch in the open and let you get a good look at, unlike many a bird I try to identify.



Three other coloured robins can occur in South Australia, the Pink Robin, the Rose Robin and the Flame Robin, but they are quite rare and rarely seen.

Mistletoe Bird

This bird has a bright scarlet patch from chin to mid-chest, and also scarlet under tail. Its head and back are a glossy blue-black with an iridescent sheen. A distinctive black streak down the chest distinguishes it from the other birds shown here. The female is (you guessed it) quite dull, greyish-brown on top, white underneath with a pinkish patch under the tail. Quite a small bird, usually seen alone or in pairs in the foliage or feeding on mistletoe berries.



Crimson Chat

This bird has a startlingly bright red chest and underparts, except for white under tail, a red head, and a distinctive white throat. Wings are a dullish brown. Female is more brownish looking with red mottling on the chest. Could be confused with the Red-capped Robin, but has a slimmer silhouette, & a much more extensive red cap. When there are good rains inland, there can be an irruption in the numbers of these birds, and they can appear further south where they have not been seen for years.



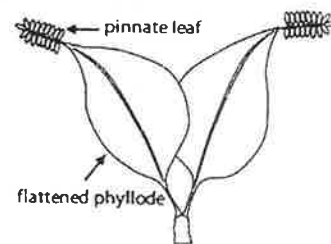
Images from *Field guide to birds of Australia*, by Michael Morcombe, published by Steve Parish, 2000, ISBN 1 876282 10 X, an excellent field guide.

WEED OF THE MONTH

Acacia saligna (Golden wreath wattle)

Although they are native to Australia, some acacias can become weeds when out of their own environment. These include Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*) and Silver Wattle (*A. dealbata*), from the eastern states, SA's Flinders Ranges Wattle (*A. iteaphylla*), and the Golden Wreath Wattle (*A. saligna*) from WA. These plants escape from gardens and misguided direct seeding projects and are dispersed by ants and birds.

As seedlings, acacia species have pinnate leaves (see diagram). But most SA acacias lose these pinnate leaves as they mature. Instead, they have leaf stalks, known as phyllodes, which are flattened and function as leaves.



Cootamundra Wattle and Silver Wattle retain their pinnate leaves into adulthood. Flinders Range Wattle and Golden Wreath Wattle (*A. saligna*) do not.

A. saligna is very difficult to distinguish from the local, and widespread, *A. pycnantha* (Golden Wattle), especially as a seedling or a juvenile. As both have broad, flattened phyllodes, the feature most useful to differentiate them in the field is the position of the glands, or secreting structures, located on their phyllodes.

On *A. pycnantha*, the gland is located further from the axil (that is, where the phyllode joins the stem) than on *A. saligna* (see pictures). Sometimes, *A. pycnantha* has a second gland above the midpoint on the upper margin of the phyllode.

How to deal with it

Remember the most important rule of weeding: - don't remove anything unless you're sure it's a weed.

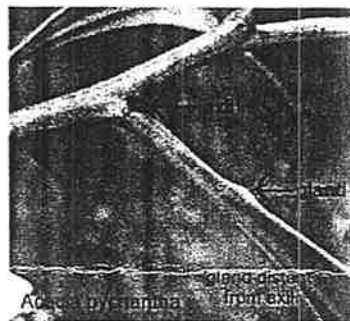
The best way to deal with *A. saligna* is by the drill and fill method. Drill the trunk (acacias do not have lignotubers) working close to the ground, below any branching. Direct a herbicide stream into each drill hole from the applicator bottle, rather than inserting the tube of the bottle into each hole. This ensures that the holes are filled with herbicide and not foam.

Do not cut and swab, as the cut stumps can re-sprout vigorously. Small plants can be hand pulled when the soil is moist. Place a foot either side close to the stem to keep the soil in place. Keep your head up, and pull by straightening your legs, not your back, in order to eliminate the risk of back injury.

Based on an article by Maurice Roche, Bush for Life Field Officer, from *The Bushcarer*, No. 1, Spring 2008.



Acacia saligna – gland close to axil



Acacia pycnantha – gland distant from axil