Dear Members,

It seems ages since I last wrote to you all, so it must be time for a newsletter! Thank you to all members who renewed their memberships by payment of their subs, and for all the lovely letters. Welcome back to all members, and to the following new members: Violet & Michael Dight (SA), Sue Bendel, and Anthony & Rosta Buc (Vic.), D.Wright and Sammy Ringer (Qld.). I hope you gain some insights into our unique and wonderful Australian flora and fauna.

FROM YOUR LETTERS:
Neil Palframan (NSW) writes 'Thanks for the newsletter. I find the reprinted articles very informative. From a recent issue I was comparing the 'huge new Murray Forest of 1600 ha' to the '17,000 ha of redgums' at Yonga. It seems Yonga is massive, as the proposed forest needs an upgrade.'

Rosemary Blemings (ACT) 'Thanks for another absorbing newsletter! In another letter Rosemary writes: 'In the crammed June-August newsletter you had a small article on Boolcoolmatta in SA. In the latest Bush Heritage News, Winter 2006 there's wonderful coverage of the reserve & an initial account of what's there. The purchase of Boolcoolmatta has been financed by the Nature Foundation of SA and the Australian Government through the National Reserve System. Bush Heritage will own and manage the property for the long term. Isn't it great to hear of such an acquisition & protection for the 63,000ha. reserve's incredible survivors against the predators and devastation you mentioned? I hope most of our study group's members know of Bush Heritage as I enjoy being a very small part of protecting the types of properties ordinary people and ordinary bank balances can't own. One query I'd love to have an answer to is how much Australian habitat/land/property is actually in "safe hands" ie. owned & managed by those who appreciate what they protect? This would obviously include purchases by Bush Heritage & kindred organisations, private landholders with wildlife covenants & the like, farmers who preserve portions of their properties etc. But this is all from times when I feel optimistic rather than times when I read of new clearing, exploitation, woodchipping & see materialism all around me...! Cheers & thanks for another great networked-read!'

MORE LETTERS NEXT PAGE

IN THIS EDITION

• Spiny Cheeked Honeyeater by Wayne Long
• A Miner concern by Sarah Lloyd (from Land for Wildlife Tasmania Vol.11, March 2006 pp.4-5)
• Woodlands and Birds from Birds Australia State of Australia's Birds 2005
• Sayings by Leigh Murray
• Media articles
• Book review and more

Best wishes to you and yours for Christmas and the New Year.
YOUR LETTERS CONTINUED....

Wayne Long (VIC.) writes: 'Dear Chris, Thanks again for the continued, informative newsletter. Enjoy them immensely! Compilation of the many letters and articles is in itself quite a task, let alone the many things that you, yourself write about. Well done!'

Maree McCarthy advised that David Litchfield's wildlife garden was accepted for the Australian Open Garden Scheme. David's garden is on a large block in the Newcastle (Belmont) area with a 2m wide easy access boardwalk that goes around the property and over the rainforest and ponds. It is home to many animals including nesting birds, Land Mullets, Bandicoots etc.

Leigh Murray (NSW) writes: 'The last issue of the newsletter was especially good. I loved the reprinted article by Tim Low on nectar. It was very good indeed, and I'm so pleased you included it so we could all enjoy it. And I was delighted to see contributions by other study group members. And of course, your excellent continuation of the possums article. Terrific stuff.'

Brenda Moore (APS Maroondah, secretary) advises that she has found many interesting articles in our newsletters, which she would like to reprint for their members. She concludes her letter by saying 'Thank you for a most interesting and informative newsletter. I look forward to the next issue!'

Jean Taylor & John Hamilton (TAS.) writes 'Thanks so much for the newsletter. We read it from front to back and often refer to the articles. ..we hope you may be interested in the Land for Wildlife News (enclosed) article 'A Miner concern.'

SPINY CHEEKED HONEYEATER
by Wayne Long

The northern parts of the Bellarine Peninsula (south of Melbourne) has again come alive this year with the wondrous chorus of this large and elegant honeyeater. The peninsula is perhaps considered one of the outermost reaches of this bird’s range, and up until a couple of years ago it was possibly only considered as an infrequent visitor. Well not now! The spiny-cheeked are flourishing and have made areas around Portarlington, Indented Head and St. Leonards home—hopefully for good. The bird is as much a fruit as a nectar eater. Insects are devoured quickly, either gleaned from foliage or plucked, acrobatically in flight. My neighbour’s fig tree and a mistletoe on the nature strip are also frequented with delight. It is thought that the spiny cheeked are now locally common because of the very constant food source. The Bellarine peninsula has not suffered from dry conditions, as is prevalent elsewhere and nourishment is bountiful and an increasing number of bird species are present.

The Red Wattlebirds and Spiny Cheeked Honeyeaters may be deemed ‘enemies’ where their territories overlap. However locally, I have rarely seen them batter an eyelid towards each other - there is plenty of food and ideal habitat to go around and they reside quite congruously.

With the middle of winter these birds are at their most active - the onset of the breeding season. Their spectacularly melodious song fills the air day long with both the male and female often in duets. A very distinctive, but hard to describe call is very protracted. Many books describe this call, as bubbled trills, gurgles, whines, wid-it, pee-peers, etc. etc. I think it is all of this and more. However a short sharp tok is heard when the bird is alarmed. However or whatever, again I'll say, a song quite spectacular. For if it was not for this voice the spiny cheeked honeyeater may not be noticed, for it is most secretive, staying under cover when foraging for food amongst trees, working quickly to the outside of foliage from within. Flying from tree to tree is done quickly in an undulating motion.

Birds are 25cm. or so in length. They are brownish in colour and streaked with grey and white markings. The underparts are paler. The upper breast and chin is a pinkish apricot colour. Bill is pink with a black tip. Tail is a dusky grey and brown, with white tip. A broad swathe of white spiny feathers across the cheeks gives the bird its common name. Many local birds seem to have an olive-coloured tinge about the mid-breast region. They are generally regarded as a dweller of woodlands and scrubby dune deserts in arid Australia, however here on the Bellarine Peninsula they are literally everywhere.
A miner concern - Birdwatching on the East Coast

Sarah Lloyd

Following my offer to lead bird walks at Land for Wildlife properties, I was delighted to receive an invitation to visit "Windsong", Tom and Jane Tenniswood's property at Little Swanport. While on the east coast I also surveyed the birds at two other Land for Wildlife properties nearby.

The Tenniswood's property has a mix of cleared sheep grazing country and dry eucalypt forest. The forest has a covenant through the Private Forest Reserve scheme to protect the rare Chaostola skipper Antipoda chaostola, a butterfly whose occurrence in Tasmania reflects the restricted distribution of its larval food plant, the swordsedge Gahnia radula.

On Saturday morning we walked across the open paddocks to the large area of protected forest. Noisy Miners dominated the farmland, but we also watched several of the state's summer migrants including Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, Dusky Woodswallows, Richard's Pipit and one Striated Pardalote calling from an isolated paddock eucalypt.

The forest has a variety of eucalypts including white and blue gums and black and white peppermints and, growing in the nutrient-poor, sandy soils characteristic of coastal regions throughout much of Tasmania, a wonderful diversity of ground cover and understorey plants. During our late spring visit, the subtle beauty of the Tasmanian bush was evident in the colourful display of pimeleas, peas and several orchids including leopard orchids (Diuurs pardina), potato orchids (Gastrodia sp.) and sun orchids (Thelymitra spp.).

Apart from the mid-layer understorey that is still virtually absent, most of the vegetation is regenerating well after the cessation of grazing and firewood collection that had been the main land use in the area until being fenced ten years ago. But there was an unusual stillness as we entered the reserve and I was concerned to see that, as well as being widespread throughout the open farmland, Noisy Miners were also well established in the bush. This provoked much discussion: was it the prolonged drought that was causing the deteriorating health of many of the eucalypts, especially the white gums, or was it the absence of insectivorous birds?

For me, being greeted by the incessant calling of Noisy Miners doesn't bode well for a good weekend of birdwatching. Quite the contrary; Noisy Miners are indicative of the ecological imbalance brought about by farming practices largely unsuited to this country and where a limited and predictable array of bird species will be present.

Noisy Miners Manorina melanopechla (not to be confused with the introduced Common or Indian Myna Acridotheres tristis that is now well established on the mainland) are native honeyeaters that live colonially in family groups. They prefer open country with scattered eucalypts or areas of bush with little or no understorey and have been favoured by management regimes that involve the clearing and fragmentation of the bush and/or the burning and grazing that eliminates the understorey. They constantly bicker amongst themselves and will aggressively exclude (and sometimes even kill) smaller birds such as pardalotes and honeyeaters from their territory. The birds they either tolerate or that can withstand their pugnacious nature include larger species such as Grey Butcherbirds, Laughing Kookaburras, Australian Magpies, Forest Ravens and Eastern Rosellas. Striated Pardalotes occasionally survive in miner-infested areas, probably because they are a cavity nesting species that are able to retreat to their nesting hollow to avoid the miners' onslaughts.

Noisy Miners are unlike most other bush birds in that they are generalist rather than specialist feeders. They forage on the ground, trunks and branches and in the shrub layer or canopy. By contrast, the birds they exclude are the smaller species; insect eaters with very specific feeding niches that consume numerous leaf eating invertebrates that, left unchecked, can sometimes defoliate the trees. Not only do Miners colonise degraded farmland, but they cause further deterioration in the health of trees by excluding these insectivorous birds.

As we continued our walk through the bush we encountered more understorey shrubs and a dramatic change in the bird fauna. Instead of the Miners' persistent calls I began to hear some of the birds I'd been expecting including Grey Fantails, Brown Thornbills, Eastern Spinebills, Black-headed Honeyeaters and Shining Bronze-cuckoos. Whether because of the different aspect, microclimate, or because it was too steep for grazing or firewood collection, this area had had a different management regime and the dense shrubby understorey layer was still intact. The corresponding increase in bird species was a stark reminder of the value and importance of structurally diverse vegetation in maintaining healthy bird populations. Structurally diverse vegetation gives a variety of bird species more opportunities for foraging and it also provides them with safe sheltering, roosting and nesting sites. Noisy Miners keep well clear of areas that, as well as being widespread throughout the open farmland, Noisy Miners were also well established in the bush. This provoked much discussion: was it the prolonged drought that was causing the deteriorating health of many of the eucalypts, especially the white gums, or was it the absence of insectivorous birds?

It is now well documented that in eastern Australia Noisy Miners are associated with areas where eucalypts are showing signs of dieback and where there is an absence of other insectivorous birds. It is likely that in the absence of these birds, there is an increase in the abundance of insects that leads to the declining health of trees. Mainland studies have also shown that when Noisy Miners are removed from remnant woodland patches other honeyeaters quickly colonise the sites, small insectivorous species return within weeks and the health of the eucalypts eventually improves.

The large bush block at Little Swanport has had various management regimes that over the years have had an adverse impact on the bird fauna. Given the chance to regenerate naturally, it is likely that the structural diversity of the area will improve, Noisy Miners will no longer be favoured and small insectivorous birds will get a chance to re-establish - only time will tell.

References:
A: seed eaters e.g. Beautiful Firetail, Black Currawong
B: nectar feeders e.g. Eastern Spinebill, Crescent Honeyeater
C: hawks e.g. Dusky Woodswallow, Welcome Swallow
D: small foliage gleaners e.g. pardalotes, Black-headed Honeyeater
E: large foliage gleaners e.g. Golden Whistler, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
F: gleaners of prey from trunks and branches e.g. Grey Shrike-thrush, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Strong-billed Honeyeater
G: flitter e.g. Superb Fairy-wren, Grey Fantail
H: pouncer e.g. Flame, Dusky, Scarlet and Pink Robins
I: Bird of prey e.g. Brown Falcon, Brown Goshawk
J: ground forager e.g. Bassian Thrush, Tasmanian Scrubwren

Different species of birds forage at different levels. To maintain healthy bird populations both in the home garden and the bush it is important to have structurally diverse vegetation with tall trees, smaller trees, understory shrubs and grasses, herbs and litter. These provide a variety of birds with foraging opportunities and places to rest, shelter and roost.

'13% of species of Woodland birds are decreasing. However separation into feeding guilds gives a very different picture. Woodland birds that feed on the ground are markedly less secure with 24% of species declining. Several regional studies have also identified this group as declining from loss of understorey and general habitat complexity, due to overgrazing, inappropriate fire regimes, weed invasion, clearing and firewood removal. Because woodland grades into grassland, and many bird species use both habitats, grassland species had also declined significantly (estimated to be about one-third) had declined significantly.

'The decreasing woodland ground feeders occur mainly in the agricultural areas of the south-west and south-east, and in pastoral country of Cape York and the Top End, but particularly in the far Top End and south-west wheatbelt.'

'Trends in the last eight years suggest that at least some woodland species are continuing to decline, eg. Zebra Finch, Jacky Winter and Dusky Woodswallow. The worst affected areas also tend to be those where the greatest amount native vegetation has been cleared. The northern savannas have not been cleared but grazing, fire and weeds have degraded large areas. These areas of greatest decrease in bird populations are also echoed in the distribution of threatened species.'

'When Atlas results and threatened species lists are combined it is evident that at least one in five woodland bird species is threatened or declining.'

### Woodland Bird taxa (species or subspecies) listed as threatened under the EPBC Act and according to the Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000 (Garnett & Crowley 2000)

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<td>Malleeowl</td>
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<td>Red Goshawk</td>
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<td>Forty Spotted Pardalote</td>
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<td>Yellow Wattlebird (King Is. subspecies)</td>
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<td>Helmeted Honeyeater</td>
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<td>Hooded Robin (Tiwi Is. s/s)</td>
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WOODLANDS AND BIRDS
from BIRDS AUSTRALIA State of Australia's Birds 2005

Threat Categories are:
Ex = Extinct; CR = Critically Endangered; E = Endangered; V = Vulnerable. The Action Plan also has an additional category Near Threatened (NT) which is included only for species listed as threatened federally but considered NT in Action Plan.

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<td>Pied Currawong (Western Victoria sub-species)</td>
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<td>Star Finch (Cape York Peninsula sub-species)</td>
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<td>Star Finch (Southern sub-species)</td>
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<td>Gouldian Finch</td>
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Horticulture throughout the centuries has played a very important role in salvaging for posterity certain species of plants that may have become extinct. Moreover, the successful garden culture of a rarity tends to eliminate the incentive for continued raids on its native haunts by unscrupulous collectors. Perhaps the classical example is Maidenhair Tree (Ginkgo biloba) which has very aptly been called a “living fossil”. This archaic, distant relative of the pines once flourished over much of Europe, Asia and even America, but was wiped out during the recent Ice Age. It managed to survive only in parts of China, dwindling further during the few millennia of civilised man. The last vestige was brought into cultivation only just in time and Ginkgo owes its preservation to Chinese temple gardens where it was eventually found growing by European voyagers - after all naturally occurring trees had vanished.

Coming nearer home, Professor W.R.B. Oliver wrote of the New Zealand Glory-pea (Clianthus puniceus) in 1925: “Exceedingly rare and local in the wild state and fast becoming extinct.” One wonders whether the past 35 years have seen the final demise of Clianthus in its Bay-of-Islands home; but, thanks to timely cultivation, this fine plant is now almost a commonplace garden flower in many countries.

Cootamundra Wattle (Acacia baileyana) was actually growing in gardens before the very restricted extent of its natural habitat became known, a few scattered patches within 16 miles of Cootamundra and within 14 miles of Temora in New South Wales. It could easily have been cleared out of existence, but for the poor, stony, terrain occupied by existing stands. Such cases could be multiplied, and it is here that the Society for Growing Australian Plants can help to serve the cause of science: by introducing into our garden borders such wildflowers as are either becoming scarce or are so localised that few people ever have any hope of enjoying them. There are not many who would disapprove this objective, and members of the Society can surely be relied upon to use discretion in dealing with very rare plants, i.e. to propagate them from seed and cuttings - NOT by digging up young plants or bulbs in the bush.

On an island in Oslo Fjord (Norway) there formerly grew a unique, wholly green-flowered variety of the rare Slipper Orchid (Cypripedium calceolus). In quite...
recent years pillagers (there is no better name for them) dug up every plant that could be found, and now this attractive island endemic is presumed extinct. The peculiar rock-ledge flora of Ben Lawers in Scotland has been imperilled more by botanical collectors, who must have its rarer trophies for their herbaria, than by all other agencies.

A sad story is that of the peerless White Diuris Orchid (erroneously called "D. alba"). Once it grew in sheets over basalt grassland immediately north-west of Melbourne, and even 30 years ago there were still a few large patches to be seen at Tottemham, St. Albans and Sydenham. At least one vandal had a mania for digging up tubers, every flowering season, and transferring them to his Foottscray garden.

A well known orchidologist, keen to protect these vanishing gems from further molestation, used to visit St. Albans before the flowering time and carefully nip out each young inflorescence; by this noble form of land utilisation. There are cases when anyone is justified in removing whole plants that are threatened by plough or "bull-dozer". It is painful to contemplate what wonderful things have been pushed out of existence on the sand-plains of Western Australia, when these are turned over to wheat or sheep, and the destruction there still goes on apace.

What, for instance, will be the future of the glorious, rosy-flowered Rainbow Plant (Byblos gigantea) – once common near Perth – when its few habitats are cleared and drained?

By all means, let us get some of these treasures acclimatised to garden culture before it is too late.

The Australian Cornflower (Centaurea australis), now scarce in New South Wales, has not been seen in Victoria for a century and is regarded as extinct in that state. Austral Anchor-plant (Discaria pubescens) is presumed to have disappeared in Tasmania and is now a rarity in Victoria. Both species had the misfortune to inhabit good pastoral land, but they do not seem to have been tried out in gardens. The rock-loving Velvet Daisy-bush (Olearia pannosa) has larger flower heads than any other of its large genus in Victoria, and is a handsome shrub; but occurrences are now reduced to vanishing point, through the depredations of rabbits and other animals. Happily, it strikes well from cuttings and is not unknown in garden collections.

Attempts should be made to propagate all decorative plants of very localised occurrence, in case their natural habitats are destroyed e.g. the endemic Victorian Pulitena subalpina (rosy-purple) and P. patellifolia from parts of the Grampians, Acacia dallasiana and A. philephylla from Mount Buffalo, and the astonishing Acacia enterocarpa (Jumping-Jack Wattle) from between Nhill and Serviceton. Three other very restricted Victorian endemics are already in cultivation, but deserve much wider recognition, viz. pendulous Acacia howittii, golden Grevillea chrysophylla and the delightful silver Eucalyptus crensula which is known from only two little patches of a few acres – both on privately owned land, liable to be cleared. Before leaving the subject of extremely localised plants in Victoria, one could make out an imposing list of species which range through one or more States, yet have only a "pin-point" occurrence here. No effort should be spared to safeguard all these in their natural environment; here are some of the more spectacular, alphabetically arranged:-


The endemic species of Mount Kosciusko, Blue Mountains and Rydstone region of New South Wales; Tasmanian peaks; Flinders Range (S.A.); Stirling Range, Mount Barron and Mount Lesuere (W.A.); Bellenden-Ker Range in North Queensland and other mountain fastnesses, cry out for protection from fire, grazing and other disturbances of human origin.

Some are already reasonably safe by their very isolation (but for how long?) a few have been cultivated, but most need the opportunity to flourish and seed just where they are. In the average garden it is difficult and sometimes quite impossible to rear plants from highly specialised environments – for example alpine moss beds, desert clay-pans, "crab-hole" country, mangrove swamp and salt marsh, sea cliffs, humid jungle, shaded mountain gorges; but there is no greater thrill than to achieve success with some unlikely subject.

Many a flower-lover would be elated to see the cream and honey-scented wedding-bush (Ricinocarpos pinifolius) burgeoning lustily in his own garden plot, but the glorious display of its native coastal heathland has yet to be repeated on some distant, alien ground. Perhaps the cause of frequent failure is related to a delicate symbiosis with fungi peculiar to heathland soils. Who will be first to tame the enthralling flannel-flower of Central Australia (Actinotus schwizii)? Silken heads of this magnificent three-foot shrub are up to four inches wide, but its abode consists of several almost inaccessible rock-walls in the heart of the MacDonnell Ranges. On the other hand, a very widespread common herb-like Blue Pincushion (Brunonia australis) has defied most gardeners' efforts to bend its ways. In the bush, it spreads wantonly for many square yards and makes an impressive splash of colour about Christmas-time; why can't we grow it as a herbaceous border-plant like thrift or primroses or glorified cultivars of the common field daisy – why indeed?
SOUTH AUSTRALIA
A number of vegetation and bird recovery projects are currently underway in South Australia. Readers may like to let us know what is happening interstate or in their area for inclusion in later editions.

Recovering threatened flora on Yorke Peninsula
The nine species in this project are:
Jumping jack wattle (Endangered)
Neat wattle (Vulnerable)
Winter spider orchid (Vulnerable)
Ghost spider orchid (Critically endangered)
Large club spider Orchid (Endangered)
Hop bush (Endangered)
Osborn's eyebright (Endangered)
Silver leaved daisy bush (Vulnerable)
Limestone phebalium (State conservation status endangered)

Native vegetation habitats have been decimated on Yorke Peninsula, with an estimated 94% of vegetation cleared.

Recovery of twelve nationally threatened orchids in the Lofty Block region of SA
The project is currently managing the recovery of 12 nationally threatened orchid species, namely:
Caladenia argocalla (White Beauty Spider orchid)
C. behrii (Pink lipped Spider orchid)
C. gladiolata (Bayonet Spider orchid)
C. sp. 'Brentwood' (Ghost Spider orchid)
C. macroclavia (Large club Spider orchid)
C. rigida (White Spider orchid)
C. wooleckiourum (Woolcock's Spider orchid)
C. xantholeuca (Flinders Rangers Spider orchid)
Pterostylis bryophila (Hindmarsh Valley Greenhood)
P. cucullata (Leafy Greenhood)
P. despectans (Lowly Greenhood)
P. sp. 'Halbury' (Halbury Greenhood)

DANGER LIST
• Since European settlement in South Australia 28 mammals, 25 plants, 7 birds and 2 freshwater fish have become extinct.
• 1179 + species are currently considered threatened
• Species now under greater threat include the common brushtail possum, white-bellied sea eagle, osprey, Cunningham's skink and the limestone spider orchid.
• Species that have improved their threatened status include the sandhill dunnart, bilby, fawn hopping-mouse, freckled duck, southern marsupial mole, and the Nullarbor bearded dragon.

Some news on Avian Recovery in SA
• There has been translocation of colonies of Black-eared Miners from Gluepot, SA to Scotia Sanctuary in far south-west NSW, adjacent to the border.
• Night time surveys using call-playback techniques will determine the Bush Stone-Curlew's extent of occurrence and numbers in the Ramsar listed floodplain of the Chowilla and Ral Ral anabranches, upstream of Renmark.
• The SA subspecies of the Glossy Black Cockatoo was limited to fewer than 200 birds on Kangaroo Island in the 1980s with problems of poor nesting success, predation and a shortage of large old eucalypts with suitable nest hollows. Recovery actions have included protecting nest trees from predators with iron collars, erection of artificial nestboxes and restoration of feeding and nesting habitat.
• Museum Victoria is conducting an analysis on SA Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo genetics to determine genetic diversity within and between each of the SA populations (Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, SE SA and Mt. Lofty Ranges)
The state of Australia’s birds 2005

Protecting dams for the
Growing Grass Frog

DIVERSITY BENEFITS OF FARM DAMS

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Native wildlife will always be at risk of injury in populated areas, but there are ways you can minimise the threat in your own backyard.

- Avoid cutting down old trees, as their hollows and holes are used by possums and birds.
- Before mowing the lawn in spring and summer, check for basking lizards.
- Plant trees and bushes that attract fauna and provide food for them.
- Put nesting boxes in trees for birds, bats and possums to live in.
- Keep your cat indoors at night.
- Have a bird bath in a shady area.
- When out driving, slow down if you see birds, animals or reptiles on the road.
- If you see a dead kangaroo or possum on the side of the road, check the pouch for a live joey.
- Baby birds have to learn to fly from the ground. Only intervene if there has been no sign of the parent birds for a couple of hours or the baby is in danger.
Sayings
by Leigh Murray

This is a collection of snippets based on two sayings: “something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue” and “tried and true”.

Old
One of the common names of Banksia serrata is Old Man Banksia. Our poor Banksia serrata languished in a tiny pot for 15 years before I finally decided where to plant it – at Tuross, on the sunny side under one of our large Norfolk Island Pines. In the six years since, it has grown slowly but steadily throughout years of drought, making an excellent recovery from its confined quarters. With fairly frequent pruning to keep it bushy, it’s now about 2 metres high with a 1 metre spread. And last summer, it flowered for the first time – at more than 21 years old, truly an Old Man.

New
I’ve turned over many new leaves since the bad old days when I let plants moulder on in pots for ages (a Livistona australis suffered the same fate as the Banksia; it too survived despite me – it’s now happily resident in a larger self-watering pot in our covered entry area). One of the changes I’ve made is that I try to plan sufficiently so that we only buy plants when I know where they can be planted. I often fully prepare holes for them before buying, at the same time ‘planting’ a marker pot of the same or slightly larger size. Once I have the plant, I just remove the marker pot and slot in the plant; this speeds up the planting process hugely. Nowadays, new plants have definite homes to go to, and don’t unintentionally turn into old pot plants.

Borrowed
Last summer was a tough one, and it finished off quite a few of our older shrubs at Queanbeyan. This created a problem for the new chums on the block: small plants that had been borrowing shade and shelter from these bigger plants. Without that borrowed shelter, they were fully exposed to baking sun and desiccating winds, and they really struggled. After attaching small pieces of shadecloth to their gutter-guard surrounds or rigging up shadecloth awnings over some beds, they fared better, as did some of our plants at Tuross that had been badly knocked by that 43 degree corker on New Year’s Day. Shelter from larger shrubs is much more effective, but the shadecloth was a good interim measure.

Blue
My favourite blue is a Blue-tongue Lizard. At Tuross, we’ve had a succession of Blue-tongues resident for long periods (two Bashfuls and a Stumpy). All three have 7.
A DRY ARGUMENT by Max Merckenschlager

You know the mantra ... "driest state, driest continent". Perhaps like us, you have used it occasionally and been concerned by its implications. A new economic value-free modelling study commissioned by Government indicates that our population will rise to 25 million by 2032 while our available water will fall by 15%. And yet Australians are well-served by water. Incredible? Not really. It's all a matter of logistics – where is our water and where are our people? And we do have a "piddling" population by world standards, even after adding an extra 5 million thirsty consumers.

As a study devoid of values, the scenario painted 25 years hence is one of blown-out costs. Without taking any action (and a number of things have been started to improve the situation) some states would pay up to ten times the current cost for delivered water.

On a trip through NSW early in June, we crossed the Lachlan, Edward, Wakool, Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers. All are shadows of their better days. We also passed extensive open channels, many with good flows. How much loss by evaporation and seepage is represented by these un-piped supplies?

The study suggests one outcome might be a free-of-coercion trading of water from rural to city areas, where most of our people live and will continue to live in the future. It's an interesting thought. At what economic point would the "channel country" people find it irresistible to stop seepage/evaporation losses and run their water in pipes – maybe sell what they save to the cities?

And how much would we town-dwellers pay them for our needs? Would we agree to pay many-fold prices to let water run "to waste" through our rivers for the sake of the environment? It's all a question of values, not water.

SAMPHIRE FOR GOURMETS
From Focus on Salt Iss. 38. Sept.2006 p.10

'Most land managers with saline land are very familiar with samphire- often the only plant that manages to survive on very saline land. But how many appreciate that it is also a gourmet food? These virtues were highlighted in a recent edition of The Cook and the Chef on ABC television. It was collected from Kangaroo Island, SA, fried in olive oil and dressed with a little balsamic vinegar. And both the cook and the chef thought it was great!

Samphire is considered best in summer when the fleshy leaves are bright green and aromatic. In winter when the leaves turn a reddish pink, blanching before cooking gives "the lovely, salty taste of the sea."

Other cultures have been aware of its virtues for centuries and web-surfing reveals many recipes. A 'succulent wild delicacy' is one description.

One recommendation is to wash it in several changes of cold water. Cover with water and boil for 15-20 minutes, until soft. Drain and refresh in iced water, then cook for a few minutes in butter and oil with wine vinegar, garlic, onion and other vegetables.'

IF A TREE FALLS IN THE FOREST
From Focus on Salt Iss 38. Sept.2006 p.13

Revegetation projects sometimes seek to replicate the original landscape, but it is not always easy to describe just what the landscape was like. A CRC researcher is investigating the changes to the Pilliga Forest in north-west NSW which is dominated by Callitris glaucophylla.

From records of the 1940s information on the forest, timber harvesting, fire, disturbances and climate variability are believed to have affected the forest. The first regeneration event was in the 1880-1905 period which affected most of western NSW. Drought and overgrazing bared off the ground, and a couple of wet years on bare country meant more trees. From then to the 1950s wet years there was very little cypress regeneration. The myxamatosis rabbit virus arrived in 1952, following a massive fire in 1951. This was followed by the wettest year on record in the Pilliga, and changes in grazing policy. All of these may have contributed to the 'wheatfield' regeneration of cypress pine.
FIRST MEASUREMENTS FOR OIL MALLEE BIODIVERSITY
From Focus on Salt Iss.38 p.17

Oil mallees have potential to provide a new crop for farmers while reducing waterlogging, but their effect on biodiversity has only recently been investigated. Whether oil mallee plantations on farms provide additional habitat for native animals, and how this might compare with other types of natural and planted vegetation in the landscape is being investigated.

The CSIRO study centres on the wheatbelt around Narrogin, WA. Compared with either native bush or typical revegetation, oil mallee planted for commercial purposes appeared to have less diversity and abundance of native wildlife. The mallee plantations do have habitat value. The study found six native mammals in the region using the mallee plantations as well as native bush. One of these was the tiny western pygmy possum.

In contrast to the mammals there appears to be less richness of birds, reptiles and amphibians in the mallee. Bugs are also attracting attention. Three common oil mallee species seem to attract different suites of canopy invertebrates, and these also differ from the invertebrates found in nearby native eucalypts.

Canopy invertebrate numbers in the oil mallees are higher than in trees in the adjacent bush but the species diversity is lower. Samples from the mallees are dominated by Hymenoptera (ants, bees and wasps), Hemiptera (sucking bugs), Diptera (flies) and Coleoptera (beetles).

On the ground, invertebrate diversity and abundance was also higher in the remnant bush than in oil mallee belts. The oil mallee belts were found to support greater diversity and abundance of ground invertebrates than cropped areas and alleys. Ground dwelling beetles are particularly fond of the oil mallees and show greater diversity and abundance under the mallees than in the remnant bush.

BACK TO THE FUTURE WITH NATIVES
From Focus on Salt Iss.38,Sept.2006 p.16

Perennial species which provide a groundcover for both erosion control and weed suppression, are being considered for inter-row areas of horticultural crops. Given the low availability and high cost of irrigation water, the perennial species chosen needs to be able to survive without supplementary watering.

The first trial conducted by CRC in southern NSW (2003-2005) looked at drought tolerance of the commercially available cultivars of both native and introduced species. Being considered were the native grasses Austrodanthonia caespitosa and A. fulva with the commercially available Taranna wallaby Grass (A.richardsonii), Sirian phalaris (Phalaris aquatica) and currie cocksfoot (Dactylis glomerata)

The second trial involved the same selection of A. caespitosa (sown 2005) at Dareton, southern NSW which has an average rainfall of 286mm. While the introduced grasses had the highest plant numbers in the first year, by the third year their frequency had declined to very low levels(<10%). In contrast the frequency of the three Austrodanthonia lines increased over time, with A.caespitosa having the highest frequency.

Herbage yield of phalaris and cocksfoot declined, while the yield of Austrodanthonia increased. A. caespitosa was consistently superior to the other Austrodanthonia species in terms of both frequency and herbage yield. A.caespitosa demonstrated superior persistence to A.fulva and A.richardsonii; phalaris and cocksfoot and, importantly, an ability to increase its density over time through recruitment.
Future of bird at risk
From *Sunraysia Daily* (Vic.) 6/5/06, p.1
'The vital conservation status of the Mallee emu-wren has been recognised by the World Conservation Union. The tiny wren was high among Australian animals listed by the world's leading conservation body in its landmark Red List this week.'
'The WCU has moved the bird's status from "threatened" in 1988 to "vulnerable" in its 2006 survey. 'The WCU commented the species had a small and severely fragmented range for which habitat was continuing to decline due to fire. The Union estimated total wren populations as 10,000.'
'The mallee Emu-wrens, stipiturus mallee is estimated to have a range of occupancy of less than 200 square kilometres.' The plight of the wrens may be much worse than recorded by the WCU even in its most recent survey, ornithologists pointed out yesterday. The Union listed one of the wren's chief locations as the Ngarkat National Park in South Australia. SA's River Murray Minister Karlen Karlene Maywald told...that a bushfire in the Ngarkat earlier this year may have wiped out whole populations.
'Mrs. Maywald said of the three colonies known to exist in the park, it was feared two of them had been wholly wiped out.'
'This makes the existence of the wrens at Nowingi of even greater importance' she said.
The WCU has recommended Australian governments continue to monitor populations of the wren and "maintain and conserve" existing habitats as well as starting a program to re-introduce more of the birds in other locations. There were claims this week that the Nowingi breeding site may be the largest for Mallee emu-wren left in the world.'

Panel warned emu-wren nearly extinct
From *The Sunraysia Daily* (Vic.) 24/5/06 pp.1,2
'An expert on Mallee emu-wrens has warned the species is close to extinction. Prof. David Paton from the University of Adelaide has warned his colleagues to beware of any action which could further reduce their numbers.' Prof. Paton said in an email to the EES panel on the proposed Nowingi toxic waste dump site that he had "grave concerns" about the ability of the species to survive.
'Prof. Paton had urged colleagues to "take the utmost conservative approach" to the protection of the species.'

Emu-wren habitat destroyed
From *Sunraysia Daily* (Vic.) 23/5/06 pps.1-2
'Important habitat for Mallee emu-wren was destroyed in a deliberately lit fire adjacent to the proposed toxic waste dump site last month. A fire prevention burn ordered by the DSE next to Nowingi in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park reduced even further habitat available to the endangered bird.'
The DSE fire prevention burn ran for a 100 metre wide strip along many kilometres of the Calder Highway and the porcupine grass habitat of the wren had been reduced to ash. Extensive flora studies of the proposed toxic waste dump site at Nowingi had been undertaken with the site known to include '134 indigenous species and 14 introduced species with five of the species regarded as of State significance...which had never been recorded in the area before.'
The botanist indicated that 'the site was of National significance for conservation.' He also said trees on the site were very old and could be as much as 400 years old.

Signs of fowl play in Mallee
From *The Weekly Times* (Vic.) 9/8/06 p.9
'A mallee farmer has taken a stand on the impact the Nowingi toxic dump will have on local wildlife. He questioned Government where the sign saying "Mallee fowl endangered species next 45km" was, as all that remains is a sign depicting a silhouette of the bird.'

Mallee Emu-wren  *Stipiturus mallee* 13cm Small, but tail accounts for half the length. Adult male has chestnut napehead, dark dull chestnut crown, dark brown nape and back streaked black. Face, throat and breast grey-blue. Rest of underparts rufous-buff. Tail fitch-tail, normally held cocked. Female and immature dark brown, buff and throat. Voice high-pitched trilling sung calls. Habitat spinifex/mallee associations in central Murray area. Restricted but inconspicuous and elusive; not uncommon. Restricted but inconspicuous and elusive; not uncommon.
Hattah-Nowingi Mallee Emu-wren population deemed crucial for entire species' survival

From Sunraysia Daily (Vic.) 16/6/06 p.2

"The Nowingi-Hattah population of Mallee emu-wren is considered crucial to the survival of the species."

An ecologist contracted by Mildura Rural City Council to assess flora and fauna impacts from the proposed toxic waste dump told the EES hearing that he had identified the mallee emu-wren and other mallee birds as key issues. "The first thing which is apparent is that this is not just a standard patch of mallee scrub but is a unique patch which supports a range of threatened Mallee birds including Mallee emu-wren, malleefowl and Regent parrot."

"This is a natural island of mallee which supports a very important population of Mallee emu-wren." The independent panel has already been told the mallee emu-wren is listed as vulnerable...and its status should be review(ed), potentially to upgrade its risk to endangered." The ecologist's own studies confirmed the species serious decline.

'Recent fires in South Australia had further emphasized the importance of the Hattah-Nowingi population. Uncontrolled wildfire is the greatest threat to the Mallee emu-wren in a fire-prone landscape. It was suggested that the Nowingi colony was a drought refuge for the species.

Scientists leap to defend emu-wren

From Sunraysia Daily (Vic.) 11/7/06 p.3

'The world's leading environmental scientists are rushing to the defence of the Mallee emu-wren. Alarmed over the Victorian Government's apparent indecision over the emu-wren's future, urgent calls are being made to lift its official status from vulnerable to endangered. The continued fragmentation of emu-wren habitat, the loss of corridor between the two national parks and the permanent loss of "high conservation value" bush as part of the clear-felling of the site for the proposed toxic waste dump has added to anxiety among environmentalists. A second push to have the status of Mallee emu-wren elevated in world terms has been done by Bird Life International, which is the global secretariat for birding organisations all over the world, including Birds Australia, and is also the official adviser to the IUCN who create the global "red list"."

Emu-wren threat heard

From Sunraysia Daily (Vic.) 23/6/06 pp. 1-2

'Nowingi supports the largest population of Mallee emu-wrens on the planet, Birds Australia told yesterday's EES hearing in Melbourne. Australia's pre-eminent bird research and conservation group urged the independent panel to refuse the government's proposal to locate a toxic waste dump at the site. The organisation, with 8000 members nation-wide, said two active nests were found in the actual footprint of the proposed facility. It was the first evidence presented to the panel of the threatened birds actually breeding on the site. John Barklaa, from Birds Australia, yesterday advised that a submission was being prepared to upgrade the status of Mallee emu-wren from vulnerable to endangered."

He also indicated that there were between 2000 and 4000 birds left in the wild, and that he had been visiting the site for 30 years.

"It is well regarded world wide that Nowingi is the best place to go to see emu-wrens which is why so many bird watchers are drawn to the site."

Panel hears opposition from environmentalists

From Sunraysia Daily 22/6/06 p.3

'The Victorian National Parks Association, representing 3500 members...was "profoundly disturbed" the Nowingi site was chosen. We take great affront the government would seek to use national parks as a buffer to a hazardous wasted dump. Ms. Barnett said the plight of the mallee emu-wren concerned many of the association's members. The emu-wren is threatened nationally with extinction, she said. The area near Nowingi contains the largest population density found so far in Australia."
Barmah bird deaths declared "natural"
From Numurkah Leader (VIC.) 17/5/06 p.10
'Ecologists have found no evidence to support recent claims that hundreds of egrets died in the Barmah Forest during the summer floods. The deaths of young Nankeen Night Herons at a nesting colony in Barmah Forest prompted community concern about the timing and duration of the flood that was initiated and managed by government agencies. But recent laboratory testing on the dead birds showed they had been killed by feasting birds of prey who had taken advantage of the breeding episode.'

'Close to 200 Nankeen Night Heron young were found dead beneath a breeding colony containing more than 1600 young while less than 10 young egret were dead from a colony of around 800 young.'
A wetland ecologist indicated that the loss of a few chicks from a significant breeding event was a tremendous outcome of recent environmental water use within the Barmah-Millewa wetland system.

Keeping tabs on swift shift
From The Weekly Times (VIC.) 31/5/06 p.33
Victorian farmers have been asked to help protect one of the state's rarest birds. 'The swift parrot, the longest distance migratory parrot in the world, has reached a critical national population of 2500 birds. Last year's national survey across mainland Australia recorded 577 swift parrots, with Victoria recording the largest number of 474 in grey-box tree areas.' In NSW, swift parrots were mainly found in the southern half of the state, the largest number being in south coast spotted gum forests, while others were seen feeding on south-west slopes white box nectar and lerps. The survey work also yielded information on other threatened species that use the same habitats, such as black chinned honeyeaters, brown treecreepers and hooded robins. Swift parrots breed only in Tasmanian bluegum forests and migrate to the mainland every autumn-winter to the woodlands and forests of Victoria and NSW, where they forage on nectar-rich flowering eucalypts.'
A spokesperson from the Murray Catchment Management Authority said the swift parrot population had declined markedly in the past decade.' ...many birds died after colliding with windows, tennis court fences and other structures. These birds are bright grass green and have red patches on the throat, chin and forehead, bordered by yellow. There is also red on the shoulder and under the wings, and blue on the crown, cheeks and wings.'

Funding to save endangered frog
From Deniliquin Pastoral Times 23/6/06
'Funding to save the endangered Corroboree Frog from extinction and to fight salinity, erosion and pollution in the Murray River and its surrounds are among 49 major environmental projects soon to be underway across NSW.'
'A total of $329,600 will be committed to save the Corroboree Frog from extinction in the wild...' The project will also include reintroducing captive-bred frogs into the Jugungal wilderness in the upper reaches of the Murray catchment.'
'Another $260,000 in funding will allow the Murray Catchment Management Authority to work with landowners to preserve the habitat of the Bush Stone-curlew, a ground nesting bird which could all but disappear from NSW within 50 years if action isn't taken.'

A river's salty death
From The Weekly Times (VIC) 28/6/06 p.7
'The once-bountiful Wimmera River at Jeparit is dying. Because of drought, some of its water is now saltier than the sea. Eucalypts look a sick grey, the birds have disappeared and the river has been reduced to a series of saline pools.'
The Wimmera last flowed naturally at Jeparit in 1996. Since then nearby Lake Hindmarsh, a large, shallow freshwater lake fed from the river, has also dried up. Some parts of the lower Wimmera were below groundwater level, and groundwater in the district is saline.
Loss of habitat taking its toll on these feisty little battlers

*From The Canberra Times 7/8/06 pp.4-5*

'They're about the size of a mouse, but belong to the same family as the quoll and Tasmanian devil.'

'Mostly nocturnal, antechinus share communal nests in leaf-lined tree hollows or logs, emerging to forage for insects and small lizards among leaf litter on the forest floor, but their diet can also include nectar and pollen.'

'They're notorious for their intense single mating season, which occurs during the second half of winter. Males are driven to frenzied mating activity by raised testosterone levels, competing vigorously for females. Mating can take up to 12 hours, with exhausted males dying shortly afterwards. High levels of stress hormones strip the male's body of protein and fat, causing a breakdown in the immune system and usually death within a week.'

'Females give birth after a four-week gestation period to between six to eight young, which are carried and fed in the mother's pouch for up to eight weeks. The young are then left in the nest before being completely weaned at about three months.'

'The males disperse to find new territories but females tend to stay within the same range as their mothers.'

A survey of these small mammals in Canberra's main urban nature parks showed that populations of both yellow-footed and agile antechinus had declined over the past three decades. It is believed that increased light levels from suburban developments and urban fringe farms had contributed to this decline. If this is true then numbers of predators such as owls could also be in decline. The increased level of fuel reduction burns, impacting upon drought, meant that there were substantial loss of ground layer vegetation and logs providing a much smaller area for survival of small mammals, their shelter and nest sites.

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See the guide for the forest

*From The Weekly Times (VIC.) 12/7/06 p.30*

Commercial and private tree plantations can provide a valuable role in landscapes, particularly a home for a diverse range of flora and fauna, states a new guide *Productive trees, healthy landscapes* published by Central Victorian Farm Plantations with the support of the Corangamite CMA.

At the launch in a bluegum plantation near Lexton, were ecologists Richard Loin, Ed McNabb and Phoebe Macak from the Arthur Rylah Institute of Environmental Research, who have been studying fauna in eucalypt plantations in Victoria.

Comparing species found in native forest with that of the plantations, the researchers indicated that a lot of forest species make use of the plantations which do provide habitat for quite a lot of native species. But there had not been the same level of species diversity in the plantations as in native forest. "There are species that don't make use of a plantation, for example some of the arboreal mammals are much less common in the plantations than they are in a forest....And some of the bark foraging insectivorous birds are much less common in plantations... With the arboreal mammals it is partly because they need hollows for daytime shelter and with the bark-foraging birds it is partly because they prefer feeding on rough-barked eucalypts rather than smooth-barked ones."

'Mr.Loyn said "insectivorous birds, such as the scarlet robin, were among the fauna that did well in some plantations. That is a group that hasn't been doing too well in forest situations, partly because a lot of their favourite habitat has been cleared", he said.'

"We certainly don't see (plantations) as substitutes for native forests ...but our results do show that they can produce some surprising benefits."
Mallee to energise agriculture
From Focus on Salt (Is, 21 June 2006 p.6
'Farmers might soon be growing crops for energy and other industrial products to complement traditional food production', suggest researchers from CRC for Plant-based Management of Dryland Salinity. This comes from recognition that 'global economic and climatic trends could favour tree or woody crops suitable for the low rainfall wheatbelt. Species such as mallee have the potential to economically supply products as diverse as ethanol, electricity, activated carbon, eucalyptus oil, charcoal, panel board products, paper and pulp, chemicals and manufactured animal feeds.'
- Yields are high and management inputs for the very tough mallee crop are low.
- The woody crop and conventional agriculture are complimentary.
'Researcher John Bartle says "Over the next few decades global agriculture faces some substantial challenges that could favour Australia with its large area of land and comparatively low food crop yields. The booming demand for industrial commodities provides our agriculture with an opportunity to diversify into industrial products and energy production.'
The CRC has examined the ratio of energy output to input for a range of crops. "These annual crops must incur the full establishment cost to achieve each harvest, and they are dependent of large inputs of high energy chemicals (fuel, herbicides, pesticides and fertiliser) resulting in energy output to input ratios less than ten."
"We compared this with the energy ratios of perennial woody crops like mallee and some of our other native woody plants now being investigated in the FloraSearch project."
"While the energy cost of initially establishing a mallee crop is relatively high, on-going energy costs are small because the crop regenerates by coppice after regular harvest on a three to four year cycle, and this can be sustained indefinitely. With planting layout designed to intercept surplus agricultural water, yields are high and management inputs for the very tough mallee crop are low, resulting in energy ratio for production of mallee biomass greater than 40."
"In the wheatbelt the woody crop area will usually be less than 10 per cent of any farm or catchment, it will be dispersed in the form of narrow belts on the contour and farmers can continue conventional agriculture in the alleys."
'By careful selection of species woody biomass feedstocks could have multiple product potential. This would include higher value products (such as wood chips for wood products, eucalyptus oil from the leaves, or carbon sinks) that would reduce the effective cost of the lower value biomass fractions going into bioenergy use.'

Irrigators continue work with red gums
From Sunraysia Daily (VIC,) 27/6/05 p.2
'Sunraysia irrigators are continuing to play their part in the rejuvenation of stressed and dying river red gums throughout the region. A total of 1.7 gigalitres of unused irrigation water will be redirected to the environment under a unique project coordinated by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority.'
Mallee CMA said "It's an important program to help save red gums and black box trees around the district that are stressed or dying through lack of water in recent years."
'Last year water was pumped onto priority locations including Johnson's Bend (near Mildura), Burra Creek (near Boundary Bend), Pile Bend (near Boundary bend), Nyah State Forest (near Swan Hill), Lindsay-Walpole Island (west of Mildura), Forest Bend (near Nangiloc) and Chalka Creek (near Ouyen).'

Focus to link National Parks
From Sunraysia Daily (VIC,) 9/6/06
'A delegation of conservationists and indigenous traditional owners from the Murray River region ...briefed Members of Parliament and NSW Government officials on the importance of a linked system of National Parks and Reserves along the Murray and its tributaries.'
A spokesperson for the group indicated that 'the NSW Government is threatening..."
endangered species like the Regent and Superb parrot simply to supply cheap firewood for Melbourne.'

'The Millewa State Forest and the Koondrook-Perricoota State Forest on the NSW side of the border are part of the biggest red gum wetland forests in the world and are part of two of the icon sites to be protected under The Living Murray initiative.'

"A Barmah Millewa National Park is the only way to properly care for an ecological system that is dying under the current mismanagement," Yorta Yorta Nations chair Lee Joachim said.

"We have come to Sydney to explain to members of the NSW Parliament that our heritage places and the sustainable future of the wetland forests of the Murray are in critical need of attention," he said.

There are no national parks along the Murray River in NSW. 'Right now there is an opportunity for NSW and Victoria to cooperate to create world class cross-border National Parks, jointly managed by traditional owners, on the Murray River, promoting tourism and boosting regional economies.'

"The Iemma Government must play its part and find immediate solutions to safeguard the iconic River Red gum wetland forests".

Global focus on dry regions
From The Advertiser (SA) 5/6/06 p.62

'World Environment Day, observed each year on June 5, is one of the principal means through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment ...the theme this year..."Deserts and Desertification", and the slogan is "Don't Desert Drylands."'

'The slogan emphasises the importance of protecting drylands, which cover more than 40 per cent of the planet's surface.'

The WED message was for all ..' to focus on the challenges of life on the desert margins.'

Rally calls for end to Murray logging
From The Guardian (VIC) 7/6/06 p.3

'Local protestors have called on the Victorian Government to put a stop to logging in redgum forests along the Murray River.'

More than 15,000 people attended the Rally for Victoria's Forests in Melbourne. The Wilderness Society used World Environment Day to promote the message to end logging in Australia's redgum forests. The Timber Communities Australia (TCA) issued a political statement in retaliation, suggesting that Australia's $2 billion trade deficit on wood and paper products meant that Victoria's natural redgum forests would continue to be harvested.

Bird monitoring project looks at health of the environment
From The Murray Pioneer (S.A) 16/6/06 p.13

'Researchers are hoping that pink cockatoos can tell them about the health of the environment. The belah, buloke and cypress pine woodlands in and around the Murray-Sunset and Hattah-Kulkyne national parks have interesting and diverse habitats, but there is still much to learn about the relationships between these woodlands and the birdlife they support.'

A spokesperson from Birds Australia indicated that local parrots and other birds would reveal some of the secrets by way of a community-based bird monitoring project. 'A wide variety of birds have been recorded living in the pine buloke-belah woodlands of the parks. By understanding the birds which have made their homes in this landscape, we can judge the effects of what is happening in these woodlands.'
New book is guide to finding native birds
From the Country Leader in Moree Champion (NSW) 1/6/06 p.4

The book Birds on Cotton Farms provides an illustrated guide to common species in northern NSW and southern Queensland, and a toolkit of advice for growers to use in managing resources to meet the habitat requirements of birds on farms.

The book was written by Greg Ford, ecologist and ornithologist, and is structured so that growers can identify any listed bird's appearance, behaviour, habitat and preferred diet.

Much of the serious decline in bird populations in farming regions is due to habitat loss through clearing and deteriorating condition of remnant habitat.

Management practices are revealed that are designed to bring back or retain individual species in local landscapes and increase their biodiversity.

This advice includes maintaining large and diverse areas of remnant vegetation; establishing corridors between vegetation patches; protecting pastures from intensive grazing; maintaining vegetated riparian zones and diverse natural wetlands; and controlling feral predators such as cats and foxes.

Illegal bike tracks damage endangered wildlife habitat
From The Canberra Times 18/7/06 p.3

The habitat of some of the ACT's most endangered wildlife has been damaged by illegally constructed mountain-bike courses in nature reserves.

Illegal bike ramps, pits and jumps were discovered at Mulligan's Flat Nature Reserve and on Tuggeranong Hill. The constructions had caused considerable soil degradation and damage, while endangering known brown treecreeper and superb parrot sites.

Under the Nature Conservation Act, those caught damaging or destroying a natural or constructed feature within a reserve can be fined up to $5000.

Commonsense faces extinction
Endangered lists 'seriously flawed' claim
From The Land 1/6/06 pp.8-9

The recent proposal to list the Old Man Saltbush ecological community as an endangered species has put the spotlight on serious flaws in the already-controversial threatened species listing process in NSW, so claims the NSW Farmers Association.

Farmers claim the NSW Scientific Committee, which is responsible for making such decisions, should be proving why species should be listed...

In NSW, there are currently 1004 species, populations and ecological communities officially listed as threatened.

The Northern Rivers catchment has 383 species, 5 populations and 13 ecological communities determined as endangered or vulnerable. The Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment has 288 endangered or vulnerable listings.

The NSW Scientific Committee says it is under no regulatory obligation to consider the social and economic impacts of its decisions.

New private native forestry laws mooted
From Southern Weekly Times (NSW) 26/6/06 p.1

The NSW Government will release a code of conduct for native private forestry this year as a part of new native vegetation laws, a NSW Farmers Association representative has told The Southern Weekly.

The NSW Government is proposing that all commercial harvesting of private native forestry will require a property vegetation plan with conditions for harvesting that are likely to lock up the majority of the best timber close to water or due to threatened species conditions.
'Farmers and foresters have called the proposed conditions 'unworkable'.
A spokesperson for the association stressed the need for different management options for different landscapes, and the need for flexibility. 'Farmers are keen to protect new areas, and we need to protect the soils for areas that were open grasslands.'

Too much of a good thing
From Focus on Salt, Iss.37, June 2006, p.21
'The WA central wheatbelt's exceptionally wet summer has resulted in 'bleaching' of saltbush leaves in many areas.'

'Saltbush aficionado Dr.Ed Barrett-Lennard said the effect was caused by waterlogging followed by a return to high temperatures. In mild cases, the saltbush plants wilt and become yellow-green, but in acutely affected cases they lose all their chlorophyll, turn a yellow-brown 'bleached' colour and die.'

'Bleaching had been seen before, but has been widespread this year. Ed said that the bleaching story contains two warnings for farmers:
- Not all saltland is suitable for the growth of saltbush, and the most severely affected areas should be fenced off and allowed to grow samphire rather than being planted to saltbush
- Even at desirable saltland locations, surface water flows may need to be managed to decrease inundation and waterlogging in extreme events.'

Salt: a creeping killer
From The Advertiser (Vic.) 19/7/06 p.22
'Killer salinity rings Australia's desert heart... 'Only the Sahara has more desert than Australia, whose red centre has long been thought uninhabitable by modern man. But while Australia's central deserts are now seen as benign and are starting to yield fruit, salination is turning once productive farmland into lifeless desert tracts and threatening the country's $A30 billion agriculture export industry, one of the biggest in the world.'

'About two million hectares of land is now officially salt-affected, half in south-west WA. The amount of saline land could rise six million hectares in 50 years....'

'Salinity is one of the biggest environmental challenges facing the country.' 'The most celebrated win so far is the reversal of salinity in Australia's biggest river, the Murray, through a combination of engineering works and the management of water flows.
A national tree-planting campaign is being accompanied by the use of salt-tolerant plants to combat growth of desertification.'

'Most of Australia's 400,000 farmers and family members are still coming to grips with the fight against salinity, which is most widespread in agricultural areas between the vast outback deserts and the coast.'

Water wise
From Times2 in The Canberra Times 31/7/06 p.5.
Australian farmers are using less water for irrigation, according to new data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A total of 10,085 gigalitres of water was used on crops and pastures in 2004-05, down 3.4 percent on the previous year. The number of irrigated Australian farms dropped by 13 per cent to 35,000 farms, down 5000 on the year before, reflecting the impact of drought and escalating water costs. But while water used by most pastures and crops decreased, cotton bucked the trend. Water used to irrigate cotton in 2004-05 was the highest for three years, totalling 1819 gigalitres, an increase of 45.7 per cent on 2003-04. The area of irrigated cotton also increased by a similar percentage, leaving the irrigation usage rate steady at 6.7 megalitres per hectare.
Fat ducks, fat cattle - fat chance
From Sydney Morning Herald Weekly Edition 8-9/07/06 p.31

'On one side of the river stand the irrigators, on the other the graziers. Both are pointing the finger over the demise of the Macquarie Marshes, writes Daniel Lewis.'

'North-western NSW is a semi-arid place where water is more valuable than land. It is a place where water has created a clash of cultures and priorities - irrigated cropping versus grazing, the environment versus the prosperity of rural communities. The graziers of the Macquarie Marshes have been fighting ever since the building of a big dam on the Macquarie River was first mooted a century ago.'

'But the irrigation industry that has boomed since Burrendong Dam was built in 1967 insists the marshes are getting enough water and it is the effect of cattle grazing and the redirection of water by graziers that is killing the marshes.'

'Fewer than 50 families control the 200,000 odd hectares of the marshes, which stretch north of Warren for about 100 kilometres where the Macquarie breaks into channels like the frayed end of a rope.'

'The outback oasis, internationally recognised as a bird breeding site, is made possible by a river with its headwater hundreds of kilometres away in the shadows of the Blue Mountains.'

'Only about 10 per cent of the area is in nature reserves. Never before has conservation involved buying something other than land, but July 1 marked the start of Riverbank - $105 million over five years to buy back at least 100,000 megalitres of water for stressed NSW wetlands like the marshes.'

The NSW Environment Minister. Bob Debus said: "The Macquarie Marshes...have never been so desperate for water. The current drought has exacerbated the already poor condition of these wetlands, coupled with an historic over-use of a scarce water resource. These factors have combined in recent years to see the Macquarie marshes shrink by half...and critically important nesting and breeding areas are empty.'

New partnerships will help rebuild endangered species
From The Guardian (Vic.) 24/7/06 p.5

The Murray CMA has agreed to enter into 10 partnerships over the next 12 months (valued at $120,000) to help rebuild local populations of endangered species.

'They include specific projects to assist Booroolong Frog, Bush Stone-curlew, Brolga and Squirrel Glider populations and raising community awareness about them; as well as weed control in sensitive ecological habitat areas- for instance Box Woodlands.'

Lizard, frog in demand
From The Weekly Times (Vic.) 26/7/06 p.29

Spring-summer surveys of wetland species by DEH are now underway. The surveys are part of the Connecting the Catchment, a three year federally funded NHT project aiming to promote integrated surface water management between Victoria and SA.

'Two of the target species are the growling grass frog and the striped legless lizard. The growling grass frog is the largest species of frog in western Victoria, measuring up to 10cm. It varies in colour from dull olive-brown to bright-emerald green and has wart-like bumps on the back and side of its body. Adult males are renowned for their distinctive calls, which consist of a long drawn out growl, followed by a few short grunts- "draawaaark...draawaaark...crok...crok." Growlers live in natural and artificial wetlands but prefer permanent to semi-permanent water.

'Striped legless lizards are small (up to 30cm) reptiles that may be mistaken for juvenile snakes. They are tan in colour, with a series of broad dark and light brown horizontal stripes running the length of the body and tail and have broad, rounded tongues and small flaps in place of hind limbs. They prefer grasslands dominated by tussock-forming native species but like swamp margins and riparian zones.'
'Marsh graziers use the motto 'Fat ducks mean fat cattle'.

'Richard Kingsford, professor of environmental science at the University of NSW, has been studying the marshes for decades. Kingsford points out that the marshes were one of the first places in NSW to be conserved, with a nature reserve created there in 1900. But setting aside land and stopping grazing had not stopped the death of thousands of hectares of river gums and reed beds or the failure of water birds to breed for six years.

"By any measure, these reserves are examples of consummate conservation failures, whose only hope is more water," he says. Kingsford has been surveying the marshes' bird population since 1983. Counts averaged 30,000 in the 1980s. In recent years there's been less than 20. A bird breeding event requires at least 200,000 megalitres - Riverbank is doing something we should have done a long time ago.'

'Late last year, after some decent rain in the catchment, the State Government trumpeted the first environmental release of water from Burrendong Dam since September 2003.'

'Rainfall saw 120,000 megalitres enter the marshes....some birds returned but the water had gone before they could successfully breed.'

Interestingly enough, Burrendong Dam can hold back more water than two Sydney harbours with a wall that's 76 metres high and 113 metres wide. 'In recent years it has often been reduced to a muddy hole. At present it's about quarter full, and irrigators and the marshes face the prospect of another long, dry summer.'

Pygmy possum a big problem for ski redevelopment

From The Australian 20/7/06 p.27

MFS Ltd's planned $500million Mt.Hotham ski village redevelopment is up in the air over fears for an endangered mouse-sized possum. Conservation group WWF-Australia claims the planned redevelopment, which includes the realignment of a small section of the Great Alpine Road, could threaten the endangered mountain pygmy possum.'

'According to WWF-Australia...the resort area contains the largest and most viable population of the possum species in Australia.'

A spokesperson said that the tiny possum's habitat was restricted to 5.2sq.km. situated within the Hotham and Buller resorts. Monitoring had also revealed a drop in female numbers from 300 in 1996 to less than 50 today. An independent planning panel would ultimately decide if the proposal went ahead.

Drawings to help save species

From Moree Champion (NSW) 20/7/06 p.6

According to the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife over the last year there have been confirmed sightings of the threatened Koala and Black-necked Stork in the area. The region provides habitat for a great number of threatened species, including the Barking owl and the Squirrel Glider. There have been less sightings of threatened animals that live in or near water, such as the Moree Plains local Blue-billed Duck and Freckled Duck.

Gliders leap of faith is no longer deadly

From The Border Mail (NSW) 21/7/06 p.11

'Revegetation along the Hume Freeway near Chiltern is giving the vulnerable squirrel gliders a chance to extend their habitat area. The gliders which are native to Victoria, inhabit parkland close to Chiltern but the area is divided by the freeway, isolating the glider population on each side of the road.'

'The project, which will include planting native flora such as ironbark, red gum and eucalypts trees over a 100m stretch, will be a long term solution, with the trees taking up to 15 years to mature. In the short term, however, a rope bridge will be built to cross over the freeway, allowing gliders and other animals to safely cross over the road.'

'While most gliders don't attempt the crossing, which is almost double their gliding distance of 30m, those that do don't
usually make it alive. The problem for most gliders is they are separated from other large populations of gliders, meaning population numbers won't improve.'

VicRoads in partnership with the DSE, started the project in response to concern for wildlife protection.

**Heritage river in distress**
*From* Wimmera Mail Times (VIC) 29/6/06 p.20

Wimmera CMA has compiled a *State of our Streams* Report to provide the community with an overview of the condition of waterways in the region. Most of the Wimmera River has been classified as a heritage river under the Heritage Rivers Act, 1992.

'This heritage section starts at the Polkemmet Bridge in the south and runs through to the northern end of Outlet Creek in the Wirrengren Plain, including Lake Hindmarsh and Lake Albacuta. Smaller waterways that do not flow into the Wimmera River or its tributaries, such as Natimuk, Yanac and Mt.Talbot Creeks are also included. Mt.Talbot Creek flows west from near the Black range into Lake Toolondo, an important water storage between Natimuk and Balmoral.'

The Index of Stream Condition survey rated each creek and river by assessing five components—hydrology, aquatic life, water quality, streamside vegetation and physical form. Some interesting results emerged.

'The lower Wimmera River is under immense stress with particularly small volumes of water reaching this part of the river.' Streamside areas of the lower Wimmera River are in fairly good condition, with the most encouraging aspect being an extensive amount of understorey vegetation. Many other indicators of a healthy streamside zone are present in significant quantities such as juvenile trees, minimal weeds and large quantities of logs and organic litter on the ground. Smaller creeks such as Yanac, Natimuk, Mt.Talbot and the northern reach of Outlet Creek have relatively poor streamside zones. The understorey has been heavily modified and logs and leaf litter are present in small amounts. The number of large trees is also quite low which affects streamside zone width, tree canopy cover and vegetation connectivity. Having a continuous stretch of large trees and a healthy understorey aids wildlife movement and the spread of native vegetation.'

**New Conservation Park**
*From* The Murray Pioneer (SA) 27/6/06 p.20

'A new conservation park has been established near Waikerie. The rare native growling grass frog, regent parrot and Murray Darling carpet python are just some of the threatened species that will be better protected by the park.'

Waikerie Forest Reserve located about 7.5 kilometres northwest of Waikerie, has been re-renamed Ramco Point Conservation Park, and would protect 31 hectares of low-woodland and a permanent wetland. The area contains some significant tree species (River Cooba and River Redgum), which are considered of high conservation value. The park also has several known archaeological sites of significance to the local Aboriginal people.

**Foxes and scrub the worst of pests**
*From* The Barrier Daily Truth (NSW) 29/6/06 p.5

'Foxes and invasive native scrub are public enemies one and two in the Western Catchment according to a new report.'

The chairman of the Western Catchment Authority indicated that control of pest animals and weeds was essential in managing the natural resources of the Catchment for sustainable production and conservation of biodiversity.

'Weed pests were prioritised as invasive native scrub, Mesquite in the Broken Hill area and Hudson Pear in the Lightning Ridge area. Other priority weeds include Noogoora Burr, Bathurst Burr and Horehound.'
Dead trees prompt millions in funding to rescue marshes
From the Sydney Morning Herald 19-20/8/06 p.7
The 200,000 hectare Macquarie marshes have finally been seen by the Federal Government, to be suffering due to over allocation of Macquarie River water for cotton crops. The sight of big river redgums that had died, due to a lack of regular flooding, proved the need for spending of $13.4 million for recovery work.
'Environmentalists and graziers have argued for decades that the wetland was dying of thirst because irrigators had been given too much water. The marshes are an internationally recognised bird breeding site, but the vast reed beds where the birds nest have shrunk greatly...'

Water for wetlands
From The Land 24/8/06, p.11
Irrigators and landholders have welcomed a $26.8 million package to restore and protect the Ramsar-listed Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir wetlands.
'The 100,000 hectare Gwydir wetlands and the 220,000 Macquarie Marshes are important nesting sites for waterbirds and the river systems support commercial grazing and farming.'
'Both wetlands were under severe ecological stress as a result of drought and land and water management practices.'
'Bird counts in the Macquarie marshes had fallen significantly and "centuries old red gums were "turning up their toes".'
The restoration project involves buying back water, and structural works such as converting open channels to pipes to improve water flow into the wetlands. It will also incorporate projects designed to improve knowledge of the wetlands and address noxious weeds.

The Cascades breathes life back into stagnant pond
From The Canberra Times 28/8/06 p.2
'Recycled water, tumbling and swirling down a cascade of concrete bowls, has brought a once-stagnant pond back to life at the Australian national Botanic Gardens.'
'The original recirculating system that fed the pond was turned off in 2003 because of an irreparable water leak, compounded with the need to conserve water because of severe drought. The pond grew stagnant.'
The 'flowforms' feature consists of 13 concrete bowls set at "angles designed to oxygenate the water by churning it in a figure of eight pattern, rather than letting it flow along the axis of gravity..."
'The water, mimicking a natural stream, made the pond teem with life again. It is home to fish, frogs and water dragons.'
Rare and endangered plants have been cultivated around The Cascades flowforms.

Not an icon
From Barrier Daily Truth (NSW) 16/8/06 pp.1,2.
'A national plan to help repair the damage done to nine of the country's most famous rivers does not include the Darling River.'
Under the 10 year "River Recovery" program run by Greening Australia the rivers marked for help are the Yarra (Vic.), Hawkesbury/Nepean (NSW), Boorowa (ACT/NSW), Derwent (Tas.), Lower Murray (SA), Burdekin (Qld.), Hutt (WA), Coliban (NT) and Katherine (NT).
"River Recovery fits well with the Government's overall strategy to improve our natural resources, make agriculture more sustainable and strengthen rural and regional Australia, economically and socially." Stated the Federal Minister for Agriculture Mr. McGuaran.
Policy will put wildlife at risk
From The Guardian (Vic.) 18/8/06 p.7
In relation to a Greens election policy to phase out the use of 1080 poison local MP Peter Walsh stated that 'it would decimate Victoria's native wildlife and cause suffering and death to farm livestock.'
 'So wildlife will be savagely hit on two fronts - loss of habitat from rabbit destruction and predation by foxes on what's left.'
 'Foxes and wild dogs are killing machines. A fox can take penguins, lizards, native rats, possums, bandicoots, most small native mammals and a whole host of ground dwelling birds.'
 'Every fox over 12 months old is capable of killing up to 3000 native animals a year and we have something like six million foxes in Victoria', stated Mr. Walsh.

Launch of wildlife survey
From Deniliquin Pastoral Times (NSW) 22/8/06 p.3
The results of a large farm wildlife survey in the region highlighted the following '....273 species on 150 sites across the Murray Irrigation Limited area of operations. This included 203 birds, 33 reptiles, 28 mammals and 9 frogs. Some of the other highlights were platypus in the Edward River near Moulamein, Gilberts' Whistlers on the Murray and Wakool Rivers, three pairs of Bush Stone-curlews, a flock of 87 Freckled Ducks in the Noorong area, Beaked Geckoes and a Gibber Gecko. Several rare skinks not previously recorded in the Murray Catchment were also discovered along with Macquarie Turtles near Mulwala and Squirrel Gliders near Moama. This reinforced the value of native pine, boree, grey box, yellow box and buloke stands, as well as the major waterways like the Murray, Edward and Wakool Rivers and the region's wetlands.

Creek study finds rare plants, animals
From Wimmera Mail Times (Vic.) 21/8/06 p.2
 'A study assessing habitat along Yarriambiack Creek and at Hopetoun's lakes Corrong and Lascelles has found rare plants and birds.'
Researchers from the Uni. of Ballarat 'found five rare or vulnerable plants including umbrella wattle, prickly bottlebrush, frosted goosefoot, cane grass and winged new holland daisy. They also found buloke, listed as threatened, as relatively common throughout most of the study area.'
The study sampled thirty sites along the creek with three sites at Lake Lascelles and Lake Corrong. The survey provided a snapshot along 120 kilometres of the Yarriambiack Creek system, which diverges from the Wimmera near Longerengon and stretches to a series of lakes and wetlands north of Hopetoun.
 'The survey also found four rare or threatened bird species.' '...Researchers recorded the brown treecreeper at 20 sites and the near threatened hooded robin at Brim North and Rosebery.' '...Researchers also saw two vulnerable black falcons and a vulnerable great egret.... ' Both lakes surveyed contained woodland bird species.' 'They also found black wallabies at Lake Lascelles.' The survey formed a base for future monitoring.

Putting Skippy on the pill: bad science, bad conservation
By Rosslyn Beeby, from The Canberra Times 26/8/06
'The notion of feeding contraceptive pills to Canberra's eastern grey kangaroos' has been a government reaction to what is perceived to be a large kangaroo population problem. But it is an argument that raises many scientific questions about immune-contraception and genetics and fails to address the complexities of wildlife biology. Experts believe that man has created this problem by altering landscapes and suburban sprawl, with little thought of native populations. The answer - wildlife corridors.'
Environment work endangers platypus

From The Border Mail (NSW) 8/8/06
'The Snowy River has been extensively polluted by earth washed into the waterway during environmental work at Jindabyne Dam...and there are fears a platypus colony in the affected area has been injured by the spill...'

The flow turned the river a yellow colour and posed a threat through sedimentation to the whole aquatic food chain, and in particular to platypus, fish and bugs. It is understood that the excavation work was done in accordance with approvals from the local council and within conditions imposed by the EPA. The work consisted of removing an earth plug separating the Jindabyne Dam plunge pool from the Snowy River.

Over the Fence

From 'North West Farmer' in Sunraysia Daily (Vic) 8/8/06 p.5
'Agricultural production can suffer great economic losses through uncontrolled pest species. These pests, such as foxes and rabbits, also threaten the survival of many native species and cause environmental degradation.'

Some farmers commented on the following. Fox numbers are on the rise across the mallee areas. Rabbits, foxes and feral cats do damage to the environment. Rabbits can ringbark small trees, while feral cats eat birds, lizards and marsupial mice, and foxes kill almost anything.

Water deprivation

From The Canberra Times 21/8/06 p.9
One in three people in the world is suffering from water shortage, according to The Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture. The study by 700 experts over the past 5 years shows that we are already at water scarcity levels previously predicted for 2025. 'One third of the world’s population was currently living in places where water was overused, leading to falling groundwater levels and drying rivers, or could not be accessed because of the appropriate infrastructure.'

Freckled duck finds Friends

From the Barrier Daily Truth (NSW) 16/9/06 p.4
'The Western Catchment Management Authority (WCMA) has committed funds to allow for improved management of Coogee Lake, a significant ephemeral lake about 115km north-east of Broken Hill. The lake is a refuge for the rare freckled duck and numerous other threatened species.'

'Thousands of water birds use the lake for breeding and feeding, including threatened freckled ducks, snipes and egrets. The Lake provides habitat for five threatened species, three migratory bird species and seven listed marine bird species.'

Funding has been through NSW and Federal Government’s combined $23 million commitment to the Western Catchment over a four year period.

ON SAFARI IN AUSTRALIA......

Shark Bay Western Australia
Shark Bay's is World Heritage listed for its rich and unique marine life. It includes the world's best collection of stromatolites, life forms which have survived for 3,500 million years, as well as dugongs, dolphins, whales, turtles and sharks.

Western Australia boasts 11,000 plant species ranging from giant karri trees to underground orchids. Spectacular wildflower displays reach their peak in Spring.

Blue Mountains, NSW
The Blue Mountains World Heritage Site consists of an aggregation of seven National parks. Visit Blue Mountains, Kanangra Boyd, Gardens of Stone, Wollemi and Yengo plus Jenolan Caves as a starter to discovering the outstanding World Heritage Values of the Blue Mountains. The Sydney Sandstones and the Blue Mts. have enormous floristic diversity, grand sandstone escarpments, vast wilderness areas, wonderful opportunities for bush walking and adventure, spectacular scenery and a rich history.

Tropical Rainforest and Reef, Qld.
This region contains Australia’s highest concentrations of plant and animal species. Two of the world’s greatest natural wonders, the Great Barrier Reef, the largest living structure, and Queensland’s Wet Tropics, home to the world’s oldest rainforests. Discover the grand scenery of such places as Hinchinbrook Island, Undara Lava Tubes and the Daintree.

ASGAP WILDLIFE & NATIVE PLANTS STUDY GROUP
MEDIA ARTICLES
South Australia — FACTSHEET

The Coorong National Park

South Australia's Coorong National Park is located immediately south-east of the mouth of the River Murray on Encounter Bay. The name, Aboriginal for 'long neck of water', accurately describes the stretch of water that is 163km long and on average only 2km wide. It is separated from the sea by the sand dunes of the Younghusband Peninsula.

Established in 1966, the park covers nearly 40,000ha of water, lagoons, marshlands and sand dunes. Many of the lagoons are hypersaline. The Murray is the Coorong's source of fresh water, but the water flows from the Murray only at times of large floods, every 10 to 20 years. In between the floods, as a result of evaporation and the inflow of sea water, salinity levels rise, to produce the hypersaline levels. When sand movement occasionally blocks the Murray mouth, salinity levels rise even higher.

The regulation of the River Murray and construction of the barrages at its mouth in the 1930s considerably modified the natural state of the Coorong. However, the Coorong remains a wetland of international significance for its wildlife and vegetation and is included on the Ramsar Convention list, particularly as a habitat for waders and waterfowl. The park includes a game reserve of over 6,800ha.

Over 160 species of birds have been recorded and there are more pelicans than anywhere else in Australia. With Lake Alexandrina (64,950ha) and Lake Albert (17,310ha), it is the largest permanent wetland in southern Australia. It is of particular importance during periods of drought.

The park is also an important recreation area. It was made famous by being the location of Colin Thiele's Book and film, Storm Boy.

South Australia's Coorong National Park is a narrow windswept area of sand dunes and lagoon, 140 kilometres long, separating the Murray-Darling Basin from the Southern Ocean.
BOOK REVIEW by Lolo Houbein, Re-leaf
Iss.99 Winter 2006.
Wild Neighbours well worth a look

Ian Temby, WILD NEIGHBOURS:
The Humane Approach to Living with Wildlife. Illustrations by Elizabeth Bastian. 250 pps. RRP $35.95

This is a book for our times and a first for Australia. In the last three decades people have concentrated on creating a greener environment around their homes, farms and workplaces, in cities and towns. Then the wildlife moved in!

Ian Temby has spent his working life resolving conflict situations between people and wildlife and as a Churchill fellow studied how these were handled in Canada, USA and the UK. Being the Wildlife Damage Control officer with the Department of Sustainability and Environment in Victoria, he sacrificed his recent study leave to turn his extensive field experience into a handbook for those encountering problems with animals and birds that destroy property, live in ceilings, dig up food gardens, pick fruit trees bare, tap on windows, make holes in fences or cause other undesirable effects.

Patience combined with assessment, tactics and lateral thinking can produce lasting solutions for most urban and farm problems with wildlife. Part One discusses strategies, health issues, whether or not to feed certain wildlife, and which deterrent products work or don’t. Part Two is an A-Z, or rather B-W (Bandicoot to Wombat) of animals, birds, rodents and spiders, 38 in all, on how to co-exist with them and not wear oneself out with bandaid measures that neither solve the problem nor take the wildlife’s role in the ecosystem into account. Many apparently abundant birds and animals could possibly head for extinction, ie the wombat. Often the very animals we want to evict are also the ones that control insects harmful to our crops.

The book offers a hosts of simple methods to make life with wild neighbours tolerable, even enjoyable, unraveling a few myths in the process. Each chapter discusses an animal’s history, habitat, diet, manner of reproduction and state of survival, followed by problems and solutions, with references for further reading. Learn why relocating animals such as possums usually leads to their speedy death in distress and how much more possum research needs to be done.

Dress in the same colours as your scarecrow. Don’t kiss your cat. Read about the Tasmanian devils who needed 22 football jumpers and another who preferred a doona! And contemplate how urban people’s fast food habits have changed wildlife populations and demography.

Wild Neighbours provides users with an astonishing array of facts about common animals and birds that are not common knowledge.

Understanding an animal’s habit is the first step to counteracting a nuisance it creates. Appendices offer information on government departments and carers to help readers access local information or advice on saving wildlife. Whether you must co-exist with possums, rodents, cockatoos, ducks in the pool, snakes or foxes (12 per square kilometre in our cities!) there is advice in these pages. The black and white illustrations are exquisite. This is a handbook for anyone who has a garden, tree plot or farm.