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Inc. PO Box 8663, Alice Springs, NT 0871

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ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB SEPTEMBER 2003

MEETINGS

Wednesday September 10th:

Robbie Henderson on "Backyard safari" A journey through the hidden wildlife diversity of your backyard . 7:30 PM.

In the staffroom of OLSH off the Sadadeen Road.

Wednesday October 8th:

Joc Benshemesh on Marsupial Moles. 7:30 PM.

In the staffroom of OLSH off the Sadadeen Road.

Wednesday November 12th:

Jose Petrick, on Egypt. 7:30 PM.

In the staffroom of OLSH off the Sadadeen Road.

TRIPS

Saturday September 6th, cancelled. I could not get permission, and there are two other events on that day, see Kindred Organisations events and calendar below.

Saturday September 13th, Bradshaw Walk.
Be at the Old Telegraph Station gate at 7:50 AM (gate opens nominally at 8 AM, usually a bit earlier) for 8 AM start. Bring hat, water, binoculars.

September 20th to 21st. Jointly with APS assisting with plant surveys at Finke Gorge National Park (Palm Valley). Chris Brock will hold a workshop on the 17th at 7:30 PM at Olive Pink for those taking part.

October 11th and 12th, assisting with fish survey at Fringe Lily Gorge. 4 WD needed. This will be an overnight camp, but anyone who wants to come for the day may.

October 19th, WaterWatch – Wigley's Waterhole. Leader: Rosalie

Sun 23 Nov 2003	Walk in hills in vicinity of Scout Hall off Larapinta Drive. This will be an early morning walk. Leaders: Connie & Barbara
Late November	Bradshaw Walk at night. Leader: Bob
Sun 7 Dec 2003	End of Year breakfast at the Telegraph Station. 8:30 am
Dec 2003	Sewage Ponds – early morning. Leader: Bob
Feb 2004	Sewage Ponds – early morning. Leader: Bob
Early March 2004	One of walks in Telegraph Station vicinity. Leader: Rosalie

March 2004	Kunoth Bore
April 2003	Slot gorge southern side of Mt Gillen. Leader: Connie
April 2004 (school holidays)	Newhaven
May 2004	Chain of Ponds (Trephina)
Sat, Sun & Mon 5, 6 & 7 June 2004	Mac Clark Conservation Reserve (Acacia peuce) and Acacia pickardii. This would be a combined FNC & APS trip.
After rain	Proposed activity: setting up a light trap.
Unknown	Walk from Wigley's to the Telegraph Station. Organiser: Rosalie

KINDRED ORGANISATIONS EVENTS

A Window on Our Wildlife, display at Alice Springs Cultural Precinct, Museum of Central Australia until September 10th. The Australian National Wildlife Collection is an extensive collection of Australia's vertebrate fauna - birds, frogs, reptiles and mammals. This travelling display provides an interactive and educational look at the uniqueness of Australian wildlife.

Wednesday September 3rd, Australian Plant Society meeting, 7:30 PM at Olive Pink.

Saturday 6th September, 6:30 PM Friends of the Desert Park Moonlight Bike Ride, starting and finishing at Flynn Grave. Free for Friends, gold coin donation for others. Hot and cold drinks and pancakes for sale at Flynn Grave.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that subscriptions are now due. If you have not paid already please do so as soon as possible. The Committee has resolved that this year the cut off will be November, that is no more newsletters if you are still unfinancial.

NEWS

Mapping Australian Owls (from the Museum Victoria website)

Museum Victoria has undertaken a study into genetics of owls and we need your help! The Museum Victoria project is the first such study undertaken anywhere in the world and will provide valuable information for conservation as well as providing scientific insights.

This study is generously sponsored by Australian Geographic.

Members of the public can get involved by helping collect owl feathers that will be used for DNA collection.

Les Christidis, Museum Victoria's Director of Science, says the project will be able to determine which populations are most distinct and therefore most important to conserve. "This task is not easy because owls are nocturnal and cryptically coloured."

Australia has nine species of owl. They fall into two genera:

1. *Ninox* – hawk owls
2. *Tyto* – barn owls and masked owls

"In reality we know little about the underlying genetic and biological diversity within each of the Australian owls," says Christidis. "Without an understanding of the genetic diversity it is difficult to manage their conservation or anticipate and plan for the effects of habitat loss."

The study will address whether owls with similar geographic distributions have the same pattern of genetic diversity, whether geographical range is linked to genetic diversity, and how geographically isolated populations differ from each other.

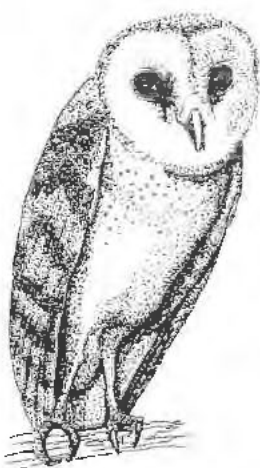
The genetic data will be gathered from three sources:

- frozen samples held in DNA tissue banks
- museum specimens
- fresh feathers collected by researchers and members of the public.

"It is relatively easy to obtain DNA from feathers," explains Les. "By encouraging the collection of such material this research project has the potential to become a community project as well."

For further information, contact Reyna Matthes Publicity on (02) 9948 5799.

Note on the owl project. There are only two species of owl in this region, the Barn Owl and the Boobook, so identification is easy.



Barn Owl

Dead owls are often found along roads, and occasionally caught in barbed wire fences. Technically both collecting feathers and sending them interstate is illegal, and I wrote to the NT Minister for Parks and Wildlife asking both about this project in particular and collecting roadkilled specimens in general. The reply that I got over the Minister's signature reads in part,

"You have asked a number of questions about technicalities of the legislation and its true intent. Rather than answer your specific questions, it would be appropriate that I assure you that the Parks and Wildlife Service would be reluctant to prosecute an individual for carrying out the type of activity to which you refer. As indicated in your letter the Parks and Wildlife Service does encourage members of the public to contribute information and knowledge of Australian wildlife and such legal proceedings would obviously discourage the public from participating in the studies of our native wildlife."

This seems a clear indication that there is no intention of enforcing the letter of the legislation in regards to this project or in passing good specimens on to the museum.

RR

Butterflies

The NTFNC in Darwin is collecting data on butterflies. Any records would be appreciated. RR

Birds Australia Atlas wins Eureka prize (BA press release)

On 12/8/03 Birds Australia won one of the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney Eureka Prize for Biodiversity Research - for the shortly-to-be-published New Atlas of Australian Birds. "Birds Australia have done a remarkable job in creating the Atlas," says Professor Mike Archer, Director of the Australian Museum. "It gives the first truly national perspective on the status of Australian bird life."

For those who have ordered, and waited patiently for, the Atlas book, I am informed that it will be available in about three weeks. For others who have not ordered it but are interested in getting a copy, it will be available from The Birding Shop (contact details on the BA website -see below). For those who have contributed to the Atlas by sending in data - thanks for your efforts, but please DO continue.

The main product of the Atlas of Australian Birds project is the Atlas database, and this is ongoing, growing in value over the years. The publication of the Atlas book is NOT the end of the project. Anybody who wants to start atlassing is very welcome; please contact us at the address and phone/fax numbers below, or email the Atlas project direct at:

atlas@birdsaustralia.com.au

Cheers,

Hugo Phillips

Publicity Officer, Birds Australia

BIODIVERSITY MONTH CALENDAR

Supplied by Colleen O'Malley of the TSN

Event	Description	Sponsoring organisation and contact
September 1-7th Alice Springs Desert Park guided talks: <i>Desert Gardens - how to enhance backyard biodiversity</i>	Join the guides at the Alice Springs Desert Park to learn about making an arid zone garden that benefits local lizards and birds. The launch of the Desert Park's wholesale nursery will also occur during this week. Contact the Desert Park for more information.	Jodie Clarkson Alice Springs Desert Park 89518728
September 3rd. Alice Springs Australian Plants Society seed sowing workshop.	Join the Australian Plant Society for their monthly meeting at 7:30pm at the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens. This month's hands-on workshop is Sowing seeds with Andy Vinter from Greening Australia.	Connie Spencer Australian Plants Society, Alice Springs 8952 2154
September 6-7th. <i>Fish in local desert waterholes</i> field day, Alice Springs.	Threatened Species Network is celebrating National Threatened Species Day with an overnight camp at Two Mile Waterhole (near Glen Helen). Activities, including fish sampling will begin at 4.00pm Saturday and a Possum food plant walk will be held on Sunday morning. 4WD/high clearance vehicle only, car pooling can be arranged.	Colleen O'Malley Threatened Species Network 8952 1541
September 7th. <i>Great Marsupial Night Stalk</i> , Alice Springs.	Junior Rangers are hosting this event at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station (6.30pm for 2 hours). Junior Rangers and other kids who bring along their dad (for Father's Day) are welcome. Bookings are essential. Participants need to bring an adult and a small torch and wear covered shoes.	Emily Findlay Parks and Wildlife Service, NT 8951 8247
September 14th. Land for Wildlife Alice Springs Soil Conservation field trip.	Join the Land for Wildlife coordinator and members and learn about soil conservation techniques suitable for Alice Springs properties. For more information about this event, or about Land for Wildlife generally, contact the Coordinator.	Audrey Hill Land for Wildlife, Alice Springs 8955 5222
September 18th & 20th. Greening Australia Community Training Workshops.	Bushland Regeneration and Management workshops. Register or get more information from Greening Australia.	Andy Vinter Greening Australia 8953 2882
Throughout September. Threatened Species Network school's biodiversity program.	TSN is coordinating and running a program of interactive biodiversity activities at schools throughout the Alice region during Biodiversity Month. Teachers interested in booking a class activity should contact TSN soon.	Danae Moore Threatened Species Network 8952 1541
Throughout September. <i>Territory Parks Alive</i> program	Experience the natural and cultural wonders of the Territory. Check out the walks and talks programs for parks around Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. For more information contact Parks and Wildlife.	Parks and Wildlife 8951 8211
Throughout September. <i>Working with threatened species</i> display at the Alice Springs Desert Park.	Learn more about local threatened species and the work Parks and Wildlife are doing to aid recovery of species in the region. Display on show at the Exhibition Centre.	Jodie Clarkson Alice Springs Desert Park 8951 8728
November 1st. Greening Australia Alice Springs Local Native Plants Sale	Enhance biodiversity and reduce water consumption by planting with local native species. 9am - 12 midday at the GA Bushcare Nursery in the grounds of the Centralian College (Grevillea Drive, Sadadeen).	Michelle Rodrigo Greening Australia 8953 2882