

Useful Websites

The following websites provide links to a range of fascinating and informative topics. The list has been compiled by our Vegetation Management and Nature Conservation Officers to increase awareness about available information sources. Should further elaboration be necessary, they are very willing to offer advice to match individual requirements.

- Birds in Backyards Project (Birds Australia and Australian Museum): <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>
- Wildlife Online (EPA/QPWS) : http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/wildlife/wildlife_online/
- Australia's Virtual Herbarium : <http://www.cpbr.gov.au/cgi-bin/avh.cgi>
- PlantNet – FloraOnline : <http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/floraonline.htm>
- Birds Australia : <http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/>
- Frogs! : <http://frogs.org.au/>
- Greening Australia : <http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/GA/NAT/> - and GA (Qld) : <http://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/GA/QLD/>
- Land and Water Australia : <http://www.lwa.gov.au/>
- Soil information at your fingertips : www.asris.csiro.au
- Regional Ecosystem Description Database +(REDD) : http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/biodiversity/regional_ecosystems/
- Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) : <http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/wons.html>
- Species profile and threats database from DEH and the EPBC Act : <http://www.deh.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/sprat.pl>

Did this newsletter reach you at your new address?

If you have changed your postal address, phone number or email address, please contact the Landcare Discovery Centre to tell us your new details. Phone (07) 4637 6201.



contacts

To receive general Land for Wildlife information, contact the Landcare Discovery Centre on **(07) 4637 6201**.

If you would like to arrange a Land for Wildlife assessment on your property, please contact the Land for Wildlife representative nearest to you.

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Land for Wildlife in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin is coordinated by the Queensland Murray Darling Committee (QMDC) on behalf of South West Natural Resource Management Group (SWNRM) and Condamine Alliance.



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Protecting our biodiversity: nature refuges and flora & reptile recovery

This edition of the Land for Wildlife newsletter includes updates on the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee's Stanthorpe Flora Recovery Plan, and the Queensland Brigalow Belt Reptile Recovery Plan, both of which have been progressing significantly since December.

Also in this edition, we'll provide you with some information on 'Nature Assist', a new nature refuge initiative being run by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

We've also included some information on reptiles as indicators of a healthy landscape, as well as some information on upcoming events.

Our Land for Wildlife Community

We can now boast approximately 200 members in our Land for Wildlife community, covering 111,164ha of country across 21 different shires!

To ensure the long-term, effective maintenance of our ever-increasing database, QMDC, as the coordinator of Land for Wildlife in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, will be conducting an audit. An university student will work with QMDC to make contact with all our members, with the view to ensuring our information is current.

It is hoped that this project will enable us to quickly and comprehensively confirm/update contact and property details for all our members. This will help us to ensure *you* receive up to date information, regularly. This project will commence in late August, so please expect some contact.



Newsletter for the Queensland Murray Darling Basin



Nature Assist

National parks alone cannot maintain the amazing diversity of plants, animals and cultural heritage found in Queensland. So, QPWS is assisting landholders to formally protect significant nature conservation values on their property through a new nature refuge program.

Nature Assist is a new incentive scheme for landholders, providing the opportunity for financial assistance to protect and actively manage the natural assets on their property by establishing a nature refuge. A nature refuge is a conservation agreement between a landholder and the Queensland Government. Each conservation agreement is negotiated directly with the landholder and tailored to suit their management needs.

By agreeing to a nature refuge, landholders achieve a vital balance between conservation and production.

A nature refuge:

- Becomes part of a network of protected areas contributing to the conservation and protection of Queensland's biodiversity
- Combines protection with ecologically sustainable use of the land
- Protects the property's conservation value for future generations
- Is tailored to suit the landholder and the management needs of the property
- Involves QPWS in providing conservation management advice

For more information about Nature Assist, or to see if you might be eligible, contact the QPWS on 1800 603 604 or naturerefuge@epa.qld.gov.au.

Source: www.epa.qld.gov.au/naturerefuge

Upcoming Events

Bushfire 2006 Conference: 6-9 June 2006, Brisbane Convention Centre

Three representatives from our community have been sponsored to attend the Bushfire Conference in Brisbane. We will include a report of the event from one of these people in our next newsletter. It is hoped that these representatives will benefit from attending the conference, taking their learnings back to their communities.

Queensland Landcare Conference: 21-24 August, Brisbane Convention Centre

The 2006 Queensland Landcare Conference is coming up, with this year's theme being 'Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide'. With four keynote speakers and 35 concurrent sessions around themes of peri-urban planning, technology, ecosystem services, bridging the divide, engagement, climate change and innovation, this 17th annual Queensland Landcare conference should be interesting. For more information about the conference, check out the website: <http://www.landcare.org.au/Conference.htm>

Parks and Protected Areas Management Congress: 2-3 August, Queanbeyan

This Congress aims to provide a forum for all people involved in the management of protected vegetation areas to swap information and learn more about management practices. To find out more about the Congress, or to download a registration form, go to the website: <http://www.ppamcon.com.au>



Stanthorpe Flora Recovery Plan Update

As reported in our last newsletter, Paul Donatiu organised and conducted three workshops to engage with community members and key stakeholders to discuss the Flora Recovery Plan. Approximately 90 people from government, service providers and community participated in the workshops. Their input has since been incorporated into the draft Plan. It is intended that the final Plan will be completed by the end of June, at which time it will be submitted to Commonwealth and State governments for adoption under the Commonwealth's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and the State's Environmental Protection Act.



Reptiles and remnants – what can lizards tell us about the landscape?

The retention and conservative management of remnant native vegetation is often touted as the key to biodiversity conservation in rural areas. But what scientific evidence is available to back up claims that fragmentation of remnant vegetation is detrimental to fauna conservation?

Poplar box, geckos and landscape health

Environmental Protection Agency ecologists recently completed a study of reptile species richness in poplar box woodlands (both remnant and regrowth) and gained important insights into ecological processes in the Southern Brigalow Belt biogeographic region. These woodlands once covered almost a quarter of the bioregion, but have been extensively fragmented by development. Over half of the remaining poplar box remnants are less than 10 hectares in size.

The ecologists found 1779 reptiles, from 42 species, across the 60 study sites they visited. The study showed that every species has slightly different needs in the environment and respond differently to changes. With clearing and fragmentation, some species decreased, some seemed unaffected and one species increased.



Bynoe's gecko, a habitat generalist, was common in both fragmented and intact habitats. Photo: M. Sanders.

In fragmented areas, the reptile community was dominated by "habitat generalists" like the Bynoe's gecko. These are species that readily adapt to many habitat types and are therefore fairly resilient to disturbance. Habitat specialists (those with very particular habitat requirements), like the ocellated velvet gecko, tended to be absent or less abundant in fragmented areas.

The key features of study sites that were related to reptile species diversity and abundance include:

- soil characteristics like the amount of sand in the soil
- the rainfall history of the area
- the presence of fallen timber on the ground
- the cover of tussock grasses
- the shape of the remnant (rounder is better)
- the overall amount of retained vegetation at the property scale.

While land managers have little control over rainfall or sand content in the soil, they certainly can influence the condition of their remnants, as well as remnant patch shape and connectedness with other vegetation. **Habitat condition in remnants** is closely related to **management of grazing, fire and weeds**, all of which influence the presence of **fallen timber and cover of tussock grasses**. Judicious management of remnant and regrowth vegetation can also create a favourable environment of well-connected, rounder patches dotted across the property.

Source: Venz, M.F., Eyre, T.J., Lawrence, A. and Chilcott, C. (2003). Ecological thresholds in southern Queensland: lessons from the lizards. Poster presented at Ecological Society of Australia Conference, Armidale, December 2003

Reptile Recovery Plan

As previously reported, the Reptile Recovery Team has been working hard. Since December, they have completed the Queensland Brigalow Belt Reptile Recovery Plan and presented it to both Commonwealth and State governments. The Plan has been adopted under the State's Environmental Protection Act. QMDC and WWF are awaiting formal adoption under the Commonwealth's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. In the meantime, the Plan has received support from all participating NRM bodies and elements of the Plan have already begun to be implemented.

For more information on this project please contact Rebecca Richardson at WWF-Australia on (07) 3839 2677



The ocellated velvet gecko is a habitat specialist, restricted to more intact vegetation. Photo: M. Sanders.