



**EVERYBODY'S
BUSINESS**

ROYALLA LANDCARE INC.
ABN 53 262 641 780

ROYALLA LANDCARE

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Injured wildlife—call
WILDCARE
6299 1966

THE BROWN THORNBILL – A VERY CLEVER MIMIC AND DECEIVER

The Brown Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla*) is found in eastern and south-eastern Australia, including Tasmania. It is relatively common in the ACT and surrounding areas.

One of the fascinating things about this bird is that it is a great mimic. The lyre bird is well renowned as a mimic, but the brown thornbill also deserves high acclaim, especially when you take into account its small size. It is just 10cms long and is a masterful mimic of birds much bigger – including rosellas and pied currawongs.

Steve IGIC, a researcher at the ANU, has found that the little brown thornbill will mimic the raptor alarm calls of other birds to put off attacks by currawongs. This gives

time for the thornbills and their nestlings to hide from the marauding currawongs. The researchers have also found that the hawk alarm calls of more than one species of bird is more effective than an alarm call from one species.

The Brown Thornbill lives in grassy box woodlands with insects and invetebrates its favourite foods. It is often seen with other small birds foraging close to the ground and in understory. Its nest is a grass dome with a side entrance usually bound with spider’s web and built near the ground. It likes dense prickly bushes in which to hide.

References: Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_thornbill

ABC News in Science: <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2015/06/03/4247203.htm>



Brown Thornbill – Source: Steve IGIC

CHILEAN NEEDLE GRASS

Why is Chilean needle grass a weed?

- Very invasive in pasture and on roadsides and other waste ground
- Well established around Canberra where it has been widely spread on road verges by slashing, and is invading other areas of the tablelands
- Tolerates drought and a wide range of soil types and climatic conditions
- Tolerates heavy grazing however there is little leaf material and therefore most of the plant is not palatable to livestock and can replace more useful pasture grasses (i.e. can reduce carrying capacity)
- Invades native grasslands and grassy woodlands

Description

Plant: a tall grass to 1m high, joints of the flowering stems are bent with fine short white hairs

Leaves: dark green flat to slightly in-rolled ribbed leaves to 5mm wide, tend to droop as they grow longer, while native spear grasses retain straight, more erect leaves

Seeds: sharply pointed and red or purplish when young, 6- 10mm long, with a long (6-9cm) awn (tail) attached at the top end of the seed. Best distinguishing feature: membranous collar (corona) where awn attaches to the seed (this may need magnification to be visible). Awns twist when mature and may tangle together. This grass can also produce seed hidden within the bases of the flowering stems.

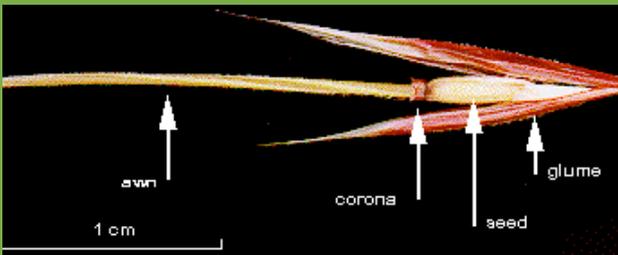
Dispersal via

- Sharp-pointed seeds attach to animals and clothing and are spread from place to place
- In soil on machinery and vehicles
- Most spread on the Southern Tablelands has been by roadside slashing

Status

Chilean needle grass is listed as a class 4 noxious weed in all council areas within the Molonglo Catchment. The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled in accordance with local management plans published by each local council and the plant must not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed.

In the ACT, Chilean needle grass is a class 3 and 4 Pest Plant which must be contained and whose supply is prohibited. Chilean needle grass has been listed as a Weed of National Significance due to its invasiveness, potential for spread and socioeconomic and environmental damage.



Weed: Chilean needle grass seed with glumes still attached. Note the corona between the awn and the seed. Native spear grasses don't have this corona. © State of Victoria, Department of Primary Industries 1999



Weed: Chilean needle grass has stem seeds (top) and normal seeds (bottom). © State of Victoria, Department of Primary Industries 1999



Weed: Chilean needle grass



Weed: Chilean needle grass

Weed facts from Weed Fact Sheets available from the Molonglo Catchment Group website – printed here with permission.

Visit www.molonglocatchment.com.au or call 02 6299 2119 for more information about getting involved in your living environment.

Information used to compile the information on this weed was kindly provided by the Southern Tablelands and South Coast Noxious Plants Committee:

www.southeastweeds.org.au

Chilean needle grass is a Weed of National Significance!



Native: double-jointed spear grass

Look-alikes

Native plants can often be confused with weed species. The following information aims to assist you with accurate identification to prevent the loss of our declining natives. If you are unsure what species you are dealing with, take advantage of the identification services on offer from your local weeds officer (either at your local council or the ACT's Parks, Conservation and Lands) before carrying out any controls.

Many native spear grasses have similar pointed seeds with a long, curved or twice-bent awn but many have very narrow leaves. The most similar is **tall spear grass** (*Austrostipa bigeniculata*) which also has broad leaves. It has a few short erect hairs at the seed/awn junction but not a membranous collar. Many of these spear grasses, like the **corkscrew grass** (*Austrostipa scabra*) also have a red appearance when the seed is young.

Another similar native is the **double-jointed spear grass** (*Austrostipa stiposa*) which has a similar collar of long hairs at the seed/awn junction.



Native: tall spear grass

Control methods

For advice on what time of year to implement the following management options, see the Molonglo Catchment Weed Control Calendar.

Seek advice on chemical application from your Council Weeds Officer or local "bush friendly" nursery. Always use chemicals as directed on the label.

The priority for Chilean needle grass is to avoid introduction in new areas by ensuring contaminated vehicles don't enter your property and machinery is kept clean if moving from infested areas.

Combining control methods, including physical removal, herbicide application, crop rotation, pasture sowing and grazing management will produce the best results once an area has become infested.

Dig or spray small infestations, preferably before the plants have a chance to set seed. Seed is long-lived in the soil so prevention of seeding is vital. Mowing with a catcher mower during flowering will reduce seed set but the clippings must be burnt (and mowing will only be partially effective as it won't remove the seeds hidden within the bases of flowering stems). Consult the Rural Fire Service for permits and advice before using fire as part of your management methods; in urban areas also contact the local council/control authority - your local weeds officer can assist with the safe disposal of Chilean needle grass plants.

Research is currently being conducted on biological controls however there has not yet been a release. Due to the persistent nature of this weed it is advised that you contact your local weeds officer for detailed control advice.



Native: corkscrew grass

SUGAR GLIDER HABITAT RESTORATION & NEST BOX PROJECT

Royalla Landcare have been successful in receiving \$1000 from the Landcare Australia Support Grant 2016 for the 'Royalla sugar glider habitat restoration & nest boxes'. If you would like to be involved with this project please contact Royalla Landcare at royallalandcare@earthbasics.com.au for more information.



CHEAP TREES

Royalla Landcare have 300 Drooping she-oak, *Allocasuarina verticillata* trees available for sale. This species is a good food source for Glossy black cockatoos, a nitrogen fixing tree and is a useful windbreak species. Seedlings are available for \$2.60 each get in quick contact royallalandcare@earthbasics.com.au



NEWS FLASH - RABBIT CONTROL IS COMING!



In mid 2017 a new strain of the rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus is planned for release to aid in the control of rabbits. RHVD K5 is a new and improved strain.

Royalla Landcare has registered interest in our area being part of this release. If our area is selected as a release site we will be calling for residents interested in participating in releasing the virus. This will be very similar to previous releases we have participated in. This will not happen until later in the year and we will be notifying residents as we receive more information. So stay tuned!

What You Can Do Now

As part of the upcoming release and to develop a more accurate picture of rabbit populations across Australia you can assist by recording rabbit sightings on Rabbit Scan.

RabbitScan is a FREE resource for landholders, the community and pest controllers to record and map rabbit activity, warrens, rabbit damage, and control activities in their local area. Working with your neighbours (and local authorities) is the best way to reduce rabbit damage and maximise the long-term benefits of control.

Download Feralscan from the App Store or Google play or go to www.feralscan.org.au.

Once the program is open you click on the picture of the RABBIT and follow the easy to use instructions.

The program is very simple to use and something that we are sure the kids will love to be involved in.

For more information you can go to www.feralscan.org.au or www.invasiveanimals.com

WHY ARE Paddock TREES IMPORTANT?

Across our rural landscapes, paddock trees stand out as one of the defining elements. Paddock trees are the remnants of once extensive woodlands and forests.

If our paddock trees continue to die at their present rate, in 50 years time our children may inherit a treeless landscape.

Values paddock trees provide...

1. Protection from wind, cold, heat for pastures, crops and stock.
2. Habitat for fauna, particularly birds, bats, insects and small mammals. 290 fauna species have been recorded using paddock trees.
3. Provision of hollows which take 150—200 years to form.
4. Stepping stones for fauna, particularly bird and bat species.
5. Ecosystem services such as nutrient recycling, salinity and erosion control.

Threats to paddock trees...

1. Many paddock trees are reaching the end of their lifecycle.
2. Dieback from nutrient build up, soil compaction, insect attack, ringbarking by stock etc
3. Spray drift from herbicide and fertilizer application.
4. Bushfires and poorly controlled burning off catching trees alight.
5. Clearing legally and illegally.
6. When paddock trees die they still have value providing habitat for wildlife, particularly in providing hollows for fauna.

Protecting Existing Paddock Trees...

1. Protecting young saplings from grazing or rubbing can be as simple as placing a 44 gal drum around the tree, secured with a star picket.
2. Applying a fence to at least the drip line of the tree's canopy.
3. Fencing out a paddock tree with enough room to plant replacement trees and understorey plants is the optimum solution. Depending on the site, natural regeneration or replanting may be a possibility.

Contact Royalla Landcare for assistance selecting suitable paddock tree replacement species.



JUNIOR LANDCARER ACTIVITY PAGE

Kangaroos are common in Royalla and you can see them at almost any time of the day. Wombats are not as common but if you are out walking early in the morning or in the evening you might be lucky enough to see one.

Remember to remind adults to drive slowly and look out for our native animal neighbours.

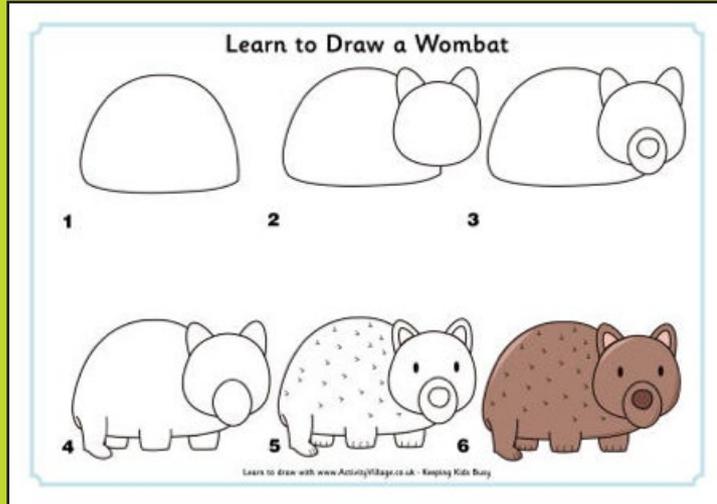
If you see an injured animal you can ask an adult to call Wildcare on 6299 1966.

Do not approach injured animals.

Activities from www.activityvillage.co.uk

Wombat Facts

- Wombats are nocturnal.
- Wombats are herbivores.
- Their burrow can be up to 30 metres long.
- Wombat poo is cube shaped.
- Their teeth constantly grow.



A Grumpy Dot-to-Dot

Be A-mazed

Help Wombat find her mud villa!

start here

Rating: difficult

INCREDIBLE NEW FROG SPECIES

One man has been instrumental in finding many new frog species in India, including a tiny night frog, and a chubby, purple frog with a pig like snout unlike any other frog, as well as the rediscovery of a species of bubble-nest frog not seen for 136 years. "In the last 15 years, Dr Biju - called the frog man of India and the frog fanatic, among other things - and his team of scientists have discovered 89 of India's 388 frog species. He reckons there are some 100 species which remain undiscovered - enough to keep him working for a while."

'India's maverick "frog man" by Soutik Biswas, published on BBC News website on 22 Jan 2016, is at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35379168>.

[Thankyou to Sharon & Anke Maria for telling me about this great story.]

JERRABOMBERRA CREEK, WATER QUALITY MEASUREMENTS

Jerra Ck Test date	Water temp	PH	Elec Cond	Tur-bidity
9/09/15	10	7.25	320	0
16/10/15	7	7	360	9
21/11/15	18	7	320	9
19/12/15	20	7.25	390	0
17/01/16	15.5	7.25	440	0
21/02/16	18.5	7.25	400	0
19/3/16	14	6.8	440	10
24/4/16	10.5	7	450	0

The water quality measurements are taken each month on Jerrabomberra Creek just up-stream from the bridge across the creek on Royalla Drive. Measurements are taken across many rivers and streams in the Murrumbidgee Catchment area. Although it may seem that the test results do not vary much at some sites, the data forms part of the bigger picture of data in the Molonglo catchment, which in turn forms part of the picture of Upper Murrumbidgee catchment health.

Each site may be upstream or downstream of another Waterwatch site, and the data Royalla Landcare Group volunteers collect tells the Waterwatch Coordinator at Murrumbidgee Catchment Group what is happening close to the site, as well as what is happening upstream and in the sub-catchment above. It can tell them about a short, sharp event that causes some change in water quality – though thankfully these are generally rare and short-lived. However it also tells them about gradual change over time near particular sites and across the catchment, and this is generally how waterways and catchment health are affected: by many small changes accumulating. These could be changes such as a new development that reduces water quality downstream, hopefully only for the short term; or the changes could be planting, erosion control, changes to stock management, or perhaps urban wetlands, that gradually improve water quality over time.

Riparian zones as 'fuses' for fire - facts and myths about bushfires & climate change

There is an interesting article on the Research page of the 'Rivers of Carbon' website (see link below). "Although many landholders are worried that vegetated riparian land, including land revegetated through riparian management programs, poses a fire risk to their property, the opposite is true. Riparian land poses a **lower fire threat** to a landholder's property, crops, livestock and built assets (such as houses and farm buildings). Under low to moderate fire danger conditions, well-managed riparian vegetation, with limited grass and weed growth, is less likely than pasture or crops to contribute to the spread of fire across a property or the wider landscape."

If you are interested to read more – google 'Rivers of Carbon riparian zones' or enter the following address into your browser:

<http://riversofcarbon.org.au/rivers-of-carbon/riparian-zones-are-fuses-for-fire-facts-and-myths-about-bushfires-and-climate-change/>

WHY WATER SCIENCE IS IMPORTANT

Bruce Haigh's opinion piece "CSIRO water science cuts leave precious resource untapped" in 12 March 2016 Canberra Times is a strongly worded piece which criticises the planned cuts to CSIRO's Land and Water division, as well as politicians and governments from both sides who have reduced and devalued Australian water science over many years. It's worth reading as a reminder that "Water is Australia's most precious natural resource - bar none. It underpins our cities, our food supply and much loved landscapes and wildlife. Yet we still do not know how much we have, where it is, how ground and surface water interact, and how climate is affecting our supplies...". Bruce Haigh is described as a political commentator, retired diplomat and farmer.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/water-unknowns-how-much-is-there-where-is-it-when-is-the-next-crisis-20160310-gnga8v.html>

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Injured wildlife—call
WILDCARE
6299 1966

Royalla Landcare

Royalla Landcare is an active group in the improvement and protection of the natural environment of the Royalla Area. The Royalla Area contains grassy box woodland and grassland communities, which are classed as Regionally Endangered in the Murrumbidgee / Molonglo Catchments.

Our projects aim to address the following issues:

- **Enhancing local indigenous fauna and flora and avoiding loss of biodiversity.**
- **Preserving and enhancing remnant grassy woodland.**
- **Establishing linking wildlife corridors**
- **Raising community awareness and education about sustainable land management e.g. responsible grazing techniques, erosion and weed control, caring for native ecosystems.**

Membership

Membership entitles you to Royalla Landcare Group newsletters, guest speakers & events, Landcare support and Cheap Trees, and more importantly, it's your contribution to landcare activities in the region. Membership for 2016 is due at the AGM in Nov 2015. Cost is only \$25 per property.

ROYALLA LANDCARE INC. **MEMBERSHIP FORM for 2016**

Name: _____

Property Address: _____

Postal Address: As above or _____

Phone: _____

Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Annual Membership: \$ 25.00

Donation: \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Date: / /

(Cheques payable to: Royalla Landcare Inc.)

ABN: 53 262 641 780

RETURN TO:

or by E.F.T.

Royalla Landcare

BSB: 032-729

PO Box 1573 ACCOUNT:

244866

Fyshwick

Please include your name and

ACT 2609

Email a remittance to: royallalandcare@earthbasics.com.au