

grey or dark brown with black flecks and the underside whitish. It emerges at night to feed on the

buildings. You might be surprised to find how many local species there are.

WEED ALERT

HAS KOCHIA BEEN ERADICATED?

People involved in landcare for some years will remember the horrifying case of Kochia, *Bassia scoparia*, brought in to WA from America to rehabilitate salt land in 1990 and sown at 68 sites across the State. When it was pointed out that the plant is a major weed of cropland elsewhere in the world (the importer had not thought to check) an eradication campaign began in 1992, by which time it had naturalised at 52 sites. Determination, vigilance – and \$500,000 – appear to have been successful as no Kochia plants have been found since 2000. If no more plants are discovered, the eradication programme will be judged as successful in 2005.

FOLLOWING UP ON MYRMECIA ANTS

Ian Conochie of Denmark read the article about *Myrmecia* ants in WW8/3 and was motivated to follow a solitary bull ant for nearly an hour as it wandered and paused occasionally as if in a trance. He asks “Why are the *Myrmecia* loners and don’t establish ant roads”.

Answer: Our ‘resident expert’ advises that individual foraging is a primitive style of ant behaviour. In other words, not only are they primitive anatomically, they are primitive socially as well. It is thought that the original ant ancestors were loners, gradually coming together in communal nests, then developing a tighter and tighter social structure as it proved to have an evolutionary advantage. When the ants pause during their foraging, they are probably sensing their environment for food or threats.
– Ed.